Nettie Lee Benson, professor emeritus of history, died on June 23, 1993. She was 88.

Professor Benson was born on January 15, 1905, in Arcadia, Texas. She studied at The University of Texas at Austin, where she earned three degrees, a bachelor's in 1929, a master's in 1935, and a PhD in 1949.

Professor Benson taught in public schools before she began her long association with the University, where she was a leading authority on Mexican and Latin American history. In 1942 she developed a library acquisitions program that increased the Latin American Collection from 30,000 volumes to 305,000 volumes in 1975, the year she retired as director of the collection. By 1993 the collection had grown to more than 600,000 volumes, aided by the Nettie Lee Benson library fund, which she endowed upon her retirement. Her acquisitions program made the collection world renowned as one of the most comprehensive in Latin American materials.

In addition to teaching Mexican and Latin American history, Dr. Benson initiated the Latin American library studies program in the Graduate School of Library Science in 1964. The project was supported by the Ford Foundation.

Professor Benson's contributions to her field and to the University were recognized on numerous occasions. In 1974 she was the first U.S. born recipient of the Premio America from the Casa de Cultura Americana. In 1975 The UT System Board of Regents renamed the Latin American Collection in her honor. In 1979 she was awarded the Order of the Aztec Eagle, the highest official honor given by the Mexican government to foreign nationals. The College of Liberal Arts recognized her achievements with the Pro Bene Meritus Award in 1990.

John R. Durbin, Secretary
The General Faculty

Biographical sketch prepared by Teresa Palomo Acosta and posted on the Faculty Council web site on November 17, 2000. Additional biographical sources can be found in the Barker Texas History Center, the UT Office of Public Affairs, and the New Handbook of Texas, Texas State Historical Association, 1996.