

LRGV Citrus History Excerpts

Provided by Norman Rozeff
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Vela family members Teresa Chapa Alamia and Leticia Alamia Valdez relate this of their family history at the Laguna Seca Ranch north of McAllen: "The first citrus trees in the Valley are planted by Carlota Vela in 1871. A priest making his yearly rounds of the ranches brought oranges as a gift to the family. He helped plant the seeds of these oranges in Carlota's garden. Seven seeds sprouted and flourished for 70 years as a monument to the kind deed of the circuit rider and the little girl who loved trees and flowers." It is speculated that they were of a Spanish variety. In one account an historian notes that as early as 1824 Oblate Fathers may have planted citrus near today's Mission. While the Velas documented, and validly so, the early plantings of citrus in the Valley, it is highly likely that some undocumented citrus plantings north of the river preceded that at the ranch. In "The Diary of Benjamin F. McIntyre 1862-1864", McIntyre records his encounters with citrus in the Valley and in Matamoros. In his December 4, 1863 entry concerning Brownsville's market place he notes "...dirty orange women sitting on the ground with their fruit spread before them...". In his January 2, 1864 he remarks about his visit to Matamoros. Here he writes of a few orange trees planted in the main plaza and at the market nearby "There were hundreds of bushels of oranges..." and "There are many fine groves of orange hanging full of their golden fruit now ripe for the harvest." As a matter of curiosity Robert E. Lee while visiting the Valley in the performance of his duty in 1856, wrote a letter to his wife in which he mentions the bowl of oranges sitting in the Brownsville home of Richard King.

John Peavey wrote that upon his arrival in Brownsville in 1905, "fruit vendors were continually on the streets of Brownsville with large baskets of fruit, oranges, lemons, figs, grapes, guavas, lady-finger bananas and dates in season. All were grown in the vicinity of Matamoros, Santa Cruz and Brownsville, here and there in small amounts on the old plantations. Almost every garden and yard in these old towns contained a few of these trees. The streets in old Fort Brown were lined with orange and palm trees, and many of these palm trees were of the fruit-bearing variety."

In the Brownsville area it was said that French-born merchant Celestin Jagou planted the first citrus trees in the area in 1891. He would experiment with a wide range of crops and "in fruit culture of the subtropical fruits as well as those grown in California." His oranges had been shipped from Orlando, Florida. Limes and lemons had come from Mexico and Italy.

1899 A freeze killed seven acres of eight year old orange and lemon trees on Jagou's Esperanza Farms southeast of Brownsville according to James Allhands in his book "Uriah Lott." This same freeze did great damage to citrus across the Valley. When the trees resprouted from rootstock they proved to be worthless as they now bore Spanish sour oranges.

In early December 1904 Harvey C. Stiles, a California fruit expert, visited the Valley to assess its potential for citrus and other fruit tree crops. His visit enticed J. B. Armstrong and three other ranchers to agree to spend \$20,000 to plant orange groves the following year. *Brownsville Herald* 12/10/1904, 12/24/1904

After having perfected deep artesian water wells on the King Ranch, Robert Kleberg (Capt. Richard King's son-in-law) started experimenting with commercial crop possibilities in 1902. He brought in experts to "establish nurseries of semi-tropical fruit trees, dates, olives, citrus." The latter came under the skilled supervision of horticulturist Stiles in 1904.

Selma Goldammer, wife of the prominent early Valley builder, Andrew Goldammer and daughter of pioneer Harlingen banker August H. Weller, put down a reminiscence in January 1959. She had this to relate about citrus: "Not until 1902, when some trees were planted in Beeville, did real interest in orange production begin. Four years later orange trees were planted on the Raymond Ranch near Raymondville. Grapefruit trees for the early orchards were imported from Florida. They were on the Duncan varieties, but these were soon supplanted by the Marsh seedless. The Marsh pink also originated from the Duncan. The Marsh Pink grapefruit, which had the best record of any fruit in the Valley originated as a sport bud on a white March tree in the orchard of W.B. Thompson of Florida. By 1925 many of the Valley nursery men were growing their own trees. The A & I Citrus and Vegetable Center in Weslaco is part of the Texas College of Arts and Industries located in Kingsville, Texas."

An account in the files of the Lower Rio Grande Historical Society relates the following: About 1906 a man named A. P. Wright settled near Santa Maria. He became interested in the development and culture of citrus fruit and did a great deal of experimenting on the 160 acre Chenoworth's Plantation.. The skeptics insisted that citrus trees were all right as ornamentals but were not as an investment. Between 1909 and 1911 the results of Mr. Wrights experiment began showing promise. Unfortunately they were set back by rising salts and soil alkalinity in poorly selected land.

About 1912 Wright's experiments attracted the attention of several men from the vicinity of Mission, Texas, as well as other localities. Mission area land developers John Conway and James W. Hoit invited Wright to move to the Mission area, and he did so, then resuming his citrus experimentation.

John H. Shary was to enter the picture in a big way. Shary had been born to Austrian immigrant parents in Nebraska on March 2, 1872. He became a registered pharmacist, traveling drug salesman for a California firm, and came to own two successful drug stores. Upon journeying to Texas he and partner George W. Paul purchased a 30,000 acre ranch between San Antonio and Corpus Christi. They were to sell all but 3,000 acres of it, making a profit of \$100,000. In 1912 Shary went on to speculate in land purchases north of the Valley. That year he came to the Valley and bought the 12,000 acres Judge Brooks Estate near San Juan and Pharr. He went on to buy the Briggs Estate near McAllen and then 16,000 acres near Mission. These would be combined with the adjacent 20,000 acres, all to be known as "Sharyland."

In 1915 John Shary became interested in and planted 300 acres of citrus trees on the tract.

It would one day expand to 15,000 acres of groves.

Shary needed water for irrigation and transformed the old Mission Canal Company into the United Irrigation Company. His endeavors attracted a great deal of attention all over the southwest. About 1915-16 carload shipments of citrus fruit started to move out of the Valley. By 1923 packing sheds began to appear.

Valley oldtimer John R. Peavey in his book "Echoes from the Rio Grande" also credits Wright with promoting the early citrus industry of the Valley. Peavey notes that the first oranges that he saw from Mr. Wright's trees were similar to those grown around Matamoros and Brownsville when he first arrived in the Valley – with a reddish tinge and very sweet. "The lemons were very large with a very thick skin, and as I remember were called the Ponderosa variety." Peavey goes on to write "Between 1909 and 1911 the results of Mr. Wright's experiment began to show promise. About 1912 this experiment attracted the attention of several men from the vicinity of Mission, Texas, as well as other localities. But those that took the interest most were Charles Volz, John J. Conway, and a man named Robertson." The individuals who did show interest in finding the most suitable citrus for the region were Charles Volz, Roy Conway, Max Melch, and J. K. Robertson.

