10-1-1961

Paul Chrisler Phillips Memorial Collection created at Montana State University

University of Montana--Missoula. Office of University Relations

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FOR RELEASE SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1

The Paul Chrisler Phillips Memorial Collection has been created in the Montana State University Library by a generous gift of books and money from the widow of the eminent historian and long-time member of the University faculty, President H. K. Newburn announced.

Mrs. Phillips has given the University a substantial sum in building and loan deposits with the stipulation that the annual interest be used to procure materials for the Phillips Memorial Collection. She has also donated books, manuscripts and other materials from Dr. Phillips' private library to form the nucleus of the collection.

The Phillips Collection will be an independent entity, but it will be built in accordance with the plan followed in expanding the University's Northwest Historical Collection. The latter, directed for many years by Dr. Phillips, was acquired largely through his efforts, according to Miss Kathleen Campbell, head librarian at MSU. Acquisitions came through gifts and by direct purchases by the University administration, she said. The collection is one of the finest of its kind in the Northwest, she noted.

Miss Campbell, who will be in charge of acquisitions for the Phillips Collection, said that historical materials relating to the North American Continent will be sought, through purchases and gifts, for the new collection. The objective is to obtain rare books, manuscripts, journals, pamphlets, magazines and paintings covering every aspect of North American history. The collection is not to be limited to Montana and Northwest history but will eventually include histories of all the states, Canadian documents, data on North American Indians and other materials.

(more)
Mrs. Phillips expressed the hope that "interested persons will do whatever they can to make the collection grow so that it will become a basic support for students, teachers and researchers from wherever they may come for source material, and for Montana, to which it belongs."

Her gift was motivated, she says, by the wish to memorialize her husband in a way that would help the University and the state and at the same time be consistent with his lifelong devotion to books and scholarship.

Mrs. Phillips believes that the cultivation of the reading habit in young people depends in large measure upon making good reading matter easily accessible. She feels strongly that "the more a person knows of his country and of the world at large, the better he will understand, and be able to cope with, world movements and problems."

President Newburn commented, "Certainly no more fitting memorial could be devised to honor a scholar of Dr. Phillips' stature than the establishment of a collection of rare books and manuscripts in his chosen field."

Dr. Newburn noted that Dr. Phillips achieved distinction in his field through the teaching, research and writing that made him a recognized authority on Northwest history. His monumental two-volume work, "The Fur Trade," published posthumously this year by the Oklahoma University Press, is considered a definitive account of the effect of the fur trade on the colonization and development of North America, Dr. Newburn said.

Dale L. Morgan, writing in the New York Times Book Review, said, "'The Fur Trade' is likely to be a standard authority for years to come and a point of departure for many new studies of American history."

(more)
Dr. Phillips was the author of other historical works and coeditor of "The Fort Owen Journals" and other books.

The MSU historian was associate editor of the Pacific Northwest Quarterly from 1932 to 1954. He served on the editorial board of the Montana Magazine of History and was historical editor of Frontier and Midland. He contributed the section on Montana to the 1954 Encyclopedia Americana annual.

During World War I, Dr. Phillips directed the Students Army Training Corps on campus, and in World War II, he served as historian for the War Department's Transportation Corps. In the '30's he directed the Historical Records Survey for the Works Progress Administration and was chairman of the Missoula and Regional Planning Boards.

Dr. Phillips joined the University faculty in 1911 as a full professor of history and political science. For many years he directed the University Museum and the Northwest Historical Collection. He retired in 1954 but continued his affiliation with the University as professor emeritus until his death in December 1956.

Prof. Phillips took A. B. and A. M. degrees from Indiana University and a Ph. D. from the University of Illinois. He and Alice M. Martin were married in Indiana in 1911 and moved to Missoula the same year.

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