

JAMES McCOMB AND THE EAST COAST FRUIT & VEGETABLE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

As Reported in *The Weekly Miami Metropolis*

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought a proliferation of farmers' associations throughout the United States. These articles from The Weekly Miami Metropolis outline the concerns facing one such association in Florida. Farmers, including citrus growers, had two great obstacles to meet and overcome if they were to profit from the backbreaking labor expended in producing their crops. First, they had to fight for better deals with railroads, which charged maximum prices and did as little as possible to follow the directives of the Interstate Commerce Commission and state regulatory agencies such as the Florida Railroad Commission. Second, they had to fight for fair prices when selling

produce, whether in direct sales or through commission men. Both of these struggles required a cooperative effort.

Of particular interest to students of Broward County history are the efforts of several early area settlers to organize local farmers. One such man, Hudson Burr, who farmed in Pompano in 1899 and operated a store there, became a member of the Florida Railroad Commission in 1901, and sought to ease the difficult conditions which he had experienced first-hand. The efforts of another early Pompano settler, James McComb, Jr., are recounted here. Arriving in Pompano in 1901, McComb soon became prominent not only as a leader of the association movement, but also as a large-scale farmer, a commission man, and a commercial producer of pigeons.

The Weekly Miami Metropolis, Friday,
June 2, 1911, page 6.

LACK OF APPRECIATION NOTICED AMONG INDIVIDUAL FRUIT GROWERS FOR GREAT BENEFITS SECURED THEM

The East Coast Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association is doing great work for the growers all along the line. It has secured a number of reductions of freight rates. It has asked for lower express rates, and the officers confidently expect an order, in the near future, giving the growers a material reduction on rates to many points. The evidence has all been submitted and the final hearing before the full commission was heard in Washington, D.C., early this month. It usually takes

between 30 and 60 days after final hearings, before orders changing existing rates are issued. The new rate will be effective, though, before any fall products are ready to move.

The association officers also confidently expect another order in the near future giving the growers a lower freight rate on the F.E.C. Ry [Railway]. The testimony in this case is all in, and final argument held.

The claim department is handling a lot of claims from growers, who felt they could not handle their claims as efficiently and speedily as is done by the management of this department. The attorneys of the association, Messrs. Hudson & Boggs, have devoted a great amount of labor and time in preparing cases before the Railroad Commission and the Interstate Commerce Commission. Mr. Boggs espe-

cially has done great work in submitting evidence that was necessary to secure favorable decisions.

LACK PROPER SPIRIT

Notwithstanding the fact that the growers of the territory have been enjoying reduced rates for over one and one-half years, individual members of the association, as a rule, have lacked the proper spirit of support that they should show. Every grower has been getting the benefit of the reductions. Every member of the association should see to it that his neighbor or other growers he may come in contact with, becomes a member of the association, and bears his share of the vast expenses necessary to carry on this work.

James McComb, Jr., manager of the



Pompano pioneer James McComb, Jr., manager of the organizing and publicity department of the East Coast Fruit & Vegetable Growers' Association. As early as 1903, newspapers on the southeast coast referred to McComb as the unofficial "mayor" of unincorporated Pompano.

organizing and publicity department, says the association will have local branches along the entire coast, as far north as Hastings. He will organize locals at Daytona, New Smyrna, and points along the Indian River. He has already made one trip as far as Hastings and met leading men at the large points. Arrangements are being made to hold meetings during next month.

Mr. McComb says there is an immense amount of work to be done all the time. Growers fail to appreciate the importance of being active "paid up" members. When they understand what is being done for them, they are delighted to know about it. If their enthusiasm would only extend deep enough to cause them to secure one or two new members, it would be a great help.

GET BENEFITS TOO EASY

This work, says Mr. McComb, sometimes makes me feel as though I am a missionary. Salvation is free. Water is free. Both are good for every grower. Some like salvation and water. Some would like "to be saved," but don't want the water. This association has been

going along doing good work, saving dollars for every grower, yet mighty few of them know how results have been obtained, or how the work is supported. Most of them, however, "chip a little in the hat" when I have a "heart to heart" talk with them. If I could only preach the Gospel as good as I can tell them about rates, and divide the collection equally for both good causes, I'd be glad to make dates for Sunday.