Eventually the use of sour orange rootstock and perfection of grafting techniques proved the way to expanded production. At one point however diseased stock imported from California and Florida threatened the progress that had been made.

1907 The first grapefruit tree planted in the San Benito-Harlingen area was said to be a Marsh Seedless planted on the Barber Plantation west of downtown San Benito. It was still under cultivation in 1937 by owner W. B. Meyer.

Regardless of the civil disturbances at the time, semblances of normalcy existed. In November 1915 the USDA announced plans to establish an experiment station in Mercedes. It would be staffed by six experts. Moreover, the citrus industry had started to expand. In February 1916, 200 acres were planted by William Lingerbrink, Pomelo Gardens Company of Mercedes and others. The Piper Plantation was soon to follow with 500 grapefruit trees on a five acre block. Embedded in any new agricultural endeavors was always the expectation that this one would be that to provide a constant, reliable and profitable income. (*Brownsville Herald* 11/17/15 and 2/14/16 and 3/9/16)

1910s Perhaps the first Valley pioneer of Japanese ancestry was Heishoro Miyamoto. After spending six years in Mexico he was to purchase 20 acres of land near Mission. He had worked and toured in the U.S. in 1908 or 1909 and was ambitious to get Japanese investors to expand here. He was unable to do so and instead opened a small nursery and introduced into the area the Satsuma orange, also called mandarin. The tree stock came from Japan. He returned to Mexico in 1925 but not before convincing at least five Japanese men to immigrate to the area.

By this year 42,384 orange trees produced 10,694 boxes of oranges. Rising citrus production soon led to the formation of the Texas Citrus Growers' Association and the South Texas Citrus Growers' Association.

1914 W.T. Hodge moves to Harlingen and in 1916 establishes himself as a shipper of fruit and vegetables. In this first year he ships only 58 carloads of produce. He was born

in Sparta TN, 6/6/86 to Jeff and Martha Shockley Hodge. After being educated there he joined his father in the produce business, eventually moving to Fort Worth in 1903 and continuing in the produce business. He engaged in this same trade in Oklahoma City for six years before coming to the Valley. In 1921 he ships the first carload of grapefruit out of the Valley. This citrus fruit industry pioneer becomes, in 1924 the head of the Valley Fruit Exchange, a large corporation. By 1926 he ships 1,070 carloads of various produce from the Harlingen area. In 1927 it ships 1,400 carloads all over the country as well as to Canada. In 1929 he completes the erection of two packing sheds. The Harlingen one has a capacity of five carloads and a floor space of 52,000 square feet in its tile and brick structure while the Rogerville one handle three carloads in its 4,500 square feet in a sheet metal building. Hodge married Estella Hilburn of Fort Worth in that city on May 27, 1906. By 1929 they have daughters Mildred and Eunice. As well as being an Elks member, he is vice president of the Lower Rio Grande Valley Shippers Association.

According to Peavey it was about 1915-16 that carload shipments of citrus fruit started to move out of the Valley and by 1923 packing sheds began to appear all over the place. Peavey also proffers the information that surreptitious destruction of trees and that conducted by individuals posing as government agents but in reality on the part of fruit grower associations in other parts of the country were "caused by jealous and fear of competition." Local orchard growers took to defending themselves as word got around of the axing. Earl Wetmore and Levi Snavely were the first to ship a car of mixed citrus fruit from Harlingen.

1916 Otis Edmond Stuart comes to the Valley. He and his cousin, Robert Terry Stuart [he acquainted himself with the Valley as early as 1912], later develop and promote Stuart Place with its 10,000 acres, probably the largest individually owned agricultural and citrus fruit property in South Texas. Brand names are Stuart's Premium and Stuart's Tree Ripened. Its two packing sheds handling products have a total of 10,000 square feet. R.T. is a resident of Oklahoma City and president of the Mid-Continental Life Insurance Co. (of Oklahoma). In 1918 O.E. is selling land via the American Land Corp. By 1930 it is the American Land Co. with I.W. Wine, manager.

1917 Here this year John Thomas Hester takes up farming and the management of orchards. He dies at age 81 on 8/13/60 leaving his wife Elnora, Mrs. C.H. (Mildred) Carden, Mrs. Loretta Young, and William R. Hester, all of Harlingen and others elsewhere.

Prior to 1917 Thomas F. Lee purchases a sizeable parcel of land just west of Harlingen with the intention of subdividing it. To attract buyers he builds an impressive two-story community clubhouse at "Leeland." When the Stuarts later purchase Lee's holdings, the building becomes the Stuart Place Community Club and the site of many social activities. It is still there at 7901 West Business 83. By 1917 Thomas F. Lee is heavily promoting sales of his farmland west of Harlingen. His Lee Land Company has offices in what he calls Leeland (now the Stuart Place area south of West Business 83), Dallas, Oklahoma City, and St. Louis. He is utilizing excursions to generate sales. One brochure exclaims "Our luxurious private steel Pullman car leaves the Union Station, St. Louis, the first and third Tuesdays of each month for the Home of the Golden Fruit--Leeland--the heart of the

Rio Grande Valley." His brochure titles are "The Magic Valley", "Telephone for Rain", "Golden Fruit", "Harvest at Christmas Time", and "My Southern Home."

1918 is the year Samuel James came to Harlingen and set up a citrus grove, now the Woodlawn Addition. He had come to the Valley in 1908. This resident later of 421 E. Washington Street also operated a nursery for a time. A member of St. Anthony's Catholic Church, he was to die at age 90 on 5/6/52.

In this year 32-year old Arthur Pitt was working with a USDA crew out of Brownsville. It was looking for citrus canker but found it rare in the Valley. Pitt, an Englishman who had migrated to Canada and then to the US, would soon partner with Sam Baker in purchasing 20 acres near Los Fresnos. He retained these as the partnership dissolved and Baker set up his nursery west of Harlingen. Pitt also bought 20 acres five miles east of Brownsville. By 1924 he had been joined by his brothers Charles and Edwin. They established Pitt Brothers and in this year planted 10,000 trees on 2000 acres of the Rice Tract east of San Benito. This property was owned by col. Rice, commandant of Fort Brown. Arthur would remain in the citrus nursery business for over 60 years. He would complete his unpublished autobiography in 1980.

Production growth is abetted when the Southwestern Land Company is formed and promotes the "Shary Plan" wherein small investors could be offered complete grove services, including marketing, assistance. Other companies followed suit in the late decade of the teens.

