motorcade of 25 cars and 111 people from Putnam County traveled to Marion and Lake Counties to view vineyards, notably the Dickson-Truskett operation. All cars survived the 305 mile journey with only a few tire problems delaying the caravan. [Consider the Florida road system in 1928!](PalatkaDailyNews 38 June 12 1928)

Subsequently, the Club planned 57 additional acres and ordered over 30,000 ‘Florida Beacon’ for planting ([FlaTimesUnion 64 Jan27 Pg.6 1929](FlaTimesUnion 64 Jan27 Pg.6 1929)). The idea was for club members to systematically follow plantings in 25 vineyards, collect data, and plan to eventually join the FGGA. [This would have been the first County Chapter, had it occurred.](W.J Stover, a respected viticulturist in Fruitland Park, visited Putnam vineyards, found growth to be impressive, and commended these efforts ([FlaTimesUnion 64 Apr7 Pg.6 1929](FlaTimesUnion 64 Apr7 Pg.6 1929); NewsClip PomonaGrapeClub 3-22 1928).]

By 1930, there were well over 3,000 (some say ~5,000) acres of grapes planted or bearing in state, primarily the Munson hybrids ‘Beacon’ and Carmen’, with some ‘Florida Beacon’ and ‘Csaba’ (A Hungarian grape on ‘Beacon’ rootstock) available. [There was some confusion regarding variety naming. ‘Florida Beacon’ was later found to be Munson’s ‘Extra’ and not his ‘Beacon’. The ‘Carmen’ variety designation was also questionable. DeVries stated that the variety was named by Munson to honor a contributing New York horticulturist, Prof. Carmen. In contrast, a New York labrusca variety was developed and named ‘Carman’ – far less hardy and Florida-adaptable than Munson’s ‘Carmen’ ([FlaGrower 18(18)18-19, 1918](FlaGrower 18(18)18-19, 1918)). Later, the opposite opinion was also given by Mrs. Slyvester, citing Munson’s friend as E.S. Carman, Editor of the Rural New Yorker and a prominent horticulturist ([FlaGrower 27(23)6-7, 1923](FlaGrower 27(23)6-7, 1923)). [We’ll side with Slyvester, and it was definitely the Texas hybrid, not the New York variety.]

Concurrently, land development companies were getting into the act, selling land, much in areas or topography completely unsuitable for grapes to outsiders, some with no clue on grape cultivation or agricultural experience, just wild hopes and cash. The flames of Grape Euphoria were fed and fanned by prominent ads in the Florida Grower. [Figure 33](FlaGrower 29(15)23, 1924). The aggressive sales thrust was in contrast to ads in Florida Dispatch 40 years earlier (Figure 15 & 16) that advertised vines. The mid 20s ads inferred, even guaranteed easy riches with little effort. In hindsight, these “Get rich quick” inducements certainly went too far and didn’t enhance the image of Florida grapes or Florida land. Even an individual with national stature, Roger Babson was cited as an inducement ([FlaGrower 29(15)23, 1924](FlaGrower 29(15)23, 1924)). [This renowned economist was credited as predicting the crash of 1929, but not the accompanying Florida Grape Bust.]

It is not surprising that with all the emphasis on grape cultivation and utilization there was no mention of wine. Prohibition was in full swing, so wine was certainly a “politically incorrect” topic, more so than a generation earlier when grape proponents had mixed emotions regarding wine making and consumption. Nevertheless, the major focus of efforts to establish fresh grape markets in the north was to satisfy the demand for juice – not necessarily as “unfermented wine”. This is a curious designation, talking around the obvious; grape juice is highly perishable. If not carefully processed and packaged, juice is one small, simple, almost inevitable step from wine, albeit rather mediocre - unless carried out by skilled practitioners. The strong demand for early season grapes in the north was certainly not driven by an unquenchable thirst for grape juice.
As commercial activities increased, so did the supporting research from both the Federal (USDA) and state (Florida Agricultural Experiment Station) and private growers. In this complementary effort, the USDA and University of Florida emphasized insect and disease control, while growers expanded variety improvement through breeding work, although there was much overlap and exchange of information among and between involved parties (Figures 38 & 39). Central in these efforts were the vineyards mentioned above. Despite substantial research support those state and federal agencies, horticultural scientists were at best guardedly optimistic, or less. **Dearing** favored muscadines [and was chastized for his opinion], **Rhoads** cautioned that the ideal variety was yet to be found, and **Lord** was concerned that growers were moving too fast (**Lord, 1931**). They were right.

**Figure 38. Experimental Vineyard University of Florida, Gainesville ~1923 and Wiersdale, 1926 [UF, USDA, or private?].**

**Figure 39. Vineyard assistance from UF Baker County Agent J.S. Johns shown [Titled “grape field”, but where are the grapes?]**

The unexpected vine decline (Pierce’s disease) was not as precipitous as 3 decades before, and possibly could have been ameliorated by frequent replanting and control of other disease and insect stress. However, there were additional barriers in place. These were: (1) Expense - Grape growing in Florida is considerably more costly than in most other environs. (2) Transportation - Rail transportation efficiencies improved California and Texas competitive advantage. (3) The development of ‘Thompson Seedless’ dramatically decreased the demand for seeded grapes. (4) The repeal of Prohibition made legal wine buyers out of countless clandestine wine makers.

**P.H. Rolfs** in his insightful overview of Florida Agriculture (**Rolfs, 1935 pg142**) added another issue that we must deal with today - “Table grapes have been marketed from Miami to Pensacola, but the vines and grapes have need of so much coddling that other lines of endeavor have been more attractive.” That was putting it mildly, especially before Pierce’s Disease was recognized as the principle villain.

There is an eerie similarity between the grape bust of the early 1900s and that of the 1930s. In both cases many people, both farmers with respectable horticulture credentials and less experienced novices were committing to grapes – full speed ahead, despite words of caution from professional horticulturists and some experienced growers who continued to favor the hardier muscadine varieties. Enthusiasts were dealing with somewhat more rugged bunch grape stock (Munson hybrids) and had the benefit of substantial research backstopping. The hardy vines provided copious yields of attractive bunches and the vineyards appeared as prolific as any in California [Note the luxuriant growth in vine photos.]. The rail transportation problems had largely been solved, and the increasing northern and local populace demanded grapes – early and
lots. But, as emphasized, Nature bats last and Pierce’s disease, spread by the leafhopper vector was far from remission, only slow adapting to these more hardy, yet still susceptible varieties.

The bubble was burst, or at least started to deflate rapidly in 1929 when the very promising fresh market was derailed by the finding of USDA investigators that grapes are susceptible to Mediterranean fruit fly infestation; this necessitated a fresh fruit shipping quarantine (FlaGrower 37(7)13, 1929). The Demkos responded rapidly by obtaining processing facilities and turning to grape juice. Other growers in the Central Florida affected area did likewise and hoped to dovetail with the citrus processing industry (FlaGrower 38(6)5-6,20-21, 1930). Unfortunately, although the concept of complementary harvest seasons is attractive, the processing logistics couldn’t be put in place and a more serious problem faced growers. [Complementary citrus/grape processing is still impractical for similar reasons.]

