

GIFTS
OF
GREATNESS

A Biography

of

S. J. QUINNEY

AND

JESSIE ECCLES QUINNEY

GIFTS OF GREATNESS

*The Lives and Legacies
of*

S. J. QUINNEY (1893 TO 1983)

AND

JESSIE ECCLES QUINNEY (1896 TO 1982)

Seymour Joseph and Jessie Eccles Quinney left as true legacies their beliefs and philosophies of life. In their wisdom, they also knew such intangible items often need physical focus; so they also left buildings and programs that they funded: The S. J. and Jessie E. Quinney College of Natural Resources Building and the Natural Resources Research Library, the Quinney Scholarships, and other programs. They gave unselfishly to their alma mater, Utah State University, where he graduated in 1916 and she in 1917.

❁ A ZEST FOR LIFE AND LEARNING ❁

Jessie Eccles was born on May 13, 1896, in Baker City, Oregon, the daughter of David and Ellen Stoddard Eccles. The family moved to Logan soon after Jessie's birth. David Eccles played a prominent role in the industrial and business development of the Western states. His children became, in their turns, men and women of distinction who contributed their talents and gifts to their communities and to institutions of higher learning, such as Utah State University. The Eccles family includes such Utah state benefactors as Jessie Eccles Quinney, Marie Eccles Caine, Emma Eccles Jones, Noni Eccles Treadwell Harrison, George S. Eccles, Marriner S. Eccles, and Willard L. Eccles.

Jessie Eccles spent her early life in Logan where she graduated in 1917 from the Agricultural College of Utah, now Utah State University. A look at college publications from that time shows Jessie to be an active and zestful participant in campus life. She was a member of the sorosis social organization, a member of the Panhellenic Council, the vice-president of her senior class, and a member of the *Buzzer* yearbook staff. In her senior year, she was elected to the Student Body Executive Committee, a signal honor and a mark of high regard from her peers.

Many subjects seemed to fascinate the young Miss Eccles. She was a general science major with an interest in English. She also took a course from Dr. E. G. Titus on the then comparatively new subject of eugenics and heredity and found it stimulating.

Jessie Eccles did not confine herself to science. From the late “Fuzzy” Arnold, a well-known language teacher at the Agricultural College of Utah, she took classes in Russian drama and literature.

✿ A KEEN MIND—A FORWARD LOOK ✿

S. J. Quinney was born on May 12, 1893, in Logan to bookkeeper Joseph Quinney and his wife Ida Theurer Quinney. The elder Quinney later became district manager for Amalgamated Sugar Company.

Joe Quinney attended public schools in Logan. When he was nineteen, he went to Europe for two years on a mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He spent much of the time in Vienna, where he worked on languages and viewed European history firsthand. Speaking about this period in an interview in 1978, Mr. Quinney said the experience was a powerful one that was to color the rest of his life. He vividly recalled the experiences: The Saturday night operas for a mere twenty-five cents and the unfolding of events leading up to World War I.

Quinney returned to the United States and enrolled at the Agricultural College of Utah in Logan with the intent of becoming a lawyer. At the college, Joe Quinney was active in many campus activities. He was the business manager of the *Buzzer* yearbook. He was also a member and manager of the debate team. Quinney lettered in debate and must have felt more than a bit of pride when during his senior year his team won debate matches against both the University of Utah and Brigham Young College. He was the associate editor of *Student Life*, the Commercial Club president, and a member of the following clubs: Quill Club, Agora, Cosmos, and Sigma Alpha fraternity. He also won the Sons of the American Revolution Medal and the Hendricks Medal for extemporaneous speaking.

He was hired to read economics papers for Dr. George Thomas, head of the Economics Department and later president of the University of Utah. Quinney was obviously a good scholar because he was also hired to teach two classes, modern German history and Western European history.

Quinney graduated in 1916 and enrolled at Harvard Law School. He later commented that he found that a “boy from the West had to study hard to catch up with his Eastern classmates who then were more thoroughly versed in subjects such as constitutional law and American history.”