This same year, 1918, Wiley Edgar and Adella Carey arrive in Harlingen with their 20 year old son James Edmond (Ed) Carey. The following year Ed returns to Throckmorton, TX to marry and bring his bride, Monterey McCay, to Harlingen. He then builds and furnishes for her a two story California style house where Ed Carey Drive now meets Expressway 77/83. He plants 200 acres of citrus in the area and later also grows cotton and vegetables. His first attempt to operate a service station located at North Commerce near the old jail ends in failure. Later however he will successfully own and operate two or three service stations around Harlingen. This First Baptist Church member will support the Boy Scouts and be very active with the Kiwanis Club. His strong faith will encourage his young brother-in-law, L.B. McCay to take up the ministry. He and Monterey have two children, Isla Lou (later Mrs. Wallace C. Athey) and son James Edmond Carey, Jr. After recovery miraculously from a cerebral hemorrhage and semi-paralysis in 1950, Ed, a native of Caddo, TX, will die in late November 1951 at age 52. As the city expands and begins to name streets after states, Pennsylvania is proposed for what people call Ed Carey Road. Public opinion prevails, however, and the city retains the name Ed Carey. When the expressway is constructed in the 1950s, the Carey homestead is demolished. Mrs. Carey then builds a smaller residence on her property to the south. She will die in 1978.

1919 This same year Sam J. Baker comes to town. He later co-founds Baker-Potts Nursery on the road west of town so named for this entity. This native of Howard City, KS (b.3/12/72) dies at age 87 (11/2/59) in Baytown, TX at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Louis (Amy Mae) Himes. A second daughter, Mrs. Frances Davis, resides in Harlingen. His wife, Virginia T. Dyer Baker, preceded him in death. Baker was a community activist

being a Mason, Odd Fellow, Woodmen of the World, and member of the Christian Church. In WWI he assisted in Liberty Bond drives.

Arthur J. Potts is a nursery man as well as secretary-treasurer of the company. He was born in Weatherford, TX 3/16/83. He attended Texas A&M College and the U. of California. He married Frances Opal Poland of Muncie, IN on 6/2/10. During the war he was an instructor to the A.T.C. At 802 Harrison they have a daughter Litha Marie. This year also Stanley B. Crockett assisted his father with the same first name in setting out 1000 acres of citrus west of Harlingen. In 1970 the Crocketts would operate the largest citrus nursery in the state.

The rising star was citrus. It had problems though. In early March 1920 some 7,000 trees were destroyed by federal horticultural agents at Donna in order to control the spread of canker disease. Realizing the seriousness of the disease, growers joined in support of continued federal inspections. In the east side of the Valley L. E. Snavely of Harlingen was one of the prime promoters of citrus. He had done so well on his own grove that he took on the job of managing groves for absentee landowners who planted citrus. By the spring of 1922 an estimated million trees were being grown on 10,000 acres. Sixty percent of these were grapefruit, 35% orange, and 5% lemon. Their production was sufficient for citrus growers to establish the Valley Citrus Exchange. It was chartered on 4/22/22 with J. A. Hickman as its first president. (*Brownsville Herald*, 4/2/22, 4/11/22,4/22/22)

6/17/20 is the date Orlie and Florence Redinour with their three sons and a daughter arrive in Mercedes, Texas. Their newly purchased property is on Mile 3, west of the town and where the Pine to Palm Mobile Home Park now stands. They soon set about planting the rich fertile land to citrus. Initially they ran a citrus tree nursery, later sold gift fruit, and during WWII sold citrus to the army. He would die in 1957 and she in 1959, both having reached the age of 92.

1921 (spring) In what is termed an "offseason" Harlingen area farmers still ship 583 solid carloads from the city. Shipped are tomatoes, beans, beets, carrots, onions, green corn, squash, spinach, peppers, cucumbers, and cantaloupes. Freight and passenger revenues for Harlingen Station during 1920 were \$568,000.

O'Hea Brothers, the heaviest buyers of cotton in the U.S. for export to England, have their office in Harlingen.

Advertising orange, lemon, lime, and grapefruit trees for sale is Dorton's Southwest Nurseries.

1921 Citrus shipments this year are above 20,000,000 boxes and remain in this vicinity until the freeze year of 1949 after which they dip to 14,000,000.

Coming in 1921 from Bishop, TX were Joseph Willie and Gertrude Grant Williams. Mr. Williams, a blacksmith by trade, had bought 25 acres in the Lon C. Hill subdivision south of Harlingen in 1920 and wanted to change his line of work. He farmed the land and grew citrus to be sold on the streets of Harlingen. He is to die at age 92 on 10/17/61 leaving his wife Gertrude and daughter Mildred.

1921 Guy Melvin Snavely, Sr. a businessman here since that date dies at age 78 on 8/5/60. He was a partner with L.E. Snavely in the Snavely Packing Company. He is survived by his wife Charlotte and daughter Mrs. Charlotte Griffen.

1922 H. Raymond Mills organizes the Valley Packing Co. in Harlingen. It is the first citrus packing shed outside of the California-Florida-Arizona districts. C.B. Wood is secretary. A *Houston Chronicle* spread on Sunday 1/25/23 shows six photos of the plant including its exterior, two of grading tables, sizer and packing bins, the applicator and elevator, and where the fruit is packed. The wooden crates are labeled Valley Sweet. The plant is at N. Commerce and Washington. It packs 40 carloads in 1922 and 23 by the spring of 1923. In this year the John Shary interests purchase the machinery and move it to Sharyland, an area which will become the Valley's center for citrus culture.

1/15/22 The Sunday edition of the *Houston Chronicle* runs a special section on Rio Grande Valley Citrus and Vegetables. John Shary is featured in one article. Eltweed Pomoroy is noted as an authority on citrus growing.

4/15/22 A purchase on this date started Harry H. Whipple of Los Fresnos in planting a limited acreage of citrus. From the San Juan Nursery and Development Company he purchased 120 citrus trees at \$1.25 each. This outfit, a partnership of Sam Baker and Arthur Pitt, operated 20 acres in the Los Fresnos vicinity. Both Pitt and Baker would go on to own major nurseries, the former in Brownsville and the latter in west Harlingen. By 1931 Whipple's ten acres of Marsh seedless grapefruit, navel oranges, and Valencia oranges, although not yet at full production, were claimed to be generating around \$1000 a year.

5/23/22 The LRGV Citrus Growers Exchange is organized by O.E. Stuart, vice president of the Stuart Place Marketing Organization. 900 growers are to participate in it. A supplement to Monty's Monthly in 1922 is titled "The Citrus Tree, Facts and Potentials of the Lower Rio Grande Valley's Great Industry." An ad on its back cover is for the Lower Rio Grande Citrus Exchange, obviously shortened from the above. Its notes as its officers: J.A. Hickman, president; O.E. Stuart, vice president; H.H. Banker, Secretary; and directors R.J. Thomas, A.H. Kalbfleisch, W.A. Comp, D.A. Cleveland W.G. Rice, and Charles Volz.

