

Martha Henning Eddy

October 28, 1881 — August 26, 1957

The death, on August 26, 1957, of Martha Henning Eddy, Emeritus Professor of Home Economics, was received with profound regret and a sense of great personal loss by her host of friends and former associates on campus, and in all parts of the world. All who knew her, remember her as a gracious, yet forceful, kind and generous person who worked unselfishly at all times without thought of praise or gain for herself, but only for the many public enterprises which occupied the major part of her life.

Mrs. Eddy was born in Saratoga Springs, New York on October 28, 1881. She was elected permanent president of her class at Vassar College from which she was graduated with an A.B. degree in 1905. She was appointed to the Cornell faculty in 1932, shortly after the death of her husband, Edward D. Eddy, who was County Attorney for Saratoga County. They had three children, David Henning (deceased), Marjorie Linden (Mrs. McCarthy Hanger, Jr.) and Edward Danforth, Jr., and an adopted son Frederick C.

During her life as a wife and mother in Saratoga Springs, she found time to do many worthwhile things outside of the home. Among other things, she was one of the founders of home economics extension education in Saratoga County. In connection with this she served as member, local leader, unit officer and member of the Home Bureau Executive Committee. She was the first woman in New York State to serve as President of a County Farm and Home Bureau and 4-H Club Association.

She was State President of both the Federation of Home Bureaus and the Federation of Women's Clubs. For five years she was a representative of the Federation of Home Bureaus on the New York State Conference Board of Farm Organizations. In 1947, she represented the Federation of Home Bureaus at the meeting of the Associated Country Women of the World, in Amsterdam, Holland. Almost until her death, she served as Counselor to the Board of Directors of the State Federation of Home Bureaus.

While at Cornell, Mrs. Eddy was a member of many policy-making committees in both the Colleges of Home Economics and Agriculture. At times, she was referred to as "our roving ambassador" by the Director of Extension. Her tact and friendly smile were enough to gain entrance to any official, or any group. Once there, her intelligence and knowledge of the situation gained the respect and confidence of those contacted and, without exception, created good will for the administration of Cornell University.

Martha H. Eddy had many important assignments during World War II, all of which she did thoroughly and with dispatch. She made many of the official contacts with several statewide organizations and departments, particularly with the State Nutrition Committee and the State departments of Labor and Health.

Perhaps her most important responsibility during this period was as head of the Women's Land Army in New York State, a branch of the huge Federal farm labor program. This was organized to provide mostly seasonal and parttime help, as a substitute for the shortage of man labor, particularly on the fruit and vegetable farms.

Not only did she perform her administrative duties in the office but she was on the road almost constantly, supervising the girls located in camps or in foster farm homes. Characteristically, she drove herself far beyond her strength and the call of duty. Many critical relationships within the camps and outside, in the communities, were handled by her personally with perseverance and skill. She commanded the respect and admiration of everyone who worked with her or who knew about her activities, including the top State and Federal public officials. The girls, many away from home for the first time, thought of her as a splendid substitute for their mothers and as a sympathetic counselor in their troubles and successes.

After her retirement in 1949, Governor Thomas E. Dewey appointed her as Director of Women's Activities at the New York State Fair, where she developed this division to a high standard of efficiency and accomplishment. She was instrumental in obtaining funds for a new wing for the Women's Building to house the steadily growing number of educational exhibits. Appropriately in 1955, it was named in her honor.

Martha H. Eddy's life was devoted to serving people—all kinds of people. She loved them all and they loved her. Her presence in any group or with any individual, was an inspiration. She was an optimist with sound advice for a better future for everyone with a problem. In the hearts of her associates and friends, her memory will live forever.

L. R. Simons, Lillian Shaben