

### In Memoriam: James M. Powell

James Matthew Powell died on January 27, 2011 from injuries sustained in an automobile accident. He was born in Cincinnati, Ohio on June 9, 1930. He received his A.B. (1953) and M.A.(1955) from Xavier University. He began to study medieval history at the University of Cincinnati in 1955 but moved to Indiana University, Bloomington in 1957, where he received his Ph.D. in 1959 under the guidance of Arthur Hogue. His dissertation examined the economic policies of the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II and was published as a monograph “Medieval Monarchy and Trade: The Economic Policy of Frederick II in the Kingdom of Sicily,” *Studi Medievali* 1962. This study began his long interest in all aspects of medieval Italian history. Later he published an English translation of Frederick II’s *Liber Augustalis* (Syracuse University Press, 1971) and continued throughout his career to write about the “Stupor mundi’s” world with a variety of essays on diverse topics from Frederick’s knowledge of Greek to his environmental policies.

He began his teaching career at Kent State University in 1959, transferred to the University of Illinois in 1961, and became an assistant professor of medieval history at Syracuse University in 1965. He was promoted to associate professor in 1967 and full professor in 1972. He became an emeritus at Syracuse when he retired in 1997. While at Syracuse he taught in Florence Italy on Syracuse’s Semester Abroad Program during the academic year of 1970-1971, where he was also director of the Program. He was acting chair of the History Department in 1972.

He held a number of positions in national and international associations. Most recently, he was the president of the American Catholic Historical Association in 2007. Before then, he had been General Secretary for the Society for the Study of the Crusades and the Latin East,

1989-1995. In 1998 he became a Corresponding Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. He was the President of the Society for Italian Historical Studies from 1993-1995. He spent the academic year 1989-1990 as a member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and the Spring of 1970 as a research fellow at the Pontifical Institute for Mediaeval Studies in Toronto.

His interests and horizons expanded as his career progressed. He began to study the crusading movement and published a prize-winning book, *Anatomy of a Crusade, 1213-1221* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986) that was awarded the John Gilmary Shea Prize of the American Catholic Historical Association in 1987. His collected essays on the crusades were published in 2007 by Ashgate, *The Crusades, the Kingdom of Sicily, and the Mediterranean*.

Powell delved into the history of the Church during the 1980's and published a number of studies devoted to Pope Innocent III and Pope Honorius III and translated the most important medieval history of Pope Innocent III's pontificate, *The Deeds of Pope Innocent III* (The Catholic University of America Press, 2004). His study of Albertanus of Brescia's life and sermons, *Albertanus of Brescia: The Pursuit of Happiness in the Early Thirteenth Century* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992) gained many admirers, especially in Brescia, where he was invited to lecture frequently.

Powell was a bookman with a life long love of books and libraries. In 1977 he was a co-principal recipient of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to catalogue the library of the great nineteenth-century German historian, Leopold von Ranke, that had come to Syracuse University in 1888 after Ranke's death. With this grant the "Father of Scientific History's" library was properly catalogued under his direction, and descriptions of Ranke's manuscripts were finally analyzed and published by Edward Muir (then of Syracuse University, now Northwestern). Powell did much to publicize the rich resources of the Ranke library. With

grants from various foundations, he hosted an international conference devoted to Ranke at Syracuse University in 1986. He edited the proceedings of the conference with George G. Iggers and published the essays in *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline* (Syracuse University Press, 1989).

Powell rendered homage to Ranke, but he was also devoted to the educating of young medievalists. In the early 1970's he gathered a group of eminent medievalists together to produce a superb introduction to the field for graduate students that was published in 1976 and reissued in a revised and expanded edition in 1992, *Medieval Studies: An Introduction* (Syracuse University Press). More than 5000 copies have been printed. His passion for books extended to the Syracuse University Library. During his thirty years at the university, his constant tending to the collection made it very respectable for serious work in the history of the Middle Ages.

His colleagues included not only those at Syracuse University but also those in the various fields that he cultivated. He was a gregarious man who helped other scholars whenever he could. He was always ready for a chat, whether it was with a colleague, a student, or just someone on the street. I experienced his gregariousness for the first time when I was an undergraduate at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He was a visiting professor in 1963, and I took his course in Renaissance history. After the mid-term exam I went to see him about some comments he made on it (it was not a brilliant piece of work). He disarmed my truculence with a smile and assuaged my disappointment with a copy of his monograph. It sits on my shelf today in the section devoted to Italian history and now to him. Requiescat in pace.

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C.V.: <https://www.maxwell.syr.edu/faculty.aspx?id=6442451561>