In Memoriam

JOSEPH JACKSON: HISTORIAN

Joseph Francis Ambrose Jackson, son of Samuel and Barbara Marie Dougherty Jackson, was born May 20, 1867, on Twelfth Street near Chestnut, next door to one of the dwellings of Robert Morris. He went to public schools at Twelfth and Locust and on Locust Street just behind the Academy of Music and grew up in that atmosphere of preparation, achievement, and satisfaction surrounding the Centennial which so thrilled Philadelphia in the seventies.

As his first interest was art he attended the Spring Garden Institute at the age of thirteen. Five years later he spent a year at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. In 1888 he became art editor of the Public Ledger and remained with that paper as editor and feature writer for thirty years. In the 1920's he was editor of a periodical known as Building and Building Arts. Most of his time after 1926 was spent in free-lance writing, generally on historical subjects.

There was no limit to his interest or to his research. He was constantly at work on artistic, architectural, literary and historic ventures. He occasionally tried his hand at fiction but Clio was his goddess and his devotions were most constant. He was a collector, too, and had assembled a large store of lithographs, books, and pamphlets.

His artistic interest caused him to write the story of Lithography in Philadelphia (1900), Early Philadelphia Architects and Engineers (1923), and two volumes on the history of architecture: American Colonial Architecture (1924) and the Development of American Architecture (1926).

His literary leanings centered particularly on Dickens, Thackeray, Poe, Charles Godfrey Leland and George Lippard. He wrote articles about Dickens and Thackeray in Philadelphia. He discussed Poe's philosophy of animal magnetism and was convinced that it was Poe who had replied to Charles Dickens' Notes on America in English Notes,1 reputedly by Quarles Quicke. He prepared bibliographies of Leland and Lippard and left a biography of the latter in manuscript.

1 This work was reprinted in 1920 by Lewis M. Thompson with notes by Jackson and George H. Sargent.
It is for his historical work, however, that he will be most remembered. His book *America's Most Historic Highway: Market Street, Philadelphia*, as reprinted in 1926, his *Encyclopedia of Philadelphia* (4 vols., 1931-1933), his guidebook, and his myriad of articles in the Philadelphia newspapers will long be consulted. When the Poor Richard Club awarded him The Poor Richard Silver Achievement Medal in 1934 they dubbed him the "present-day Watson," the successor to that famous annalist.

This great lifetime of effort bore many other fruits, fruits which cannot be catalogued as can his writings. What he knew, he shared with many. He made it a practice to visit The Historical Society nearly every day and constantly advised its staff. Generous with his time, he would often sit down with some puzzled researcher to straighten out his difficulty. Many had reason to be grateful to him for help of this sort. The present writer profited by his advice but a few weeks before his death.

For many years he lived with his mother. After his marriage in 1915 to Harriet Holmes Fletcher he dwelt in West Philadelphia. He was a frequenter of book shops, particularly Cullen's on Ninth Street, whose "back room" he made immortal in verse:

"It is dusty and musty,  
Yet it breathes not of gloom—  
In fact, it's inviting—  
Is Jerry's back room."

So he passed his years, collecting, writing, wandering through the streets he loved with his eye ever on the alert for historical matter. He was active until the end which came suddenly on March 4, 1946. The Historical Society has lost a valued friend. The great pity is that so much of priceless knowledge died with him.²

ROY F. NICHOLS

² The author is indebted to Albert Mordell, Esq., and to Messrs. Fairchild and Givens for aid in the preparation of this sketch.