

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION
WALTER G. BEACH
(1868-1948)

On October 6, 1948, Walter Greenwood Beach, Professor of Social Sciences, Emeritus, died in Pasadena, California. His death brought to a close a notable and exceptionally long career as scholar, teacher, and administrator, much of it in association with Stanford University. Professor Beach first came to the University in 1897, when he enrolled as a graduate student for special work. He became a member of the faculty in 1920 and remained here until his retirement in 1933. During this period, his four children attended Stanford and were awarded degrees.

Walter Greenwood Beach was born in Granville, Ohio, on May 20, 1868, the son of David Edwards and Alice (Allen) Beach. Scholarship and teaching were traditional in his family, and in later years he himself occasionally remarked upon the fact that sociology was distantly related to theology in much the same way that he was related to that great theologian, Jonathan Edwards. Beach attended Marietta College and there received his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1888. In the process he discovered the existence of the larger and more secular world that lay beyond the intellectual horizon of the religious colleges of that day; and, to explore this world, he went to Harvard for further study. At Harvard, he was awarded another Bachelor of Arts degree in 1891 and the Master of Arts degree in 1892. The following year he accepted an appointment as Professor of Philosophy and History at Marietta College for Women. Four years later he interrupted his teaching career to resume, this time at Stanford, his graduate studies. In 1897 he joined the faculty of the State College of Washington as Assistant Professor of Economic Science and History, and there he became first, Professor, and then Head of his department, a position that he retained until 1910, when he accepted an appointment as Professor of Social Sciences at the University of Washington in Seattle. He remained at this institution until 1917, when he rejoined the faculty of the State College, in Pullman, as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Meanwhile, Professor Beach had grown increasingly positivistic in his philosophical outlook and his scientific interests had come to center around the special field of sociology. As Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Washington State College, he was able to further the development of the social sciences as a whole, but he was not able to pursue his major interest. It was at this time that Stanford offered him a Professorship of Social Sciences with the opportunity to teach sociology. His acceptance of this position marks the beginning of the most fruitful—and, his friends here hope, the happiest—period of his life: a period during which he developed and began to record his understanding of matters sociological, and during which he founded the Division of Sociology, and acquired a national reputation as a sociologist. Out of the beginning course that he taught here for many years came his Introduction to Sociology and Social Problems which was widely acclaimed and used as a textbook in American colleges and universities. As a teacher he was, perhaps, best known for his seminar on the Development of Social Theory, and to it came students from all the social sciences. Sociological theory was undoubtedly his major interest, but he undertook a number of researches in the modern manner. He was an active participant in the Pacific Coast Survey of Race Relations during 1924-1925 and he later directed a study which resulted in the publication of a book entitled Oriental Crime in California.

On December 28, 1892, he had married Flora Victoria Warner of Marietta, Ohio, and until the time of her death in 1938 Mrs. Beach participated with her husband in the work of civic organizations and community activities both in Palo Alto and on the Stanford campus. Both were active in the work of the Congregational Church in Palo Alto and both shared a special interest in the problems of minority group relationships.

No description of Professor Beach's career at Stanford would be complete without reference to his characteristics as a man in relationships with others. Outstanding were his humility balanced against unswerving loyalty to principles, his courage which enabled him to pursue his work and meet all his obligations in spite of obstacles of health which would have beaten any less strong personality, and, finally, his sincere and sympathetic understanding of others, his colleagues, his students and his friends. His kindly nature and sympathetic understanding combined with his quiet humor were long remembered by his students, many of whom kept in contact with him in his years after retirement from active work at Stanford. His skill as a teacher and as an administrator rested on a rare blend of firmly held ideals and a love for, and interest in, people whom he believed could all be won to austere standards by tactful and persistent training.

The year before his retirement in 1933, Professor Beach published the work that, at the time, seemed to his associates to represent the full flowering of his intellect—Social Aims in a Changing World. But retirement did not bring an end to his labors, for his faith in the social value of the scientific study of society was both great and demanding of him. In the fifteen years of his retirement from teaching he wrote a number of books, of which The Growth of Social Thought, a work that developed out of his seminars in this field, is representative. It was characteristic of him that through his last long illness he strove to bring to completion a group of essays on the social conditions essential to the maintenance of American democracy.

The Academic Council of Stanford University here records its appreciation of Walter Greenwood Beach as an able and respected colleague and as a beloved member of the Stanford community. Be it resolved, therefore, that this memorial be entered in the minutes of this Council and that copies be sent to the surviving members of his family: Mrs. Kenneth K. Landis, Mrs. Daniel M. Bernt, W. Edwards Beach, and Allen W. Beach.

Approved and submitted by your Committee,

F. W. Weymouth
Richard T. LaPrine
Charles N. Reynolds