* A LIFE TOGETHER *

After his first year at Harvard Law School in Cambridge, Quinney returned to Logan and married Jessie Eccles on August 17, 1917. Joe and Jess immediately returned to Boston, and she enrolled in Radcliffe. In an interview in 1973, she recalled those days she spent at Radcliffe while her husband went to Harvard Law School. She talked about studying Russian literature, with a

particular emphasis on Tolstoy, with Professor Weiner. She said that the classes were interesting not only for the subject matter but also because Professor Weiner was a participant in contemporary Russian history. He was a friend of Alexander Kerensky and had translated many of his writings. When Kerensky's government was toppled from power, Mrs. Quinney recalled, Professor Weiner expressed great personal sadness. She also studied English literature under the famous Professor Kitteridge.

It was a time of intense study for both of the young scholars, but they did have Sundays together. Often on those afternoons, they would attend the Boston Symphony Orchestra performances. When there was no performance, a visit to local art museums was always available. Their love of music and art flourished early. At that time, they befriended a young and penniless painter named John Gieslien and bought several paintings from him.

After Joe spent two years in law school, the United States entered World War I; and Quinney was drafted and assigned to Fort Lewis, Washington, as a clerk. Quinney's wry comment in later years was that "it was a stultifying experience."

Delighted to be back in Cambridge after his discharge from the army, he quickly went to work and received his L.L.B. degree in the autumn of 1919. (This degree was later elevated to a J.D. by decree for all Harvard law graduates.)

✿ NEW CHOICES—NEW PLACES ✿

The future beckoned and Joe and Jess pondered their choices—Seattle? Salt Lake City? or back to Logan?

Their choice was Salt Lake City where, Quinney stated later, he knew exactly two people. In late 1919, he passed the Utah State Bar examinations and set up an office in the Judge Building. The

first year Quinney opened his door, his gross income was \$900, hardly sufficient for a young couple who had had to borrow to attend school.

In 1927, he joined a firm whose principals included Hugh B. Brown, J. Reuben Clark, and A. E. Bowen. All were subsequently summoned to become apostles of the Mormon Church. This seemed to be the time for a new legal affiliation.

In 1940, he became a founder and partner in Ray, Quinney and Nebeker, a firm that still bears his name and his commitment to the highest standards of legal ethics and jurisprudence in handling the diverse and increasingly complex body of law. In a business profile in 1978, Quinney was asked about the firm he had founded. His reply was, "I think we're a prestigious firm . . . and we damn well better be." He grinned and said no more.

❁ FATHER OF UTAH SKIING ❁

The Quinney family, which now included a son David and a daughter Janet, were avid outdoors people. The family enjoyed sailing, fishing, hunting, climbing, river running, and skiing. Mr. Quinney was introduced to skiing in the late 1920s by his son, Dave. (Dave, a Salt Lake City contractor, who as a youth was a star skier in Western competition, died in 1974.)

It was Quinney's interest in sports that led him in 1936 to arrange for Mayor Watson of Alta to have several thousand acres of the surface rights in Little Cottonwood Canyon, which Watson owned, conveyed to the United States Forest Service.

Since Dave was not old enough to drive himself, Joe Quinney took him out to the slopes. The family story goes that since he had to be at the ski hill for the day anyway Joe decided to learn to ski himself. The Quinney's daughter, Janet, also became a skier. That

left only Mrs. Quinney, who said she took up the sport in self-defense: She didn't want to be left at home while the whole family was up on the hill having a grand time.

From these quiet beginnings, the Quinney children became excellent skiers and won many competitions. They were both competing for a berth on the U. S. Olympic ski team when the Second World War removed the Olympic games from the world sports schedule for many years.

