

LOUISE FARGO BROWN

1878 - 1955

Louise Fargo Brown was born in Buffalo, New York of pioneer stock. Early Browns had helped to extend the frontiers along the Mohawk and the Ohio, and Fargos were among the '49ers pushing westward to California. These deeds were long since done. But the spirit in which they were done and the qualities leading to their accomplishment, - a lively curiosity, love of the new venture, generosity, a zest for life itself, great good humor and warmth of spirit - were the rich legacy bequeathed to Louise Fargo Brown. Throughout her life she remained something of the pioneer, with a keen awareness that every generation has its own frontiers to extend, whether of the mind or space. She received her early schooling in the Buffalo schools and her B.A. degree from Cornell University in 1903. In 1905, she entered the graduate school at Cornell and long before Fulbrights and Fords and Guggenheims had made the privilege of foreign study almost a commonplace, Cornell twice awarded Miss Brown its Andrew White Travelling Fellowship. This gave her two wonderful years in Europe, the first at London and Oxford, the second in Basle, Zurich and Geneva. An article based on the research of these years appeared in the English Historical Review while she was yet a graduate student.' She received the Ph.D. from Cornell in 1909, and except for a spring semester at Vassar in 1915, was instructor in history at Wellesley from 1909 to 1915. During this period she completed her first book, The Political Activities of the Baptists and Fifth Monarchy in England During the Interregnum, a book which received the Herbert Baxter Adams Prize from the American Historical Association for the best monograph of the year in Modern European History. In 1915 Miss Brown was offered the post of Dean of Women and professor of History at the University of Nevada. She was at this post when America entered World War I in the spring of 1917. Browns, Towers, and Fargos had served their country in earlier wars. Louise Fargo Brown volunteered; and from 1917 to 1919 was detailed to do historical work in Washington. Her pamphlet on The Freedom of the Seas was sent in MS for use at the Paris Peace Conference. It delighted her sense of humor that in return for her services as LOUISE FARGO BROWN (Continued)

historian the United States government had conferred upon her the rank of sergeant in the Marines. To the delight of her colleagues on the Vassar bridge path, the sergeant's uniform became the historian's riding

In Miss Brown, during the semester at Vassar in 1915, Lucy Maynard Salmon had seen seething of her own pioneering spirit in history teaching. Hence she was recalled to Vassar in 1919 to begin the years of service which lasted until her retirement in 1944. Here she became a lively and spirited member of the college community. She was always a champion of the underdog, and a rugged fighter for the causes in which she believed. At one point she even entered Dutchess County politics and ran for County Court clerk. Some of her colleagues still remember her star role in a Founder's Day program on "Matthew Vassar's Times". During these years she published two additional books, *The First Earl of Shaftesbury* in 1933, under the auspices of the American Historical Association, and *A History of Democracy*, the life of Lucy Maynard Salmon, in 1943. Her work in England was recognized in her election as Fellow of the Royal Historical Society. In 1930 she was co-founder of the Berkshire Historical Conference, still a thriving organization of women historians.

The course at Vassar for which alumnae best remember Miss Brown bore the suggestive title, "The History of Tolerance". To some students it was the most provocative course they had at Vassar. Her interests and activities did not end with retirement. In 1948, in collaboration with George B. Carson she published a European history text, *Men and Centuries of European Civilization*, a new approach in textbooks.

Miss Brown's recent years were spent in Norfolk, Virginia. That one was past seventy need not keep one from exploring and enjoying this new region. She at once identified herself with the local historians and became custodian of their local archives. But as much as she loved the past, she could drop old MSS at a moment's notice to engage in a social or political struggle. Hence, when the scourge of McCarthyism

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ravaged the land, the old warhorse entered the lists again. Vassar Alumnae who saw the dejected figure of Titus Oates in stocks on the cover of *The Nation* for April, 1954 could not have been too greatly surprised to discover that the author of the article, "Portrait of an Informer; a Seventeenth Century Moral" was their old teacher of the "History of Tolerance". Those of us who came as young instructors during her term at Vassar remember gratefully her kindness and friendliness during our years of initiation. All of her colleagues respected her integrity and her courage and found Vassar a less colorful community

when she was no longer here.
Respectfully submitted,
Josephine Gleason
Emily Brow:
Mildred Campbell
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