



DR. H. J. WEBBER

Herbert John Webber

1865—1946

In Memorium

Herbert John Webber was born December 27th, 1865 at Lawton, Michigan. After graduating from the University of Nebraska, he later received the degree of PhD from Washington University. He was most interested in the science of living plants.

In 1892, while in the service of the United States Department of Agriculture, he was sent to Eustis, Florida. There, in collaboration with W. T. Swingle, he produced many citrus hybrids among which the Sampson Tangelo is most familiar to Californians. Many other subtropical fruits attracted his attention, and there he made his first acquaintance with the avocado. After serving five years as Professor of Plant Breeding at Cornell

University, he was called to Riverside California to become Director of the University of California Citrus Experiment Station; where, with short interruptions for cotton breeding work in South Carolina, and a citrus survey in South Africa, he served until his retirement in 1936.

Dr. Webber took an active part in the organization of this Society in 1915, served as director 1915 to 1920; as President in 1916, and again as director from 1935 to 1937. In the early days he was very active on the variety committee, and in many ways did much to advance the best interests of the avocado industry. Dr. Webber served on the committee of minor subtropical fruits and was particularly enthusiastic with respect to the future of the guava as a commercial fruit. He frequently contributed to the Yearbook of this Society. He was awarded the Society Emblem of Honor in 1938.

One of Dr. Webber's most outstanding services to the avocado industry in California was in 1917 and 1918. At that time a certain few real estate promoters, noting the high prices received for avocados and taking advantage of the publicity provided by this Society, began a wild speculation in subdivisions of very questionable lands planted to nondescript avocado nursery trees. From his position on the board of directors Dr. Webber, both by speech and printed word, led the fight by this Society against this nefarious business. In spite of repeated political threats he loudly denounced the practice of using the avocado to unload questionable lands onto the public at outlandish prices. The effect of this campaign was to save the good name of the avocado and redirect the development of the then youthful industry along more sensible and conservative lines.

Dr. Webber's solicitude for the California avocado industry was such that, in his position as Director of the Experiment Station, he was always willing to stretch a point whenever he could in providing funds and personnel for research work on the many problems arising in connection with the culture of the avocado.

On completion of his second term as Director, this Society, on the occasion of its 22d annual meeting at Whittier, May 8, 1937, presented Dr. Webber with a beautiful hand illuminated scroll bearing the following words:

IN APPRECIATION

To Doctor Herbert John Webber—thorough scientist, wise counsellor, able administrator—in appreciation of his many years of distinguished service to avocado growers in developing a sound horticultural industry.

California Avocado Association,

Signed by the Officers and Directors.

On September 8, 1890 Dr. Webber married Lucene Anna Hardin, who died August 16, 1936. Dr. Webber passed away at his home in Riverside January 18, 1946, shortly after reaching his eightieth birthday. Their children are, Mrs. Eugene Frances (Webber) Morrison; Mrs. Fera Ella (Webber) Shear; Herbert Earl Webber, and John Milton Webber.