

Arthur William Christie

In Memoriam

Arthur William Christie was an important figure in the formative years of the California avocado industry.

A man of three careers, he was a teacher, a business executive, and a farmer. After retiring from his "second-career" position as field manager of the California Walnut Growers Association, Mr. Christie devoted his last years to the production of avocados and then to pomegranates in his home site acreage in La Habra Heights.

The avocado industry that owed him much unfortunately allowed Art Christie to fade from its ken during those last years. It has been learned only this year that Mr. Christie died October 26, 1974. For fourteen years, we "lost" him! With sorrow that this memorial was not presented sooner, we now pay belated homage to the memory of this man whose presence and good works enhanced our industry.

Art Christie was a native of San Francisco, born in that city on January 2, 1892. In 1916, he signed on with the University of California, at Berkeley, as Assistant in Agricultural Chemistry. His first involvement with the avocado industry came in 1923, when he and E. H. Guthier conducted investigations into the preservation of canned avocado flesh by dehydration. The results were not favorable. Three years later, at the request of the California Avocado Growers Exchange, Professor Christie, with B. E. Lesley, developed the refractometric method of measuring oil content as a test for avocado maturity. The new technique was immensely successful; it remained the official method for determining oil content for many years and saved the industry thousands of hours of laboratory time, until the adoption of dry-weight maturity standards.

In 1927, Mr. Christie moved on to his second career, becoming field manager of the California Walnut Growers Association. Not long thereafter, he acquired property in La Habra Heights on which he developed an avocado orchard—thereby beginning a third career while still active in the second. He joined the California Avocado Association in 1933, and was elected in that year to its board of directors, where he continued to serve through 1949. He was the Association's president in 1934 and 1935 and again in 1939.

The remarkable number and great value of Art Christie's contributions to the avocado industry were recognized by the Association when it awarded to him in 1939—only the second year of the awards program—its emblem of honor for outstanding meritorious service.

A strong proponent of agricultural cooperatives and an expert in the field of specialty crop marketing, Mr. Christie in 1943 accepted an invitation to serve on the board of directors of Calavo Growers of California as a director at large. He served with distinction for 13 years.

Art Christie was a leader and a constructive activist in agriculture, and in the California

avocado industry in particular. His kind comes along only rarely. Our industry was fortunate that he chose to become a "Citizen of Avacadoland." We miss him.

—J. S. S.