

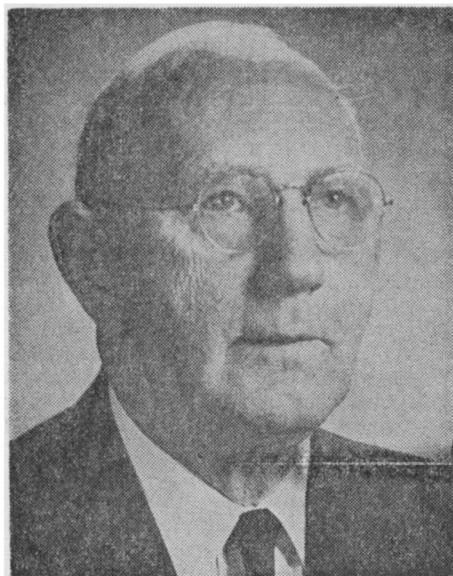
STEPHEN SARGENT VISHER
1887-1967

Stephen Sargent Visser, Professor Emeritus of Geography at Indiana University, died at the age of 79 on October 25, 1967 in Bloomington, Indiana, where he had lived and worked during the last 48 years of his life. However, while he spent a major portion of his active years in Indiana, Dr. Visser was a product of many environments and broadly varied experiences.

Born in Chicago on December 15, 1887, he migrated as a boy with his parents to South Dakota where he grew up close to nature in the wide open spaces of the Great Plains. He returned to Chicago for his high school education completing the course in three years and becoming valedictorian of his class. He entered the University of Chicago in 1906 on a very special schol-

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STEPHEN SARGENT VISHER

arship providing both tuition and \$500 per year. He did not draw scholarship money for the usual four years but graduated at the end of two and one-half years with a Bachelor of Science degree in botany and was elected to Phi Beta Kappa, Sigma Xi and several other honors including a postgraduate fellowship.

At twenty-two years of age Stephen Visher had his Master of Science degree in geology and an appointment to the faculty of the Zoology Department of the University of Chicago. He earned an M. A. degree in zoology from the University of South Dakota in 1912 and, in 1914, the University of Chicago granted him the Doctor of Philosophy degree in geography. Significantly, his doctoral thesis was on the geography of his beloved South Dakota. During these years of college and university attendance he found time to spend a summer as assistant to Henry C. Cowles on his ecological expedition to southern Alaska, to serve for eight months as research assistant in Carnegie Institution's Desert Laboratory at Tucson, and to serve for a period of three years as Assistant State Geologist of South Dakota.

After joining the faculty at Indiana University, Dr. Visher continued to accept numerous invitations from governmental and educational agencies wishing to draw upon his broad knowledge and acquaintance with scientific personnel. He helped the U. S. Geological Survey classify thousands of acres of public land in Wyoming and Utah; he conducted a soil survey of South Carolina for the U.S. Bureau of Soils; he served as research assistant to the Bureau of Meteorology in the Australian Commonwealth; for one year he was acting geographer for the Department of State; after World War II he

was a consultant to the U.S. Navy on scientific manpower and later to the Department of Defense on climate. In addition to Indiana University, Yale, South Dakota, Chicago, Minnesota, Colorado, Cornell, Pennsylvania and British Columbia are other universities which availed themselves of his teaching abilities.

Dr. Visher wrote extensively for publication, especially on the subjects of climate, the state of Indiana, and the geographical backgrounds of scientists of note. He is the author of 20 books and co-author or contributor to 22 others. Hundreds of technical and semi-technical articles, reviews, and abstracts have been published under his name. Of most interest to ecologists are eight papers on tropical and North American climate published in *ECOLOGY* between 1923 and 1950, and as many more on biogeography and the ecological relationships of climate and vegetation to be found in numerous other botanical, geographical and ecological professional journals during those years. Nineteen articles of his on climate of the United States were published in *Scientific American*. Considered most important of his publications are: *Climatic Laws* (1924); *Geography of American Notables* (1928); *Climate of Indiana* (1944); *Scientists Starred* (1947); *Indiana Scientists* (1951); and *Climatic Atlas of the United States* (Harvard University Press, 1954, revised 1966).

Through the years recognition of his important contributions came frequently. He was first listed in *Who's Who in America* in 1922 and in all volumes since that year. *International Who's Who* first included him in the 1937 volume and continuously since. He was a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, the Royal Meteorological Society, and the Geological Society of America. He served as vice-president of the Association of American Geographers, and vice-president and later president of the Indiana Academy of Science. The University of Chicago awarded him a Distinguished Alumnus Citation; the National Council of Geography Teachers gave him the Distinguished Service to Geographic Education Award, and the Association of American Geographers conferred upon him its highest honor, the Outstanding Achievement Award.

But with all his national and international activities, Stephen Visher was first and foremost a teacher of geography in Indiana University. He loved to teach and his greatest satisfactions came from working with the students who registered in his classes. He believed that no matter how immature and unmotivated some of them might seem, all of them nevertheless wanted to succeed. And with that as a starting point he set about teaching, helping, encouraging, and inspiring them from his storehouse of knowledge, understanding, and experience. When Dr. Visher was stricken in July 1967, one of his younger associates took time to write Mrs. Visher as follows:

Stephen was an exceedingly earnest and diligent student of geography, productive in research, valuable in teaching, and important in many professional activities. I recall with particular satisfaction the fatherly interest which he took in me during my two years at Bloomington in 1939-1941. I rejoice in the rich and rewarding career which he has had and am saddened that so great a figure and so fine a person should now be laid low.

Another former associate wrote from Corsica:
I know of nobody, in or out of the profession, who has done more to

encourage his younger colleagues and acquaintances, or has been more generous in his praise of their work.

Wordsworth writes of unremembered acts as being the best part of a good man's life. Stephen Visher will live in the minds and hearts of his former students and associates for his major achievements, to be sure, but also for "His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love."

Surviving are his wife, Dr. Halene Hatcher Visher, and one child from that union, Peggy Mildred. From an earlier marriage to Martha Bolks Visher (deceased 1949) are two sons and two daughters: Dr. Ruth Smalley, National Labor Relations Board, Washington, D.C.; John Edwin, Department of Interior, Washington, D.C.; Paul Sargent, Assistant Manager, Space Systems Division, Hughes Aircraft, Malibu, California; and Mary Ellen (Mrs. Robert Mayer), Sausalito, California. Eleven grandchildren survive. Also surviving are two brothers and three sisters: Dr. John W. Visher, Evansville, Indiana, and Harvey H. Visher, Seattle, Washington; Mrs. George White, Hamilton, Montana; Mrs. Jo D. Payne, Duarte, California; and Mrs. W. A. Calkins, Tahlaquah, Oklahoma.

Committee on Resolutions.