Quinney's "father of Utah skiing" title hailed his pioneering efforts in the formation of the Salt Lake Winter Sports Association, which built the first chair lift at Alta with each member putting up about \$1,000 for the construction. That was the beginning of what was to become one of the famous ski resorts of the world—Alta. Joe Quinney was president of the Utah Ski Club from 1935 to 1938 and was one of the organizers of the annual Snow Cup at Alta, the oldest sanctioned ski race in the United States. He was presented the Winter Sports Award by the Salt Lake Area Chamber of Commerce in 1967. He was named a member of the National Ski Hall of Fame in 1975. Part of the biography submitted with his nomination read:

His promotion of the sport has covered a span of more than fifty years, the period in which ski pioneers such as Joe Quinney successfully bridged the promotion gap between the old days of carrying long wooden skis up an endless mountain to a complex of high-speed chair lifts carrying thousands daily to their favorite runs high on the mountains. Joe Quinney is a ski-sport builder and public-minded citizen whose reputation has been felt in the ski world for half a century. His contributions to the sport are endless, and his impact is felt worldwide.

Joe Quinney told a reporter that he was “a little frog in the big puddle of skiing.” A later article held the opposite to be more truthful when it stated that men such as Joe Quinney were “the backbone, heart and minds of skiing.”

✿ ALTA—ANOTHER TYPE OF RECLAMATION ✿

In the spring 1980 issue of the College of Natural Resources' publication *Edge*, Roselena Sanders interviewed S. J. Quinney concerning his role in the reclamation of disturbed lands. She noted that “when the pioneers first came to the Salt Lake Valley, they used Little Cottonwood Canyon for timber. Next came the miners and the establishment of the community of Alta. . . . After the miners played out, and the mountain was practically denuded of trees, the area was used to run sheep. Now, it's the home of Alta Ski Resort.”

S. J. Quinney said, “Many people have used the same areas for different purposes, but all the uses have been for the benefit of the public. Each use of the area has been indigenous to society at the time. The transfers of use have been in response to public requirement. I wonder if there will be another use in the future?”

He agreed with Thadis W. Box, at that time Dean of Utah State University College of Natural Resources, who said that “reclamation of land is not necessarily returning an area to its original state of nature.” Both men believed, for example, that what happened in land-use change in Little Cottonwood Canyon over the years was a good example of reclamation. “The board of the Alta Ski Lift Company has always been eager to restore and to enhance the area,” said Mr. Quinney. “I think that a ski area is a good use of land. The managers restore terrain, and the public can use the area all year, skiing in the winter and hiking and picnicking in the summer—a convincing example of land use.”

Quinney was not just a winter sports pioneer. He saw in the story of Alta more than just the creation of a world-famous ski area. He saw a prime example of how to convert land used and abandoned by one industry into another of equal value to society. Today the hills of Alta are breathtakingly beautiful with trees and, in the summer, with wildflowers of many species and colors. Much of what was removed by earlier uses of the land has been replaced and restored by the Alta Ski Lift Company.

❁ RIVER RUNNING ❁

Joe Quinney also enjoyed river running. His friend Fred Speyer, who was General Manager of Alta, encouraged Joe to try this new sport. He read the journals of Major Powell and became very enthusiastic about attempting to run a river. Fred Speyer, Don Harris, and Jack Brennen built several Major Powell boats; and in these boats, between 1950 and 1957, ran the Snake, Yampa, Green, Colorado, and Cataract Canyon Rivers. This was before any dams were built on these rivers. It was certainly a far cry from what river running is all about today. As Joe once said, "You never saw anybody for a week!"

❁ COMMUNITY, COMMITTEES, AND COMMITMENTS ❁

The lives of the Quinneys continued to be busy, full, and prosperous. The things they loved they shared with the people of Utah. Joe Quinney served on the board of directors of the Utah Symphony Orchestra for many years. Jessie Quinney was an active volunteer and financial supporter of Ballet West, Neighborhood House, and the Utah Arthritis Foundation. Together the couple also contributed to the Utah Museum of Fine Arts and to the University of Utah Medical School drive. It was to their alma mater, Utah State University, however, that they gave several gifts

of wisdom and value, including donations to the Athletic Department, the Harpsichord Fund, and several scholarships and donations to the David and Ellen Stoddard Eccles Building, named for Mrs. Quinney's parents.

When S. J. Quinney joined the College of Natural Resources' Citizen's Advisory Committee in 1979, he and the other members of the committee were asked to help the College of Natural Resources focus on problems of greatest concern to Utahns. They were asked to advise the college on ways to serve the state better and to aid in the wise use of Utah's rich resource base. The men and women of the advisory committee included leaders from business, agriculture, forestry, mining, range resources, and both public and private interests.

