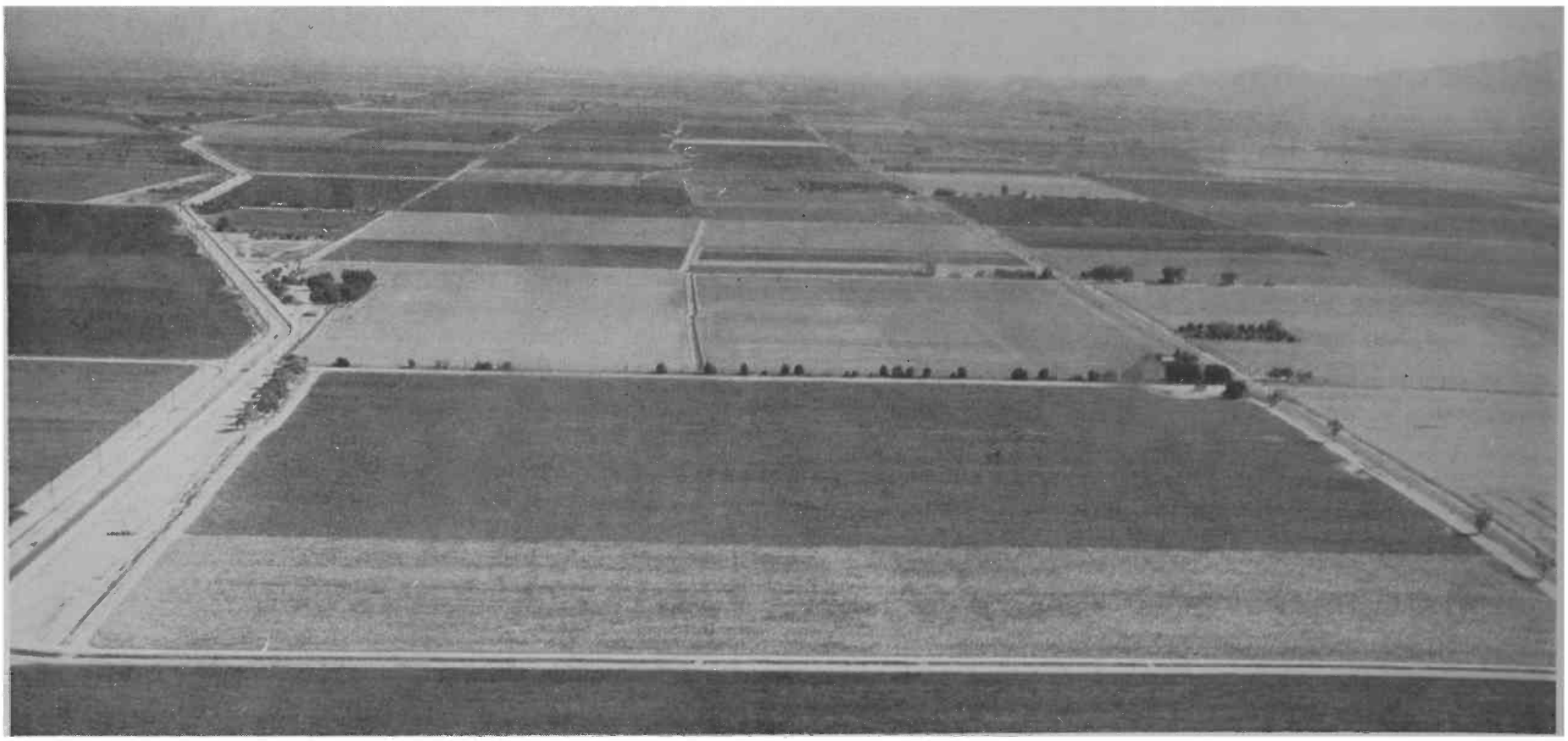
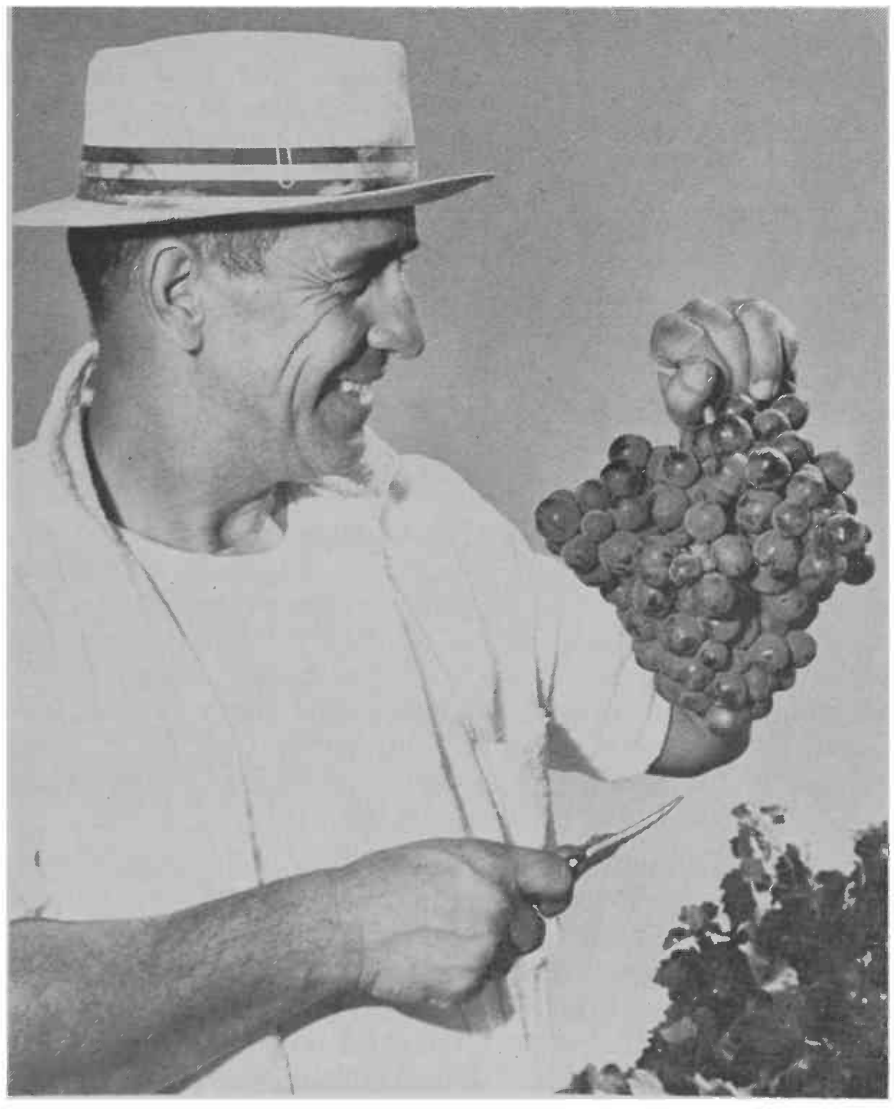