The inevitable vine decline that doomed grapes 3 decades earlier was neither as rapid nor severe with the Munson hybrids, but it did occur. As late as 1930, 600 tons were shipped from Lake County (FlaGrower 38(11)30, 1930), but this represented only a small fraction of the cited 2,000 bearing grape acreage. [At a low yield of ~2 tons/acre, that’s only 300 acres.] Concurrently, the Northern market weakened, as competition from other Southern states and California, all with lower production costs, ramped up.

The Great Depression, originating in 1929, certainly didn’t help, nor did the end of prohibition in 1933. Without doubt a substantial amount of the grapes shipped north from Florida and other producing regions found their way to buyers – native and recent immigrants - with enology skills and wine consuming traditions. This unquenchable thirst was not for “unfermented wine”, aka grape juice. Florida’s early season advantage continued, but much of the incentive for American “Beaujolais” (first fresh and newest wine of the season) was trumped by national and international access to traditional wine markets.

Thus, the vast grape acreage and accompanying euphoria faded around the mid 1930’s. Although local sales were promising (FlaGrower 45(12)8, 1937), the required volume was nowhere near the optimistic forecasts of a decade earlier. Unfortunately, thousands of acres again disappeared, along with the investment and hopes of many growers (and the wild dreams of duped investors). As previously, there was a bright side that is reflected in the status of the Florida grape industry today. An optimistic article appeared in 1934 (Lake County Citizen, 1934) and even as late as 1938 there were some positive articles (FlaGrower 45(12)8, 1937; FlaGrower 46(7)6,13 Jul and 46(8)7,13 Aug 1938) and focused breeding efforts in South Florida emphasizing native and tropical stock (Fennell, 1938).

The grape growers of the 1920s and 30s were versatile agriculturists. When grapes yielded disappointing results, many turned to citrus, watermelons, or other crops. Florida’s early season advantage also holds for winter vegetables, without viticulture’s complexities – appreciable capital investment and production lag time. Some growers persisted with grapes, and that was a good thing. In that pursuit they initiated and were part of an essential organization. That was the FGGA, the most important and enduring legacy of the 1920s.
IV. FOUNDING OF THE FLORIDA GRAPE GROWERS ASSOCIATION

A. Background
Unfortunately, there is much more background information available on grapes in Florida from the Civil War up to the present than there is on the details of the FGGA from 1920s to about 1970. FGGA documents and articles with details of the FGGA foundation and the early years were carefully collected, stored in Gainesville, but sadly discarded, several years prior to the decision to prepare this article. Some of this earliest material is now derived and extrapolated from journals, grape reports, and news articles. The search is continuing, but it will involve laborious perusal in periodical archives, located throughout the former grape producing counties [and the cooperation and involvement of Florida grape history aficionados].

The best source of all, FGGA Newsletter, proceedings, and minutes from annual and semi-annual meetings from time zero through most of the 1980s, were either discarded in Gainesville, or were never collected. [For the purpose of the historical record time zero is taken from the 1870s.] We’re filling in the blanks, as acquired information permits. If these blanks exist, they are probably stored with the possessions of former FGGA members or descendents. Nevertheless, information is being accumulated and we have lots to work with.

Let’s trace the origin of the FGGA. In the older literature there is frequent mention of the need for an association devoted to grapes. The Florida Fruit Growers Association’s 3rd Annual Meeting Proceedings is described in a Florida Dispatch article (FlaDispatch 2(36)1, 1878), along with their Constitution and Bylaws. The presiding Chair was A.I. Bidwell of Jacksonville. (The President was C. Codrington and committee members ranged from Tallahassee to Jacksonville, down to Tampa.) According to the narrative, the Association first met in January 1875 and the initial President, C.H. DuPont, died before the 3rd meeting. The focus was on organizational matters and more attention was given to oranges and northern markets, but grapes were on the agenda. Dr. Kenworthy reported on grape cultivation and disease with comments from Bidwell, Reid, White, and Barnett. Dr. Kenworthy and Judge White (not J.H. White of Island Home) were charged to report on grapes at the next meeting, scheduled for Gainesville, April 8-10, 1875. [The University of Florida was just an unfunded legislative idea. Also, 1875 was well before its 1887 founding in Lake City.] None of these individuals were mentioned in subsequent available Dispatch articles or FSHS Proceedings. The Dispatch was listed as the official organ of the Florida Fruit Growers Association and its officers were listed in the 1888 Dispatch.

There was serious attention paid to grapes even earlier. Scuppernongs (the generic designation for bronze muscadines) were frequently mentioned and a nursery in Valdosta, Georgia advertised scuppernong rootlets “recommended for any region of Florida” (FlaDispatch 2(15)4, 1877; Figure 6). Muscadines were noted in early American history (USDA, 2007) and North Carolina
seems to have the earliest established muscadine tradition, dating from 1810 ([http://www.crgf.org/pubs/ff/muscadinegrape.html](http://www.crgf.org/pubs/ff/muscadinegrape.html)). [NC expertise benefitted Florida almost 170 years later (Nesbitt et. al., 1976; Mortensen et. al.,1976.]  

Prompted by the development of rail lines (Figure 7), Agricultural Associations were cropping up all over North Florida. An 1878 issue listed eight Florida Agricultural Societies and by 1882 there were 28 listed (Table 3). These organizations were promoting the agricultural interests of their respective locales; in one, viticulture was on the agenda. The Indian River Agricultural and Pomological Society met at Rev. J.H. White’s Merritt’s Island vineyard to view his grapes and pineapple and form a committee on grapes in 1879 ([FlaDispatch 4(10)2, 1879]). A Grape Committee did exist as part of the Florida Fruit Growers Association, and was mentioned in an 1887 article ([FlaDispatch 7(17)358-9, 1887]). Presumably, this committee was retained when the FSHS was formed the following year, but these groups were only committees and part of other associations with a much broader horticultural focus than just grapes.

**Table 3. Florida and Neighboring Agricultural Associations 1882 ([FlaDispatch 1(3)11, 1882])**

- Florida Fruit Growers Association (Jacksonville, the Dispatch is its official journal)
- Florida State Grange (Statewide)
- State Park Association (Jacksonville)
- Orange Park Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (Orlando)
- Lake George Fruit Growers Association (Georgetown)
- Picolata Agricultural and Horticultural Society
- Micanopy Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association
- Tropical Fruit Growers Association of Monroe County
- Levy County Immigration Society
- Florida Agricultural and Mechanical Association (Jacksonville)
- Pinellas, Florida Fruit Grower’s Association
- Bronson Agricultural Union
- Central Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association (Arredonda)
- Evergreen Horticultural Society (Dunedin)
- Decatur County Fair Association (Georgia)
- Lake Weir Agricultural and Pomological Society
- Welaka Horticultural Society
- Southwest Georgia Industrial Association
- Sumter County Agricultural and Fruit Growers Association
- Florida Central Agricultural Society (Gainesville)
- Archer Agricultural Association
- Middle Florida Agricultural and Mechanical Association (Tallahassee)
- Indian River Agricultural and Pomological Society
- Madison County Agricultural and Mechanical Fair Association
- Orange County Fair Association
- Albion Agricultural and Fruit Growers Association
- Gadsden County Fair Association
- South Georgia Agricultural and Mechanical Association
[The Florida State Horticultural Society, founded in 1888, served to provide a statewide focus for many of these local horticultural interests, which then faded from the scene. Also, improved transportation and communication facilitated a broader FSHS membership and attendance base.]

