

Charles Homer Haskins Biography

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Biography

American historian Charles Homer Haskins (1870-1937) was a leading authority on Norman culture and an important academic administrator.

Charles Homer Haskins was born in Meadville, Pennsylvania., on Dec. 21, 1870. He learned Latin at the age of 5 and Greek a little later and entered Allegheny College at 12. Transferring to Johns Hopkins, he graduated at 16 and began advanced work in history, receiving his doctorate in 1890.

Appointed an instructor at the University of Wisconsin, Haskins became a full professor in 2 years. In 1902 he moved to Harvard, where he held a number of chairs in history and in 1908 became dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. In 1911 he served on the American Historical Association committee which reported on *The Study of History in Secondary Schools*. The next year he married Clare Allen.

Meanwhile, Haskins became Harvard's first Henry Charles Lea professor in medieval history. His initial book in this area, *The Normans in European History* (1915), was a collection of lectures. Most of his books were based on his lectures or on papers. Haskins's next book, often considered his best, *Norman Institutions* (1918), followed this pattern.

Following World War I, President Woodrow Wilson appointed Haskins chief of the Division of Western Europe on the American Commission to Negotiate Peace. Haskins and Robert H. Lord, the chief of the Division of Eastern Europe, gave their impressions of this task in a series of lectures that became *Some Problems of the Peace Conference* (1920). This volume remains valuable for historians of the Versailles Treaty.

During the 1920s Haskins lectured, wrote, and worked in scholarly organizations. He helped form the American Council of Learned Societies and served as chairman from 1920 to 1926. He was president of the American Historical Association in 1922 and of the Medieval Academy, which he helped found, in 1926-1927.

The breadth of Haskins's interest in medieval history is reflected in the titles of his books: *The Rise of Universities* (1923), *Studies in the History of Medieval Science* (1924), *The Renaissance of the 12th Century* (1927), and *Studies in Medieval Culture* (1929). His work, a pioneer effort, has become dated in parts but still remains impressive. He retired in poor health from Harvard in 1931 and died in Cambridge, Mass., on May 14, 1937.