



James Garfield Eddy, Sr.

1881 - 1964

James Garfield Eddy, Sr., lumberman investor and forest geneticist, was born in Bay City, Michigan, on April 7, 1881. He was the son of John Franklin and Charlotte Whittemore Eddy.

John Eddy was a lumberman who had come to Michigan from Bangor, Maine in 1860 to establish a large sawmill. The Eddy family had been associated with the lumber business for several generations.

James completed his early schooling at Lawrenceville School in New Jersey in 1899 and received a Bachelor of Arts degree from Princeton University in 1903.

That same year, he and his brother John W., acquired an interest in the Port Blakely Mill Company on Bainbridge Island in the State of Washington. James sold lumber from the mill in San Francisco until the mill burned. He next relocated to Everett, Washington, where he learned more about the lumber business before buying his own mill, the Ferry Baker Lumber Company.

James was also active in the management of the Eddy Investment Company of Bay City, Michigan, with his brothers, John W. and Robert B. The company had been founded by their father and was managed by the three brothers following their father's passing in 1907. After Robert's death, the Eddy Investment Company was moved to Seattle in 1934.

James married Mary Horton Cooley in Bay City on April 28, 1904. They became the parents of three daughters and one son: Adaline Seymour, Charlotte Whittemore, Mary Ann Cooley and James Garfield, Jr.

James had many business interests besides his lumber company. He raised citrus fruit in California and apples in Washington. During World War I, he joined D.E. Skinner and his brother, John W., in establishing the Skinner and Eddy Shipbuilding Company in Seattle.

However, it was the lumber business and the growing of trees that held his greatest interest. James could look back to his father's and grandfather's careers and trace in just three generations the migration of the forest industry from New England to the Lake States to the Pacific Northwest. He knew that the logged-over lands must be reforested to meet the future needs for wood. However, he became convinced that there must be a way to grow the new trees faster than nature would grow them.

James had read everything published about the work of Luther Burbank and his plant-breeding experiments in California. In 1918 James wrote the scientist but found Burbank not interested in trees for timber, only fruit trees, flowers, and vines. James traveled to Burbank's home in Santa Rosa, California, where he requested a personal meeting with Burbank. Mrs. Burbank refused to let her ailing husband be bothered, but Eddy persisted for two weeks until the interview was granted.

Burbank showed Eddy his hybrid walnut tree that had grown to a diameter of 24 inches at 16 years of age. While Burbank doubted his principles could be applied to conifers, he helped Eddy meet others interested in tree growth. Encouraged by the support of scientists from the University of California and the U.S. Forest Service, and eventually the backing of Burbank, Eddy was ready to move forward with his project.

Eddy was convinced that the federal government would offer financial support for tree improvement. In 1923 he appeared before the Select Committee on Forestry of the United States Senate to plead his case. His testimony created much interest, but no federal funds were offered to support the project.

By 1925, Eddy believed he could wait no longer. Using his own funds, he established the Eddy Tree Breeding Station at Placerville, California. For eleven years the station was maintained with Eddy's personal funds, with some assistance from the Carnegie Institute. Eddy offered Burbank the job of directing the project, but he declined because of his age and current studies. Eddy did accept Burbank's recommendation of a University of California teacher and researcher, Lloyd Austin, to lead the project.

Because of their great commercial value and wide growing range, pine was chosen as the major species to study. An arboretum, later named the Eddy Arboretum, was first established with over 90 species and varieties of pine. By 1931, this was the most complete arboretum of pine in the world.

The first few years were spent learning how to select quality trees. The next phase was undergoing hybridization between various species of pines. This long, complex undertaking has produced over 66 different hybrid combinations of pine, each with different characteristics of greater root systems, more abundant foliage, faster diameter growth, and other responses. The research also led to the rearrangement of the Pinus genus by studying the chromosomes of many species.

As the Eddy Tree Breeding Station developed a reputation and increased staff, Eddy continued to support its work. However, he agreed with others that the research might best be affiliated either with a university or some other organization. In 1932, the name was officially changed to the Institute of Forest Genetics with a board of trustees responsible for its administration. Three years later, in 1935, Congress authorized the federal government to accept the institute as a gift to be administered by the U.S. Forest Service. Research work continues today at the Institute of Forest Genetics.

Over the years, Eddy invested countless hours of planning and support, plus over \$250,000 of his own funds, to make the institute possible.

In 1952, the American Forestry Association presented Eddy with its highest award for outstanding service to American forestry, in recognition of his more than 25 years of effective efforts in the field of forest genetics.

Eddy died on June 5, 1964. Two months later, the Native Sons of the Golden West dedicated a bronze plaque at the institute that reads in part: "Businessman, scientist, conservationist, and true pioneer; his foresight and generous effort advanced the science of forest genetics many years and helped to conserve the supply of forest products for the future."