

"Early Peanut Industry in Roosevelt"

Interviewed By Mrs. Jean Burroughs
February 15, 1973

- 016 1930: he came here from Sweetwater, Tex. where he has been doing religious educational work.
- 020 Depression had caused him to lose job.
- 025 Hoped to teach (highest pay \$70 a month in script) but couldn't find job
- 034 Finally found job working on Highway 18 (Lovington)
- 037 Dug post holes and set back fence all the way to county line.
- 046 15-20 workers including Eldridge Neers, Coleman Finley, & Gabe Foster
- 054 Built highway with fresnos and Haines (describes)
- 077 Farmers grew lots of vegetables: beans, carrots, & tomatoes
- 090 He bought out small peanut businesses; had one roaster built
- 106 Had to run first roaster day and night to keep up with business in the fall
- 116 Were only 400-500 acres being grown at time; grew Tennessee Red peanuts.
- 124 Describes first roaster: one big drum with revolving little drum inside; gas fired oven took 2 hrs. at 300° to roast 300 lbs. of peanuts.
- 140 Building was very small - roof sloped down to back; didn't have room to store peanuts.
- 148 1931: it got down to -28° and building began to sweat; peanuts absorbed enough moisture to become dough like.
- 177 dry climate helps in roasting peanuts
- 184 Didn't earn enough off of peanuts while in little building so started potato chip factory.
- 190 Sold Taylor's Chips to stores in Portales during summer.
- 207 Had hand cranked slicer
- 229 Later moved to building on 2nd Street
- 237 As business grew built own building on corner where Portales National Bank is now.
- 244 1934: farmer grew 1500 lbs of peanuts to the acre

Peanut Industry

- 253 Now can grow as much as 4000 lbs to the acre
- 269 1934: Spanish peanuts in Texas sold for 30¢ a bushel (here he paid farmers 2½ lb.)
- 277 He paid workers 20-25¢ an hour
- 292 1945: he sold out to John Burroughs
- 304 Hauled lumber to make building (Nat. Bank corner) from Cloudcroft and used adobe.
- 317 Building, 100 ft. X 40 ft., cost \$1500
- 324 Bank paid \$2000 to have it torn down
- 335 Building was used as garage & car agency after he sold out
- 347 He was not first peanut business here - John B. Miller had little roaster at Bethel in early '30's.
- 370 1941: government to charge and wanted to grow spanish peanuts
- 380 Gov. put peanuts in cans for soldiers during WWII
- 401 Filled all of buildings at fairground with peanuts during war
- 408 1942: Gov. had him declean 40 car loads of Tenn. Red peanuts and ship them to Russia under lend-lease program.
- 436 He worked through thr S.W. Peanut Growers Association at Gorman, texas (agents for gov.)
- 457 He calculated amount of peanuts roasted throughout his career
- 475 Had 2 roasters built in Amarillo (John Burroughd still using one); each held 1100 lbs. and were largest in world at that time.
- 513 When he sold business estimated 14,000 acres of peanuts were bring groen.
- 532 Government cut acre because too large of crop
- 540 Portales peanuts only small part of national production
- 558 During war all of peanuts had to be sold to gov.
- 581 Crowd of eaters would gather when he dumped load of roasted peanuts at National Bank site.

SIDE TWO

- 013 Others in and out of business:
Bill Kenyon roasted his own peanuts
Edgar Sidall - roaster at present location of Pat's Drive-in.
Malcolm Hall
One other man put in roaster just across the street from him (present Texaco)
- 050 Only a few had the peanut disease-black rot- during his 17 yrs. in business
- 060 Describes shocks and thrashers
- 083 1945: sold out to John Burroughs after 17 yrs. in the business; for 2 more yrs. he was buyer for Mr. Burroughs.
- 100 Peanut is by far best money crop in this area.

Facts from John Burroughs

- 120 1945: bought the facilities of the Portales Oil Mill Co. and erected peanut shelling plant.
- 126 Plant was capable of shipping a car load per day
- 130 1947: original New Portales Valley Mills was followed by a modern shelling plant. additional storage, and a screw grist?
- 140 Recently the oil extraction process has been modernized by new machinery
- 146 1971: Portales Valley Mills began manufacturing old fashioned peanut butter for distribution through health stores.
- 150 Currently this (peanut butter) absorbs 15% of the total N.M. production of peanuts.
- 157 Mill now has capacity for 50 tons per day for shelling
35 tons per day for oil extraction
10-12 tons per day for nuts roasted in the shell
16-20 tons per day for packing shelled peanuts
- 166 Local peanuts are purchased and 10-12,000 tons are shipped in annually for processing.
- 170 Other processing plants erected:
Bordon Peanut Co.
Randolph Peanut Co.
Williams Peanut Co.
Spray Green Fertilizer Co.
- 175 Excellent growing conditions of Portales Valley include:
High % of sunny days
normally excellent dry harvest conditions
water for irrigation

175 (cont) supply of barn yard fertilizer

187 1973: peanut crop estimated contribution to economy of Eastern
 N.M.: \$3,150,000