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Gregory, Wayne collection

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Description is written in: English.

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Havana History and Heritage Society

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Summary Information

Repository:	Havana History and Heritage Society
Title:	Wayne Gregory collection
ID:	21.0004
Date [inclusive]:	1938-2021
Physical Description:	1 Files 1 file
Language of the Material:	English .
Mixed Materials [Box]:	Single Folder Collections - 2021 Box 1
[Folder]:	21.0004-Folder 1

Preferred Citation

Wayne Gregory Collection, Havana History and Heritage Society, Havana, FL.

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Biographical / Historical

Wayne Gregory is a Havana native and the son of one of the three founders of the Planter's Exchange. The Planter's Exchange was founded in 1923 on the south side of 7th Avenue in Havana, Florida by three Gregory brothers: Clyde, Ben, and Wayne's father Tom. The brothers founded the Exchange based on their previous growth of vegetables. They were three of ten total children: eight boys and two girls. One of their brothers died circa 1910 around the age of 3 or 4 after a cut became infected. The rest of their family was not involved in the business. Clyde helped establish the business but soon left for law school in Tennessee, later moving to Tallahassee. Ben primarily managed the bookkeeping, and Tom was in charge of operations management.

The Gregory family became established in Havana beginning with Wayne Gregory's great-grandfather Charles Gregory and his brother Jason Gregory. They lived on either side of the Apalachicola River, which was important in the cotton industry at the time, around 1825 - Jason on the West and the Gregory House and Charles on the East. Charles and Jason both

grew sun tobacco for their own personal use. George B. - Charles' son and Wayne's grandfather - was born in 1854 on the Apalachicola River, roughly the time that the Civil War reached Apalachicola. Charles went to Quincy, Florida in Gadsden County, grew ill, and died at roughly the same time that his wife died in childbirth during the early Civil War. Their children were left orphans - George B. and his sister were in their early teens and too young to take over for their father.

George B. was a riding superintendent for a tobacco company. The Florida tobacco industry likely bloomed as a result of New Yorkers traveling South for work during the Great Depression. George married a member of the Floyd family - one of the two most prominent families of the region, the other being the Scott family - and she was given 320 acres of the Floyd Farm. The couple moved there when she got pregnant in 1901. Her brother, another Floyd, was a prominent figure. He worked for the federal government and even got into the cheesecloth business in Connecticut - a vital part of the shade tobacco industry. At some point, he even had President Teddy Roosevelt come to town. Additionally, Wayne's grandfather drove cattle from the Apalachicola plantation, one of the biggest cotton producers in Florida. At one point, he moved to Dogtown in Gadsden County to work for Owl Commercial Company.

As for George B.'s children: Tom and Ben each got 15 acres of land and signed the deed for the Planter's Exchange after Clyde had left, with Ben signing on behalf of Tom. The business was incorporated in 1931, but Tom and Ben Gregory did not want to be store clerks, looking up to people like E.B. Shelfer, a member of a prominent East Gadsden family. The business was then designed so no one person could take full control: split into thirds among other investors. These investors included W.L Williams, Potter Woodbery, and Tom Delacy. Williams was a powerful railroad agent, Delacy was a tobacco grower, and Woodbery was well-connected within the industry: all united via a mutual interest in hunting and fishing. Woodbery and Williams even gave the Gregory brothers a dock on the Ochlockonee River for river fishing purposes. Combined with the Gregory brothers, the men's expertise was met with success. Williams only became available because his previous investment - Jameson's, a local competitor - shut down and moved to Quincy, allowing him to join the partnership as a manager with 80 shares. Tom and Ben Gregory had bought 2600 acres of Reed Swamp and were able to be more freewheeling, having freedom from the range of investments. Delacy and Woodbery were already partners and owned a 1000 lb mixer, which would help the Exchange get started.

The Exchange was able to survive the Great Depression of the 1930s because Williams would not sell on credit. Thus, PEX - Planter's Exchange fertilizer - grew famous during World War II. Wayne Gregory would later change the name to "Planter's". The fertilizer formula was 90% organic and noncontaminating on the color of the tobacco leaves, made up of: cottonseed meal, steamed bone meal, sulfate potash, and nitrate of soda. The Planter's Exchange hit its prime in the 1940s-1950s, making over \$1,000,000 in 1948 - 90% of which was from fertilizer. Mixing was done by hand, and the fertilizer production was supervised by Cecil May. At the peak, the Exchange would get 1-2 boxcars worth of supplies per day. Eventually, Wayne Gregory took over the exchange, which now primarily competes with mega-corporations due to prices and versatility.

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Content Description

This collection relates to Wayne Gregory, who was raised in Havana, Florida, and whose father founded the Planter's Exchange. This collection contains an interview registration form and a digital video disc interview of Gregory.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

Havana History and Heritage Society

Conditions Governing Access

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Conditions Governing Use

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Controlled Access Headings

- Tobacco industry -- United States
- Tobacco industry

- Gadsden County (Fla.)
- Havana (Fla.)
- Agriculture--Economic aspects