

OBITUARY

Charles J. Kennedy 1912-2001

Charles J. Kennedy was the founder of the Economic and Business Historical Society. He also served as the Society's first President, Editor and Chair of the Board of Trustees.

After earning a B.A. from Hastings College and a M.A. from the University of Nebraska, Kennedy completed a Ph.D. at the University of Wisconsin. Following the completion of his doctorate in 1940, Kennedy was appointed chair of the Department of Social Science at Iowa Wesleyan College. Kennedy left Iowa Wesleyan to serve as a specialist officer in naval aviation. He joined the faculty of the University of Nebraska at Lincoln in 1946 where he retired as professor emeritus of economics after more than thirty-five years of service.

Shortly after joining the faculty of the University of Nebraska, Kennedy was selected as a Harvard post-doctoral fellow of Business History. By his own acknowledgement, this post-doctoral fellowship was a very positive intellectual and personal experience. In addition to influencing his scholarly interests and record, the experience resulted in the development of enduring friendships with other Harvard fellows (several of which subsequently participated in the Economic and Business Historical Society as presenters, members and in leadership roles).

Kennedy's teaching interests were primarily focused on economic and business history. His research and scholarly interests were concentrated on railroad history and management practices. Much of his work involved the history of the Boston and Maine Railroad and more than 40 of its predecessors. Kennedy's study of railroads included the historical application of benchmarking methodology to appraise the entrepreneurial and management performance of past industry leaders.

Charles Kennedy was not only an accomplished scholar, he also was a popular and effective teacher. At Nebraska, Kennedy was the recipient of a College of Business Administration Distinguished Teacher Award. He provided more than intellectual stimulation and knowledge development to his students. Charles and his wife, Dorothy, were interested in the personal well being of his students. A mentor and friend for scores of students, he made a special effort to maintain contact with former students. Kennedy was especially supportive of the professional and career development of his graduate

students. Because of Kennedy's intense and sustained interest in railroad history and management practices, he was affectionately referred to as Choo Choo by some of his graduate students.

During the early 1970s, Charles Kennedy organized several conference sessions designed to enhance an appreciation of the significant role of economic and business history in understanding societal challenges and opportunities. These interdisciplinary sessions included the use of history, economics, marketing, management, accounting and selected social science disciplines. The sessions were offered concurrently with the Rocky Mountain Social Science Association, which was subsequently renamed the Western Social Science Association. In the spring of 1974, Charles Kennedy and seven other academics met in Denver where Kennedy proposed the formal organization of the Western Economic and Business Historians. Kennedy was elected the organization's first president. In 1976, the organization was incorporated and its name changed to the Economic and Business Historical Society.

In recognition and honor of Kennedy's role as the founder of the Society, EBHS created "The Charles J. Kennedy Award" to be periodically conferred to a selected author or authors in recognition of excellent scholarly presentations made at annual conferences of EBHS.

Charles J. Kennedy will be missed and fondly remembered by his family, friends, faculty colleagues and scores of former students. The members and friends of the Economic and Business Historical Society owe Charles Kennedy a debt of gratitude for his vision and persistence in founding the Society, and for his thoughtful guidance of the Society during its formative years.

Philip R. Smith
Former EBHS President and
Chair Emeritus of the Board of Trustees