

NEWS NOTES

ALFRED COWLES, 3RD, 1891-1984

ALFRED COWLES, 3RD, died on December 28, 1984, at the age of 93. Cowles was instrumental in the founding of the journal *Econometrica*. In January, 1932, the Council of the Econometric Society accepted Cowles' offer to underwrite the founding of a journal. Cowles acted as circulation manager, Secretary, and Treasurer of the Society for many years. He ceded the position of Secretary at the end of 1948 but continued to serve as Treasurer until 1954.

An account of Cowles' role in the founding of the Society, written by Carl Christ in 1952, was reprinted in the January, 1983 issue of *Econometrica*, pp. 3-6. In brief, the story begins with Cowles' failure, and that of other forecasters, to predict the 1929 stock market debacle. Disenchanted with informal methods of forecasting, he terminated his own forecasting service in 1931, and stated in his investment letter that he wanted to try to learn more before attempting any further forecasts. Christ records how Cowles was brought into contact with the fledgling Econometric Society, founded in 1930, and how he came to offer to finance a journal for the Society in order to secure "first-class talent to work on the problems in which he had become interested."

At the same time Cowles founded the Cowles Commission, initially located in Colorado Springs and then at the University of Chicago between 1939 and 1954. In 1954, when Cowles discontinued his role as Treasurer of the Society, the Cowles Commission moved to Yale University, where it has been a functional part of the Yale Department of Economics since that date. From its beginning, the Cowles Commission (now called the Cowles Foundation) has been concerned with the formulation and application of quantitative techniques to economic analysis and forecasting, and the work of the Commission/Foundation has had a profound effect on the development of econometrics.

Cowles was born September 15, 1891, in Chicago, and died December 28, 1984. His family has a long association with Yale University, starting with his father and uncle who were Yale graduates. The business office of the Society remained at Yale from 1955 to 1976, when it was moved to its present home in the Economics Department of Northwestern University.

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