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*** Thomas Ray Stanton ***
(1885 ~ 1962)

Thomas Ray Stanton, who retired in 1951 as Senior Agronomist in Charge of Oat Investigations of the U.S.D.A. died in his sleep at his home in Hyattsville, Maryland, November 14, 1962. Dr. Stanton, for several years following retirement from the government, was very active in oat work but in more recent years had been in poor health.

Dr. Stanton was born September 23, 1885 near Grantsville, Maryland, son of William T. and Anna (Durst) Stanton. He was reared on the family farm and attended the public schools in the Grantsville area. On October 23, 1913, he married Pearl Marguerite Gude, and their only child, a son, Dr. William Alexander Stanton, has for many years been connected with the E. I. DuPont Company.

Stanton attended the University of Maryland graduating with the B.S.A. degree in 1910 and later in 1921 received his M.S. degree from the same institution. In 1945 Iowa State University conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Agriculture in recognition of his outstanding contributions to American agriculture. The American Society of Agronomy elected him a Fellow of the Society in 1943.

Dr. Stanton served one year, 1910-11, as assistant in agronomy at the Maryland Experiment Station. Late in 1911 he joined the U. S. Department of Agriculture and from 1911 to 1915 served as scientific assistant and later assistant agronomist in charge of the cereal experiments on the U.S.D.A, B.P.I., Arlington Experiment Farm in Virginia across the Potomac from Washington. He became agronomist in oat investigations in 1915 and was placed in charge of oat investigations in 1922. In 1928 he was advanced to Senior Agronomist in Charge of Oats which position he held until retirement in 1951. After retirement from federal service he continued to be active making valuable contributions to oat literature as well as serving as a consultant with the Coker’s Pedigreed Seed Company of Hartsville. South Carolina.

During his career, Dr. Stanton made numerous contributions of great value both in the field of technical knowledge of oats as well as of economic value to American agriculture. Among his scores of publications his "Oat Identification and Classification" (U.S.D.A, Tech. Bul. 1100) and "Superior Germ Plasm in Oats" (U.S.D.A. Yearbook for 1936) are outstandingly notable in the literature on oats. The many U.S.D.A. farmers bulletins and scientific papers of which he was an author have long been used and widely referred to.

Dr. Stanton believed in the cooperative approach to the solution of agricultural problems. He was responsible for the origin of the first cooperative uniform oat nursery, the oat rust nursery, and pioneered a uniform smut testing and the soil-borne oat mosaic nursery. As Agronomist in Charge, the cooperative oat yield and uniform winter-

hardiness oat nurseries were initiated with his approval. For some 30 years he maintained the World Collection of Oats in the U.S.D.A. His carefully kept records and the care he exercised to keep seed supplies pure and correctly labeled proved of inestimable value to oat scientists of this and other countries.

In the economic field contributions made by himself and his co-workers proved of tremendous value at a critical time for American agriculture. 1n 1930 he pollinated the crown rust resistant South American oat Victoria with pollen from the then important Corn Belt variety Richland and obtained a single crossed seed. In the next decade, in cooperation with others in U.S.D.A, and State Experiment Stations, the crown rust, stem rust and smut resistant varieties Boone, Tama, Vicland, Vikota, Cedar and Control as well as many strains used in further crosses were selected. Crosses of Victoria by co-workers were made in 1930 which resulted in crown rust resistant oats for the South and numerous varieties became available for farm production in both the north and south in the early 1940's.

The timeliness of the release of these varieties was almost without parallel in the history of American agriculture. These were the years of World War II and within a span of some 5 years, 1941-1945, the expansion of Victoria extended to some 80 percent of the oat acreage of the country. It was estimated that the total value of the increased yields resulting from growing these varieties exceeded a half billion dollars in the war years. Whereas the six varieties listed have about disappeared from American farms due to their susceptibility to Victoria blight, strains of Stanton's original cross were much used by hybridists and additional varieties resulted which are still being grown.

Apparently, Stanton's second most notable contribution to oats, from the economic standpoint, came as the result of his crossing Winter Turf with Aurora in 1916. Few oat crosses that later resulted in varieties had been made in the United States previous to 1916 and this was the first cross of note between fall sown varieties. In Lee, derived from the above cross, the desired characters of the parents were combined to an exceptional degree and an entirely new winter oat type resulted. Lee has remained of economic importance for over 30 years and is a progenitor variety of most of the winter oats that have been and still are grown in the cooler areas, Piedmont and elsewhere, of the South. In the last quarter century at least half of the winter oat varieties grown in this country trace to Lee or Lee derivatives.

Although Dr. Stanton made many additional contributions both in the economic and the scientific fields, the above were so outstanding that American agriculture, oat scientists, crop teachers and extension workers will remain much indebted to him for many decades to come.

by F. A. Coffman