

# A Tribute to Claude B. Hutchison, 1885-1980



Claude B. Hutchison  
in April 1980

On August 25, 1980, the end came to a life which had, perhaps, the most significant influence on the University of California's Agricultural Experiment Station in its entire history. Claude Burton Hutchison served as Dean of the College of Agriculture for 22 years, from 1930 to 1952, and Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station for 19 years during that period (1930-1949). In addition, he was named Vice President of the University in 1945, a position he held until he retired in 1952.

As the chief administrative officer for teaching and research in the agricultural sciences during this time of growth for the University, he guided the development of facilities, programs, and faculty with remarkable intuition and sound judgment. The early years of his tenure as Dean and Director were trying times, because they were the years when the Depression of the early 1930s gripped this nation. However, he skillfully guided the agricultural sciences through this period of adversity into a sustained period of prosperity and growth.

Claude B. Hutchison was born on a farm near Chillicothe, Missouri, on April 9, 1885. After graduating from Chillicothe High School in 1904, he attended the University of Missouri, where he received a B.S.A. in 1908. He continued his education at Cornell University, where he received an M.S. degree in 1913, and Harvard University, where he received another M.S. degree in 1916. He held faculty positions at the University of Missouri from 1908 to 1916 and at Cornell University from 1916 to 1922.

It was in 1922 that Claude Hutchison began his influential association with the University of California, when he was appointed Professor of Plant Breeding and Director of the branch of the University of California College of Agriculture located at the University Farm at Davis. This was a significant but brief association with Davis, as he left in 1924 for a four-year period to become Associate Director and subsequently Director of Agricultural Education for Europe for the Rockefeller Foundation's International Education Board. He returned to the University of California at Berkeley in 1928 to organize and develop the Giannini Foundation for Agricultural Economics and served as its first Director until 1931.

Claude Hutchison was a builder with vision and a keen judge of quality. His early association with the University Farm at Davis revealed to him the potential of that location and its fledgling agricultural program to become an outstanding agricultural teaching and research center. With skill and persistence, he scoured the country for talented people and persuaded them to join him, as faculty members and researchers in the Agricultural Experiment Station, in fulfilling his dream to make Davis a renowned agricultural center. His persistence was demonstrated when one of his early recruits accepted his invitation to join the University of California only after he agreed also to bring to Davis the experimental dairy cow herd that the young researcher had under study. I am sure that Claude Hutchison's faculty searches in other states and foreign countries created a sense of apprehension in his administrative counterparts as they contemplated some of their outstanding scientists succumbing to the Dean's temptations.

Claude Hutchison's skill in assembling a talent-laden faculty was matched by his skill in securing the necessary support to develop the physical facilities needed for his faculty to flourish. With his encouragement, the University's Agricultural Field Station system was developed, and the Davis campus established itself as a leading center for teaching and research in agriculture. The other units of the College of Agriculture and the Agricultural Experiment Station at Berkeley and Riverside, namely, the Giannini Foundation for Agricultural Economics, the School of Forestry, and the Citrus Experiment Station, each gained stature and fame through the activities of the staff and faculty recruited largely under the direction of this remarkable man.

Dean Hutchison was an inspiration to all who knew and worked with or for him. His quick wit, good humor, infectious friendliness, and ready smile flavored a steadfast will to do what he felt was right for the University. He established a high standard of leadership and accomplishment. I miss his daily walks past my residence and our occasional discussions, which were always topical and educational. Great universities are so because of the people who have been associated with them. The University of California is a great institution, because people like Claude Burton Hutchison have dedicated their lives to make it so.

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