11/22 The Lower Rio Grande Citrus Exchange takes a full page ad in the Valley Mid-Winter Fair edition of the *San Benito Light*. J.R. Hickman, its president and manager, asks "Is It Fair?" regarding poorly packed and graded citrus fruit competing with "Valley-Sweet" and its standard pack. He berates the competition.

In this year the Harlingen district has 1000 acres of citrus averaging 60-70 trees/acre and at age 5-6 years should produce 10 boxes of fruit per tree.

1923 Otha Alton Wyrick, around 18 years old, arrives here. This native of Emerson, AK is to become a citrus grower and cotton farmer. Over the years he is deeply involved in civic endeavors including boy scouting, serving on boards, and with the Church of Christ. When he dies in April 1986 at age 81 he leaves his wife Anna Mote, son Michael of Harlingen, and two daughters. On 12/28/05 Mrs. Wyrick, 95 years old, is to die after having lived at 822 Taylor for 60 years. Born in the Oklahoma Indian Territory she had

moved to Harlingen in 1924. A member of the First Christian Church for over 75 years, she was known for her flower and gardening prowess.

The Texas Citrus Fruit Growers Exchange is organized this year in August by John Shary and other growers. The benefit is quality of produce shipped due to grading standards. By 1928 the exchange will have erected a large handsome factory with trademark signage advertising "TexaSweeet." Its packing sheds will be in Harlingen and Sharyland and later Mercedes.

2/14/23 *The Harlingen Radio* Vol.1 No.32 reports an estimate that the Valley will ship 70 carloads of citrus fruit this season and together with local express shipments the total will run to 100 or more. Twenty-five straight cars of grapefruit have been moved by the Valley Harlingen Packing plant.

4/6/23 Nurseries in the area are competitive. W. M. Ellison Citrus Nurseries advertises the availability of Marsh Seedless, Duncan, and Walters grapefruit trees, balled or bare-rooted. The La Bonita Nursery offers grapefruit, orange, peaches, plums, ornamentals, and shrubs. W.W. Jones Citrus Nurseries with outlets in Harlingen and Brownsville notes its establishment in 1916.

Jan.-Feb. 1925 The Texas Department of Agriculture publishes its Bulletin No. 19 titled "The Citrus Industry in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas." The 128 page publication is written by J. M. Delcurto, E. W. Halstead, and Hal F. Halstead.

1/25 An assessment of the December freeze reveals a 15% loss of the Valley grapefruit crop and 25% for oranges.

2/13/25 W. T. Adams, the Corinth, Mississippi machinery manufacturer who owns considerable acreage (later to be called Adams Gardens) west of Harlingen, visits his property that has a small citrus grove and concludes the freeze did little damage to his citrus trees over two years age. He observes limited damage to orange and grapefruit trees under this age. The exception is lemon trees. Adams believes that stopping the watering of the orchards in September or October will put them in a dormant state and help protect them against freezes. In a letter he also notes that fruit and vegetable shipments are about twice what they were in the preceding year.

2/27/25 Charles Edward Rickard, an Illinois native, locates in Corpus Christi but by this date comes from Cape Girardeau, MO to become a Harlingen resident. Before 1930 he becomes an area citrus grower owning five acres and managing 90 acres more for non-resident owners. His home is Rural Route No. 2 out of Harlingen.

After checking out both California and Florida, Wimberly McLeod comes to Harlingen where he and financial partner, Walton D. Hood, a San Antonio banker, buy in 1928 a large but undeveloped tract of 1,870 acres with the intention of subdividing it into small acreages for citrus production. They create the McLeod-Hood Land Co. The site is located just south of the Ojo de Agua Tract, bounded on the east by the Arroyo Colorado and the west by the Briggs-Coleman Tract. It even has a 69 acre reservoir. The 165 lots range in size from around 2.8 acres to 20 acres. A large u-shaped two-story residence/clubhouse is erected on the property next to the arroyo to entertain prospective buyers. Wimberly McLeod is president of McLeod and Hood Co. with Paul H. Brown as vice-president, and Walton D. Hood, secretary-treasurer. The company's office is in the Politis Building at 108 ½ North 1st Street. McLeod will also sell parcels in the Rice

Tract east of San Benito. This land is then cleared by the Bingley brothers of Los Fresnos. McLeod is a native of Abbeville, GA, having been born there 11/6/92. By 1931 he and his wife have a small daughter.

6/12/25 Prof. Arthur T. Potts resigns his Texas A&M position as head of the horticultural division to join Sam Baker in the formation of a nursery company called Baker-Potts. In addition to an A&M degree Potts possesses one in citrus from the University of California. Potts had help to set up Texas A & M College experiment stations around the state, including the Weslaco one in 1923. It was originally Substation Number 15. In 1951 the Rio Grande Horticultural Society recognized his efforts and ever since the prestigious annual Arthur T. Potts Award is awarded to a deserving individual. Baker came to the Valley to be an ag inspector and in 1916 entered business in Los Fresnos. Baker-Potts Road west of Harlingen is named after the nursery site. It was in 1925 that the Harding-Gill Company, using 1,500 Mexican laborers, began clearing land on the Mestenas Tract. It built an impressive clubhouse near Delta Lake to accommodate landseekers. Citrus orchards would soon occupy this virgin land.

6/26 The C.C. Howell Company is dealing in fresh fruit and vegetables.

10/1927 Stanley Crockett begins work in citrus culture and propagation at the Baker-Potts Nursery west of Harlingen. He had traveled to California to learn the latest techniques. By 1958 he would own 1,200 acres, half of which were in citrus production. Sam J. Baker claims to be the first man in the Valley to start a nursery with his own stock when John Shary was the only man here breeding plants on a nursery basis. Homer Dolton did the budding work for Shary. Other citrus pioneers here were "Boll" Briscoe near Mission and Eltweed Pomeroy (an Englishman), Donna. Griffin Brothers from Florida opened a McAllen nursery but failed to make a go of it. They did however try sour orange root stock obtained from Los Fresnos. Citrus varieties at this time were for grapefruit: Marsh, Duncan, Connor's Improved Prolific; for orange: Parson Brown, the Pineapple, Valencia, Lu Gim Gong, and Washington Naval; for lemon: Eureka, Lisbon, and being spread was the Myers which was cold tolerant.

It is 1927 that Van Snell's father, who is in real estate in Hammond, LA, is attracted by Valley opportunities, buys land near Donna, and then moves there where he takes up citrus culture. Van will go on to Edinburg Junior College where he meets his future wife Kitty. He then works at the USDA Laboratory in Weslaco before entering a lengthy eventful career as cannery manager with H.E.B. He works 32 years building and managing the Harlingen Canning Company. He was one of those instrumental in the development of the Port of Harlingen, served the Chamber of Commerce, helped to found Tropical Savings and Loan Co., was a Rotary and First Methodist Church member, and was president of the Harlingen Housing Authority Board as well as one which disposed of the former Harvey Richards Field area. Preceded by his wife of 60 years, Kathryn Vaughn Snell, Van Snell is to die in Harlingen at age 94 on July 16, 2005. He leaves a daughter, Ada Kay St. John of Mercedes, and a son Kenneth of Austin along with grandchildren and great grandchildren.

