

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

WILLIAM H. DAVIS (1880—1962)

William Hawley Davis was born in Frazer, Pennsylvania, on June 3, 1880, and died at Stanford on December 5, 1962.

He entered Harvard University in 1901 and was graduated magna cum laude in 1905. While at Harvard he won the Boylston Prize in Elocution, and served as president of the Harvard Debating Council. He took an A.M. degree at Columbia University in 1908, writing a thesis on English Renaissance literature. After further graduate work at Harvard he taught at Columbia for two years, and then went to Bowdoin College, where he was professor of English and Public Speaking from 1910 to 1924.

In 1924 Professor Davis came to Stanford as editor for the Food Research Institute. From 1925 until his retirement in 1945 he served both as Professor of English and as Editor of the Stanford University Press. He was the first man to be named as editor of the newly-organized press, which became, at the same time, a department of the University. He continued to teach part-time in the Department of English, but most of his energies went into the job of editing. In its early days the Stanford Press was not exactly overstaffed, and Professor Davis used to describe his editorial duties as those of "pack-horse, midwife, and theme-corrector." Before his retirement, however, he saw through to publication many distinguished books. During his twenty years of service the Press published more than 600 titles.

Professor Davis was the author of English Essayists: A Reader's Handbook, published in 1916, and of several articles and monographs. He was interested in American figures of speech and had catalogued more than 3000 such figures. Many had hoped that before his death he would be able to publish his study of the nineteenth century American lyceum -- an institution of importance in American cultural history, toward the record of which he had assembled many materials.

During his long life Professor Davis was known to his many friends as unfailingly courteous, generous, and kind, even though what he used to call the "thorns in my editorial cushion" demanded that he reject many books for every one that was accepted. His modesty was such that people had to learn of his good deeds by indirection. He was much interested in the welfare of the community, and was active in the Congregational Church and numerous civic groups. He served as director and treasurer of the Palo Alto Junior Museum from 1934 to 1943.

Professor Davis is survived by his wife, Caroline Edgerly Davis, and a brother, Joseph S. Davis, Director Emeritus of the Stanford Food Research Institute—both of whom live on the Stanford campus; and by a son, Alan W., and a daughter, Mrs. Hugh D. Smith, both of Palo Alto.

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