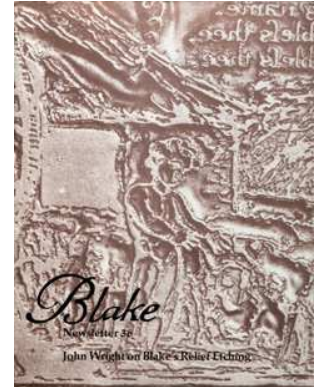


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R E M E M B R A N C E

Milton O. Percival, 1883-1975

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## MILTON O. PERCIVAL, 1883-1975

Milton O. Percival died 14 June 1975 at the age of 92. As a student at Ohio State Thomas Minnick got to know Percival:

I met Percival when he was 83. He had just lost his wife and was living alone in a huge home not far from the university. He really was lost for something to fill his time. He kept a cat, but he had no near relations in the state and wouldn't have cared for them in any case. He was always a short man, probably not much above 5 feet, but his clothes fit him as though he had shrunk some inches since they were made (back in the '40's). And so he looked like Yeats' aged man, "A tattered coat upon a stick, unless / Soul clap its hands and sing," as when one afternoon in response to what he regarded as modern critical heretics, he said that he would go *to the stake* declaiming that he who made the tiger also made the lamb.

After his death the Board of Trustees issued a Resolution in Memoriam:

The Board of Trustees of The Ohio State University expresses its sorrow at the death on June 14, 1975, of Milton O. Percival, Professor Emeritus in the Department of English.

Milton Ossian Percival was born in 1883. He took the B.A. degree in 1906, the M.A. in 1907, and the Ph.D. in 1914, all at Harvard University. After a year's study at Oxford University he accepted a position in 1915 at the Ohio State University as an assistant professor (having earlier held instructorships at both Oberlin College and the University of Minnesota). In 1925 he was advanced directly to the full professorship, a position he held until his retirement and advancement to the emeritus professorship in 1953. In recognition of his long and truly distinguished career, Milton O. Percival was in 1957 awarded the honorary degree Doctor of Humane Letters by the Ohio State University.

Dr. Percival was a distinguished man. His distinction was equally supported by his work as a scholar and his influence as a teacher.

As a scholar he was both a historian and a critic and interpreter of literature. His first major publication, an edition of the *Political Ballads Illustrating the Administration of Sir Robert Walpole* (Oxford, 1916), was primarily a contribution to the history of England in the eighteenth century. His other books, however, were works of interpretative criticism--and of major importance. *William Blake's Circle of Destiny* (Columbia University Press, 1938) was at once a brilliant interpretation of a difficult poet and artist and an enormously erudite study in the philosophy of mysticism. It combined knowledge of the history of thought with literary sensitivity in a book of the kind that only a handful of scholars achieve in any generation. In 1950 he published *A Reading of Moby-Dick* (Chicago University Press), in which he achieved a full, wise, and rich interpretation of what is probably America's greatest novel--and certainly one of its most difficult.

As a teacher in the English Department and as a member of the Department, Dr. Percival was one of the two major influences upon it in the period 1930-

1950. His acute mind, his drive toward excellence, his combination of idealism with practical scepticism, his steady and powerful backing of what was good, and his devotion to the best in public state education gave him an enormous influence. It was as profound within the University as his reputation as a scholar-editor-critic had been outside. As a teacher in the classroom his work for thirty-eight years was quite simply superb. Ph.D. candidates and undergraduates alike received from him fine technics, discrimination and taste, great learning--and, what is more rare, wisdom. . . .

## THE NYPL BULLETIN, SUMMER 1975

The Summer 1975 issue of the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* contains two essays on Blake--one on Blake and Erasmus Darwin, the other on the Chimney Sweeper--along with two on Coleridge (one on Coleridge and Cowper) and one on Defoe.

## COLBY LIBRARY QUARTERLY

John H. Sutherland, editor of *CLQ*, announced in September that, although the journal will continue its regional emphasis, with special interest in authors represented in the collections of the Colby Library, *CLQ* is now soliciting articles on art and literature, with Blake high on the list. Since *CLQ* is also changing its format from letterpress to offset, black-and-white illustrations can be used freely. Address the editor at Colby College, Waterville, Maine 04901.

## WORK IN PROGRESS

The *Newsletter* remains interested in news of work in progress on Blake and related subjects. Soon we plan to canvas our subscribers once again to find out what Blake projects they are doing. In the meantime we welcome a brief description of any work you would like the readership of the *Newsletter* to know about. Of course, we are also interested in hearing about courses being taught, lectures being given, conferences being planned, exhibitions being mounted--in short, any Blake news.

## NEWSLETTER BIBLIOGRAPHER

Beginning with the last issue, we added an official bibliographer to our masthead: Thomas Minnick, of Ohio State University, whose special task it will be to compile the final version of our annual checklist of Blake scholarship, which has been growing steadily every year since its inception. Finally it seemed to us that we needed a professional bibliographer who knows Blake scholarship to handle what had become a very large, complicated job. Minnick will also help supervise our other bibliographical projects (bibliographical in the loose sense)--our checklists of Blake collections, of reproductions, etc.