

## Harris Gaylord Warren (1906–1988)

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The recent death of Harris Gaylord Warren deeply saddened friends and colleagues of this distinguished historian of Paraguay. As the first researcher in the United States to delve seriously into the history of that often-ignored land, Harris Warren was an inspiration to a generation of scholars. In Paraguay, as well as in the United States, his contributions will long be remembered.

Dr. Warren proudly claimed a rural, midwestern background, one that stressed an earthy pragmatism with an open mind. His family reinforced that attitude by imparting to young Warren a high value on education. Born in Nebraska in 1906, he moved to northern Indiana two years later and received all of his early schooling there. Warren graduated from Purdue in 1926, and began his academic career in Mountain Home, Idaho, where his duties teaching Spanish and history already pointed him toward his future interests. In 1928, he gained an appointment as clerk of the U.S. Legation in Asunción, Paraguay. There, his life-long fascination with the history and culture of that land was kindled. For reasons of health, Warren had to resign that position within a year and returned to the United States.

He soon enrolled at Stanford University, where in 1930 he received a master's degree in Latin American history; his thesis concerned the Chaco conflict between Paraguay and Bolivia, then very much a hot issue. The young historian returned to the Midwest and taught at various institutions while earning his Ph.D. in history from Northwestern University in 1937. At Northwestern he worked under Isaac J. Cox. The next year Warren married Katherine Elizabeth Fleischman who was to be his future collaborator on several works. In 1940, he received an appointment as an assistant professor in Latin American history at Louisiana State University.

Warren spent the war years in North Africa and Italy in military intelligence, and emerged from these experiences with the rank of major

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in the U.S. Army. His chief duties in those years were researching and writing the history of the U.S. Army in the North African and Italian campaigns. After the war, Warren returned briefly to LSU, and in the late 1940s became professor of history at the University of Mississippi. In 1957, he became head of the history department of Miami University of Oxford, Ohio, a post he retained until his retirement in 1971.

The scholarly career of Harris Gaylord Warren was marked by a wide-ranging catholicity of interests. While he is generally remembered today as the father of Paraguayan studies in the United States, his early work focused on borderlands history. His first book was *The Sword Was Their Passport: A History of American Filibustering in the Mexican Revolution* (1943); it is still considered a standard reference. Warren also authored many articles on the same theme and collaborated on various textbook ventures in his early career.

In 1949, Warren produced the first serious English-language text on Paraguayan history, *Paraguay: An Informal History*. He saw this monograph as being solely introductory, but it has, in fact, stood well the test of time and for many of us has served as the point of departure in the present “boom” in Paraguayan studies. While wanting to continue work on Paraguay, Warren was unable to return immediately to the South American archives. He concentrated instead on administrative work and topics that might be accomplished closer to home. In this vein, he published *Herbert Hoover and the Great Depression* (1959), as well as several short borderland studies and articles on U.S.-Latin American relations.

By the 1960s, despite his heavy administrative burden at Miami of Ohio, Warren returned to his first love, the history of Paraguay. He steadily contributed articles on Paraguayan immigration, politics, railroads, banking, and personalities—mostly for the post-Triple Alliance War period. On retirement, he resolved “finally to get some work done” on the history of Paraguay. Fulfilling his own predictions, his most productive period came in the decade after he left university service. Articles continued to flow from his pen, but more important were two significant and well-received monographs. In 1978, *Paraguay and the Triple Alliance: The Postwar Decade, 1869–1878* appeared to general acclaim. With this one book Warren opened a hitherto closed chapter. Before, this period had been held sacrosanct by the two traditional parties of Paraguay—both founded in that era. Now Paraguayans felt free to examine that sensitive era. In 1985, that first study was followed by the solid *Rebirth of the Paraguayan Republic: The First Colorado Era, 1878–1904*.

Harris was researching the twentieth-century Liberal period of Paraguay when his health began to fail. To the end he remained optimistic, anxious to continue his work on Paraguay. His wife, Katherine, had died

in 1985. He is survived by a daughter, Gwendolyn Elliot, a son Gordon, and several grandchildren. He is also survived by the fond memories that his friends in Paraguay and the United States will always have of him. When Paraguayans heard of his death they stated truly, “Rohechagauta mbo’ehara karái Warren.”