In fact, participants active in viticulture around that time were either nurserymen with an interest in a number of fruit crops or hobbyists, some of whom later evolved into commercial growers. Many were recent migrants from the North or Europe with some viticulture experience. It was the Nurserymen’s Association that combined with the Florida Fruit Growers Association to form the Florida State Horticultural Society (FSHS), probably because of increased interest by the membership in fruits, especially citrus and including grapes. The literature and ads indicate some were both nursery owners and fruit growers and shippers (Figure 15 & 16, Grape-related ads of the 1890s).

After the 1888 formation of the FSHS, in 1892 G.H. Wright mentioned the formation of a Grape Growers Association in Orange County, representing over 350 acres, where 6 years previously there hadn’t been a single acre (FlaStateHortSoc 5:31, 1892). The vineyard of P.P. Ink, Secretary of this Orange County Grape Growers Association (OCGGA) was described (FlaDispatch 4(28)545, 1892). The following year The OCGGA met with representatives from New York Grape Commission (J.R. Travis) and Southern Express (C.L. Myers) to discuss handling and shipping of early season grapes (FlaDispatch 5(4)72, 1893). Presumably the OCGGA was actively involved in establishing that elusive northern market for Florida grapes, an endeavor that was to take on new meaning about 30 years later. No details were given and there were no subsequent references to that group. None of the 28 Agricultural Organizations listed by the Florida Dispatch were devoted exclusively to grapes (Table 3), although there were later discussions citing the need for such an organization in Florida when J. Leahman made such a proposal (FlaDispatch 7(16)338, 1887).

Then it happened – the Florida Grape Growers Association was formed. But the record is as fuzzy as the cited precedents. Truskett complicates the origin by stating a 1921 meeting of the “….newly formed Grape Growers Association in Oldsmar the fall of that year…” (Truskett in History of Lake County, Florida, p 124). The origin date gets even murkier in a November 11, 1921 Florida Times Union article (FlaTimesUnion 56 Nov11 Pg.11 1921). The “Best meeting in history” of the FGGA is described with W.E. Bolles, Oldsmar identified as President and 104 members in attendance. Also present and participating were the same individuals associated with subsequent FGGA meetings, including the 1922 President, H.T. Fisher. A related article by Bolles, with photo, cited the FGGA formation in Lakeland and the recent 2nd meeting in Tampa attended by 65 interested growers (FlaGrower 23(22)6, 1921). A confounding article the following year (FlaTimesUnion 57 Nov17 Pg.4 1922) cited the “sixth annual meeting” with H.T. Fisher as president, F.J. Zimmermann as secretary, and about 100 members attending. In these pre 1923 articles the organization was reported interchangeably as “state grape growers association”, “grape growers association”, or “Florida grape growers association”, but certainly focused only on grapes, a clear indication that the FGGA existed perhaps as early as 1916 and had over 100 members by 1921.

Some of the same people were mentioned in the newspaper articles and Truskett’s narrative (Truskett in Kennedy, 1988). What happened to W.E. Bolles? Was there a coupé, disagreement,
dissolution? Surely, a viable organization with ~100 members didn’t just disappear without an explanation. The only clarifier is Truskett’s use of the term “newly organized”. Another clue is the citation of a ~1924 text by W.E. Bolles of Oldsmar, “Commercial Banana Growing”, published by the Florida Banana Growers Association. Bolles was also cited in “Bananas: An American History”, V.S. Jenkins, 2000.

http://search.barnesandnoble.com/Bananas/Virginia-Scott-Jenkins/e/9781560989660#CHP

“In 1921 W. E. Bolles of Oldsmar, Florida, organized the Florida Banana-Growers Association to try to grow bananas on a commercial scale. Bolles saw an enormous market for Florida bananas sold at the same wholesale prices as imported fruit, as much as "$1,400 per acre per year, when they get going good." No one came to the first meeting, twenty people attended the second meeting, and over two hundred attended the annual association meeting in October 1923.

The 1920s' Florida land speculation boom, fueled by eastern investors, may have had something to do with this sudden interest in banana farming, and growers reported making more per acre from bananas than from oranges and grapefruit. Soon an estimated two thousand acres were planted to bananas. Bolles believed that "there are reasonable probabilities of growing bananas commercially not only in all Florida, but in southern Louisiana and southern Texas, and the plant can be made to fruit in southern Georgia and California."

Was there a conflict between grapes and bananas? Bananas have not fared nearly as well in Florida as grapes in the following 85 years.

At any rate, the FGGA was incorporated in 1923 and that’s the date on the Association’s emblem (Figure 41). Most members had vineyards in the Central Florida area. Col. Hiram T. Fischer of Eustis, who attended the earlier 1921 meeting, was president by 1922. He was identified as the first FGGA President for 1923-24, followed by E. L. Lord, Florida Agricultural Experiment Station at Gainesville, who held the position for 12 years. He was probably the most visible UF grape expert for several decades, as his cogent summary of viticulture research suggests (Lord, 1939).

Figure 41. Florida Grape Growers Association Emblem

B. FGGA Presidents

Table 4 shows the evolution of the FGGA, initiators or principles/presidents, and their term of office, using the older information. In some cases the details available are limited or even contradictory. We’d like to devote some attention to each of these individuals, albeit with gaps where the written records are shallow. Unfortunately, some remain just a name with little or no description regarding their background, contributions, or personal history, except that before, during, and after their Presidential tenure they and their anonymous colleagues – other FGGA officers and members - kept the Association viable.

The most important elected position in an association such as FGGA is the President. That individual has the leadership role which to a large extent defines the direction, vitality, even survival of the organization. The President is assisted by and clearly dependant upon other elected officers such as spelled out in an old set of By-Laws (FGGA, 1977) or the newest revision (http://fgga.org/fggabylaws.html). In large associations continuity is provided by an executive administrator - perhaps a full time, paid position, depending on the society.
Although effectiveness depends upon an active, responsive membership and capable elected officers, the president sets the tempo and is ultimately responsible to the electorate for the success and vitality of the organization. Consider the many activities which must be orchestrated – membership recruitment and retention; newsletter; website (comparatively new but of growing importance); annual conference, regional, national, and other meetings; social functions; delegated interactions with other organizations; industry and government liaison, to name a few. These duties add up to a full time job – for a volunteer, likely with other undiminished personal and professional responsibilities.

The President must also be politically savvy and diplomatically handle inevitable differences in opinion and conflict between and among members and outside interests. Is the term “herding cats” pertinent? What are the rewards? Perhaps the respect and goodwill of colleagues and some citation after years of service are earned. Most important – a well recognized and respected association that fulfills the needs and aspirations of members and the industry they represent. From the available record, at least 24 persons held the position of FGGA President. If they and other elected officers worked as diligently and effectively as those we personally knew over the past half century, we owe them all a debt of gratitude. Let’s not take them or those who will follow for granted! In addition, present and future presidents merit encouragement and support from the entire Florida Grape Community.

