

**IN MEMORIAM**  
**EUGENE CAMPBELL BARKER**

Professor Eugene Campbell Barker died in Austin, Texas on October 22, 1956. Excepting the years in graduate study at the University of Pennsylvania and Harvard, he spent his entire academic life in the service of the University of Texas, a service extending over a period of fifty-seven years.

He was born in Walker County, near Riverside, Texas, November 10, 1874. Prior to coming to the University, he was in the employ of the railroad shops in Palestine, and while a student at the University, he served as mail clerk on a night run for the Missouri Pacific. He entered the University of Texas in 1895, was awarded the B. A. degree in 1899 and the M. A. a year later. He served as tutor in history at the University from 1899 to 1901; instructor from 1901 to 1908; adjunct professor, 1908 to 1911; associate professor 1911-1913; professor from 1913 to his retirement in 1951, and professor emeritus until his death. When the title of Distinguished Professor was created in 1937, Dr. Barker was among the first group of three chosen for this position.

On May 6, 1903, while an instructor, Dr. Barker married Matilda LeGrand Weeden whose charm and culture provided an ideal background and atmosphere for Dr. Barker's future work. Their fieldstone colonial home at 2600 San Gabriel Street in Austin was a model of architectural beauty. The interior, with the exception of Dr. Barker's study, was furnished with antiques chosen with such taste as to create a place of rare charm. It was here that David, the Barkers' only child grew to manhood.

In 1906 Dr. Barker took a leave of absence and went north for graduate work. He studied first at the University of Pennsylvania as a Harrison Fellow in history and later as an Austin scholar at Harvard where he taught at Radcliffe College. In 1908 he took the Ph.D. at Pennsylvania. Returning to the University of Texas, he was promoted to the associate professorship in 1911. Two years later he became senior professor and chairman of the department of history.

In addition to three earned degrees, Dr. Barker received the LL.D. from Transylvania College in 1940, an honor he particularly appreciated because it was the college that Stephen F. Austin had attended. He was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and was a member of Phi Delta Theta social fraternity. He was a member of the editorial board of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association, and served as president in 1923. Though he attended the professional associations with some regularity, he could never be called an association man. In 1950 the Regents created the Eugene C. Barker Texas History Center to house Texas books and archives.

It was during the thirty-two years of the full professorship that Dr. Barker did his scholarly work. Upon his return from graduate study in 1908 he found the field of Texas history wide open. With that rare judgment for which he was notable, Dr. Barker elected it as his own, and selected as his first task that of presenting the definitive biography of the most important man in Texas, Stephen F. Austin. Before writing the biography Dr. Barker collected and began the publication of the Austin papers. These papers covered the period 1765 to 1836, and were published by the American Historical Association in four volumes in the years 1924-1928. The Life of Stephen F. Austin was published in 1925, and was recognized immediately as a definitive work. It is often described as a classic and has been called the finest single piece of historical writing yet done in Texas. There is no doubt that Dr. Barker prized it above all his other contributions. His admiration and affection for Austin were boundless, but his rigid principles of complete historical objectivity were such that he hardly permitted himself a word of praise. The nearest he came to it was in the last restrained paragraph of the book:

He (Austin) was a man of warm affections, and loved the idea of home, but he never married. Texas was home and wife and family to him. He died on a pallet on the floor of a two-room clapboard shack, a month and twenty-four days past his forty-third birthday. His work was done, but he was denied the years so hardly earned for the enjoyment of its fruits. There is a certain poetic completeness in this, but the prosaic mind, rebels. Austin sowed unselfishly and abundantly, and he deserved also to reap.

With the work on Austin out of the way, Dr. Barker turned to other tasks. In the scholarly field he published Mexico and Texas (1821-1835), 1928; Readings in Texas History, 1929; The Father of Texas, 1935. The second great, and the most famous character in Texas history was Sam Houston. Dr. Barker and Miss Amelia Williams undertook the stupendous task of collecting the papers of Houston and these were published in eight volumes, 1938-1943, under the title of The Writings of Sam Houston.

Paralleling his authorship of books, Dr. Barker served as managing editor of The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, publication of the Texas State Historical Association, from 1910 to 1937. For twenty-seven years he not only edited the magazine, but he contributed to it article after article, most of them dealing with some aspect of Texas history. Through his books and articles he showed the influence the Texas question and Texas history had on national development, and especially on westward expansion. In this connection he exploded some pet hypotheses that had attained wide acceptance. One was that the westward expansion of the United States, the acquisition of Texas and the Mexican cession of 1848 resulted from a conspiracy of southerners to expand slave territory; another was the idea that in the Texas Revolution and the Mexican War all the fault was on the Mexican side.

It is always difficult to rate a scholar's various achievements) to say which one of his activities will be the most important. It may be said of Dr. Barker that he deserves full credit for the fact that today the University library is one of the nation's great repositories of authentic source material on the Civil War. All scholars who undertake to write definitively about the War Between the States must consult books and documents which the University has acquired from the proceeds of the Littlefield Fund.

Major George W. Littlefield, cattleman and banker, had long been interested in the University as evidenced by his many benefactions. As an ex-Confederate he was disturbed by what he considered unfair treatment of the South in the standard histories that were *pouring out of northern* universities. When he complained about what the historians were doing to the South, Dr. Barker, always a realist, told him that the only remedy would be to get the facts on which a true account could be based. The result was that Major Littlefield eventually gave \$125,000, the proceeds of which were to be spent in collecting sources and in writing and publishing a true history of the South.