1928 L.E. Snavely is doing so well with his citrus business that in mid-1928 he constructs his \$11,250 showplace on Wilson Road. He was educated in Wellington High

School in that city in Kansas and at Kansas Normal School. In 1899 he wed Lenna M. Edmondson of Wellington. In 1931 this First Presbyterian, Woodman of the World and Kiwanis member and his wife had two children. He is found dead in Haymarket Plaza, San Antonio. His death at age 68 in 1939 is likely due to a heart attack. Mrs. Snavelly is to precede him in death in 1938. Their daughter is to become Mrs. Paul Phipps. Numerous citrus growers are now spread across the Valley. Some of these include from the San Benito area E. N. Brown, C. W. Sullivan (Farm Rentals and Development), Claude L. Atkins, E.E. Ogden (Delta Irrigated Farms Co.), James C. Bowie (Bowie & Trent), M.F. Orr (El Jardin del Oro); from Los Fresnos Harry H. Whipple; from Mercedes George A. Morrison (Ebonyhurst Farm), Flora Mills Carter (Lake View Orchards and Nursery), E.E. Evans; from La Feria J.J. Heidt (Rosedale Fruit Farm); elsewhere A. N. Roach, E. J. Bucklin, and Alfred L. Harloff.

8/21/28 Irrigated Farm Corporation, 5061 Broadway, Chicago, with principles Rutherford and (H. C.) Harding, issue a hard-covered oversize book promoting their citrus lands. This 95-page book has numerous colorized photos (by Dickey and others) and testimonials. These gentleman commenced in 1926 the Valley Citrus Fruit Syndicate with six other partner investors and Herman C. Dilg as manager/partner of their 105 acre tract near La Feria. Rutherford and Haynes then purchased land in Shares 27 and 28 (alongside the Cuates Resaca later Bayview) of the Espiritu Santo Grant and started to clear and develop it for resale. Jack Elliott of the Elliott Development Company, San Benito was awarded the citrus development contract for the property. Prospective land buyers were given land costs, projected returns, and operating costs as follows:

Land Cost based on twenty acres	
60% cash or its equivalent, @ \$240 per acre	\$4,800.00
Balance in 5 equal payments at 6%	<u>3,200.00</u>
	8,000.00 (or \$400/acre)

Approximate Returns on 20 Acre Grapefruit Orchard in the Lower Rio Grande Valley

Grove Age	#of boxes	# of Trees/ac.	# of Boxes/ac.	Price/box	Total Yld./ac.	Total 20 ac.
4 th year	3	70	210	\$2.00	\$ 420	\$ 8,400
5 th year	4	70	280	2.00	560	11,300
6 th year	5	70	350	2,00	700	14,000
7 th year	6	70	420	2.00	840	16,800
8 th year	7	70	490	2.00	980	19,600
9 th year	8	70	560	2.00	1,120	22,400
10 th year	10	70	700	2.00	1,400	<u>28,000</u>
Approximate grand total end of ten years						\$117,400

Elliott provided these cost estimates per acre for the first year:

Clearing	\$35.00
Plowing	10.00
Sub-soiling	5.00
Canal construction	5.00

Trees	87.50
Planting of trees	17.50
Six (6) waterings	9.00
Six (6) cultivations	6.00
Flat rate	3.00
Hoeing	4.50
Fencing	5.00
Supervision	9.25
Total	\$196.75

Second through fifth year costs were \$57.00 each year for 12 month care, six waterings and the flat rate for water. The total expenditure per acre for five years acre are \$424.75. For ten years on 20 acres the development/operating costs total \$14,195. H. J. Sandemeier was employed by Elliott as chief citrus expert. B.K. Goodman of San Benito was a major clearing contractor.

10/4/28 The United Growers Exchange of Harlingen completes a fruit packing shed at Stuart Place. It will be operated by Wallace, Shannon & Co.

11/28 Harper and Fitzgerald, packers and shippers of fruit along the rail line at Stuart Place, advertise gift fruit boxes for \$1.50 and up. In an ad for the fair they proclaim theirs will be the "World's Largest Citrus Display."

By November 1928 the *Lower Rio Grande Valley Magazine*, a monthly, is up to Vol. 5 No.5. Selling for 10 cents a copy or \$1 a year its editor is Kenneth W. Calvin and it is published by E. C. Watson with offices in the Baxter building. Watson will later become business manager for *Texas Citriculture Magazine*.

1928-29 While cabbage remained the Valley's chief commodity export, carload citrus shipment this harvest season totaled 1,610 for grapefruit, 28 for orange, and 106 for mixed citrus fruits. This contrasts sharply when railroad carloads were commenced in 1921-22 and were nine for grapefruit, one for oranges, and five mixed. Within the next two years shipments would jump to over 10,000 carloads.

11/29 *Texas Citriculture* notes that Lon Hill has been experimenting and propagating avocado and papayas for six years. In the 1/27/31 News-Herald of Franklin, Pennsylvania Jim Borland who visited here reported in his column that Hill had 2,500 avocado trees of about 5' height planted next to the auditorium. Elsewhere, he had another 2,500 trees about 20' in height. The *Texas Citriculture Magazine* was first offered for sale 7/28/29 at \$1 per year subscription.

Cecil Carruth arrives this year. His older brother Paul will follow about four years later. Carruth in 1930 was the bookkeeper for the Grant Lumber Co. in Harlingen and a year later had worked up to manager. By 1937 Carruth's business was general insurance and loans. By 1939 he was into the partnership of Carruth and Johnson Insurance, then with his brother Paul, and still later with Grant Klopenstein as Carruth-Klopenstein, real estate and insurance. Cecil, called Happy by his friends, is somewhat of a genius or, at minimum minimum, his mile-a-minute mind is open to new ideas. He conceives the idea of commencing a frozen juice concentrate plant in Harlingen. This will be in the cold

storage plant which he purchased from CPL in 1946 and renamed Harlingen Cold Storage. He went to Florida and learned what would be required, including over \$1 million of stainless steel piping. He and partners, including Paul, then convert the large plant at 804 North Commerce in the late 1940s. Misfortune befell them when a severe freeze decimated the Valley's 1949 citrus crop. His Texas Frozen Food Corp., for which he was president and J.E. Barr executive vice president, then sought alternatives in watermelon and pineapple concentrates and even looked into freeze-dried foods. When Paul went on with others to found Tropical Savings and Loan, Cecil sought to utilize the plant by leasing it to shrimp and other packers. Squirt brand soda pop with its grapefruit-citrus flavor was even bottled there for a time. When he died at age 82 10/4/85 the property was willed to the Rio Grande Children's Home in Mission.