### Table 4

**Evolution of the Florida Grape Growers Association**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>President or Principle</th>
<th>Date or Term</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.I. Bidwell</td>
<td>1878-?</td>
<td>3rd meeting of Florida Fruit Growers Association- Grapes discussed and planned in future agenda (<a href="#">FlaDispatch 2(36)1, 1878</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James H. White</td>
<td>1879</td>
<td>Indian River Horticultural and Pomological Society sent grape sample to Dispatch to promote their district; grape committee formed (<a href="#">FlaDispatch 4(10)2, 1879</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>1887</td>
<td>Reference to a grape committee at Florida Fruit Growers Association meeting in Orlando (<a href="#">FlaDispatch 7(17)358-9, 1887</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Leahman</td>
<td>1887</td>
<td>Formation of a state grape growing association suggested to Dispatch Editor (<a href="#">FlaDispatch 7(16)338, 1887</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dudley W. Adams &amp; Emil DuBois</td>
<td>1888</td>
<td>Florida State Horticultural Society formed and a Committee on Grape appointed; DuBois FSHS Vice President (<a href="#">FlaDispatch 8(16)312-13, 1888</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.P. Ink G.H. Wright</td>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Ink was secretary of the Orange County Grape Growers Assoc. (<a href="#">FlaDispatch 4(28)545; FlaStateHortSoc 5:31, 1892</a>) Was Wright President?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W.E. Bolles</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Cited as FGGA President, E.L. Zimmerman Secretary, N.W. Chadwick, Treasurer, Membership was 104 (<a href="#">FlaTimesUnion 56 Nov11, 1921</a>). Or was it 65? (<a href="#">FlaGrower 23(22)6, 1921</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Truskett cited attendance at a fall 1921 meeting of the “newly formed FGGA” in Oldsmar (<a href="#">Williams, 1988, pg 124</a>)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>Notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| H.T. Fisher      | 1922-1925 | Cited as 6th Annual Meeting of FGGA, so the first was in 1916?? Called H.T. Fisher P.T. so accuracy questionable.  
(FlaTimesUnion 57 Nov17, 1922); Membership about 100; Cited as 9th FGGA meeting: puts founding back to 1914 or, if 2/year, ~1918 ?  
(FlaGrower 28(24)8, 1923) Fisher reelected for 1924. |
| E. L. Lord       | 1925-1937 | FGGA mentioned as over 8 years old (FlaGrower 38(6)5-6, 1930), so founded ~1921? Lord was president for the last 6 years  
(FlaStateHortSoc 44:177, 1931). Lord reelected for 10th term  
(FlaGrower 40(8)15, 1932) |
| A.E. Pickard     | 1938-1939 | FlaGrower 61(6)10, 1953. Cited tenure of Lord from UF and Pickard, an Orange County grape grower (FlaGrower 44(7)6, 1936) |
| Dr. Charles Demko| 1940-1954 | Sentinel-Star, July 11 1948; FlaGrower 58(4)10,27,28, 1950; FlaTimesUnion, undated, ~1952 President for 14 years |
| Charles W. Demko | 1961-1968 | Dr. Demko’s son possibly President multiple years - anyone between Fennell and C.W. Demko? (Orlando Sentinel Jul 19, 1956) |
| C.L. McCormick   | 1968-1971 | Anyone between Demko and McCormick? (FlaTimesUnion July 11 1971) |
| Thomas J. Hughes, Sr. | 1972-1974 | Tom championed U-pick and fresh market quality. Multi-generation contribution with son, Tom, Jr. still active |
| Esmond Grosz     | 1974-1976 | Esmond brought substantial business skills record keeping and was involved in wine making and attracting wine interests to Florida. |
| Florence Hall    | 1977-1978 | Florence achieved legislative recognition and support for FGGA and developed regional marketing organization. Championed FAMU grape research program |
| Levin Darden     | 1979-1980 | Levin persisted with legislative recognition and followed through with Hall’s initiatives |
| Clara-Jane Smith | 1980-1981 | Clara Jane promoted the fresh market needs and communicated the value of grapes to legislators (with husband Bill) |
| Harold Crevasse  | 1982-1983 | Harold developed regional meetings and organized fresh market sales cooperative |
| Jim Eckhart      | 1983-1987 | A former legislator himself, Jim strengthened ties with the FDACS and development of the Viticulture Policy Act |
| Gary Ketchum     | 1987-1988 | As an early Principal in Lafayette Winery and attorney, he was prominent in addressing legislative matters and FGGA support |
| John Holloway    | 1989-1990 | John’s vineyard expertise and familiarity with the Florida legislature saved the Viticulture Trust Fund from oblivion |
| Joe Spinelli     | 1991-1994 | Very proactive regarding workshops, wine-food popularization, and state wide promotional activities |
| Joe Stephany     | 1995-1996 | Centralized the FGGA office and streamlines administrative procedures |
| Byron Biddle     | 1997-     | Emphasized the statewide nature of the FGGA and provided a |
C. The Dynamics of Volunteer Organizations

Let’s now consider the environment under which associations such as the FGGA evolve and operate.

Over its ~ 90 year history, thousands of individuals have been members of the FGGA. Many have conspicuously left their mark and are noted here. Others by their FGGA membership and activities in growing, processing, marketing and/or promoting grapes have contributed to the industry. Less visible members, by serving as active FGGA members or officers, providing ideas and thoughtful discussion, and supporting the leadership have been and/or are an essential part of the organization. To use a rough analogy – Generals and their officer-staff direct battles, noncoms and privates win them.

Associations start with a perceived need by a few with a common interest – they associate. The need resonates with others sympathetic to the cause, and informal meetings result in a leadership group which takes the initial steps to formalize an organization. This may involve soliciting support from known backers (starting from scratch), changing the structure or goals of an existing organization, forming an allied/competing group (breaking away), or going outside the originating group for members and support. In any case, this is a common, reasonably democratic operation repeated as frequently as new issues and challenges affect special interest groups and society. Apparently there were many in Florida in the 1870s on. An interesting listing along with officers and their location of state/regional agricultural organizations grew from two when first reported ([FlaDispatch 2(36)4, 1878]) to 26 in the last such report ([FlaDispatch 6(36), 1882]), and peaked with 28 cited, ([Table 3, FlaDispatch 1(3)11, 1882]).

What makes a successful organization? Sadly, it is much easier to destroy a viable association consisting of members with a common purpose than it is to form and maintain it. Even when the association is based on an obvious need, well articulated in its charter, and strongly led, failures occur. The change in business or personal circumstances - employment, serious illness or death of key personnel - can be devastating to an organization, as can unresolved business, political, or personal controversies. Additionally, issues change and dynamic leadership can switch focus or simply run out of steam – burn out. Fortunately, when some falter due to profession, economic, or personal reasons, others step in to fill the gap and keep things moving.

All of the above have occurred within the FGGA. Fortunately, the organization has depth - members capable of stepping in to fill the gap, often with changes in direction and emphasis.
Membership retention and recruitment are the constant survival needs of any organization; volunteers can and do walk away from organizations that do not meet their personal or professional needs. The current FGGA viability reflects well on the attractive proposition of grape growing in Florida and the people involved. Although grape growing (farming) is central to our focus, many contributors come from other careers, having developed an interest in grapes after or concurrent with their primary profession. All bring much to the organization, even as they cycle in and then move on.

