

# Lee M. Hollander

## A Biographical Sketch

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Born on November 8, 1880, in Baltimore, Maryland, the son of Samuel Hollander and Amelia Herstein, both of Baltimore, Lee Milton Hollander belonged to a family that had preserved strong links with its former homeland, Germany, from where his grandfather had emigrated to the States in 1848. Young Hollander spent the happy years of his prime in Baltimore, until the death of his father, who was running a furniture factory as a family business. Sorrowfully deprived of her husband, his mother decided to take her two sons, Lee and his older brother, back to Germany to live with relative in Frankfurt-am-Main. There he went to primary and secondary school from 1886 to 1897, when he left the Obersekunda of the Realgymnasium at the age of seventeen to return to the States.

Back in Baltimore, he attended the College at Johns Hopkins University, where he obtained his B.A. in 1901, with a major in Germanic Philology and a minor in English and Comparative Philology. He then went on to the Ph.D., working under Henry Wood on a dissertation on prefixal *s-* in Germanic, which was published at Hermann Collitz' personal encouragement. After graduation, he financed a trip to Norway and also visited Sweden and Denmark, learning the Scandinavian languages and reading their literature during these *Wanderjahre*. He developed a great admiration for Peter Daas, the author of *Nordlands Trompet*, and he still feels extremely proud that his article in the *Afterposten* in 1906 was instrumental in the decision to restore the poet's home, beyond the Arctic circle. While in Scandinavia, he also visited many classes in the universities, listening to Carl Marstrander, Magnus Olsen, Otto Jespersen, Moltke Moe, and attending Sophus Bugge's seminar on the Edda in Oslo. But he mainly availed himself of the opportunity to read and study at the King's Library in Stockholm, as well as in the rich libraries of the University of Oslo and of Copenhagen, where he devoted special time and attention to the Arnamagnaeon Collection.

After two years abroad, he returned to the States in 1907 and became an instructor in German at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. While teaching the beginners' course in German, as well as some Norwegian, he published the first of an impressive series of translations in *Poet Lore*. After three years, he transferred to The University of Wisconsin, where he also taught German and Norwegian at the beginner's level and where he began more substantial research which led to various articles, mainly on Scandinavian literature, in *Modern Language Notes*, *Scandinavian Studies*, *Arkiv fr Nordisk Filologi*, and other publications.

The First World War, with the violent and irrational anti-German reaction it entailed, deprived him of his job, like all the other instructors in German, and for quite a while he devoted the best of his time to compiling large files of clippings about the war from the chief newspapers in England, Germany, and the United States. He thoroughly hated the job, but was, nevertheless, very grateful to Librarian Smith of the University of Wisconsin, for having created it for him so that he would not simply be dismissed like most of his colleagues, who were often considered to have a double allegiance because of their bilingualism.

In 1920, events finally took a turn for the better, and he came to The University of Texas as an assistant professor. By that time, the study of foreign languages began to boom again, and the chairman of the Department, Dr. Boysen, who had to switch to teaching French while German was in bad odor, now had more students than he could handle. Therefore, the addition of Lee Hollander to the staff was heartily welcomed, and this was the beginning of an uninterrupted career of forty-seven years at The University of Texas for the brilliant young scholar.

Those were fruitful and happy years. The University gradually grew, and, being a very successful instructor, Lee Hollander was soon promoted to associate professor and professor, before taking over the chairmanship of the Department of Germanic Languages in 1929.

Under his leadership, the Department became nationally known as one of the most active centers of Germanic studies and several prominent scholars joined the staff. But apart from his unselfish devotion to the task of building up the quality and reputation of his Department, Lee Hollander continued to work strenuously in his chosen field of research: excellent scholarly studies show how much time and effort went into the preparation of the major works -- *The Poetic Edda* (1928), *Old Norse Poems* (1936), *The Skalds* (1945) -- in which he tried to re-create the tone of the original in his very personal style and diction.

Reaching the age limit in 1946, he had to relinquish the chairmanship of the Department, but while less strong and devoted souls would have indulged in the fallacious peace of a serene retirement, Lee Hollander became more active than ever, continuing enthusiastically both his teaching and his research until the present day [1969]. He went on guiding students on the thorny paths of Germanic studies, publishing more valuable articles on problems of Old Norse and excellent translations of sagas. Meanwhile, having become the Nestor of Scandinavian Studies, he was made Knight of the Order of the Icelandic Falcon, Member of the *Norsk Videnskaps Akademi*, President of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies, and Honorary Life Member of the Viking Society for Northern Research. But perhaps no man in the world is less concerned about such honors than Lee Hollander: He simply remains faithful to his grande passion -- Old Norse literature and mythology -- and his unwavering devotion to it leaves no room for smaller ambitions. Perhaps the sponsoring function he enjoys most is directing the Department of Germanic Languages Journal Club. The best scholars in the country and from abroad come to speak informally about their work and research, and Lee Hollander masterfully leads the open discussion.

From *Old Norse Literature and Mythology: A Symposium*, ed. Edgar C. Polomé (Austin: U of Texas Press, 1969): 291-293

For Hollander's complete publication list, see pp. 294-327

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