

MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

PAYSON JACKSON TREAT (1879 – 1972)

Payson Jackson Treat was born in New York November 12, 1879, the son of Erastus Buck and Rhoda Ann Goslee Treat. He died at his campus home on June 15, 1972. Treat earned his A.B. degree at Wesleyan University, Connecticut, in 1900 and then taught at the Barnard School in New York while working for his A.M. degree at Columbia University, which was conferred in 1903. In the fall of 1903 he came West to study with Professor Max Farrand, a distinguished scholar in American history and Executive Head of Stanford's History Department. When Dr. Farrand accepted a visiting professorship at Cornell University in 1905, Stanford appointed Mr. Treat an Instructor.

Treat became well-acquainted with President David Starr Jordan, as everyone on the faculty did in those early days of the University. Dr. Jordan's ichthyological research took him on several occasions to the Far East, including Japan, where he was impressed with the knowledge and understanding of his scientific papers among Japanese scholars. He became intrigued with the idea that American universities should institute courses in Far Eastern studies, for Asia appeared destined to play a larger role in world affairs. He believed that Stanford's location on the eastern fringe of the Pacific Ocean made it the logical place to develop a center for this work. Dr. Jordan, with his insight into human personality, thought that Treat would be a good choice for pioneering the new studies. Apparently the young instructor, greatly impressed with Jordan's expansive plans for the fledgling university, enthusiastically agreed. The two concluded in the spring of 1906 that Treat should have a leave of absence for the year 1906-1907 to allow him to go to the Orient and Australasia to prepare for his new assignment and to gather materials for the library. Professor Treat later recalled seeing President Jordan surveying the earthquake damage on the morning of April 18, 1906, and remarking "Well, Dr. Jordan, I suppose this means I must give up my trip." "Not so, Treat ... take your trip. We'll have it all put back again before you return!"

Treat took his trip and traveled to India, East Asia, and Australasia, thus launching his career as a pioneer American scholar in the field of Far Eastern history. While traveling he purchased Australasian historical materials using funds provided by Thomas Welton Stanford, Herbert Hoover, and others, thereby making Stanford the foremost repository of Australiana for decades to come. Stanford itself participated: a minute of the November 30, 1906, meeting of the Board of Trustees included a resolution authorizing Treat to spend up to \$150 of History Department Library funds for books on the history of the nations of Eastern Asia. Moreover, Treat's lectures in Australian history, which he initiated in 1907, were the first ever to be given anywhere if one excepts a course on English immigration to Australia offered by Professor E. D. Adams at Stanford in 1904.

Although he changed fields of specialization close to the beginning of his scholarly career, Payson Treat completed his doctorate under Max Farrand. Stanford

conferred its first Ph.D. in History on Treat in 1910. His dissertation, The National Land System, 1785-1820, published in 1910, won high praise from reviewers including A. B. Hart, the very distinguished Americanist of Harvard, who pronounced it "an indispensable tool for every student of the development of the West." The book has been recently paperbacked attesting to the significance of the subject as well as to the soundness of the author's scholarship. During the remainder of his active scholarly life, which extended well into his emeritus years, Professor Treat poured his immense energy into research, writing, and teaching in the field of East Asian history. He made three additional research trips to the Orient and Australasia -- 1912, during the early days of the Republic of China and at the time of the death of Meiji, the most significant Japanese emperor of modern times; 1921-22, not long after the close of World War I; and 1936, as tensions mounted between the United States and Japan.

