

California Avocado Society 1964 Yearbook 48: 19-20

JOHN ELIOT COIT

"The Father of the Avocado Industry"

In acquainting those who are interested in the development of the avocado industry, from its beginning, it is apropos in this 50th year of the California Avocado Society that recognition be given for the many years of service to the industry of the man who was the principal stimulator of the founding of this cultural Society.

The following from the 1939 Yearbook is a succinct statement of the service of Dr. Coit to the avocado industry:

"Dr. J. Eliot Coit is truly "The Father of the California Avocado Industry." From its babyhood or the time when growing avocados was a hobby, through adolescence or the transitional period into maturity as a full fledged industry Dr. Coit has been its able and watchful parent. Long after his name will have been forgotten, consumers in New York as well as growers in California will unknowingly feel Dr. Coit's influence."

Dr. Coit was born at San Antonio, Texas, March 9, 1880, a descendent of a long line of school teachers and preachers running back to John Eliot, the apostle to the Indians. Reared in Texas and North Carolina he spent much of his early life learning the fundamentals of agriculture with shovel and hoe.

He entered the North Carolina State College of Agriculture in 1899, graduating in Agriculture in 1903. Later he received his Masters Degree in Horticulture from Cornell University and in 1907 the Ph.D. degree, Honorary Fellow in Agriculture from the same University.

Following his schooling Dr. Coit progressed through many important positions such as:

Horticulturist, University of Arizona Experiment Station, 1907-1909. Assistant Professor of Pomology, University of California at the Whittier Pathological Laboratory and at the Citrus Experiment Station at Riverside. He was Superintendent of the Citrus Experiment Station at Rubideaux in 1912, and in that position was instrumental in selecting the site of the present Citrus Research Center and Experiment Station at Riverside.

From 1913 to 1917 Dr. Coit was Professor of Citriculture, University of California at Berkeley. Farm Advisor, Los Angeles County, 1917 to 1919.

In 1919 he founded the "Coit Agricultural Service" and is today continuing in this line of service.

Among agricultural organizations Dr. Coit has served as director of the Sierra Madre Lamanda Citrus Association, the California Avocado Association (the name changed to the California Avocado Society in 1941) in 1915 and again from 1923 to 1947, and served as president three terms. In 1924 he helped organize the California Avocado Growers Association (now Calavo) and served as director until 1944.

Although not a prolific writer Dr. Coit's literary accomplishments have been valuable

contributions both as technical and of a popular nature. He served as editor of the California Avocado Society Yearbook from 1932 until 1948.

Dr. Coit has received honorary awards including:

Fellow, American Association for the Advancement of Science. Sigma Xi, Cornell 1905, and is a member of Alpha Zeta and Gamma Alpha. He received the first Award of Honor from the California Avocado Society and was presented with a Special Award of Honor in 1956, and in 1963 was made Director Emeritus by the Board in appreciation of his many contributions to the industry.

Dr. Coit was married to Emilie A. Hanna in 1907 at Durham, North Carolina, and to them were born three girls, Eleanor, Frances and Lucy. There are three grandchildren and seven great grandchildren. His first wife passed away August 10, 1924.

In 1926 Dr. Coit was married to Luise Gait Viney of Pasadena. The second Mrs. Coit passed away suddenly on August 25, 1962, after their many years of close companionship.

In recent years Dr. Coit has given much of his time to the Carob and under his direction much of the research on this dry land crop is progressing in variety orchards in several countries around the world.

The avocado industry has indeed been fortunate to have developed during these past 50 years with the assistance of so able a man. California agriculture, and particularly the avocado growers, surely owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. J. Eliot Coit.