

Thomas H. Shedden

March 4, 1856—December 3, 1935

The California avocado industry, and this Association in particular, owe more than many newcomers realize to the unselfish work and high idealism of the men who did the pioneering and laid the foundations.

One of the most loved of these was Thomas H. Shedden of Monrovia. Mr. Shedden passed away December 3, 1935, at the age of seventy-nine and his portrait may be seen as the frontispiece in our Yearbook for 1935.

Born March 4, 1856, at St. Louis, Missouri, Mr. Shedden spent some years in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Later he removed to San Francisco where for a number of years he was engaged in the hotel business. There he came to appreciate the avocado as a food and his enthusiasm finally reached a point where he determined to engage in the growing and popularization of the fruit, at that time new to the American public.

In 1914 Mr. Shedden moved to Monrovia and established the "Florimel Avocado Orchard." He took part in the organization of this Association and was a charter member. He was selected by the U. S. Department of Agriculture as one of several recipients of the budwood of new avocado varieties being introduced by U. S. Plant Explorer, Wilson Popenoe. For many years, at considerable financial loss, he maintained a large collection of introduced as well as local varieties in order that he might make comparative studies of their value and distribute budwood of the most promising. He originated the "MacArthur" which was named in honor of his mother whose maiden name was "MacArthur."

Mr. Shedden never married but his mother lived with him at Monrovia until she died on July 25, 1928, at the age of ninety-five. During the last ten years of her life her diet consisted largely of avocados and Mr. Shedden often stated that he believed her good health during the last years was due to her avocado diet.

Elected President of the California Avocado Association in 1917, Mr. Shedden was very busy with variety investigations and did much to widen the scope of Association activities. He was a most lovable man, jolly and optimistic always, the life of every "party" and a very popular toastmaster. A number of leaflets and brochures filled with recipes and directions for preparing avocados for the table were published, entirely at private expense, and mailed to addresses all over the country. Mr. Shedden's great zeal in working to introduce and popularize the avocado is well illustrated by a passage from one of his latest publications.

"Since my orchard began to bear fruit, the topmost avocado idea in my avocado head and heart has seemed to be to do what I can to get the avocado, this newly naturalized, fascinating foreigner, into the good graces of the eating public; not alone the 'upper ten,'

but the 'lower millions' of them; believing that interested, intelligent treatment and, as nearly as possible, personal contact with customers, establishes good and pleasant understanding, and will, and does, tend to develop an avocado appetite like unto that of Old John Barleycorn! I hope to live long enough to see the avocado an acceptable, plentiful, reasonably priced, daily food of the rich and the poor alike."

Altruistic to a fault, Mr. Shedden often neglected his personal business affairs to campaign for the avocado. If in later years, anyone wonders how and why the avocado, an unknown fruit, got such a valiant boost in California, he will find the answer in such men as Thomas H. Shedden.

—J. E. C.