

Novelist Kenneth Roberts Dies at Seacoast Farm

KENNEBUNKPORT, Maine (AP)—Author Kenneth Roberts, whose best selling novels brought the drama of the nation's history to millions of readers, died yesterday in this seacoast village of his birth. He was 71.

Roberts, who had been in bed for a week, fell victim to coronary thrombosis. He recently had completed proof reading "Water Unlimited," a book for October publication. Roberts first hit the best seller list in 1937 with his "Northwest Passage," a story of French and Indian war days.

Versatile Kenneth Roberts began his career as an historical novelist on the Cornell campus in the early 1900s.

Roberts, a 1908 Cornell graduate, was editor-in-chief of the Cornell Widow for two years.

Moving from the campus scene, he worked as a reporter and columnist for the now dead Boston Post from 1909-1917, then for a short periods for the old Life, Puck and the Saturday Evening Post.

From the time he began his magazine work until 1928 when he started his first novel "Arundel" he became known more and more as one of the better magazine correspondents.

He credited his success to his painstaking and feverish research. He found historical writing a tedious job, but went into the finest detail on every work.

In his work on "Northwest Passage," he labored for three years to gather material "for the reader to understand in two days." Many vital parts of the novel were based on documents historians had concluded did not exist, but which Roberts uncovered in London archives.

He used to set a daily writing



KENNETH ROBERTS

budget of 1,200 to 2,000 handwritten words, which he rewrote and revised himself several times.

He was known to comment on writing as "the only form of expression that becomes increasingly painful and difficult the more one knows about it."

Roberts retreated to his home in Kennebunk, once his success was assured. He continued his arduous writing, and followed his first success with "The Lively Lady," "Rabble in Arms," and "Captain Caution."

In 1947 his novel "Lydia Bailey"

sold more than a million copies, and was one of the most successful novels in publishing history.

"Boon Island" was his most last work published during his life.

The first actual writing of his historical series began at his winter home near Porto Santo Stefano, Italy, and later he did most of the actual research and writing in the book-crammed studio of his Maine home.

In May of this year, he was awarded a special citation from the Pulitzer Prize Committee for his "historical novels which have long contributed to the creation of greater interest in our early American History."

While at Cornell, he was a member of Phi Beta Kappa and Beta Kappa Phi, as well as Chi Phi fraternity.

Prior to "Northwest Passage" he had produced a series of romantic novels dealing with the Revolution and the War of 1812. These started with "Arundel" and were followed by "The Lively Lady," "Rabble in Arms" and "Captain Caution."

Death came to the novelist at his seaside farm which he called Rocky Pastures. Here in a book-crammed studio, Roberts did much of the painstaking research and writing for his novels, the latest of which was "Boon Island." Here too he dabbled in what he called "off-beat agriculture," specializing in vegetables.

Roberts was born Dec. 8, 1885. He married Anna S. Mosser, who survives him.

Funeral services will be held Tuesday at Bigelow Chapel at Mt. Auburn Cemetery, Cambridge, Mass. Burial will be in the Arlington National Cemetery, Washington.