

Weldon G. Cannon History Files

COMMERCIAL HORTICULTURE IN EULESS

In this folder donated to the City of Euless, labeled COMMERCIAL HORTICULTURE IN EULESS, are a few key documents and other materials from files donated to The University of Texas at Arlington for the Weldon G. Cannon Euless Collection in the Special Collections of the University Library. Following is a brief summary of materials in the 1 folder under this subject that were donated to UTA:

1. COMMERCIAL HORTICULTURE IN EULESS

Folder Contents

Work file of varied materials about nursery business in Euless, mainly Tarrant County Nurseries and Euless Nurseries, with narrative; includes some material from application for marker about Euless Nursery that was rejected; the application for a Texas Historical Marker was approved and the marker placed at the site of the nurseries on Euless South Main Street in Euless in 2009; 3/4 " .

[Also see another folder, EULESS NURSERY.]

COMMERCIAL HORTICULTURE IN EULESS

LAUNCHED IN EULESS BY PIONEER NURSERYMEN, COMMERCIAL HORTICULTURE HAS BEEN VITAL TO THE AREA ECONOMY SINCE THE 1800s. IDEALLY SITUATED FOR HORTICULTURAL PRODUCTION, EULESS SITS ON SANDY SOIL WELL ADAPTED FOR PLANT CULTIVATION. AMBROSE H. BOYD (1829-1916), A KENTUCKY NATIVE, ESTABLISHED TARRANT COUNTY NURSERIES IN 1879 AND IN 1882, WITH HIS SON, JOHN S. BOYD (1858-1946), HE OPENED A DISTRIBUTION YARD IN FORT WORTH. THEIR MERCHANDISE INCLUDED TREES, SHRUBBERY AND VINES. IN 1885, JOHN BOYD HELPED ORGANIZE THE TEXAS STATE NURSERYMEN'S ASSOCIATION (NOW TEXAS NURSERY AND LANDSCAPE ASSOCIATION); HE LATER OPENED FLORIST BUSINESSES IN CLEBURNE AND DENTON.

ARCH N. CANNON (1866-1941), UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF AMBROSE BOYD, ESTABLISHED EULESS NURSERIES IN 1897. HE SPECIALIZED IN BLACKBERRIES, BUT ALSO PROPAGATED AND SOLD PLUMS, APPLES, PEARS, APRICOTS, GRAPES AND PEACHES, INCLUDING THE "CANNON'S WONDERFUL" AND "CANNON'S CLING" VARIETIES HE DEVELOPED HIMSELF. BY 1907, CANNON'S BUSINESS EXPANDED TO ALSO OFFER TREES AND ORNAMENTAL SHRUBS, INCLUDING ROSES, WHICH BECAME THE NURSERY'S SPECIALTY; CANNON DEVELOPED A NEW VARIETY NAMED "LOUISE." EULESS NURSERIES SHIPPED PLANTS THROUGHOUT THE REGION AND BECAME THE MOST PROFITABLE BUSINESS IN THE AREA. ARCH CANNON'S SON, ROSS (1897-1980), LATER ASSUMED OWNERSHIP OF EULESS NURSERIES, OPERATING IT UNTIL IT CLOSED IN 1960.

TODAY, THE HORTICULTURE AND NURSERY INDUSTRIES IN TEXAS ACCOUNT FOR A NOTABLE PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL AGRICULTURAL RECEIPTS. NURSERYMEN PIONEERS, SUCH AS AMBROSE AND JOHN BOYD, AND ARCH AND ROSS CANNON, PAVED THE WAY IN EULESS FOR THIS PROFITABLE ENTERPRISE, AND THROUGH THEIR WORK, HAVE ENHANCED THE NATURAL BEAUTY OF TEXAS.