11/24/29 A \$1.65 million bond issue is to be presented for the Cameron County Irrigation Improvement District 14. This encompasses the Laguna Vista area and 15,000 acres in the Box Ranch (later Bayview). The latter already has 1,000 acres set in citrus.

1930 The Harlingen Canning Company, which is owned by Howard E. Butt, commences its operations to produce "Texas-grown, Texas-packed" goods at its Harlingen plant. R. L. Hill, the ice-making entrepreneur, goes into partnership with H.E. Butt, to operate the cannery. Hill may have commenced building the two-story canning plant at F Street between Jackson and Monroe on site of a junk yard in 1928 the year he moved here. He would have ice plants not only in Harlingen but also McAllen, Raymondville, and Brownsville. Here he was president of both the C of C and the Kiwanis Club, as well as being first v-p of the First National Bank. With several hundred thousand square feet of floor space, the cannery operates until July 1968. It processes 55 items as varied as tomatoes, green beans, three types of greens, grapefruit and orange juices, potato and corn chips, pineapples, preserves, bottles soda water, and salad dressing among others. 150 are employed year-round and up to 1,500 at peak periods. Hill is president, Butt vice-president, Milton Capp, secretary, and M.M. Clark manager of the cannery for the first two years until relieved by Van C. Snell, who stayed on for 33 years.

1/31/30 Railroad rates for citrus transport are reduced 15%. Super salesman J.C. Engleman boosts of land sales despite the recent freeze. His firm has 9,000 acres planted to citrus.

3/7/30 The tenth pool of the Texas Citrus Fruit Growers Exchange distributes 1/4 million dollars or over 3 cents per pound. The season average price was 2.71 cents per pound.

3/29/30 L.E. Snavely of Harlingen reports that he is working on the development of a seedless pink Marsh grapefruit. The current pink with seeds is a sport of the Duncan grapefruit.

5/7/30 The Texas Citrus Fruit Exchange commences erecting a \$70,000 packing shed on 14th Street, Brownsville.

5/21/30 Florida citrus stock and trees valued at \$11,000 are burned at Port Isabel out of concern for the Mediterranean fruit fly and other infestations. Shortly thereafter Florida imports located in a Donna nursery are also destroyed.

1931 The development of vast irrigated citrus lands in what will become the Delta Lake area commences. Rollo E. Harding of Raymondville is one of its prime movers. For its fiscal report ending 9/30/30 the Delta Orchards Co. reported asset of \$8.356 million, most of which was in both developed and undeveloped land.

5/22/31 Gov. Sterling signs a bill creating a Texas Citrus Fruit Zone and investing the Commissioner of Agriculture with authority to prevent shipments of diseased citrus stocks into the zone.

11/11/30 At the San Benito Airport Dedication on this date a promotional booklet was published. Its first page read: San Benito Texas In the Garden of Golden Grapefruit. Surrounding the "Resaca City" may be found the most intense citrus development of the Valley section. Due to the fact that San Benito is headquarters for many Valley-wide shipping agencies, more cars of citrus were shipped from this city than any other Valley point during the season 1929-1930.

According to the Handbook of Texas, by 1932 there were over 1.6 million orange trees in Texas. In 1932 the first annual Citrus Fiesta is held with John Shary as King Citrus I. Over the years it will evolve into a major local and tourist attraction in Mission extending several days.

9/1/33 In connection with the booming citrus business MOPAC is constructing a new \$14,000 brick and tile shipping plant for the Valley Fruit Exchange. At the west end of Jackson Avenue it is adding a \$4,500 second floor to its Stuart Place packing shed.

Across the Valley it will expend \$200,000 to handle the expected \$ 6 million citrus crop.

9/2/33 Sixty citrus shippers agree not to sell culls, namely fruit not meeting U.S. No. 2 inspection requirements.

9/5/33 Hurricane No. 11, 1933 comes ashore north of Brownsville. It subsequently drops or damages 90% of the citrus crop in the Valley. A less severe hurricane here a month earlier had negatively impacted the cotton crop which was enjoying a 9 cent a pound return versus 5 cents for last season. While 55,000 bales were eventually harvested, growers estimated that they had lost 20,000 bales due to rainy weather late in the growing season.

The *San Antonio Light* of September 6 wrote: "Conservative estimates said only one fourth of the \$6,000,000 citrus crop which had just started moving to market would be left for harvest in the Valley. Almost all fruit was destroyed from Mercedes east to Brownsville, while about three-fourths of the crop was blown from the trees from Mercedes west to Mission. Fruit blown from the trees will be virtually worthless." It later wrote: "The Valley citrus crop, scheduled to be gathered this week, lay on the ground today. Trees were stripped of all fruit and foliage. Water stood a foot deep around the orchards. Miles and miles of citrus groves in the fertile area about here lay in waste. Big, yellow grapefruit and oranges floated in the big pools of muddy water in the torn groves. The citrus and feed crops were totally destroyed, a survey revealed. Loss to citrus growers alone reached \$4,000,000, Harlingen officials said."

1934 This year the Snider Packing Co. is established. By 1936 it is handling 3,000 acres of peas, beans, broccoli, spinach, beets, carrots, and grapefruit.

1935 The Stuart Place Citrus Association shed burns down with a loss of \$22,330 for the property and \$23,134 for its contents. This year J.R. Fitzgerald, who has been in the produce business in the area since at least 1930, establishes Tri-Pak Machinery Service

on N. Commerce Street. It manufactures equipment for agricultural product packing, lidding, and waxing among other things.

5/10/36 *The Brownsville Herald* reports that TexSun canned grapefruit will be featured at the Texas Centennial Exposition. TexSun is the brand name used by the Rio Grande Valley Citrus Exchange. Its new Weslaco factory is to be one of the most up-to-date one of its kind in the entire canning industry. In December the plant nears completion. An advertisement by the Rio Grande Valley Citrus Exchange in this same issue proclaims "grower owned—grower controlled—grower operated." In addition to the Rio Grande Valley Citrus Growers Association, Mercedes other entities in the exchange are the citrus associations of Brownsville, Combes, Donna, Weslaco, Edinburg, McAllen, Raymondville, La Feria, San Benito, Santa Rosa, and Stuart Place. A separate entity is the Texas Citrus Growers Exchange headquartered in Mission. Its president is John H. Shary and its sales manager, Ted M. Mellen.

In the issue is also an article as follows: "**Willacy Real Home Of Valley Citrus**

Willacy county claims to be the real home of the Valley citrus fruit industry.

