

## IN MEMORIAM: *STANLEY STEIN, 1920–2019*

Few, if any, of Stanley Stein's students were not profoundly affected by the experience of working for and with him. His incisive questioning, profound intellect, and broad learning typically made for memorable—and often unpredictable—discussions. Stein was, in the best sense, a teacher and scholar of rare distinction, not so much by conventional method, as by sheer force of personality. He was preceded in death by his wife and collaborator, Barbara Hadley Stein, of whom any number of similar observations could be made. Together, even if it is Stanley who is the subject of this memorial, they were outstanding members of the postwar generation of Latin American historians in the United States. Their legacy is exceptional.

Stanley Julian Stein was born in New York City on June 8, 1920. He attended and was graduated from two institutions that each produced a raft of distinguished alumni, DeWitt Clinton High School and the City College of New York. From the latter, he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Comparative Literature in 1941. He began graduate study soon after, again in comparative literature, traveling to Brazil in 1942 for research. There he met Barbara Ballou Hadley, who was conducting research on the abolition of Brazilian slavery. They returned to the United States and married in 1943. Stein then joined the US military for the duration of World War II and at the conclusion of the war began graduate study in history with Clarence Haring at Harvard. Haring's early work on trade and navigation in the Spanish Indies was to exert a significant influence on Stein's subsequent intellectual career.

Returning to Brazil in 1948, the Steins decamped to Vassouras in the state of Rio de Janeiro. Seeing Vassouras as broadly representative of other coffee-growing districts, Stein had selected it to conduct intensive archival research on the rise and decline of the coffee plantations. The results of that research work began to appear in the early 1950s in the *Hispanic American Historical Review*, at roughly the same time that he joined the faculty of Princeton University, in 1953. There, offers of work at other institutions notwithstanding, he was to spend his entire career.

## THE PRINCETON YEARS

*Vassouras: A Brazilian Coffee County, 1850–1900* (Harvard University Press) appeared in 1957. If anything, it is a book whose reputation has grown over the years. *Vassouras* was well received, but by today's standards, with restraint. Heavily influenced by the perspectives of social anthropology, but deeply grounded in primary sources, *Vassouras* was, in a way, a book ahead of its time, particularly when one thinks of the town studies that revolutionized early American history in the 1960s and 1970s. Exceptionally, also in 1957, Stein's *The Brazilian Cotton Manufacture: Textile Enterprise in an Underdeveloped Area 1850–1950* (Harvard University Press) was published under the auspices of Harvard's Research Center in Entrepreneurial History.

If anything, economic historians working on industrialization in the periphery consider this book even more important than *Vassouras*, for it clearly established the nineteenth-century origins of the Brazilian textile industry at a time when import-substitution industrialization dominated thinking in development economics in Latin America. Nevertheless, *Vassouras* has endured as a classic of wider appeal and considerable methodological novelty. More than 60 years later, it remains available in a reprint edition.

Stanley having established himself as a leading scholar of Brazilian history, it remains a bit puzzling that he (and Barbara, whose collaboration was to become ever more evident) turned away from Brazil to the study of the Spanish Empire. One inevitably wonders about the extent to which events in Brazil factored into the decision. Stanley Stein said only that “interesting things were happening” in Mexico at the time, but the die was cast. He and Barbara would spend the balance of their careers working on the interrelated histories of Spain and New Spain under the Hapsburgs and the Bourbons.

The archival research undertaken in support of that work was nothing, if not Herculean. The reputation of both Stanley and Barbara for thoroughness, application, attention to relevant detail, and sheer persistence followed them everywhere. They were charming, but, one gathers, also a bit intimidating: stories about them by awestricken colleagues persisted for years after they had finished their sojourn. One phrase in particular remains in memory, in the words of Alejandra Moreno Toscano, then director of the Archivo General de la Nación, as she described the Steins in Mexico: “Es gente que estimamos mucho.”

The “imperial” project consumed half a century and resulted in four dense volumes, all published by Johns Hopkins University Press: *Silver, Trade and*

*War* (2000); *Apogee of Empire* (2003); *Edge of Crisis* (2009); and *Crisis in an Atlantic Empire* (2014). Even in his last years, Stanley continued to actively consider the growing interconnection between New Spain, Cuba, and Spain during the 1810s, but he had not time enough to complete it. The first two volumes of the series described the emergence of Spain as a “rentier state” that literally survived by virtue of the flow of silver from Peru and New Spain. In the third volume, he showed the erosion of the established foundations of the empire under the assault of foreign interlopers seeking a share of the rents. In the fourth volume, the imperial system literally blew up with the botched abdication of Charles IV and Godoy (1808). In sum, the Bourbons did not reconquer America, but clumsily lost it. The oeuvre been compared to the work of the Chaunus or of Laurence Henry Gipson. What more need be said?

In the interim, Stanley Stein edited a volume of great usefulness to economic historians of the pre-Internet era, *Latin America: A Guide to Economic History* (1977). Yet the work for which both Stanley and Barbara are universally known almost did not happen. As Stanley recalled, Samuel Baily of Rutgers University had asked him to give a series of “interpretive” rather than “scholarly” lectures on the principal factors in the long-term evolution of Latin American society and economy. By Stein’s telling, no purely academic press displayed any interest. It was not until Sheldon Meyer of the US branch of Oxford University Press saw the draft chapters that a perceptive editor realized their timeliness and sheer importance. The revised materials appeared in 1970 as the book *The Colonial Heritage of Latin America*.

To call *Colonial Heritage* one of the most influential books on Latin America ever published in English (and translated into other languages, including French and Spanish) is an understatement. *Colonial Heritage* was a book of its time, for its time, and, most importantly, about its time, a perspective for which the Steins made no subsequent apology. Although the influence of *Colonial Heritage* peaked in the mid 1970s, it was still cited as late as 2000. Even contemporary economic historians have contended with the idea that a “colonial heritage”—the economic, social, and political relations of production that crystalized during the 300 years of the Iberian empires largely determined the fates of their successor states, into the twentieth century. While it was a call for engaged scholarship, clearly, the emphasis of *Colonial Heritage* was nevertheless on scholarship in its own right, something the Steins’ critics often ignored, or plainly failed to undertake themselves. The book also, for better or worse, put “dependency” at the center of the working vocabulary of Latin American historians.

The list of professional honors that went to Stanley Stein in his long career is lengthy. He was twice a Guggenheim Fellow and a Fellow of the National Endowment for the Humanities. He was a recipient of both the Bolton Prize and the Robertson Prize from the Conference on Latin American History. Stein was principally responsible for the establishment of Princeton's Program in Latin American Studies in 1967, along with Barbara Stein, Princeton's first Latin American bibliographer. At the time of his death, he was Walter Samuel Carpenter III Professor of Spanish Civilization and Culture, Emeritus.

Until almost the time of his death, Stanley maintained an active scholarly presence on campus and an office to which he almost daily commuted. Stein was a remarkable man, and he will be sorely missed.

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