

- **Hugh Borton Biography:**

Spanning Japan's Modern Century: The Memoirs of Hugh Borton

Lexington Books, 2002 - [Biography & Autobiography](#) - 273 pages

In 1942, Hugh Borton, then a 39-year-old assistant professor of Japanese history, was called to serve in the State Department. Here he rose rapidly to become one of the principal architects of United States policy toward post-war Japan. Drawn from Borton's personal papers this work provides a fresh and intimate picture of the man who played a pivotal role in defining the meaning of unconditional surrender for Japan, retaining the Emperor, and designing Japan's post-war constitution. It sheds fascinating new light on the development of the United States' post-war Japanese policy and the often-fractious relationships between the various agencies tasked with its creation and implementation. The author of *Japan's Modern Century*, director of Columbia University's East Asian Institute, and later president of the Association for Asian Studies, Hugh Borton dedicated his life to strengthening the academic, cultural, and humanitarian ties between Japan and the United States.

- **Obituary: Hugh Borton, 92, Expert on Japan and Ex-College President, Dies**

By [Eric Pace](#) Aug. 9, 1995 – The New York Times

Hugh Borton, an authority on Japan who became president of Haverford College after heading Columbia University's East Asian Institute, died on Sunday at his home in Conway, Mass. He was 92.

Dr. Borton was in the State Department from 1942 to 1948 and was chief of its Japanese affairs division and special assistant to the director of Far Eastern Affairs in charge of preparations for the peace treaty with Japan.

He was a senior research associate at Columbia's East Asian Institute from 1967 until 1991, after heading Haverford -- in Haverford, Pa. -- from 1957 to 1967, when he retired from that post.

His writings during those last years at Columbia included a second, 1970 edition of his 1955 history of Japan's transformation into a modern, industrialized world power, "Japan's Modern Century."

Also in 1970, Dr. Borton addressed a gathering of 300 Asia scholars in Washington and contended that the United States intervention in Vietnam resembled Japan's disastrous attempt to achieve a political solution by military means on the Asian mainland before World War II.

He began his immersion in Japanese history at a seminar in Tokyo in the winter of 1928-29. Years later he wrote, "Having decided to enter a new field of study and set for myself a high standard of intellectual and personal integrity, I was fortunate to have done so when my special knowledge was useful both for the academic world and for our Government in determining its postwar policies toward Japan."

After studying at the Imperial University in Tokyo from 1931 to 1937, he received a doctorate in Japanese history from the University of Leiden in the Netherlands in 1937. He was on the Columbia faculty from 1937 to 1957, with time out for his State Department duty.

In the 1950's, he edited a book of essays, "Japan" (1951), which was praised in The New York Times Book Review as "outstanding" and containing "gems of writing." He was a co-author of "The Far East, 1942-46" (1955) and "Japan Between East and West" (1957). In addition, he rose to be a full professor of Japanese and, from 1954 to 1957, the East Asian Institute's director.

As Haverford's president, he oversaw the raising of tuition, in 1958, to \$1,000 from \$850. Also, in a 1958 speech to a conference in New York on secondary schools, he warned against overspecialization in science and mathematics there.

In addition, he spoke out against an antisubversion provision of the National Defense Education Act of 1958. The provision required students seeking loans to disclaim, by affidavit, belief in or support of groups advocating the overthrow of the Government by force. And in 1967 he warned Haverford students that they faced suspension if found illegally using drugs.

Dr. Borton was born in Moorestown, N.J., graduated from Haverford in 1926 and received an M.A. in history from Columbia in 1932. He was awarded several honorary degrees and was decorated by the postwar Japanese Government.

He is survived by his wife of 68 years, Elizabeth Wilbur Borton; a son, Anthony, and a daughter, Anne Carter-Borton, both of Conway; a brother, John Carter Borton and a sister, Faith Weston, both of Kennett Square, Pa.; two grandchildren and a great-grandson.

From Wikipedia:

Hugh Borton (May 14, 1903 – August 6, 1995) was an American historian who specialized in the [history of Japan](#), later serving as president of [Haverford College](#).

Borton was born on May 14, 1903, to a devout [Quaker](#) household in [Moorestown Township, New Jersey](#).^[1] His parents sent him to Quaker schools and after graduating from [Haverford College](#) in 1927, he and his wife Elizabeth Wilbur, proceeded to find a way of making a living that was in line with their Quaker beliefs. They looked to the [American Friends Service Committee](#), which set up teaching posts for them at a small school in the foothills of the [Tennessee](#)'s [Great Smoky Mountains](#). In 1928 Borton and his wife were asked to travel to [Tokyo, Japan](#), to help the Committee's work there.

Borton's three years living among the [Japanese](#) affected his outlook to the extent that he thereafter devoted himself to studying Japan. Initially, Borton sought guidance from Sir [George Sansom](#), a British scholar who was then serving in the British Consulate. In 1931, Borton returned to America to further his education. He completed a master's degree in history at [Columbia University](#) and studied briefly at [Harvard University](#). He then traveled across the [Atlantic](#) to pursue further study under the supervision of Professors [J. J. L. Duyvendak](#) and [Johannes Rahder](#) at [Leiden University](#) in the [Netherlands](#). He was awarded his PhD by Leiden after several years of work at [Tokyo Imperial University](#). He returned to the United States to take a position on the faculty at Columbia, lecturing on modern [Japanese history](#) and language. He also played a key role in structuring the first undergraduate program in [Japanese studies](#) in the newly expanded Department of Chinese and Japanese. His research publications prior to the [Second World War](#) included *Peasant Uprisings in Japan of the Tokugawa Period* and *Japan Since 1931: Its Political and Social Development*.

Borton's academic career was interrupted by America's entry into the Second World War following the [Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor](#), diverting him into public service. Borton cited his Quaker principles in conscientiously objecting to serving in the armed forces, but he was interested in doing what he could to prepare for the peace after the war. In June 1942 he sought leave from Columbia to spend the summer serving on the faculty of the School of Military Government at the [University of Virginia](#) at [Charlottesville](#). In the fall he moved to the [US State Department](#). It marked the beginning of six years during which he was in the midst of a corps of officials who focused not on the military advancement of the war, but in preparing peacetime measures not focused on punishing Japan, but on reforming it so that a similar war would be less likely to occur. Borton drafted many of the State Department proposals and was a proponent of many of its positions, including those that resulted in key decisions such as the decision not to prosecute Emperor [Hirohito](#) as a war criminal and the decision to not replace the [Japanese government](#) but to disband the [Japanese military](#) and replace the wartime leadership. His group also sought to implement fundamental reform of the Japanese constitution.

In 1948 Borton returned to academic life at Columbia, where he was a prominent organizer of the East Asian Institute as the University's centre of modern and contemporary East Asian studies. He replaced the inaugural director, Sir George Sansom, and later helped to establish the [Association for Asian Studies](#), serving as its first treasurer and later as its president. Among his works were *Japan Under Allied Occupation, 1945–1947* and *Japan's Modern Century*, which went on to become one of the most widely used history texts of his period.

In 1957, Borton resigned his post at Columbia to accept an appointment to [Haverford College](#) as its president, before retiring in 1967. In 1972 he retired to his farm in the Berkshire Hills of [Massachusetts](#) to enjoy the farm life which he loved and to practice his Quaker faith. Borton died on August 6, 1995, at the age of 92 at his home in [Conway, Massachusetts](#).^[1]