

Douglas William Coolidge



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Douglas William Coolidge, first Secretary and director of this Association, proprietor of the Coolidge Rare Plant Gardens in Pasadena passed away May 19, 1928 at the age of 68 years.

Mr. Coolidge was for many years an ardent advocate of the avocado. He propagated many varieties in his nursery and distributed them so effectively that Pasadena has come to be known as a city of avocado gardens. Always a loyal and active member of this Association, he has taken an important part in the up-building of the industry.

Douglas W. Coolidge was born May 7, 1860 at Bonaparte, Iowa. When the other boys were playing baseball or marbles, young Coolidge was off in the woods gathering wildflowers and studying nature. He read everything about plants that he could and

made rare plants his study. Shortly after his marriage in 1882 to Virginia West, he took up music teaching, and was head of the music department of the University of Oregon at Eugene for many years. For four years he was secretary of the Oregon state board of equalization. He did not lose his interest in plants, however, and was instrumental in the starting of the loganberry industry in Oregon, sending one of the first plants, raised by Judge Logan, of Santa Cruz, to a friend in Eugene, and to a Portland nurseryman, who distributed it to the first loganberry farmers of the state.

He came to Pasadena in 1899, and was secretary of the Pasadena Board of Trade for many years. He decided that he would enter his chosen profession more than twenty years ago, and started a florists' shop across from Hotel Maryland. He believed that he was in the wrong end of the business, and later opened his rare plant gardens at Hill avenue and Colorado street. His success was immediate, and he branched out in the business. For twelve years he conducted the gardens at that point, and then moved to fourteen acres of land on North Santa Anita avenue. These gardens have been visited by people from many states interested in plants.

Mr. Coolidge was responsible for the introduction into Southern California gardens of more rare plants than was any other man. His genius as a propagator and grower of ornamental plants was recognized by the Federal authorities, who co-operated with him in introducing to this section many rare plants secured by explorers in many parts of the world. He first introduced the French and African heathers to gardens of the state, and many more wonderful plants are here because of his enthusiasm and energy. He exhibited the true pioneer spirit in the introduction of rare and beautiful plants. His friendships were strong and his ideals were of the highest. As a prominent member of the California Nurserymen's Association, he was in great demand as toastmaster at banquets because of his wit and command of language.

He had been confined to his bed but a few days. A pioneer of Pasadena he was beloved by a great number of friends who knew his sterling qualities and his great love of flowers, music and children. Mr. Coolidge traced his ancestry back to John and Mary Coolidge, as does the President of the United States, and was a distant cousin to Calvin Coolidge.