

WILLIAM PATTERSON CUMMING

William Patterson Cumming has combined loyal and faithful service as a faculty member at a distinguished sister institution with scholarly pre-eminence in a field quite outside that of his official departmental affiliation. In his unfolding of the early history of the southeastern part of this country through definitive studies of the maps made of it, he has brought distinction upon himself and Davidson College.

Born in Japan of missionary parents, educated as an undergraduate at Davidson and as a graduate student at Princeton, he returned to his alma mater in 1927, rising through the ranks to become Virginia Lasater Irving Professor of English Literature there in 1961, and serving also as departmental chairman from that year until his retirement from teaching in 1968. The scholarly responsibilities and publications associated with his official position were soon complemented by the fruits of his second area of study, that of the early maps of North America and especially of this region. In his many works on the subject, from The Southeast in Early Maps (1958), published by our University Press, through the portfolio publication, North Carolina in Maps (1966), to the elegant Nebenzahl lectures published as British Maps of Colonial America (1974) and beyond, his concern for detail and clarity--typical cartographic excellences--has made possible an enriched view of the early European settlements of this area. He has been a Guggenheim Fellow, a Fulbright lecturer, and past President of both the Historical Society of North Carolina and the South Atlantic Modern Language Association.

It is understandable that at least two British scholars who have recently visited Chapel Hill are on record as having thought that Dr. Cumming and North Carolina were synonymous. This University, while aware of the difference, takes pleasure in locating this rarely accomplished scholar among its honorary degree recipients.