

## Walter P. Cottam and the Sequoia Tree

Walter P. Cottam was born in St. George, Utah, March 3, 1894. He grew up there working on his father's farm and helping with the cattle. He spent a lot of time on and around the Pine Vallley Mountain as a young boy and later working for the Forest Service.

Walter went through the local schools and was in the first graduating class of the St. George Stake Academy in 1913. The Academy was the beginning of what has become Dixie State University. Walter married Effie Frei who was also in the same class but six years his senior. He went on to graduate from BYU in 1916 with a A.B. degree and was the first person to receive a master's degree from BYU. He taught at Jordan High School for a year but decided to pursue an advanced degree in Wisconsin. However, he got sidetracked to the University of Chicago and received his Ph.D from there in 1926.

Walter went back to BYU and stayed there for the next 12 years. He then transferred to the University of Utah for the next 31 years and, after retirement, spent many years there working on his hybridized Oak project. He died Dec. 22, 1988.

Dr. Cottam's writings, accomplishments and rewards are too numerous to mention here, but his 1947 lecture--"Is Utah Sahara Bound?" started a conservation movement that is still relevant today. His biography--Why Hurray Through Heaven? pretty well covers the man and his works. The following quote sums it up: "And he planted trees. Hundreds of trees. Thousands of trees. Dr. Cottam's fascination with trees lasted throughout his life. In his forays into the out-of-doors, he was always looking for the largest, the tallest, the most beautiful, the most unusual trees. He photographed them, measured them, made scientific studies of them, wrote articles on his findings about them, and eventually hybridized them."

I spent a year living at the Cottam home; while there he told me that he planted a number of Sequoia trees on both sides of Pine Valley Mountain in the 1930s. The only one known to have survived was near the cabin in the Browse area of the mountain.

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