The process by which organizations are initiated, maintained, and modified is analogous to “Open Source Software” in the computer industry - a system by which users and aficionados individually and collectively, informally and formally work on an open source code available to all and continually improve its operation and functionality. So too FGGA officers, members, and advisors with the common goal of improving the Florida grape industry, have since inception (and even before, as we have seen), added to the focus and operation of the organization. These are the individuals we wish to recognize and whose accomplishments merit emphasis.

In addition, it is essential that the ideas generated, used, modified, and/or discarded be documented. That is the second purpose of this text. Although times and conditions change there are some procedures, policies, and programs that have worked well for the FGGA. We’ll discuss these in closing, since by modifying to meet existing or anticipated circumstances their open source nature should be of value in the future.

Florida is a large, long state covering several vastly different climatic zones from semi tropical to almost temperate. Consequently, growing conditions vary dramatically from Key West to Pensacola, a land distance of over 700 miles, and from marine coastal to continental inland. Thus, the adaptation of grapes and growers is equally diverse. Although the early work was around Jacksonville, Tallahassee, and Orlando [East, West, and South Florida, respectively, as they were known at the time], many vineyards were established throughout state and growers cooperated regionally. Eventually local chapters developed, facilitating vineyard visits, meetings, and exchange of germplasm and information. These activities preceded the FGGA, and were the likely catalyst for its formation and success.

The Florida State Horticultural Society (FSHS) formed in 1888 preceding the FGGA by ~35 years and itself, grew out of Agriculture focused organizations initiated even earlier. In fact, from the earliest years the FSHS had a Committee on Grapes. Active committee members, who reported on grapes in the FSHS Proceedings, were some of those pioneers we now recognize. The annual reports and related conversations provide a fascinating record of the ups and downs of grapes in Florida from the 1870s on.

Individuals active in the foundation of both the FSHS and FGGA were for the most part private parties interested in horticulture from a business or hobby standpoint. Later, as agricultural research was promoted and funded by the federal (USDA) and state governments (Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, and later Florida Department of Agriculture and FAMU) a healthy mix of educators, research scientists, commercial grape growers, wine makers, and hobbyists were attracted to grapes. This synergism exists today – another example of “Open Source” cooperation.
The early FSHS Proceedings had informative articles on grape propagation and sales, primarily in West and Central Florida (Tallahassee and Orlando). Then around 1907 there was scant mention of grapes, except to note that muscadines were much more amenable to Florida conditions and recommended over other species. In the early 1920s grapes again received some attention regarding activities in Central Florida. This petered out by the late 1930s.

These early FSHS Proceedings are fascinating reading, as there were many historical recollections by early members that described the contributions of their colleagues to the success of agriculture in Florida from the 19th century on – the type of narrative we’re aiming for here, albeit without the benefit of grape old timers. Unfortunately or perhaps inevitably, the articles on personal recollections and biographical information (as part of the Necrology section) diminished as scientific rigor and 3rd person, impersonal narratives took over. Thus, although the scientific knowledge and technical accomplishments increased dramatically and continue today, the identification and contributions of those prominently involved is much more impersonalized.

To the surprise of no one who has been or is involved in growing grapes in Florida, it is an extremely difficult undertaking, compared to other agricultural endeavors or even viticulture practiced in favorable regions – practically anywhere else on the planet. Everything grows well in Florida: the vines, competing vegetation (weeds), insects, nematodes, birds, varmints, larger predators, pathogenic bacteria and virus. If one or a combination of these cited factors wasn’t a sufficient deterrent, add the vagaries of weather – too much or too little rain in volume, time, or location; untimely frosts, hurricanes - certainly complicate the enterprise. To these now add environmental and 21st Century sustainability concerns – some legitimate, others unrealistic.

The challenges met and overcome belie the comparatively minor (but increasing) contribution of grapes to Florida’s total agricultural output. It is an underappreciated accomplishment, yet ever pertinent to viticulturists in more hospitable environments for whom the Florida viticulture research findings and practices are valuable guides. “If you can successfully grow grapes in Florida, you can grow them anywhere” (Quote, personal recollection circa 1980)

D. The Triad
The success of major Agricultural endeavors such as Viticulture is based on science and technology and depends on three entities. These are:

(1) Industrial component – businesses and entrepreneurs willing to invest time, resources, and capital in an enterprise. They take the risk and reap much of the rewards. To this category we must include Hobbists – individuals committed to a pursuit (in this case, viticulture/enology) simply due to an absorbing interest in the subject. Their challenge is overcoming obstacles, creating new knowledge, associating with like minded protagonists, and earning the respect/recognition of their peers. They have and continue to contribute much (Dunstan, 1962; DeWolf, 2003).

(2) Scientist and technologists capable of providing the expertise necessary to overcome technical problems, maintain progress, and foster competition.
Government infrastructure to support (or at least not hinder) private enterprise. A given is the legal framework to insure an orderly business landscape and avoid social disrupting (dishonest), environmentally unsound, or unsafe practices.

As the grape industry developed in Florida, these three features came together and allowed the industry to at least survive the hard times and prosper during good ones. First, there were dedicated growers who felt that grapes could and should be a Florida crop. Some liked the idea of growing grapes for fun, others for profit. Many had experience or aspirations based on successful grape ventures elsewhere, and recognized the potential inherent in Florida’s appealing climate and natural resources. Just as important were the hobbyists, likewise committed to grapes and the “Romance of the Vine”. Together, these were the pioneers who planted vineyards and committed to overcoming the challenges involved. Initially they communicated informally and later formed a number of horticultural oriented organizations which evolved into the FSHS and the FGGA.

The second pillar of strength was the scientific community. Some growers had or acquired the necessary technical background, allied themselves with those that had, or relied upon the expertise in the available literature. Initially trial and error was the learning mode, and worked well on an individual and collective basis. Information was reasonably effective, dissipated - first informally from neighbors and nurserymen and later formally through the evolving agricultural institutions and associations.

Agriculture is progressively based on the physical, chemical, and biological sciences; behavioral sciences such as economics, business, and sociology now play an increasingly important role. Educational institutions, which were expanding across the nation, provided graduates trained in agriculture and related disciplines. Whether trained graduates went to industry, joined family farm operations, or academic pursuits, their technical contribution substantially increased the scientific and technical level of farming, including viticulture and enology. As scientific knowledge accumulated and was put to use, it became clear that grape cultivation in Florida is a much more complex undertaking than in most global regions, hence the third contributor.

The third partner is government. Thanks primarily to the Morrill Act of 1862 and subsequent Federal and State investments in Agriculture support. The combined effort of the USDA and State Agricultural Research and Cooperative Extension Services, plus the essential involvement of Colleges of Agriculture, is to a large extent responsible for the global dominance of U.S. Agriculture – a fact often taken for granted, but strikingly evident when contrasted to the developing or undeveloped world. This brought financial support and a degree of regulatory control to Florida agricultural enterprises.

