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## John Batterson Stetson, Jr., 1884-1952

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JOHN BATTERSON STETSON, JR., 1884-1952

Those who write of Florida's history, especially of the colonial era, should ever be grateful to John B. Stetson, Jr.

Following his father, from whom John B. Stetson University took its name, he became President of the Board of Trustees of that University and served for more than thirty years. An interest in historical scholarship led naturally to an interest in Florida's history. About 1918 he determined to further the writing of our State's history by collecting the needed materials, encouraging the writing of monographs and series of volumes, and supporting their publication. Visiting every section of the State, he secured the cooperation of numerous interested Floridians and winter residents, together with public libraries in and out of Florida, each of whom agreed to subscribe to the projected publications at the cost of printing alone. He then organized the Florida State Historical Society, and these subscribers became the body of its membership.

This was during a period when the Florida Historical Society was not active and he proposed a merger of the two societies, which was declined. In 1940 a merger was again considered but not consummated. So there was never any union of the two. Nevertheless, from the beginning there was the closest cooperation between them, and they worked together toward a common goal - the writing of Florida's history. Many members and several officials were common to the two, and Mr. Stetson was vice president and honorary vice president of the Florida Historical Society from 1941 until his death on November 14 last.

Dr. James A. Robertson soon joined with Mr. Stetson as editor of the projected series on Florida history. In all, eleven titles (16 volumes) were published, the first in 1922; the last, in 1933, being a translation by Dr. Robertson of the "True

Relation of . . . a Gentleman of Elvas." Some of the foremost historical scholars in their respective fields were induced to write for this series, and the publications have taken a place in the forefront of Florida historical works.

In appreciation and gratitude to Mr. Stetson the editor of our *Quarterly* wrote (the issue of January 1926):

"To the interest, the unceasing efforts, and the generosity of Mr. John B. Stetson Jr., President of the Board of Trustees of John B. Stetson University, and now United States Minister to Poland, the writer of Florida history and its readers will be under extraordinary obligation. . . . We Floridians are deeply grateful to Mr. Stetson . . . and Dr. Robertson for their interest, for what they have accomplished, and for what they plan to do. Their work should be an incentive, as it is an example, to the Florida Historical Society and to those of our members who are directing its efforts. Through the continuous cooperation with them that is assured, the knowledge of and the writing of Florida's history, which has been so limited in the past, must make steady and rapid progress."

All of this was and continued to be true, for the revival of the Florida Historical Society in 1924 and the reestablishment of the *Florida Historical Quarterly* was in good part due to the example of John Batterson Stetson Jr. (JCY)