Mr. Quinney not only made his presence felt on the committee, he also served as an example of a man who put his money where his values were by funding an endowment for the College of Natural Resources. He and Mrs. Quinney were major donors to the buildings that now bear their names and comprise the College of Natural Resources. In 1980, S. J. Quinney also chaired a successful seven-million-dollar project for Life Span Learning facilities on the campus.

S. J. Quinney received an honorary doctorate of law degree from Utah State University in 1976. He and Jessie were honored as Alumni of the Year at Utah State University in 1980. In 1982, a Utah State University building was named the S. J. and Jessie E. Quinney Natural Resources Biology Building in their honor. On the occasion of the building's dedication, Dr. Stanford Cazier, then president of Utah State University, commented, "We are honoring two persons who have been major influences in the growth and direction of this institution."

❁ THE NATURAL RESOURCES CONNECTION ❁

Northern Utah held a very special place in the hearts of the Quinney family. In addition to growing up in Logan and graduating from the Agricultural College of Utah, both Joe and Jess Quinney valued their time at their Bear Lake cabin retreat. It is not surprising then that they followed the course of their alma mater as it evolved through the years.

When the Utah State University alumni publication *Outlook* in February of 1970 published an article outlining the ideas of Dr. Thadis W. Box, newly appointed Dean of the College of Natural Resources, it must have struck a responsive chord in the mind of Mr. Quinney because he and Mrs. Quinney made a sizable donation to the College of Natural Resources and placed no restrictions on the money. He said merely, "Make Northern Utah a better place to live."

After many years of being a consistent donor to the college, Quinney was asked why he did not dictate how the money was to be spent. His answer was, "What I do is pick areas that interest me, pick people I have confidence in, then I put my money and resources behind them."

Quinney understood the value of unrestricted money to fund special projects and scholarships. He liked to have input on projects but left the final decision to the dean.

In recalling the days when S. J. Quinney was a member of the College of Natural Resources' Citizen's Advisory Board, Dean Emeritus Thad Box said, "I miss Joe Quinney for his quiet advice and his insight into what executives should do and what advisory boards should do. He acted as a great sounding board. He was a man to whom we could give ideas. He listened for the broad, general areas and then found money and other resources to back them."

✿ HIGH IDEALISM AND SERVICE ✿

The lives of S. J. Quinney and Jessie E. Quinney were marked with high idealism and a very real sense of service and deep commitment to their community and state. They underscored their values by supporting institutions in building programs and facilities that aided the present needs as well as reached into the future.

Joe was basically, however, a reserved individual. It was difficult to draw him into a discussion of projects in which his personal interest, time, and contributions were a major part of the finished product. As one reflects on his entire life and considers the scope and depth of his accomplishments in the legal community, at his beloved Alta, in his philanthropic and community activities, and with his family, one begins to appreciate a man of great vision and intellect, a patient and innovative leader who led a very fulfilled and successful life. Joe was also the kind of man who would have been the first to state emphatically that it was always with the love and support of his cherished wife, Jessie, that these things were accomplished, that it was not so much “I” but rather “we” who realized so many hopes and dreams.

Joe and Jess left as their legacy the charitable foundation named after them—The S. J. and Jessie E. Quinney Foundation, which is directed and administered by their heirs and selected law partners from Mr. Quinney’s law firm. Joe and Jess, through their foundation, remain invaluable supporters of the College of Natural Resources. Among other things, the foundation has set up the Quinney Scholarship program as well as the Quinney Graduate Scholarship. In 1989, the S. J. and Jessie E. Quinney Foundation provided a grant to construct the research library, which includes, in addition to the library, the Remote Sensing/GIS Laboratory, the Utah Geographic Alliance, and the Policy Analysis Program.

Joe and Jess Quinney lived long lives filled with creativity and innovation. Their vision and determination made possible their legacies of greatness that continue to be manifest through the administration of the S. J. and Jessie E. Quinney Foundation.



Joe Quinney (1893 to 1983)



Jess Quinney (1896 to 1982)