However, in the early days all was not sweetness and light between the Agricultural Community and State Agriculture Colleges (Marcus, 1986). The pragmatic needs of farmers and the goal of expanding knowledge in the Agricultural Sciences met head on, and through a combination of cooperation, competition, and communication was reasonably well resolved. Although, even today the priorities of scientific and business interests require mutual understanding and compromise, as the FGGA narrative well illustrates.
It is highly unlikely that a viable agricultural industry, let alone a grape industry, would have developed had it not been for the fortuitous combination and strength of this triad. It continues today and we are exploring its components – with emphasis on the people who made/make it happen.

E. Federal and Florida Agricultural Research and Extension Services

Governmental involvement in viticulture was slow coming to Florida. However, the need for agricultural research was recognized even before Florida was U.S. Territory and voiced continually thereafter. The 1862 Morrell Act and subsequent federal legislation set the stage although Civil War and Reconstruction turmoil prevailed for the following 3 decades, (Cresap, 1982 Chap15; Ferleger, 1990). The idea of an Agriculture College jelled in 1870, but it was 1884 in Lake City before a physical facility existed (Proctor, 1962) and 1891 before grape research was reported (Bull. 14, Figure 42; ibid pp11-12). Results were disappointing in the 70 variety vineyard (presumably in Lake City), and not much was reported about grapes for awhile.

Figure 42. First Annual Report Florida Experiment Station

The burden of grape research and development (R&D) was carried by the private sector, as well described in publications of the time. Nevertheless, the Federal government through the Department of Agriculture was actively involved in Alachua County. A prominent viticulturist, Baron H. Von Luttichau, was very active in promoting grapes at his estate in Earleton, about 12 miles northwest of Gainesville. Von Luttichau participated in the FSHS as a contributing author and member of the Committee on Grapes. From the 1880s to 1905 he reported and published frequently.

In 1887 Von Luttichau initiated plantings on his “Government Experiment Station”, established in consultation with George C. Husmann, Department of Agriculture, who was charged with evaluating grape variety adaptability and promoting their cultivation in various states. Caution, G. W. Husmann’s, father George Husmann contributed significantly to grape and wine developments in Missouri, California, and even France (phyloxella resistant rootstock) but not Florida (Pinney, 1989 has many citations on both Husmanns). His son continued exploring grape potential throughout the U.S. (Husmann, 1916; Husmann, 1932). The USDA continued grape investigations in Florida, as implied by later authors (Dearing, 1922; Fisher, 1924).

Curiously, in 1896 H. Von Luttichau lead off a FSHS presentation with the surprising statement, “I had to give up grapes; they did not pay me well.” (FlaStateHortSoc 9:67-69, 1896). But in the 1905 proceedings, he reported again on “The Government Viticultural Experiment Station”. He noted that vines did well through the 5th year and then declined (FlaStateHortSoc 18:60-62, 1905). He blamed it on improper pruning, variety, soil, or location and recommended replanting after 6 or 7 years. This was the last H. Von Luttichau was heard from regarding grapes, although his avocado endeavors were noted as late as 1916. (The Avocado in Florida).
**Von Luttichau** was much more than a viticulturist, since he was cited as growing avocados and demonstrated considerable knowledge of citrus culture and cover crop usage, as reflected by his cooperation with [H. Harold Hume](Hume, 1911 pg. 290), horticulturist and botanist at the University of Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, Gainesville.

**Von Luttichau**, was cited ([Buchholz, 1929 pg. 178](Buchholz, 1929 pg. 178)) as “**Von Ladisha** [sic], foreign botanist and horticulturist [bought Earle’s Belvedere Nursery site on Lake Santa Fe] and began experimenting with the introduction of foreign tropical fruits. His place was famous for its wealth of flowering plants, especially azaleas. In 1880 the state supplemented his work, and there established its first experiment station.” [Was it the State or Federal Government or both?]

1. **University of Florida Grape Research 1891-1929**

The first mention of grapes by the Florida Agricultural Experiment Station was in the 1891 Annual Report from the original Lake City site. Sixty varieties planted earlier were so affected by freezes, drought, and disease that the fruit quality wasn’t worth reporting ([Fla Ag Exp Sta Report, pp 11-12 1891](Fla Ag Exp Sta Report, pp 11-12 1891)). The 1893 Annual Report indicated that 40 Italian grape vines received from California were planted and the old vineyard had some surviving vines of unknown varieties ([Fla Ag Exp Sta Annual Report, pg. 15 1893](Fla Ag Exp Sta Annual Report, pg. 15 1893)). Presumably, the location was on the Lake City farm, and nothing more was mentioned. In 1896 Annual Report, 23 varieties were set out at the Myers Sub-Station ([Fla Ag Exp Sta Annual Report, pg. 78-79 1896](Fla Ag Exp Sta Annual Report, pg. 78-79 1896)). Most were labrusca with some aestivalis and rotundifolia, but most didn’t do well.

The Agricultural College moved to Gainesville in 1905. There was scant mention of grapes until several decades later when a 1924 report cited mixed results with 62 bunch grape (mostly hybrids - probably **Munson**’s) and 16 muscadine varieties under observation ([Figures 33 ABC](Figures 33 ABC)). These vines were followed for several years with mediocre results. Nevertheless, the resurgent interest in grapes was very dramatic – see ([Timeline](Timeline) and [Bibliography-Chronology](Bibliography-Chronology) circa 1921-1930).

The most cogent summation came in 1926. **Arthur S. Rhoads**, assistant Plant Pathologist, Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, Cocoa published Bulletin 178, Diseases of Grapes in Florida ([Rhoads, 1926](Rhoads, 1926)). This comprehensive publication provided an overview of previous viticulture efforts, spoke optimistically about the potential of **Munson**’s hybrids as breeding stock, and cautioned that the ideal commercial variety had yet to be developed - due to disease problems. **Rhoads** then detailed fungal diseases and means of combating them.

Coinciding with the decline in grape interest between about 1905 and 1920, there didn’t seem to be much federal or state Agricultural Experiment Station reporting on grapes, although research did go on. In 1920 **Charles Dearing** of the USDA encouraged muscadine grape production and utilization. He cited his earlier muscadine breeding work in Florida around 1909 for the Bureau of Plant Industries and the rationale for emphasizing native Vitis species over those introduced from elsewhere ([Dearing, 1920](Dearing, 1920)). [Dearing’s opinion of bunch grapes potential in Florida was disdained as overly pessimistic and discouraging for about 20+ years, although events eventually proved him to be correct.]


In 1922 Dearing again addressed the FSHS, reinforcing the value of muscadines and citing previous failures with vinifera and northern species (Dearing, 1922). By this time there was strong interest in Munson hybrids among another generation of Florida growers. At this meeting E.L. Lord, UF College of Agriculture, Gainesville provided an update on bunch grapes and indicated that propagation research was underway at several state experiment stations (Lord, 1922). H.T. Fisher, Eustis followed with an upbeat article on grape potential, citing grafting and labrusca-native breeding work 12 year previously (~1910) by Frank W. Savage of the Government Station in Eustis (Fisher, 1922).