(2008)

MARKER IS PROPERTY OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

Commercial Horticulture in Euless

I. CONTEXT

Pioneer 19th-century nurserymen at Euless helped launch commercial horticultural enterprises in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. One nursery owner/operator helped organize an early professional association that evolved into the present-day Texas Nursery and Landscape Association. Others actively participated in trade organizations. Along the way, these businessmen assisted with the “greening” of the burgeoning Dallas-Fort Worth region by promoting landscape beautification and conservation. Two businesses owned by these Euless residents -- the Tarrant County Nurseries and the Euless Nurseries -- are among progenitors of a \$1.3 billion industry that now produces fruiting trees, ornamental plants and flowers. Nurseries are now the state’s fourth largest farming industry, tallying 8.1 percent of total agricultural receipts.¹

II. OVERVIEW

Ambrose H. Boyd (1829-1916) was among early Texas nurserymen, establishing his Tarrant County Nurseries by 1879. An Arlington, Texas, newspaper editor, acknowledging his trailblazing role, called Boyd “the pioneer fruit and berry man of Tarrant County.” A Kentucky native and Euless resident from 1859 until his death, Boyd was also a physician, druggist, and local political leader. He owned a half section (320 acres) at Euless, where he grew his stock. Boyd Branch, named for him, flowed through the nursery and today drains much of the central part of the City of Euless. In 1880, Boyd was the only person in his Tarrant County precinct operating a nursery and one of only two in the county with land dedicated to a nursery.²

Euless, located in the Eastern (Lower) Cross Timbers, a narrow strip of sandy loam between the clay soils of black-land prairies on the east and west, was ideally situated for horticultural production. The sandy land was perfectly adapted to growing fruits and vegetables, in addition to traditional basics such as cotton, corn, and wheat. While nurserymen profited by selling fresh fruit, they also benefited from growing and selling fruit trees, vines, and bushes. Before the days of plastic growing containers, nurserymen dug plants from the soil with a ball of dirt intact or pulled them out of the ground bare-rooted. Extracting them from wet and sticky or dry and hard black land was arduous, but porous sandy loam made removal easy. Furthermore, nurseries at Euless were nestled midway between two booming cities -- Dallas and Fort Worth -- that were major consumers of horticultural products and blessed with excellent rail connections beyond North Texas.³

Boyd used these connections well. In 1882, he and his son, John S. Boyd (1858-1946), opened a distribution yard in Fort Worth, and by 1886 they advertised extensively in the Fort Worth Daily

Gazette. Their merchandise included shade, fruit and ornamental trees, plus shrubbery and vines, in “endless varieties suited to this climate.” Furthermore, they sought “live and energetic agents” to represent them in all parts of the state. The newspaper editor referred to Ambrose as a “well-known nurseryman.” A respected authority on both local horticulture and general farming, the elder Boyd advised others on growing fruit-bearing and ornamental plants. In 1909, he claimed that in his 50 years in Euless he had never known a crop failure. He liked to draw attention to the advantages of the nursery business over cotton farming. Nurserymen understood that while their work paralleled the general farmer’s labor in many ways, they had distinct advantages. Both the farmer and the nurseryman were subject to the vicissitudes of nature -- drought, deluges, freezes, and extreme heat, along with plant diseases and animal depredations. The nurseryman, however, could tolerate them better than the general farmer because of his crop diversity. Weather extremes could wipe out a cotton or corn grower, but the nurseryman, with a variety of trees, shrubs, and fruit-bearing trees, was better able to endure hard times. Nurserymen sometimes repeated the adage: “Plant cotton, and you will do the work. Plant fruit trees, and they will do the work!”⁴

Boyd’s son, John, was an organizing member of the Texas State Nurserymen’s Association in Dallas in 1885, one of the earliest efforts by Texas horticulturists and nurserymen to effect a trade organization. Following several name changes and mergers, today it is known as the Texas Nursery and Landscape Association. After working with his father in Euless, John moved to Cleburne in about 1896 to open a nursery, specializing in the florist business. About 1914, he moved to Denton, where he operated a business named “The Florist” until 1939. Following in their father’s footsteps, John’s daughter became a designer at the Dallas Flower Mart and son became a Houston landscape architect.⁵

Ambrose Boyd’s horticultural influence lasted for several decades. His nearest neighbor in Euless after 1897 was Arch N. Cannon (1866-1941), who bought a 100-acre tract once part of Boyd’s nursery. The Cannon family moved into a log house only a few hundred feet from the Boyd home. A native of Bedford County, Tennessee, Cannon migrated with his family to Bedford, Texas, in 1872, then to Euless soon after marrying in 1891. Boyd gave him some neighborly advice: Don’t invest in worthless gold stock schemes; instead, go into the nursery business. To encourage him, Boyd also gave him four pear trees. Cannon took the advice seriously, planted the trees, and established his business in 1897, which he named Euless Nurseries. Although he grew a wide variety of fruits, he specialized in blackberries, a particularly lucrative crop. Prosperity came quickly, enabling him to build a fine, spacious house in 1900, modeled after Boyd’s. In 1990, the Historic Preservation Council of Tarrant County listed the still-substantial Cannon house in an inventory of historic buildings, describing it as a “Victorian farmhouse [which] is the city’s most impressive link with its agricultural past [and] appears

to be eligible for the National Register.” Unfortunately, it was torn down shortly before the inventory’s publication.⁶

