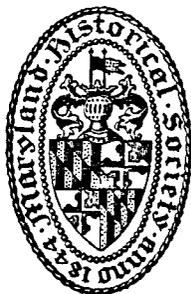


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GEORGE L. RADCLIFFE, 1877-1974

United States Senator from Maryland, 1935-1947
Member of the Maryland Historical Society, 1908-1974
Secretary, 1911-1931; President, 1931-1965; Chairman, 1965-1974

For ninety-seven years from birth at Spocott Farm near Lloyds in Dorchester County on August 22, 1877 until death came in Baltimore on July 29, 1974, Senator George L. Radcliffe enriched the lives of others with warm friendship as he followed a strong urge to use his boundless energy and wide range of interests and abilities. Throughout his life the Senator's old associations grew richer. As his activities and usefulness widened with each passing year he increasingly cherished his family, neighbors and growing new friendships. He particularly enjoyed returning home to the Eastern Shore on every possible week end. For sixty-nine years he happily attended each annual meeting of the Baltimore City College Class of 1905. They had named him their favorite teacher and dedicated the 1905 "Greenbag" and its supplement 40 years later to him.

In describing his early years, in a speech at Pocomoke on May 25, 1946, the

Seantor said, "I was born within a hundred feet of salt water. My early experiences were in my father's shipyard, on his farms, working in our canning factory mingling with the farmers, fishermen and oystermen who were our neighbors and good friends. The lives of those who toil on farms, on the oyster bars, are open to me." Referring to his view of his service as a United States Senator, he said, "My duty, my pleasure and my ambition is to turn out a good, sincere, unostentatious, successful record of service to my constituents, whether they earn their living with a pen, a hoe or a pinball. They all look alike to me." In the same year Judge Samuel K. Dennis, the Senator's long-time friend and former Chief Judge of the Supreme Bench of Baltimore said of the Senator, "... nor is he partisan. He has an idea his services belong to anyone everyone. Hence men of high and low degree, of all political affiliations, in business and in office alike find him approachable, amiable, infinitely kind and obliging."

Senator Radcliffe thoroughly liked people. He was at ease with others regardless of place, background or differences. He made them feel comfortable and enjoy being with him. A person full of innate goodness and blessed with ability and good judgment, the Senator was instinctively turned to by people when they wanted a man in whom they could place their trust and from whom they would receive fair and wise help or advice. Individuals and groups, often those with conflicting views, turned to him for help in resolving their differences or accomplishing a task. He was a man of patience, quick to forgive and who just could not harbor a grudge. His very nature rebelled at man's cruelty to man. It was never for him to cause pain or mortification to others.

From early childhood the Senator carried with him and constantly renewed warm memories of Christmas and the happy time his mother made for her family at Christmas. In school Christmas was his favorite subject for compositions. Later he collected over 2,000 books and 500 articles about Christmas. It was the subject of his first address to the United States Senate. The Christmas spirit represented to the Senator the happy bringing together of family and friends, generous impulses and kindly deeds to others. These things appealed to his deeply ingrained sense of love of people, equality, goodness and justice in dealing with others.

Beginning early in life, Senator Radcliffe was deeply influenced by his father's emphasis on independence and work, and his mother's love for reading and literature. Following graduation from the Cambridge High School and pursuing his desire for work and education, he received degrees from the Johns Hopkins University, A.B. 1897, in history and political science and Ph.D., 1900, in history. His doctoral thesis, "Governor Thomas Hicks of Maryland and the Civil War" was published by the Johns Hopkins Press in 1901. A lifelong source of satisfaction to the Senator was that those who read his work were unable to determine whether his sympathies were with the Union or the Confederacy. While at "Hopkins" the Senator was a member of the one-mile relay team which won that event at the University of Pennsylvania Relay Carnival at Philadelphia in 1898. The gold watch awarded him became his favourite possession and a constant reminder of this happy occasion. An active and appreciative alumnus, Senator Radcliffe served as President of the "Hopkins" Alumni Association

(1913-1920) and Chairman of the successful 1919 campaign to raise funds to build the "Alumni Memorial Dormitory."

Among the Senator's happiest memories were those of his service as principal of the Cambridge High School (1900-1901) and Professor of History at the Baltimore City College (1901-1903). During the years 1902-1903 he attended the University of Maryland School of Law from which he received an LL.B degree in 1903. In later years he received honorary degrees from Washington College (LL.D, 1934) and the University of Maryland (LL.D, 1943).

In 1903 Senator Radcliffe began his seventy-one-year business association with the American Bonding Company of Baltimore and the Fidelity and Deposit Company of Maryland. His responsibilities in various capacities included Head of the Legal Department, Vice President, Chairman of the Executive Committee and member of the Board of Directors. Judge Samuel K. Dennis, a fellow Director, in referring to the Senator as a businessman said, "He became valuable to his Company, not as a master of routine, but in stronger fields as a 'trouble shooter,' idea man, pioneer thinker, policy maker, diplomat." J. Harry Schisler, a business colleague for most of the Senator's career, describes him as "the man to handle serious things" and "an accomplished negotiator." Senator Radcliffe's other business interests included membership on the Board of Directors of the Fidelity Trust Company and Baltimore Contractors (1951-1974).

Senator Radcliffe and Miss Mary McKim Marriott of Baltimore were married on June 6, 1906. Among the Senator's greatest joys were his own home and family. After his wife's death he derived special joy from knowing that his son George, his daughter-in-law Augusta and their children shared his love for Spocott Farm.

