

Donald E. Worcester (1915-2003)



Donald E. Worcester served as the 13th president (1974-1975) of the Western History Association. Born on April 29, 1915 in Tempe, Arizona, Worcester lived most of his life in the Southwest, a region that sparked not only his academic curiosity, but also his imagination. Worcester, a Latin America specialist, wrote prolifically not only about Latin America and the U.S. Southwest, but also wrote many Western novels and Western-themed children's books.

Worcester wrote, co-wrote, or edited more than twenty-one books and more than thirty articles. His books included *Brazil: From Colony to World Power* (1973), *Bolívar* (1977), *The Apaches: Eagles of the Southwest* (1979), which won the Western Writers of America Spur Award and was published in German in 1982, *The Chisholm Trail: High Road of the Cattle Kingdom* (1980), and *The War in the Nueces Strip* (1989). His scholarly articles ranged from WWII naval strategy to the spread of horses through the Southwest and included "The Significance of

the Spanish Borderlands to the U.S.," which appeared in the *Western Historical Quarterly* in 1976 and was reprinted in two books. One of his final projects was writing the text for the photography book *Cowboy with a Camera* (1999).

After graduating from Bard College in 1939, Worcester received an M.A. at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1941. He joined the U.S. Naval Reserve that year and served through 1945. He and his wife returned to California following his service and Worcester received his Ph.D. at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1947. Worcester's first professorship was at the University of Florida where he remained between 1947 and 1963. He moved to Fort Worth, Texas, to join the faculty of Texas Christian University in 1963; one of Worcester's most significant contributions was to initiate a Ph.D. program in history at TCU. Worcester oversaw fifty Ph.D. dissertations at TCU. Worcester's excellence in teaching and leadership as Department Chair (1963-1972) led the faculty members of TCU to name a graduate fellowship in his honor; that fellowship is now one of the most prestigious awards in history granted at TCU.

Always interested in the cowboy lifestyle, Worcester truly was a modern cowboy. He wore western shirts, a cowboy hat, boots and a bushy mustache. He shuffled as he walked, displaying a mild temper that contrasted sharply with his salty sense of humor. When he was not in Reed Hall at TCU, Worcester was relaxing at his "ranchita" in Aledo, Texas, where one of his hobbies was raising Arabian horses. Donald E. Worcester died in Fort Worth, Texas on September 20, 2003. He was 88 years old.

Sources:

"Don Worcester: An Inventory of His Papers, 1986-1991 and undated, at the Southwest Collection/Special Collections Library," <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/taro/ttusw/00065/tsw-00065.html>;
Donald E. Worcester Personnel File, Department of History and Geography, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth, Texas; Claudia Feldman, "A Time for Cowboys: Western Historian Don Worcester has Blended His Words with Century-Old Photographs for an Award-Winning Book on the Old West." *Houston Chronicle*, April 4, 1999, http://www.chron.com/CDA/archives/archive.mpl/1999_3129119/a-time-for-cowboys-western-historian-don-worcester.html

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