The early level of grape research and extension support from the state is unclear. A 1923 FSHS presentation cited helpful information from Gainesville Ag Station (Sylvesters, 1923) and another presenter mentions advice against bunch grape propagation by the USDA and little encouragement by state agents, except to save existing vineyards (Burnham, 1923). Lord then addressed disease control (Lord, 1923), as did C.L. Shear, USDA (Shear, 1923). This was followed by a paper on grape insects by J.R. Watson, Florida Agricultural Experiment Station, Gainesville (Watson, 1923). So clearly the message was getting through and both USDA and the Ag Station were ramping up grape research and extension efforts. Growers now had much more information and tools to deal with insects and diseases than their predecessors 30 years prior.

2. IFAS Today
It is worthwhile to look briefly at the changes that the Agricultural College, Agricultural Research and Extension Services since the early 1900s, as recently cited (Florida Trend, 2008 http://floridatrend.com/article.asp?aid=49429).

“IFAS traces its roots to the 19th century. The U.S. Morrill Act of 1862 established land-grant universities in an effort to bring advanced practical research to Americans who didn’t have access to higher education. Over time, Congress also asked the universities to build agricultural experiment stations and cooperative extension efforts that sent agents into rural areas to bring research to farmers.

Today, in addition to housing UF’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, forestry, natural resources and other academic divisions, IFAS maintains offices in every one of Florida’s 67 counties, as well as 13 research and education centers in 19 locations around the state. In Homestead, for example, IFAS professors teach and research tropical and subtropical crops from papayas to passion fruit. In Lake Alfred — the largest citrus-research center in the world — IFAS faculty battle the citrus greening disease that threatens to wipe out Florida’s signature crop.”

Teaching: IFAS’ primary academic unit is the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, with more than 5,000 undergraduate and graduate students in agricultural and biological engineering; agricultural education and communications; animal sciences; entomology and nematology; environmental horticulture; fisheries and aquatic sciences; food science and human nutrition; microbiology and cell science; plant pathology; forest resources and conservation; soil and water science; wildlife ecology and conservation.

Research: IFAS pulled in about $72 million in research, teaching and extension grants last year, both on campus and in its 13 research and education centers around the state. The largest contributor was the U.S. Department of Agriculture, followed by the Florida Department of
Agriculture & Consumer Services. The academic departments that landed the most grant funding were: Fisheries, $6.2 million; microbiology, $5.3 million; horticultural sciences, $4.8 million; agriculture and biological engineering, $4.3 million. IFAS researchers have brought to market nearly 300 new cultivars and inventions over the past five years, the majority of them plant germplasm.

**Extension:** IFAS manages Florida Cooperative Extension Service offices in all 67 counties. Extension agents specialize in everything from traditional row crops to growth management and land-use. The service coordinates volunteers in programs such as the Master Gardener program. Extension volunteers work the annual equivalent of 672 full-time employees. IFAS youth programs such as 4-H focus on youth leadership development. Its Florida Yards and Neighborhoods program helps homeowners create and maintain efficient landscapes.

### 3. Florida A&M University Center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research

In 1978 another grape research partner came on scene, thanks to FGGA efforts to be described. The center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research was established in the College of Engineering Sciences, Technology and Agriculture in 1978 by the Florida Legislature (Florida Viticulture Policy Act, 1978), to assist in the development of the Florida grape and wine industry through research, extension service, and student training.

The Center is to focus exclusively on viticulture research until more recently when small fruit research was added to the program in 1999. Over the years, the Center has undergone extensive improvement to enhance its research capability and capacity. With the support of Florida A&M University and Florida Viticulture Industry, the Center was relocated in 2001 from the main campus of Florida A&M University in downtown Tallahassee to its present location on Mahan Drive (the Former Lafayette Winery), with 40 acre vineyard and a 15,000 ft² lab and office space. The center has since continued to grow and is becoming the largest and best equipped facility dedicated to viticulture – warm climate grape research in the south and southeastern United States.

**Mission**

To conduct research and provide service and support that will help the viticulture industry in Florida become a viable industry.

**Goals**

1. Develop new and improved grape cultivars and selected small fruits suitable for fresh fruit and processing.
2. Improve the disease resistance of Florida grapes through classical breeding and biotechnology.
3. Promote the marketability of Florida grapes and value-added products through research and extension.
4. Develop best management practices for Florida grapes and selected small fruits.
5. Establish a small fruit improvement program with emphasis on blackberries and raspberries.
6. Promote a strong graduate research program through research and student experiential learning.

**Missions and Research Objectives**
Located east of the main FAMU campus on US 90, the Center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research is situated on the site that was formerly Lafayette Vineyards. This has provided researchers with an ideal facility for viticulture research, with well-established vineyards and a state-of-the-art laboratory where they can work on everything from genome research to the development of seedless muscadine varieties and the development of other small fruit varieties adapted to north Florida.

The mission of the Center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research is to conduct research and provide service and support that will help the Florida viticulture industry to become an economically viable industry. To achieve that, the Center has developed six goals that researchers will be addressing for the next few years:

- Develop new and improved grape cultivars for fresh fruit and for processing
- Improve the disease resistance of Florida grapes
- Promote the marketability of Florida grapes and value-added products
- Develop best management practices for vineyard operations
- Establish a small fruit program with emphasis on commercial potential
- Provide extension and outreach services to grape growers and processors

These research goals are aimed at helping Florida grape growers improve their marketing and production, and at helping to put the viticulture industry in the state on a sound economic footing. The Center’s research projects are directly tied to industry needs as they have been identified by the Florida Viticulture Advisory Council.

Research projects address many aspects of grape and wine production in Florida; program emphases are on both wine and table grapes. One effort has been the development of a seedless muscadine with large berries and good quality fruit that will have edible skin and good disease tolerance for making wine, juice, and jelly.

Muscadines, of course, are the most common native grape in north Florida, but they’re not the only grape that the Center works on. Researchers also are working with bunch grapes, some of which also are native to the region. Different research projects look at various management and cultural practices, to determine the effects of different kinds of trellis systems, canopy management, vine density and pruning on fruit production and fruit quality for both muscadines and bunch grapes.

The wine industry is not new to Florida. From the 1880s to the 1920s, Florida grape growers planted more than 12,000 acres of vines. The rich, highly-flavored muscadine wines that those growers produced became a well-known regional specialty. However, by the 1950s, most of that acreage had been decimated by Pierce’s Disease, which causes vine degeneration and death.

Although breeding programs have developed improved varieties of native muscadines with natural resistance to Pierce’s Disease, researchers at the Center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research are working to identify genes that offer resistance to both Pierce’s Disease and other fungal diseases. This project, known as the Grape Genomics and Bioinformatics Research and Training Program, is aimed at identifying and sequencing groups of genes from native American grape species that can provide disease resistance and stress tolerance; researchers will be able to
use this information to improve grape cultivars that are susceptible to several diseases and to stress. Other projects are aimed at determining ways to manage the glassy-winged sharpshooter, an insect that helps spread Pierce’s Disease from plant to plant.

The Center also works to disseminate information to growers through a formal and informal outreach program. An annual Grape Field Day at the Center provides growers and the general public with the opportunity to see what researchers are working on and learn new management practices that will help them in their vineyards. Faculty and staff also help growers on a one-to-one basis with production and management problems.

In a unique approach to making the public aware of research being done at the Center, faculty members have offered introductory and advanced courses in the Art and Science of Enology. Participants who complete 70% of the course lectures and review sessions and take the final exam receive two credit units of the University Outreach Program.