FORT LAUDERDALE BRANCH

The eyes of the people of the West, Southwest and Northwest, are turned toward Fort Lauderdale, "The Baby City" of the East Coast. This is one of the largest shipping points along the line. It should have, and no doubt will have, the largest local association along the line. The organization was perfected there last Monday night. J. G. Ewing was elected president and W. B. Parham secretary. Both of these gentlemen are wide-a-wake, up-to-date pushers. They confidently expect every grower to become a member — "Fort Lauderdale in the Front" is their motto.

The Weekly Miami Metropolis, Friday, March 24, 1911, page 6.

GROWERS SELECTED JAS. MCCOMBS, JR., BUSINESS MANAGER

The East Coast Fruit and Vegetable Association has selected James McComb, Jr., as business manager. The work of Mr. McComb will be to make the association the strongest organization in the State. The work the association has done in the last two years is evidence sufficient that such a body can accomplish great things when it is well organized, but the necessity of keeping the growers interested and alive to their opportunities is recognized as being of such importance and necessarily the work of an organizer who was able to devote all of his time to it. Mr. McComb is going to give his entire time to the work, and he promises to keep all the growers in line. He has a wide acquaintance among them, and his work for the last few years in Florida along such lines qualify him well for the undertaking. He is to begin work at once.

Dr. Cooper Clifford Kirk . . .

(continued from inside front cover)

ships overcome by Broward's early settlers, he played a leading part in creating Pioneer Days, an annual celebration featuring exhibits, entertainment, and a ceremony recognizing the county's pioneers. He enjoyed introducing each one. Often they were people he had known most of his life, and at times he was privileged to present a former school teacher. He would give the ladies a hearty kiss on the cheek, perhaps to make up for some of his boyhood mischief.

No conceivable aspect of Broward County's rich past was beyond the bounds of Dr. Kirk's fertile imagination and energetic efforts. He worked tirelessly encouraging every community to form their own historical society or to revitalize an inactive one. He helped organize and establish a strong Black Historical Society in Fort Lauderdale. He spent countless hours and untold mileage traveling from one end of the county to the other to inspect historic sites and gather oral histories from pioneers and photos, documents and artifacts to build up the Historical Commission's archives and collections.

In 1976, Dr. Kirk created the *Broward Legacy*, the first journal devoted to the county's history,

and for thirteen years he solicited manuscripts, served as the editor, and wrote much of the material for this publication.

Cooper Kirk was no ordinary man; he was that rare, one-of-a-kind individual who inspires others by his own deeds. His philosophy of life was based upon Godliness and principles. His goals were high; he was always reaching, never satisfied with mediocrity. He hoped to inspire everyone to be as thrilled and eager to know the history of Broward County as he was. On one occasion he had a conversation with a man who said, "This area has only grown since World War II; it has no history." No history! Dr. Kirk could not tolerate such shallow and uninformed thinking. He set about to correct this image and share his knowledge of his beloved county.

Cooper Kirk served this county with selfless devotion. He will be remembered as a man of great character who left this county richer, better acquainted with its colorful history. His work was not finished, yet his typewriter is silent and his seat on the Historical Commission is empty. His splendid mind and honorable soul have entered the realms of Glory, and all who knew him mourn as we bid farewell to Cooper Kirk.

*Goodbye Dear Friend, Your smile is etched upon my mind,
Your truth upon my heart.*

*You cared for riches which were not of this earth,
But heavenly bounty was your goal.*

*Soft and gentle was what I saw hid beneath the skin,
Hard and firm your face was, until you smiled again.*

*I knew you well, but could not tell, for fear of being wrong.
A seeker not of glory but of truth.*

*You stood so solemn yet so sad, life was seldom kind.
Yet like the hero, strong and true,*

*You kept searching for the way.
Often scared, lonely and tired, you knew hope loomed*

*On the horizon, for you carried faith within your heart.
Belief in something larger than yourself,*

*And hope to find the way.
Love was hard for you, but the legacy you left
Made love easier for me.*

— Correction —

The photos on page 37 of the Summer/Fall 1989 issue of *Broward Legacy* were inadvertently transposed. Perry Bryan is at top, with golf club; Frank Clark is at bottom wearing navy uniform.

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L. Clayton Nance
Historical Building
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