



Obituary: Louise Arner Boyd (1887-1972)

Author(s): Walter A. Wood and A. Lincoln Washburn

Source: *Geographical Review*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (Apr., 1973), pp. 279-282

Published by: American Geographical Society

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/213418>

Accessed: 31/08/2008 17:22

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=ags>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

---

JSTOR is a not-for-profit organization founded in 1995 to build trusted digital archives for scholarship. We work with the scholarly community to preserve their work and the materials they rely upon, and to build a common research platform that promotes the discovery and use of these resources. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

Science, and served as dean of the Graduate School from 1949 to 1961. The university recognized his contributions and international status in 1962, when its highest faculty honor, a Boyd Professorship, was bestowed on him.

Russell took editorial responsibilities seriously. He valued effective writing and often cited Nathaniel Shaler, John Wesley Powell, Israel C. Russell, and Grove K. Gilbert to his students as examples. He deplored jargon, particularly the coinage of new terms. He became associate editor of *Geologie der Meere und Binnengewässer* in 1939 and of *Zeitschrift für Geomorphologie* in 1957. From 1949 to 1961 he edited the *Louisiana State University Studies*, and in 1961 he was associate editor of the *Monograph Series of the Association of American Geographers*.

Russell was proud of his association with Theta Tau, the engineering fraternity, of which he was national president from 1927 to 1931. Also, he held the unique honor of being president of both the Association of American Geographers (in 1948) and the Geological Society of America (in 1957). During the 1940's and 1950's he was active on various committees of the National Research Council, a service that culminated in the chairmanship of the Division of Earth Sciences. In 1962 he was chairman of the Earth Sciences section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

Russell's monumental research earned him membership in the National Academy of Sciences in 1959 and corresponding membership in the Göttingen Academy of Sciences in 1960. He was the recipient of the Outstanding Achievement Award of the Association of American Geographers (1960), the Vega Medal of the Royal Swedish Society of Anthropology and Geography (1961), the Cullum Geographical Medal of the American Geographical Society (1962), and the United States Navy Distinguished Public Service Award (1967).

Russell attributed much of his success to colleagues who, in his words, "seemed to come along at about the right time and place." He was stimulated by Sauer's intellectual challenges; his attitude toward Howe bordered on the reverential; his ideas were strengthened by Kniffen's synthesizing concepts; Fisk challenged him; and Miss Pruitt expanded his perception of processes that refined his concepts of coastal morphology. Under his inspiration the field of geomorphology was given new direction. He was one of those rare giants whose character and accomplishments are so outstanding that time will not erase their imprint.—WILLIAM G. McINTIRE

LOUISE ARNER BOYD (1887–1972). Louise Arner Boyd, Honorary Fellow, medalist, Councilor Emeritus, and longtime friend of the American Geographical Society, died on September 14, 1972, in San Francisco following a prolonged illness. Thus ended the long life of a woman as remarkable for her social and cultural stature as for her impact on polar exploration and on the lives of many men and women of science.

Miss Boyd was born on September 16, 1887, in San Rafael, California, where she lived for nearly eighty years. She grew up in the tradition passed on to her by successful and prominent parents. Her two brothers died while she was still young; yet she was not so young as to be excluded from their favorite pastimes—camping, hunting, and fishing—in which she reveled as much for the sport as for the love of nature and the life of the wilderness. Here, surely, were nourished

three of her great qualities: kindness, honesty, and self-reliance. From her parents she inherited grace, loyalty, and exceptional business acumen. After the early death of her father, she assumed the presidency of the Boyd Investment Company. She never married.

The three Rs held little lure for Miss Boyd, and she replaced them with three loves: music, horticulture, and geography. The great aboretums and philharmonic halls of Europe and America became as familiar to her as Maple Lawn, the family home in San Rafael. And in 1924 she took passage on a small Norwegian tourist steamer, visited Svalbard, and caught her first glimpse of pack ice. Thus the door was opened on nearly half a century of association with the Arctic, which brought rewards of the spirit and benefited scientific and national communities.

Louise Boyd conceived of, organized, financed, and led seven summer-long expeditions to the Arctic. The first two, in 1926 and 1928, she considered preparatory. In 1926 she chartered the Norwegian sealer *M.S. Hobby* and cruised to Franz Josef Land. Two years later, again with *Hobby*, she was about to sail when news of the disappearance of Roald Amundsen reached her. She promptly abandoned her plans, put *Hobby* at the disposal of the Norwegian search parties, and logged more than 10,000 miles in the Barents and Greenland seas and along the coasts of Svalbard and Franz Josef Land. For her part in the fruitless search she was decorated by King Haakon VII of Norway with the Chevalier Cross of a Knight of St. Olaf, the first non-Norwegian woman to receive this honor.

Miss Boyd was not content with the satisfaction that her three visits to the Arctic had brought her; the urge to share her unique experiences with others and to contribute to human knowledge was strong. She had no formal training in geography or related disciplines, but she was a keen observer of all that she experienced and she turned to photography to record her impressions of the Arctic landscapes and seascapes. Thus began a pictorial inventory of landforms and sea-ice characteristics which grew in descriptive wealth and documentation with each visit to the North. To photography she added the love of natural history, especially of flora, and botanical collections became another string to her bow.