With the nursery growing rapidly, Cannon expanded his products. In 1903, he optimistically predicted that he would sell \$3,000 worth of blackberries alone. He also developed and sold peach varieties that he called “Cannon’s Wonderful” and “Cannon’s Cling.” In addition, he propagated and sold varieties of plums, apples, pears, apricots, and grapes. By 1907, his nursery’s expanded offerings included ornamental shrubs and trees, such as arbor vitae and sycamores. Besides selling fruit in the cities, he shipped thousands of plants annually by wagon, truck and rail across the Southwest. The editor of the Arlington Journal described the operation as a “large commercial nursery” and the “business backbone” of Euless.⁷

Growth of the nursery business accelerated. After another visit in 1910, the newspaper editor observed that Euless Nurseries had been profitable every year, a “perpetual dividend-paying” operation, an “object lesson in industrial achievement,” and an “inspiration to view.” He also dubbed Cannon the “Berry King of North Texas.” In 1931, Bradstreet Company, in its commercial ratings book, attributed to the Euless Nursery a greater amount of wealth and gave it a higher credit rating than any other business in the Euless, Bedford, and Hurst areas.⁸

Among ornamental shrubs, the rose became the Euless Nurseries’ specialty and a family favorite. A new variety developed at the nursery was named “Louise.” In 1932, after a visit to the nursery, a reporter for the Fort Worth Star-Telegram dubbed Cannon the “Rose Man of Euless” preparing to ship 10,000 rose bushes to West Texas, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. At the center of the 100-acre nursery, the reporter observed, still stood the four pear trees that were planted in 1897, surrounded by acres of evergreens, blocks of roses, and crape myrtle hedges.⁹

Besides caring for day-to-day nursery operations, Cannon was constantly traveling, promoting and improving his own business and the welfare of the profession in general. His treks included day trips to Fort Worth, Dallas, and other nearby cities, plus frequent trips to adjoining states. He also belonged to local and statewide nursery organizations, often attending meetings and horticultural workshops to enhance his skills and stay in touch with fellow nurserymen.¹⁰

After Cannon’s death in 1941 and his wife in 1946, their son, Ross Cannon (1897-1980), who had always worked with his father in the business, assumed ownership, operating it until its closing in 1960. Ross also established his own business, the Ross Cannon Nursery, at Euless in the 1930s, but merged it with the Euless Nurseries after his parents’ deaths. From part of his nursery land he developed the Ross Cannon Addition in the City of Euless in 1949. His two brothers also established

nurseries in Euless in the 1930s, the L. T. Cannon Nursery and the Roy Cannon Nursery. One of Arch's grandsons also became a nurseryman.¹¹

III. SIGNIFICANCE

Pioneer nurseries of Euless, along with others in Texas, formed the foundation of a diversified horticultural and nursery industry that today has become an economic powerhouse. The nurseries of Euless contributed significantly to the local economy, furnished fresh fruits for nearby booming urban areas, enhanced the beauty of North Texas and beyond, and were part of the "Green Revolution" before the term existed. The marker will be placed at the site of the Tarrant County Nurseries and the Euless Nurseries.¹²

IV. DOCUMENTATION

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2. The Arlington Journal, December 12, 1902, p. 1, April 14, 1904, p. 5, June 18, 1909 p. 4, ; Fort Worth Star-Telegram, April 5, 1916, p.8; Tarrant County Deeds, MSS, 84:292-293, 87:170, 174, Tarrant County Court House, Fort Worth, Texas; U.S. Census, 1880, Agricultural Schedule, Tarrant County, Texas, E.D. 95, p. 42, E.D. 203, p. 4; R. L. Polk & Co.'s Texas State Gazetteer and Business Directory for 1884, Planters' and Farmers' Directory of Texas 1884 (Detroit: R. L. Polk & Co., 1884), p. 996; The Mercantile Agency Reference Book The Within States [Texas] (New York: R. G. Dun & Co., 1887), p. 24.
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