In Memoriam

CHARLES BERWIND MONTGOMERY

Charles Berwind Montgomery, son of Charles Howard and Frances (Hickman) Montgomery, was born December 28, 1889, near Bellwood, Blair County, Pennsylvania, and died at his winter residence in Philadelphia, October 10, 1942. He was a nephew of Thomas Lynch Montgomery, the greatly esteemed, somewhat recent Librarian of this Society and less recently the widely remembered State Librarian.

A long line of well placed English feudal houses and American gentle folk, brought to Charles Montgomery an inheritance of high ideals, calm courage, a sobriety of speech and a generous tolerance of the foibles of others. Well balanced mentally, well bred and well read, his quiet humor made him a welcome addition to any group. With the apparent simplicity of a gentleman of other days and the artistry of a diplomat, he made friends for himself and his cause wherever he went.

At the outbreak of World War I, he enlisted in the Canadian Forces and was finally assigned to the United States Army Air Corps, Third Aviation Instruction Center, south of Paris, where he remained until the Armistice. In mid-summer of 1919 he returned to America after eighteen months overseas service, during which, badly gassed, he lost practically the use of one eye. In spite of his disability he at once became connected with the Veterans’ Bureau at Philadelphia, to guard the interests of disabled veterans who had been discharged.

Subsequently he purchased a large farm near Knauertown, originally the Branson tract, now widely known as Templin Place, the property of the Pew family. This he successfully operated as a gentleman farmer for some years, meanwhile taking a lively interest in local affairs and, in particular, the Warwick Furnace, one of the great iron works of Pennsylvania, a depot for the manufacture of cannon during the Revolution.

A member of the Chester County Historical Society he rarely missed its stated meetings and, from time to time, made valuable contributions to its Museum, including his extensive collection of colonial hardware, presented as a memorial to his mother, Mrs. Frances Hickman Montgomery.

In the passing years farming became too arduous for shattered optical nerves and he relapsed into the more leisurely life of the scholar, serving, from April 1, 1929, as Curator of the Berks County Historical Society, living meanwhile at Joanna. It was during his administration of this office that the Society’s Archives were collected, classified and appraised preparatory to installation in its new building on Centre Avenue, Reading; a
piece of work greatly commended by the Society and citizenry of Reading, as was his later work of cataloging the Library. In these fruitful years it was that he made himself the leading authority on the history of the Schuylkill Valley, particularly in reference to its early iron industry, so vital to the careers of its pioneer settlers. The result of his labors may never reach a concrete form, nor the amount of assistance he gave to historical students of Berks County be accurately known, he had that sub-conscious joy which the scholar derives from planting in virgin soil.

In 1924, Mr. Montgomery became a life member of The Historical Society of Pennsylvania, after which frequent, indeed, were his periods of absorption in its rich Manuscript Department with particular concern for his special field of research, Pennsylvania in the iron industry, as symbolized in its Forges and Furnaces of colony and commonwealth. In recognition of this interest, the Council of the Society appointed him Curator of Business Records, December 28, 1936, which office he resigned, May 16, 1938. At this time he was, with others, engaged in a critical review of the Penn-Harrison correspondence at The Historical Society, in furtherance of exactitude in the re-creation of the William Penn Manor House at Pennsbury. This, proving of material assistance to the architect, he later edited and printed in *The General Magazine and Historical Chronicle, University of Pennsylvania*, July, 1939.

Recently, he attempted to enter military service for the second time, but was prevented by impaired eyesight and turned to home defense in which, as a member of the Honeybrook Township, Chester County Salvage Committee he worked diligently before returning to Philadelphia for the winter months.

Survived by a sister, Mrs. Mary Montgomery Norton, widow of Homer Hine Norton, late Commander in the United States Navy, the Council extends to Mrs. Norton its profound sympathy and orders that a copy of this Minute be sent to her.

Comrade; Historian; Patriot: Those of us who remain, salute you, and promise, Remembrance!

M. Atherton Leach, Historiographer