In 1908 Senator Radcliffe became a member of the Maryland Historical Society, and for sixty-six years contributed immensely to its growth in size and usefulness. For sixty-four years he served as an officer—Secretary (1911-1931), President (1931-1965) and Chairman (1965-1974). The Senator often said that the Society was not work but a place to which he could turn for a restful change of pace and recreation.

The highlights of the Senator's service as President included an address to the Society by his close friend, then Vice President Harry S. Truman, soon to succeed as President another close friend, President Franklin D. Roosevelt. The subject, "Maryland and Tolerance" was one dear to the Senator's heart. Speaking of intolerance that evening, March 16, 1945, Vice President Truman said, "There is no lasting cure except that found in the impartial recording of history." Turning to history again, Vice President Truman spoke words to the Senator. "The pages of history remain open for all to read. They stand as an eternal warning against the tragic disasters of the past . . . of course, every generation must meet new problems in light of new developments, but surely they must profit by the experience of the past."

Developments at the Maryland Historical Society which meant much to Senator Radcliffe would include the Keyser Memorial, including the gift of the Enoch Pratt House, the gift of Francis Scott Key's original manuscript of "The Star-Spangled

Banner," the Thomas and Hugg Memorial Building and endowment, the Jacob and Annita France Auditorium and the Jacob France Endowment Fund, the Darnall Young People's Museum of Maryland History, and the 1973 decision to rename an expanded maritime museum "The George L. Radcliffe Maritime Museum."

The Senator supplemented his devotion to the Maryland Historical Society by accepting other responsibilities related to Maryland history. These included: Chairman of the 1924 Baltimore City Commission which saved the "Shot Tower"; Chairman of the Star-Spangled Banner Committee (1939); Maryland War Records (1942); Chairman of the celebration of the 300th anniversary of the Religious Toleration Act in Maryland (1949); Chairman of the Committee on Historical Markers in Maryland (1954). The Senator's long-time encouragement to local historical societies played a major role in their growth to the point where at least one is now in being in every Maryland county.

When interviewed and recorded on tape last summer by his friend Walter Finch as part of the Society's Oral History project, the Senator responded to a question about his first introduction to politics saying, "According to tradition the first thing an Eastern Shore baby does is look west to Annapolis." His early public service included appointments by his former Cambridge High School principal, Governor Harrington, to membership on the Baltimore City Liquor License Board (1916-1919) and Secretary of State (Maryland) (1919-1923). Senator Radcliffe served as chairman of four Gubernatorial Inauguration committees—Governor Ritchie, 1923, 1926, 1930; and Governor Lane, 1947. In 1932 his friend Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who had been a Vice President of the Fidelity and Deposit Company before becoming Governor of New York State, named Senator Radcliffe as Maryland Chairman of his successful campaign for election as President of the United States. To help President Roosevelt in that difficult period Senator Radcliffe accepted an appointment in 1933 as Regional Director of the Public Works Administration. In 1934 Senator Radcliffe was elected to the first of two terms in the United States Senate. His Senate committee assignments included Finance and Maritime. As Chairman of a Maritime Subcommittee Senator Radcliffe was the chief architect and author of the Merchant Marine Act of 1936. This basic legislation has been described as "the keystone and foundation upon which our maritime laws and our merchant marine function." Just as had been his way in business, the Senator thrived in the United States Senate on work and problems. Never one to set people against each other, he had no sympathy for legislation and programs which advantaged individuals and groups at the expense of others.

The Democratic State Central Committee for Maryland chose Senator Radcliffe as its Chairman for the Presidential Campaign year 1936. He later served as Maryland Chairman of his close friend President Harry S. Truman's successful 1948 re-election campaign. In 1952 Senator Radcliffe served as Chairman of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge dedication.

The Senator's additional interests and contribution to Maryland were many. His ability to enlist people in getting jobs done was reflected in his being called on as just

the right man for many responsibilities. One of these responsibilities which meant much to the Senator was leadership for thirty years of the March of Dimes (Infantile Paralysis Programs) in Maryland. A quick project the Senator often recalled was the construction of a horse-drawn coach within forty-eight hours by Victor Frenkil and Baltimore Contractors for the Oriole's 1954 Homecoming Celebration. Other opportunities for service the Senator responded to were the presidencies of the English-Speaking Union, the University Club and the Eastern Shore Society.

Perhaps closest to Senator Radcliffe's heart were the parts he played in projects related to the Eastern Shore. These would include the Dorchester County Historical Society, Grace Foundation of Taylors Island, the restoration of historic Old Trinity Church and the Chapel of Ease.

One of the happiest occasions of the Senator's life took place on his ninety-fifth birthday. On that day he realized a childhood hope for the reconstruction of Spocott Windmill, which was originally built by his father, used for grinding grain into flour, and blew down in the blizzard of 1888. His vigorous address and the appreciation he expressed on the dedication day for the reconstructed mill will always be remembered by those present.

The Senator steadfastly looked to the future with hope. Each of us who know and study his life will find in his example strength for our own futures. At every stage of life he lived as though he were entering a new career. Those who are fifty-nine will see great possibilities for their futures as they realize they are the same age as the Senator when he began a twelve-year career in the United States Senate. At any age until ninety-six they can look forward with success, as the Senator did, to the realization of his childhood dream that "the old mill would come back." Each of us can, as was true of the Senator, continuously re-live the joy of Christmas and share with the Senator the lifelong happiness and inspiration he found in the Christmas spirit of goodness to all men.

It is an inspiration to look back on the life of Senator George L. Radcliffe. He lived a life in which a sense of the past was linked so beautifully with the realities of the present and an optimistic view for the future.

Samuel Hopkins
October, 1974