

High Mountains, Fertile Valleys

Geronimo's Apaches Are Still In The Saddle... As Able Cattlemen

John L. Sears

Sometime during 1881, the lawmakers of Arizona Territory, in a sudden flurry of activity, created no fewer than three counties. That year of 1881 was the one in which more than one country came into being, since the original four were established in Prescott in 1864.

One of these counties was Graham, the only one in this mountainous state named for a mountain. Just two days before the adjournment of the eleventh territorial legislature, an act to create the county of Graham was passed. The territory to form it was taken from Pima and Apache Counties, and Safford was made the county seat. Two years later the county seat was moved to Solomonville, but with the coming of Greenlee County many years later it was moved back to Safford to stay for good.

High Peaks, Rich Valley

Today Graham County covers 2,063,200 acres of territory, the third smallest county in the state. Its population is approximately 15,000. The Safford Valley is one of the richest agricultural areas in Arizona. Mount Graham is one of the state's loftiest, and its San Carlos Indian Reservation

Johnny Sears isn't as big as the Graham Mountains, nor has he been around as long. But he is almost as prominent a fixture of Graham County as they are. As County Extension Agent, John Sears has been a helpful aid to Graham County farmers for 10 years. Before that he was Greenlee County Agent for five years, going to that assignment right after his graduation in 1948 from Michigan State University.

He ranks very high in that index of county agent measurement — how much they like their county and its people, and how warmly those people regard their county agent. In Graham County "Johnny Sears" and "County Agent" are synonyms.

is a model of what the tribesmen can do for themselves.

The Gila River travels fast as it leaves the mountains of New Mexico but when it gets to Graham County it slows down, broadens out, and becomes an able farmhand.

Graham County is a farming area and, thanks to the Gila, it has about 40,000 acres under cultivation. This produces such crops as alfalfa, cotton, grain, truck crops, pecans, and other products with a total worth of some eight to ten million dollars a year.

It was the promise of agriculture that brought about the settlement of the Safford Valley in the first place. These first settlers had originally passed through the valley as members of the California column in the Civil War. On being mustered out, some of them started a farming venture near what is now Gila Bend. But the soil did not respond to their efforts and the river was cantankerous, so they moved to the upper Gila Valley where the soil was better and conditions more favorable.

DR. JIM RONEY, Extension Entomologist, explains how to check cotton for insect damage, at a cotton insect field day in Graham County.



Had Early Civilization

But life along the Upper Gila had existed for centuries before this. Lieutenant William H. Emory was in charge of the first American scenic expedition into the Southwest. He reported in October of 1846 that his party found in the valley many prehistoric ruins, indicating at one time a large and flourishing community. But past the middle of the last century it was a dark and avoided region, the reason being the Apache Indians.

Today, near Lordsburg, New Mexico, less than two hours of easy driving from Safford, a motorist can read on a bronze tablet these words:

"Near here Geronimo surrendered, thus ending Indian wars in America forever."

It was on September 3, 1886 that Geronimo surrendered and the event caused jubilation in the little village of Safford, as well as throughout Graham County. Peace at last had come to the land.

Less than a decade and a half before Geronimo bowed to the U. S.

SORGHUM FIELD DAY, with Dr. Bob Dennis in the foreground, explaining results of a sorghum demonstration on the Scott Pace farm at Solomon. County Agent Sears says Graham County people are very responsive to events such as this.



Mark Graham County



ATTENDANCE AND INTEREST are high at Hay Day in Graham County. More than 200 farmers turned out to watch the new hay swathers in action. The demonstration was scheduled cooperatively, with the county agent's office and local farm machinery dealers participating. Two years after this demonstration, more than 95 percent of the hay in Graham County was cut with these swathers.

Cavalry, a resolute group of pioneers came into the valley to wrest from the river and the desert land that is just as fertile as any land on earth. They were the industrious Mormons. They worked hard and they worked together and they did not fail.

Several villages sprang up along the banks of the Gila, farming communities like Thatcher, Pima, Central, Eden, and Bryce. Ranchers brought herds into the hills and mountains, and things began to look up for Graham County. It's been that way ever since.

Apaches Top Cattlemen

And what of the Apache Indians who made life so miserable nearly 100 years ago? They are still staying close to the Gila, but today they are about the finest citizens you can find in any country. They are top cattlemen and produce fine beef.

Advising farmers, ranchers, and homemakers in Graham County is the University of Arizona Agricultural Extension Service located in the old Safford armory, right on busy Highway 70. This office is staffed by John L. Sears, County Agent in Charge;



TEACHING IN THE field. County Agent Sears (back to camera) explains to farmers how a new hay swather works, and its advantages, just before start of a swather demonstration.

Home Agent Mrs. Darleen Kurtz, and Assistant Agent William E. Reynolds, one full time secretary and one part time secretary. The Agricultural Extension Service was established in Graham County in 1916, one of the first counties in Arizona to sponsor the Extension Service.

Graham County had one of the first 4-H Clubs in the United States. There was a club in Pima, Arizona, in 1913. This was before the county officially had an Agricultural Extension Service.

Has Branch Station

In April 1946, at the request of farmers in Graham County, an exper-

SECOND OF A SERIES

This Graham County story is second of a series. Last issue, you may recall, County Agent Ernie Foster told us about Greenlee County.

Next in the series will be a report from the high country, as County Agent Alvin Allen, up at Prescott, reports on Yavapai County.

We hope to continue the series to give, in turn, an agricultural report from each of Arizona's 14 counties.

iment farm was established in Graham County by the University of Arizona. Dr. Fred Turner now serves as superintendent of that important station.

Graham County is famous for its good cotton. Graham County is a one variety short staple area. They grow the famous New Mexico 1517 cotton and also S-2 long staple. The town of Pima claims to be the "Home of Su-pima Cotton." Graham County is proud of its cotton products. All of the cotton is ginned by the Safford Valley Cotton Growers Co-op, owned by the farmers of Graham County.

Also of agricultural importance, as a market for Graham County farm products, is the home-owned Safford Packing Company, makers of the famed "Cactus" brand hams and bacon.

ANDERSON, CLAYTON & CO. SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

A year ago Anderson, Clayton & Co. initiated a scholarship program which grants \$800 each year for four years to an outstanding agriculture student attending the U of A. After four years, four U of A students will be under the company's sponsorship annually. The first scholarship was awarded last year to John Smith of Somerton. This year's recipient is Robert D. Justice, Peoria. Selection of recipients is made on the basis of scholastic achievement, leadership ability, character and educational promise in the field of agriculture.