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REFERENCE SERIES

LAWRENCE HENRY GIPSON - 1880-1971

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Lawrence Henry Gipson rose up from humble beginnings in southern Idaho to become part of the first class of Rhodes Scholars to study at Oxford University. He went on to establish himself as an internationally known historian, a distinguished professor of history, and a Pulitzer Prize winner.

Born December 7, 1880 in Greeley, Colorado, Gipson moved with his family to Caldwell where he spent his boyhood. He excelled as a long-distance runner at Caldwell High School and the Academy of the College of Idaho, but dropped out after only one year at each institution. Before attending the University of Idaho, Gipson had a number of odd jobs, including driving a stagecoach, working in a North Idaho mine, and learning the printing trade. His family published the Idaho Odd Fellow, the Gem State Rural and Livestock Farmer, and established Caxton Printers in Caldwell, Idaho.

Gipson received his A.B. degree from the University of Idaho in 1903, and in 1907 completed the first Rhodes scholarship granted to an Idahoan. While a Rhodes Scholar, he was awarded a B.A. degree from Oxford University of England. Gipson wrote of his experience as a Rhodes Scholar in the October 1962 Lehigh Bulletin.

One disadvantage that our first delegation of Rhodes Scholars labored under was the fact that we attracted so much attention. I am sure that no subsequent group was ever the object of such intense curiosity. Almost inevitably we were made conscious that each of us was on trial, especially in the eyes of the scholarly world. We were even made to feel that in a sense the reputation of American scholarship was in our hands.

Following graduation Gipson taught history at the College of Idaho for three years. In 1909 he married Jeannette Reed, a school teacher. He studied history at Yale University as a Farnham Fellow in 1910 and 1911. Gipson headed the history and political science department at Wabash College from 1911-1924, and received his Ph.D. in history from Yale in 1918. He headed the department of history and government at Lehigh from 1924 through 1946, and held the title of research professor emeritus from 1954 until his death. Gipson was honored to return to Oxford University in 1951-1952 as the annual Harmsworth Professor

of American History, and again in 1964 for a reunion of Rhodes Scholars.

His major contribution is a fifteen-volume history entitled The British Empire Before the American Revolution which he began researching in 1924. The final volume was published only nine months before his death on September 26, 1971. Volume 6, The Great War for the Empire: The Years of Defeat, 1754-1757 was awarded the 1948 Columbia University Loubat Prize. Volume 7, The Great War for the Empire: The Victorious Years, 1758-1760 won the Bancroft Prize of the American Historical Association for the best work in American history in 1949. The Pulitzer Prize was awarded to Gipson in 1962 for Volume 10, The Triumphant Empire: Thunderclouds Gather in the West, 1763-1766.

Gipson was awarded honorary doctorates from Temple University in 1947, Lehigh University in 1951, and an L.L.D. from the University of Idaho in 1953.

By Guila Ford and Elizabeth Jacox

(This information has not been edited.)