During her many visits to Norway and Denmark, especially in the search for Amundsen, Miss Boyd had come to know many prominent persons associated with polar work. She heard of the lonely magnificence of the East Greenland fiord region from Lauge Koch, Ejnar Mikkelsen, Adolf Hoel, Hjalmar Riiser-Larsen, and Bernt Balchen, and she determined to visit it. In 1931 she traversed the pack ice west of Jan Mayen Island and spent two months aboard the Norwegian sealer *Veslekari* in the dramatic alpine complex of waterways, mountains, and glaciers of the East Greenland fiords.

She had met Isaiah Bowman shortly before she embarked for northeastern Greenland. At that time, new photogrammetric mapping techniques were emerging at the Society under the stimulus of O. M. Miller. Since these techniques favored the mapping of high relief at reconnaissance scales, Bowman and Miller explained them to her. She was particularly well equipped to apply photogrammetric methods, for her camera equipment, selected for landscape photography with fine-grain film, included a tripod-mounted aerial camera of calibrated focal length. Reconnaissance mapping, as well as plant collecting, became an element of her expedition.

The 1931 expedition was a turning point in Miss Boyd's career, for she spent much time with Bowman and members of the Society's staff on her way home. She came to recognize the interdisciplinary nature of geography and the benefits to be gained from integrating a number of facets of science within a single project using a mobile logistic base. Thus she undertook her last three expeditions to East Greenland, in 1933, 1937, and 1938, all on *Veslekari* and all sponsored by the American Geographical Society. The results of these field seasons, published in "The Fiord Region of East Greenland" (*A.G.S. Special Publ. No. 18*, 1935) and "The Coast of Northeast Greenland" (*A.G.S. Special Publ. No. 30*, 1948) are monuments to her dedication, her generosity, and her faith in the physical and biological scientists who accompanied her.

Miss Boyd hoped to make many expeditions to East Greenland, but by 1938 the clouds of war had gathered and by 1941 she was sailing the waters of the West Greenland coast with Captain Bob Bartlett in the schooner *Morrisey*, as the prime mover of a scientific complement seeking answers of military significance to North America. This was her final visit to Greenland, but she continued to contribute to the military effort by putting her photographs and experience at the disposal of the War Department.

Louise Boyd detested airplanes, but she would tolerate them if they were the only mode of transportation that could fulfill her wishes. In 1955 she chartered a DC-4 and made a 3000-nautical-mile round-trip flight to the North Pole from Bodø, Norway.

Although Miss Boyd's polar flight concluded thirty years of exploration and field research in the Arctic, the American Geographical Society continued to be a major focus for her. She had been awarded the Cullum Geographical Medal in 1938; in 1960 she was elected to the Council, the first woman to be so chosen. She cherished that honor, and her sound business sense found her always on the side of conservatism. Nonetheless, her enthusiasm for the Society's emerging programs allowed her to encourage their implementation strongly. By 1967 the long journeys from California were taxing her strength, and in December of that year she resigned from the Council and was promptly elected a Councilor Emeritus. Her interest in the Society never flagged, though she became bedridden in 1970, and a visitor would always find her surrounded by Society publications—her own included—and by mounted photographs and maps illustrating her Arctic experiences.

The changing seasons accommodated all three of Miss Boyd's interests: music in the winter, geography in the summer, and horticulture in the spring and fall. She was a devoted member of the San Francisco Symphony Association and a long-time member of its executive committee. She seldom missed a performance, but if she did she was usually attending the Metropolitan Opera, Albert Hall, or La Scala. Wherever she might appear in San Francisco, she wore flowers, more often than not from her own garden. Her camellias became her trademark, and more than once she was approached by total strangers who identified her by the blooms she wore. For many years she served as a member-at-large of the Garden Club of America.

When Isaiah Bowman was enlisting a new staff member or a would-be geographer it was his practice to conclude the interview with an admonition that rewards are rare in science and that when they come they stem largely from within

the scientist. Miss Boyd received the Bowman warning when she undertook a book on "Polish Countrysides" (*A.G.S. Special Publ. No. 20, 1937*), but the admonition was neither new to her nor a setback to her aspirations—she had learned these basic truths in her childhood. Nevertheless, recognition and honors came to her spontaneously and in abundance, and being human she treasured them.

In addition to the honors already mentioned, Miss Boyd was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor of France and received the Medal of King Christian X of Denmark and the Andrée Plaque of the Swedish Society for Anthropology and Geography. The University of California and the University of Alaska conferred honorary degrees on her, as did Mills College. She was elected an honorary member of the California Academy of Sciences, and the Louise A. Boyd Junior Museum of Science in San Rafael was named in her honor. Most of all, however, Miss Boyd treasured her friends, who were legion and from every walk of life. They and the world will not see her like again.—WALTER A. WOOD and A. LINCOLN WASHBURN