

## MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

### E. LOUISE PEFFER (1898 – 1978)

E. Louise Peffer, Professor Emerita in the Food Research Institute, died in Turtle Creek Convalescent Center, West Lafayette, Indiana, on August 11, 1978, at the age of 79. Professor Peffer first came to Stanford in September 1946. She retired from active duty in September 1964.

Louise was born in Natrona, Pennsylvania on November 15, 1898 but grew up in West Lafayette where her father was Professor and Chairman of Chemical Engineering in Purdue University. She graduated from West Lafayette High School in June 1917, and enrolled at Purdue University that fall. It was to be twenty years, however, before she qualified for the baccalaureate. The years between were filled partly with short periods of attending classes at the University, but mostly with work as secretary, bookkeeper, bank teller, reporter, and editor.

She entered graduate studies in history at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1937, and was awarded the Master's degree in 1939 and the Doctorate in 1942. Her doctoral dissertation was published by the Stanford University Press in 1951 as *The Closing of the Public Domain: Disposal and Reservation Policies, 1900 - 50*. In 1963 it was selected for the White House permanent collection and in 1974 it was republished by Arno Press in its series "Use and Abuse of America's Natural Resources."

The gradual closing out in the first half of this century of those "vacant, unappropriated, unreserved" public lands that were available for sale, entry, and settlement marked the ending of the great land settlement that had characterized American economic life since the seventeenth century. Peffer provided the authoritative account of how it came about, and her extremely readable book is of interest to all students of American history. The book is also an insightful and timeless commentary on how national decisions of the magnitude of this one are made. Its last page carries this message: "In the final analysis, the real obstacle to providing the needed corrective has always been the electorate .... The public, until disaster stunned it into thought in the early 1930s, retained the old romantic view of the public domain -- when it recalled that there was one."

In November 1942, Dr. Peffer entered the Women's Army Corps of the Army of the United States as a Second Lieutenant and served until November 1945, rising to the rank of Captain. During most of this time she was an Economic Intelligence Officer on the staff of the Control Council for Germany and was stationed during 1944-45 in France and later in Germany.

In 1946 the Food Research Institute initiated a series of studies of the History of Food and Agricultural Policies in World War II, and Dr. Peffer was hired to assist in the administration of this project, including liaison with the numerous Outside authors who were to contribute to the History, preparation and supervision of budgets, and editorial review of all manuscripts prepared for the History. In addition, she was asked to conduct independent research on agricultural developments in Latin America. The History series was closed with its thirteenth volume, *Canadian Agriculture in War and Peace, 1939-50*, by G. E. Britnell and C. V. Fowke in 1962. Louise Peffer played an important part in the development of the volumes.

Professor Peffer spent four months in Peru in 1945-46 before she joined the staff of the Food Research Institute, and six months in Argentina as a Fulbright Fellow in 1957-58, visiting Peru and Chile en route. Her Latin America research resulted in a series of five studies of the domestic and international aspects of Argentina's cattle industry during the war and post-war periods. These were published between 1956 and 1962 in *Food Research Institute Studies* and in the *Inter-American Economic Review* and comprised the essentials of a small book. They display the same objective evaluation of national political decision making that is a feature of her earlier book. The last article, "Foot - and - Mouth Disease in United States Policy," brought her back to United States policy, now in an area where scientific knowledge as well as the view of cattlemen were important elements, and the arena was the Department of State rather than the Department of the Interior. But Peffer was no more awed by the "truths" of veterinary scientists than by the arguments of the authors of the Taylor Grazing Act.

Professor Peffer had been hired originally as Associate Economist, to serve in a purely administrative and research capacity. In 1951 she was awarded academic rank as well, and from then until her retirement she played an active part in the Institute's graduate program, as well as directing dissertations in related programs outside the Institute. Her graduate courses on Agriculture Expansion in the Americas and on Agricultural Expansion of Latin America were a part of the core program of the Food Research Institute and were also included in the program of the Latin American Studies Center.

Louise made her most valued contribution to colleagues and doctoral candidates as manuscript reader and critic. No manuscript went through her hands without being the better for it, and, as so often happens, careful attention to form frequently led to improvement in substance as well. Not that substance was ignored- many authors have been grateful to Professor Peffer for catching a flaw in argument or calling attention to useful sources that had escaped their attention. She rendered a similar service to contributors to *Agricultural History* when she served from 1964 to 1970 as Associate Editor and member of the Agricultural History Society's Executive Committee.

Louise continued to keep a desk in the Institute until 1973 when ill health forced her to return to Indiana where she could be closer to her family. There were no publications during these years, but Louise followed current events and the literature in her field as closely as ever, as well as assuring her friends a completely reliable guide to the best current books, both fiction and nonfiction.

Louise Peffer was a good companion: a lover of good books, good talk, and good whiskey, and a thorough scholar.

William O. Jones, Chairman  
Walter P. Falcon  
Roger W. Gray

*We are grateful to Margaret and James Collins and to Helen B. Hoff for their help in preparing this Resolution.*