

Virginia True

February 7, 1900 — January 4, 1989

Virginia True began her career at Cornell University as a part-time instructor in the College of Architecture. She became an assistant professor in the College of Home Economics in 1942. Her local and national leadership in the areas of housing and design were instrumental in bringing the College of Home Economics to the forefront of housing and design issues in the U.S.

As head of the Department of Housing and Design, now Design and Environmental Analysis, she expanded the design courses into a strong undergraduate curriculum; she helped develop the Cornell University Housing Research Center; she took leadership in establishing a very vital housing program in the Cooperative Extension Service to address housing issues, and to complement earlier established work in home furnishings and interior design; and on a national level, Professor True helped to plan and participate in national conferences concerned with the improvement of the teaching of housing in land-grant universities, and with art in the home economics curricula. The fourth Conference of Housing was held at Cornell University under her aegis in 1960.

As a teacher and administrator, Virginia True took a personal and sensitive interest in her students and faculty and their accomplishments. At the same time, she received numerous awards for her paintings, and exhibited widely throughout the United States in both juried and one-woman shows in galleries, museums and universities. Her mural entitled "Home Economics," which hangs in the Martha Van Rensselaer Amphitheater, is well known to students and faculty of the college. She also designed the wood relief carving in Mann Library, which designates the Martha Van Rensselaer Collection of books by and about women. She was also an enthusiastic leader in the arts at Cornell. For example, she established the Art Gallery in Martha Van Renssalaer Hall, a first on campus, bringing art works of foremost artists and designers to the college and community.

Professor True retired in 1965 and was appointed professor emeritus at that time. After retirement, she established residency on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, and also in Del Ray, Florida. She died in Gillett, Pennsylvania, on January 4, 1989, and is interred at Hannibal, Missouri.

Virginia Utermohlen, Clark Garner