Charles Pease, now deceased, claimed that citrus planted on his farm in Willacy county was first in the Valley. The farm is now owned by Mr. and Mrs. E. L. Bradley and J. A. Busch. There are now 18,000 trees on this property.

Many of the trees in Willacy county are quite old, proving that citrus fruits can be grown there successfully although it takes longer for trees to come into commercial bearing without irrigation."

In the September and October issues of *Texsun News of the Rio Grande Valley Citrus Exchange* (Weslaco), J. H. Welch presents the history of citrus in the Valley. This paper also carries diverse agriculture articles drawn from the *Texas Farming and Citriculture Magazine*.

11/5/36 The McAllen Citrus Association packing plant opens. It replaces the facility disastrously burned in February. Current directors of the association are: J.G. Gronber, president; U.G. Waller VP; B.N. Hyde, Sec.-Treas.; E.W. Linard, MGr.; I.G. Cook; DeWitt Haden; W. I. Witherspoon, Board of Directors, and Jas. M. Andrews, alternate. July 1936 Bay View Groves affiliates itself with Rio Grande Valley Citrus Exchange. This area and its irrigation district are rapidly developing.

7/11/37 Twelve meetings of citrus growers across the Valley are scheduled to select nominees for the Growers' Industry Committee which will administer the market agreement and order to become effective next week. The agreement was approved by Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace. The boundaries of the various districts were established. Each citrus grower will have one vote regardless of the number of citrus orchards owned.

10/37 Results of a citrus tree census are publicized. The figures extrapolated are 65 grapefruit trees per acre, 75 orange and 150 lemon and lime.

Trees not yet in commercial bearing: 498,727

Acres not yet in commercial bearing: 7,138

Trees in commercial bearing (4 years and older): 6,527,826

Acres in commercial bearing: 95,553

All citrus trees in the LRGV: 7,026,553

Acres planted to citrus: 102,691.

9/27-29/43 The Texas Citrus and Vegetable Growers and Shippers Association holds its first annual meeting. Harlingen member are Adams Gardens Nurseries, Collier-Mitchell Produce Company, Cullen and Thompson, and John Morris, Jr. Company. Associate members from Harlingen are Crown-Williamette Paper Co., Food Machinery Co., and Tri-Pak Machinery Service.

12/8-10/45 By this year the area was already holding its third annual LRGV Citrus and Vegetable Institute in Weslaco. The reports were published in a 190 page booklet.

1947 The Citrus Center originated in the mid-1940s when a group of local citizens and citrus growers approached the then Texas College of Arts & Industries, Kingsville, with the idea of establishing a research and training facility specializing in citriculture for the Lower Rio Grande Valley. In 1947 the original campus site and research farm was purchased with funds contributed by the citrus industry and other community institutions. Buildings were acquired from the deactivated Harlingen Army Air Field and by 1948 the Center was in operation. It is located at the intersection of HWY. 83 and FM 1015, Weslaco.

1/23/48 This date sees the chartering of the United Citrus Growers Association. It is a cooperative marketing association. During the years 1946, 1947, and a major portion of 1948 Texas growers were practically giving away their fruit. During 1947 and through December 1948 growers received an average price of 53 cents per field box (1 3/5 bushel) of oranges and for grapefruit 26 cents per box. It actually cost around 50 cents/box to grow oranges and 35 cents for grapefruit.

In 1952 the association would publish a 48-page booklet titled "Rebuilding the Citrus Industry in the Lower Rio Grande Valley." It contained 16 relevant articles as steps to return the industry to profitability. At this time J.J. Daniels was general manager of the association.

1947 and 1948 saw peak harvests only to have orchards devastated by disastrous freezes in 1948 and 1951.

1950-74 The Alberti Seafoods Processing Co. selling "King-O-Shrimp" and "Sea Breeze" Brands will pack products in Harlingen. Its owner Lawrence Alberti of Chicago is to die at age 67 on 10/16/60. When, in 1974, Alberti shuts its doors and a year later Western Shellfish at 708 N. Commerce does also, Cecil Carruth is left with his largely useless Harlingen Cold Storage Building at 804 North Commerce. For a time his Texas Frozen Foods Corp. processed frozen shrimp and citrus juice. The large building contained cold storage vaults, a shrimp processing plant, a citrus juice extraction plant, and a citrus peel dehydration plant along with Rio Freezer, Inc., cold storage.

1951 Year of the Big Freeze hurts the agricultural economy of the area, especially citrus. By July 1952 following three bad freezes in two seasons the citrus tree population in the Valley is reduced from 14 million to 3.6 million. The more detailed report of October 1952 state that less than a third of the 11,374,372 citrus fruit trees flourishing several

years ago in South Texas are left following three bad freezes in two seasons. The count now is 3,679,173 of commercial value. Grapefruit barely outnumbered orange trees 1,842,279 to 1,807,605 where before the freezes grapefruit roundly outnumbered oranges. 1,165,219 grapefruit surveyed are pink and red.

By 1960 it will rise to 5.75 million on 70,000 acres. The freeze did allow grapefruit growers to switch from yellow grapefruit varieties into the more desirable and attractive Ruby Red variety.

1953 It is this year that the Atchison Citrus Center opens for business. In November 1967, owners Mr. & Mrs. John Atchison Jr. will open a new facility on Business 83 near FM 800. It will be the exclusive supplier of gift fruit for Sakowitz of Houston. He manages 500 acres in citrus and sells under the Key Brand label. Mr. Atchison will die at age 92 on July 25, 2008 in League City. A graduate of Harlingen High School in the early 1930s he attended San Marcos Baptist Academy and Texas A& M University. He returned to the Valley in 1946 with his wife Lorene after serving in WWII. He was a Rotary Club member, past president of the Lions Club of Harlingen, and a deacon of the First Baptist Church. He was survived by a son, daughter, and grandchildren.

1958 The Texas Citrus Mutual is established to assist Valley citrus growers in numerous ways, one important one being the establishment of crop insurance. J. L. Boggus of Harlingen is its first president.

By the following year the USDA reported that the citrus fruit industry had been rebuilt. Grapefruit trees numbered 3,165,932 on 2,299 farms and 2,129 farms were growing 2,428,543 orange trees. Lemon trees with lesser cold tolerance only numbered 31,901 trees on 298 farms.

1/30/59 a severe freeze destroys 3 million of the Valley's 12 million trees.

1960s The Jones-Collier Foundation helps to finance the purchase of the 200 acre South Research Farm for the Citrus Center of Texas A & I. In 1974 and 1977 a total of 62 additional acres adjacent to the South Research Farm are purchased through the A&I Development Foundation.

The decade opened with the discovery that the Mediterranean Fruit Fly was infesting Valley citrus. An all out eradication program began and met with success.