Besides grapes, researchers at the Center are field-testing north Florida-adapted varieties of fruits such as blackberries, blueberries, kiwi, and other non-traditional fruits; growers also have asked researchers to look at raspberries. Administrators expect this program area to expand over the next few years to include a breeding component for new hybrids that will provide new economic crops for small farmers.

That’s the grape research situation today, with multiple state and federal programs capable of addressing grapes industry problems. But let’s look back ~80 years when the research efforts and involvement of State and Federal agricultural professionals in the FSHS was increasing. Their participation coincided with and was undoubtedly related to the formation of the FGGA. Still, the majority of reports originated from private growers, who were as optimistic as their counterparts were 30 years earlier. However, the stage was now set for an essential increase in Florida viticulture knowledge, coming from the underappreciated Florida Agricultural Experiment Station.

4. The Leesburg Station

The contribution of this research center closely mirrors the successful development of the Florida grape industry. It was the driving force behind Florida grape developments for about 70 years. The Leesburg Field Laboratory was founded as a branch unit of the University of Florida Agriculture Experiment Station system in 1929 (IFAS, 1982) Leesburg ARC Research Report WG-82-1. The initial research emphasis was on disease and insect problems threatening the thriving watermelon industry. It wasn’t until the 1933-34 when, prompted by the FGGA, attention was turned to grape pests. [The date could have been as early as 1931, according to a researcher involved (Loucks, 1944, 1st paragraph).] It was reported that 3 men went to Tallahassee (1933-34) to request legislative support to deal with diseased vineyards (IFAS, 1982- Mortensen, pg13).

“In 1933 three men went to Tallahassee…” This was the quote that prompted us to ask an intriguing question – who were these men? Possibly H.T. Fisher, former FGGA President and Dr. Charles Demko, active grower and future FGGA President were two. The third was possibly E.E. Truskett or Col. W.J. Stover (Loren Stover’s father), partner in the MacKenzie-Stover
vineyard operations. We earlier speculated that Dr. W.A. MacKenzie, elsewhere identified as Mayor of Leesburg and a representative in the Florida Legislature, was probably involved (FlaGrower 32(12)5, 1925). However, MacKenzie left the scene in 1929, killed in a firearm accident (FlaGrower 37(6)3, 1929) and nothing more was heard from the MacKenzie-Stover experimental vineyard. Nevertheless, grape growers certainly had political connections and, independent of their identity and date, these three men [and their behind the scene colleagues] did their work well.

Although capable scientists from the USDA and Florida Agricultural Experiment Station had contributed significantly in addressing the grape problems in the 1920s and early 30s, they were scattered – Hussmann had national responsibilities out of Washington DC; Dearing was based in North Carolina and in and out of Florida; Lord was at the Ag Experimental Station, Gainesville; Rhoads was at the Florida Experiment Station, Cocoa, and Loucks was at the Leesburg Station. The Lake County extension agent, C.R. Hiatt and his counterparts in neighboring counties worked closely with growers. Hiatt was FGGA Secretary in the early 1930s and Lord was President from 1925 to 1937.

The modest appropriation of funds ($3,500) to study grape diseases at Leesburg, eventually led to an interdisciplinary group of scientists with a grape research focus. Although a “critical mass” wasn’t reached for some time, the Leesburg Station was central to the growing region and convenient to many grape growers.

As today, these State and Federal professionals provided material and moral support to commercial and hobby grape growers and grape aficionados to promote the industry. However, government research scientists usually don’t go directly to state or federal legislators asking for support. [Although Lord’s tenure as FGGA President encompassed that time frame, we speculate that it is unlikely that, as a state employee, he was one of the three who went to Tallahassee.] That’s the job of commercial growers with business interests affecting the economic well being of their locales – employment, taxes, sustainable community growth. Businessmen (and women) are in a much better position to champion the benefits of agricultural research focusing on their problems, amenable to research solutions or government policy directives. When the right people are involved in thoughtful dialog with legislators, it works. It did in the early 1930s and again about 45 years later, as we’ll see.

One caveat – Government programs, be it teaching, research, extension, or marketing are very sensitive to the funds available. Support levels wax and wane in response to the condition of state and federal treasuries, which in turn depends on local, national, global economies (now increasingly). Furthermore, even in good and especially in bad times, funding levels are never enough and priorities must be set. Thanks to political savvy FGGA members and enthusiasts, grapes have done reasonably well, and the support justification is evident in the vitality of the industry. Yet the job is never done; a number of other agricultural entities can lay stake to the same persuasive arguments. Maintaining economic vitality and political connectivity is the continuing challenge of FGGA officers, members, and businesses.

It’s worth emphasizing that state and federal professionals actively support practically all agricultural organizations. By their membership and participation as volunteers, elected officers,
and committee members, these government employees are visible, active supporters of professional societies. They provide continuity. From its 1888 founding, the rolls of the FSHS illustrate this commitment as does the history of other commodity and/or profession focused associations throughout the nation. The Bibliography-Chronology listing of FSHS Officers is replete with Federal and State horticulturists and administrators, many with strong grape interest and involvement.

Now, back to Leesburg - The station was designated as the Watermelon and Grape Investigations Laboratory in 1941-42 and had several name changes associated with changing research emphasis. The original 77 acre farm near Whitney was moved to its final station location, off Route 27, 6 miles south of Leesburg in 1958 (FlaGrowerAndRancher 63(7)12-13, 1955). By 1972 the facility had expanded to 262 acres.

![Figure 43. Initial Florida State Experiment Station Facility, Whitney ~1938](image)

![Figure 44. Whitney Laboratory ~1938.](image)

It was in these two environs that the landmark research started, leading up to Pierce’s disease (PD) resistant cultivars and supporting studies that made bunch grape cultivation possible (Figures 43 & 44). In 2000 the property was sold and the research operation moved to the Mid Florida Agricultural Research and Education Center in Apopka (MREC).

The Leesburg Watermelon and Grape Lab (later the IFAS Leesburg Agriculture Research Center - we’ll call it the Leesburg Station for simplicity.) was the driving force behind Florida grape developments for many decades. And the effort continues in Apopka today. The MREC research program areas are considerably broader that at the old Leesburg Station, yet grapes are still a prominent research focus. The primary objective is the development of marketable, productive, and long-lived bunch and muscadine grape cultivars, maximizing production efficiency, and control of Pierce’s disease by chemical or biological means including genetic modification of grapes and in controlling the insect vector (IFAS, 1982-Mortensen, pg 13).

It should be emphasized that the classic research in defining PD as bacterial in nature and identifying the insect vector was accomplished at Leesburg and these findings are applied by research scientists and viticulturist globally. A number of notable scientist well worth mentioning addressed grape issues at Leesburg. Early contributors and their dates of service are noted below. Many of these individuals deserve credit for the recovery and present viability of the Florida grape industry after the last grape boom and bust of the 1920s and 30s. Their research contributions are evident in the accompanying bibliography and, in the case of several individuals noted, continue today.

**Plant Pathologists Dates?**

M.N. Walker – 1929-1942
G.K. Parris – 1945-1951
J.M. Crall – 1952-1977