Treat published three monographs (one in three volumes) on the diplomatic relations between the United States and Japan and a general textbook on the political and diplomatic history of the Far East. Research in his new field of interest first bore fruit in the Albert Shaw lectures in diplomatic history for 1917; these appeared as The Early Diplomatic Relations Between the United States and Japan, 1853-1865 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1917). Volumes appearing in 1932 and 1938 brought the narrative to 1905. In 1921 he brought out Japan and the United States, 1853-1921 which in 1928 he revised and brought up to date. In addition, he published more than a dozen articles and papers on the Far East in scholarly journals and several others which appeared in popular magazines. All of his works bear the marks of careful research and objective analysis. He wrote with exceptional clarity and without ambiguity, and he took great pains to present both sides of every question. Dr. Treat earned the respect of the scholarly world for his professional work as is attested by the reviews that appeared in the learned journals; the visiting appointments to teach at Harvard, Johns Hopkins, Columbia University, and the University of California; and by his election to the presidency of the Pacific Coast Branch of the American Historical Association in 1922. He was a Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society of London and a member of the American Historical Association on whose Executive Council he served from 1926 until 1930.

He was, however, no ivory tower scholar. He believed that a study of history could shed light upon issues of public policy and action. During the alien land law agitation in 1913 in California, for example, he sent a statement to his former students asking that they bring reason and objectivity to the debates and discussions. After World War I he participated in the activities of the Institute of Pacific Relations in an effort to influence policy along peaceful lines. In the 1930's he sought to calm impassioned feelings and to get his fellow Americans to understand the Japanese position respecting its aims and ambitions in the Far East. For his untiring efforts to promote better Japanese-American relations, the Emperor of Japan decorated him with the third class Order of the Sacred Treasure in 1935. It was a sad day for him when the two nations went to war.

Within the university community Professor Treat proved to be a popular and trusted colleague. He served for seven years -- 1922-1929 -- as Executive Head of the History Department following E. D. Adams' fourteen years in that post. Like some of us,

he complained about his position: "Ever since I took over that job," he wrote to a former student, "I have been simply the office-boy of the Department. The other eight members simply pass every buck up to me and I have to worry them through." Because he maintained the highest standards of scholarship and teaching for himself, as head of the department, he expected others to meet those standards. Yet he was generous of his time and of his materials. He freely loaned books and other materials to associates and helped younger colleagues to secure research grants and in other ways gave support to their work. He insisted, however, that everyone should stand on his own feet and develop independence and a sense of responsibility for what he wrote and what he did.

Professor Treat was a master teacher. He was particularly effective in his lecture courses. They were always meticulously organized and packed with information; he spoke clearly, concisely, and with a rapid-fire, almost staccato-type delivery. He was a witty person, clever in repartee, and an accomplished punster; one hoped to avoid the "crack of his quip," as one of his colleague recalls. Treat had a rare knack for friendship with students, alumni, and with neighbors. When he retired from active duty in 1945 he estimated that he had taught over seven thousand Stanford students. He kept a card file of former students and he took particular interest in their children who enrolled in his classes. Friendships were reciprocated and were manifested over the years either by letter or by calling at his home.

Mrs. Treat, the former Jessie McGilvray, a Stanford alumna and his former history student, joined her husband in graciously entertaining students, alumni, colleagues, and friends in their lovely campus home. Dr. Treat was a genial host who knew how to put guests at ease and to engage them in conversation. Guests looked out on the garden in which Professor Treat took great pride and on which he expended a great amount of time and energy. The Treats were staunch members of the Sierra Club and enjoyed hiking, fishing, and camping in various parts of the West.

In retirement Professor Treat continued active professionally and socially until a very few years ago. Visitors from the Quad noted his interest in the affairs of the University to which he had devoted his loyalty over so many decades. Friends and former students found his hospitality and geniality undiminished. Always gallant, he told a faculty wife who had invited him to a reception that he could not attend because of an ailing hip. When she said, "Why don't you just come and sit?" he responded, "Oh, I couldn't do that. Some pretty young lady might come to talk to me, and I would have to stand."

We are pleased to honor the memory of Payson Jackson Treat -- pioneer professor, respected scholar, helpful colleague, cherished friend, and a loyal and devoted alumnus and supporter of Stanford. His influence upon shaping this university and the lives of thousands of its sons and daughters will long be remembered and cherished.

George H. Knoles, Chairman
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