9/14/61 Hurricane Carla causes \$1,183,000 in losses to Valley citrus and vegetables. While it hit closer to Corpus Christi, Harlingen had strong winds and a September rainfall total of 8.3". The storm occurred six weeks after heavy rains caused a 25 to 35% loss in the cotton crop being harvested. Harlingen's August rainfall totaled 4.52".

1/11/62 Eleven hours of temperatures below 28 degrees wipe out the vegetable crop in the Valley and five hours below 26 causes widespread citrus icing. Later 5 to 35% of the trees were deemed killed but up to 50% of the citrus production lost. Homes sustained frozen and busted pipes. The blue norther blasts its way to Veracruz and hurts its orange crop. The 1962-63 winter is another bad one. Temperatures in the mid-20s occur several

times in January 1963. 4,000 acres of lettuce are affected and 15,800 acres of early-planted tomatoes are wiped out.

1964. This year Texas produced 2,400,000 boxes of grapefruit valued at \$8,016,000 and one million boxes of oranges valued at \$3,810,000. Production continued to rise so that by 1966 5.6 million boxes of grapefruit valued at \$10,152,000 and 2.8 million boxes of oranges valued at \$5,808,000 were forthcoming.

4/4/64 Brad Crockett named Jaycee Young Man of the Year. Bradley Standley Crockett, Jr. was born in Mercedes 8/6/35. A 1953 Harlingen High School graduate, he went on to earn a BS degree at Texas A & M in 1957. He spent three years in the US Air Force rising to the rank of 1st Lieutenant. In January 1959 he married Nancy Hardy of Ardmore, OK. They presently have four young children, Mynan, Standley III, Julie and Allen. Brad is VP and manager of Crockett Growers, Inc, and Crockett Nurseries, Inc. while owning Crockett Farms. These are major citrus entities.

On September 26, 1967 following Hurricane Buelah, the USDA makes a studied estimate of citrus losses. Grapefruit loss are put at 50% and oranges at 33%. Grapefruit numbers fell close to their 1964 level while oranges dropped even more to 1.8 million boxes.

1970 By this year the Texas Citrus Exchange Processing division is using the Harlingen Cannery facilities on F Street. It will be consolidated into the Mission Citrus Association, and when the latter builds a new plant south of Mission, the cannery will be vacated by 1987-88.

1976 This is the last year here for the American Refrigerator Transit Co. at 825 N. Commerce. The shipment of cooled vegetables and fruit in railroad freight cars from Harlingen had declined to the point that operations here were no longer economical. Refrigerated trucks had taken most of the business from the railroads.

12/24-26/83 An arctic norther (frigid high pressure frontal system) decimates citrus, sugarcane, and other winter crops in the Harlingen area and Valley when temperatures dip into the teens. It is termed "The Freeze of the Century." Trees on 47,000 out of 69,000 acres are decimated. The upside is that growers may now move into the newer variety Rio or Star Red. It will be in 1987 that the first significant harvests are made of Rio Reds.

1984 In a decade from this year the Texas A&I Citrus Center leases a 40 acre farm north of Mission from the Looney family. It is later replaced by a 50-acre site at Monte Alto leased from Rio Farms Inc.

1985 Recovering orchards numbered 30,600 acres.

12/22-24/89 An Alberta Clipper arctic freeze sweeps the Valley. This time temperatures are in the low teens, even colder and of a longer duration than the blast six years previous. This cold front penetrates as far south as Veracruz, Mexico. Along with the winter crops, decades-old tall palm trees are destroyed as well as many Norfolk pine trees

and semi-tropical ornamental vegetation. Losses to the economy are in the millions. For citrus 24,000 out of 35,700 acres are wiped out.

1990 Texas A&I University merges with Texas A&M University and loses its name. Administration for the Citrus Center comes under the aegis of the A&M Ag. Research Center, Weslaco until 2008 when full-time leadership is re-established at the center. Citrus Center directors over the years have been P.W. Rohrbaugh 1948-63; Richard A. Hensz 1964-1994; J. Victor French (interim) 1994-1996; and John V. da Graca 2008-.

1992 Mexico first goes into deficit in providing the annual 350,000 acre feet of Rio Grande River water to the United States but has a five year period to comply. By 1992-97 the deficit rises to over one million and then by 2002 to 1.5 million acre-feet. Valley farmers are stressed for available water as the physical drought continues and proves worse than the early 1950's one. It will not be before 9/05 that Mexico drops its deficit to 100,000 acre-feet.

2002 River reservoir level drop to record lows since the dams were constructed as the year proves to be the driest ever noted.

8/25/04 A lawsuit against the government of Mexico is brought by 17 irrigation districts, 29 water rights owners, and the North Alamo Water Supply Corp. They claim \$500 million in economic damages since 1992 when Mexico failed to live up to its part of the water treaty. In 1992 the two river reservoirs were 100% full, but a drought ensued and in the years 1994 through 2003 the levels ranged from 31.425 to 66% and averaged 42.17%. On October 9, 2004 the levels had risen to 81.26% of capacity but the law suit was going forth as Mexico still owed the U.S. 800,000 acre-feet. The year would prove to be the third wettest on record. Eventually the two dams reach over 94 % of capacity.

11/04 The four hurricanes which hit Florida this season reduce its crop by one half. As a result Valley citrus prices rise. Pittman & Davis, who send out up to 800,000 gift boxes in the holiday season, have sent out their sales flyers months earlier and therefore find themselves in a cost squeeze.

3/11/05 With its northern reservoirs overflowing, Mexico now agrees to pay back its water debts to the U.S. The 13 year wait is about over. On 9/27/05 Mexico completes the transfer of the remaining balance by 9/30. The U.S. totals behind the two reservoirs will now stand at 97.1% of capacity.

2008 The Valley is now down to a little over 28,000 acres in citrus. Over them hang the potential treats of invasive insects and diseases now in Florida, Brazil, and Mexico. USDA inspectors went around the Valley to residential areas to check citrus trees for greening disease.

11/22/10 Federal, state and local agricultural official, university scientists and citrus industry representatives hold a conference at the State Farm Arena, Hidalgo. They discuss a campaign to reduce the spread of citrus diseases which have already have crippled the citrus economies in Florida and parts of Mexico. About 27,000 acres of grapefruit and orange groves in the Rio Grande Valley are responsible for the region's \$160 million citrus industry, according to Ray Prewitt, president of Texas Citrus Mutual.

The three diseases of concern are citrus greening spread by the Asian citrus psyllid, canker, and black spot. Although the psyllid is here, the disease that it is capable of carrying is not. Since considerable citrus is grown by homeowners the concern is that home purchases be done from reputable firms. Citrus stock from Florida, Alabama, Georgia, and Hawaii are all quarantined. Partially quarantined material is that from Arizona, California, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Portions of Mexico have also been quarantined. No citrus trees may be imported from Mexico