When the proceeds of the fund became available, books, manuscripts, newspaper files were abundant and inexpensive. These treasures began flowing into the University library, and made it one of the chief repositories for Southern history. Six volumes of *A History of the South* have been published and four others are, in progress. The original Littlefield Fund has not only paid for all this, but has grown from unspent income by some forty thousand dollars. This service Dr. Barker rendered in a field in which he was not particularly interested.

In addition to his scholarly writing, Dr. Barker diffused his knowledge to millions through his textbooks, which extended from the third grade through the high school. In 1912 he, with C. W. Ramsdell and C. S. Potts, published A School History of Texas, which was the state-adopted text in the sixth grade for many years. In 1928 he began the publication of a series of school histories of the United States. In this series Dr. Barker took in many associates who participated in one or more books. Among these associates were Henry Steele Commager, William E. Dodd, Frederick Duncalf, Walter P. Webb, and others. These books were remarkably successful in all parts of the United States, and brought Dr. Barker leisure, which he never used and independence, which he always exercised regardless of financial status.

Aside from his teaching, the main service of Dr. Barker to the University was that of building a department of history which came to rank during his active career as among the best in the state universities of the nation. Since there was nothing of the promoter in him, his success must be explained in other terms. Dr. Barker set an example of industry and consistent work that influenced others to work. He never told anybody in the department to do anything in addition to his duty; but what is more important, he never forbade one to do anything he wanted to do. For example, he believed that so far as investigation and research were concerned, the individual should be free to go where his intellectual curiosity led. The idea of one man preempting a field and keeping others out was repugnant to him. This tolerance of the rights, and even the aspirations, of others was Dr. Barker's second characteristic, which exerted a powerful but intangible influence on other members of the history department.

It is when we come to Dr. Barker's character that language to describe him is hard to come by. Great as his scholarship, sound as his teaching, both were equaled or surpassed by his strength of character. Physically he was tall and angular, rugged is the word for him. His eyes were keen, his nose aquiline, his forehead high. He had about him an unconscious austerity, the sort found in generals and in Indian chiefs. His portrait, painted by Robert Joy, which hangs opposite the front door of the Eugene C. Barker Texas History Center, is an excellent likeness. To those who knew him best, this austerity was but a crust to cover a great heart, to hide his compassion for those less fortunate than he. It is doubtful if any individual who ever went to him in personal distress, failed to receive aid. He lent money to any needy student, never took a note or required any proof other than the individual volunteered to give. All this money, he once said, was paid back, sometimes twenty years later. Nobody forgot to pay one so austere and so kindly generous. Many years ago an aviator flew a plane into a cottage in west Austin occupied by a

struggling graduate student, his wife and child. The child was killed. Dr. Barker called the student, who was not in the history department, and offered to let him have any funds needed for the tragic expense.

This is one side of Dr. Barker, but there was another. While he was tolerant of individuals whatever their frailties, he was intolerant where principles were involved. He hardly knew the meaning of the word compromise when an issue he thought important was at stake. In faculty controversy he would first present his views quietly and in a few words, but if the opposition persisted, he would unfold his six feet and more from his seat, now a different man. His eyes were no longer kindly nor his manner considerate. He destroyed the opposition in language that was sometimes intemperate. Once when some colleague suggested that academic courtesy should prevail, he retorted that what passed for courtesy in a faculty was often damned cowardice. He did not use profanity, but did allow himself an occasional damn.

In the publication of his series of textbooks he was in constant conflict with the president of the company who was a strong and stubborn character. In the midst of one controversy, the publisher's representative entered Dr. Barker's office just as he was writing a telegram. Dr. Barker asked the agent to send the telegram, and began to fumble for money to pay for it.

"Don't bother about that, Dr. Barker. I'll send it collect."

Reaching for the telegram, Dr. Barker said, "Dammit, I'll add three words."

From 1910 to 1945 Dr. Barker was prominent in all matters that were important to the University. He was one of the leaders in opposition to Governor James E. Ferguson after the Governor blue penciled the entire University appropriation excepting one item, and attempted to dismiss several members of the faculty. His conservative nature led him into violent opposition to practically everything that Franklin D. Roosevelt stood for) and this same conservatism caused him to support the University regents when they discharged President Homer P. Reiney.

Dr. Barker's recreation consisted of golf and fishing. Knowing nothing of golf, we can not comment on this phase of his life, except to say that he played for years with one team. Fishing with him was serious business. He kept no hours, but fished before breakfast, from breakfast to noon, from noon to night. He tested all the waters in an afternoon's drive of Austin. He regularly went to the coast, usually to Florida Roberts' camp at Port Aransas. For years he maintained a summer home at Boulder) Colorado, probably for the fishing as much as for the cooler climate.

The passing of Dr. Barker marked the end of an era in the department of history, and it marked the passage of an era in the University. For years after the Ferguson controversy he exercised remarkable influence in the General Faculty. He became a leader in that body both because of the confidence his colleagues had in his judgment and because of his singular ability in expressing his opinions. Led by him and a few others the faculty followed policies that determined University affairs for at least a quarter of a century. These leaders were all men of character and integrity; they differed in personality but they were held together by their devotion to the University. They did not lay the foundation, but they built a university on the foundation put down by their predecessors. They made the institution what it is today. In their personal relations they were kindly men, but where the fortunes of the University were involved they were wise, sometimes fierce, and always indomitable. Dr. Barker shared these characteristics, and some of them he possessed in the highest degree.

This memorial resolution was prepared by a special committee consisting of Professors Walter P. Webb (chair), Joe B. Frantz, and Robert A. Law.