FIELDS ARE LARGE and intensively cropped in the Salt River Valley. To the left can be seen one of the many irrigation canals which make crop production possible in this otherwise arid part of Arizona.

MARICOPA COUNTY

TABLE GRAPES ARE increasing in importance as a cash crop in Maricopa County. Here, Charlie Condos of Arrowhead Ranch admires a cluster of Cardinal grapes.



JOHN WIEHL of Gilbert proudly shows the kind of cotton that can be grown in Maricopa County.

THIS CONCRETE DITCH lining machine, invented in Phoenix, is just one of many things developed to increase the efficiency of agriculture in the Salt River Valley.

AGRICULTURE

CUT FLOWERS are one of the more highly specialized and exotic crops for which the Salt River Valley has become famous. Here, a carton of stock is loaded aboard a plane for shipment by air freight to Chicago.

Valley's Farm Income Yearly $200 Million

By Robert L. Halvorson

The search for high adventure and precious metals brought the first settlers to Arizona. But by and large, it was the promise seen in the rich alluvial soil and mild climate of her valleys which induced them to stay and which has kept them coming.

Most important and perhaps best known of these is the Salt River Valley lying within Maricopa County. Here, over the last hundred years, industrious farmers and ranchers have carved out an agricultural wonderland that each year pumps more than $200 million into the economic veins of the state.

Valley Large and Rich

It comes as a surprise to most people to learn that Maricopa County is one of the nation's most important agricultural areas. This is more easily understood, however, when you consider that Maricopa County is as large as the state of New Hampshire and also when you consider that it is served by one of the most efficient and successful water reclamation projects ever attempted, and it has a climate that permits the year-around production of crops.

According to the last census, approximately 500,000 acres or roughly 10 percent of the land in Maricopa County is under cultivation. This is almost half of the total number of acres under cultivation in the state. Indeed, it has been said that half of Arizona's agriculture, as well as half her people, can be found in Maricopa County.

Cotton, cattle, and fresh vegetables head the list of money earners. They bring in about 70 percent of the total

MARCHING HOUSES have failed to halt the expansion of agriculture in the Salt River Valley. Here, Virgil Merrill irrigates a new citrus grove near Queen Creek.

COUNTY AGENT BOYCE Foerman indicates how tall Sudangrass will grow in the Salt River Valley.

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agricultural income. Other important crops include alfalfa — up to seven cuttings per year — barley. grain sorghum, wheat, seed crops, and last but not least, citrus fruit and dairying.

Heavy Cotton Yields

In Maricopa County, some 135,000 acres, or about a fourth of the irrigated cropland, is given over to the production of upland and extra-long staple cotton. Average yield approaches 1,100 pounds of lint to the acre, with yields of five bales and better often reported.

It has been estimated that at any one time in the course of a year only about 35,000 acres of cropland is given over to the production of lettuce and commercial vegetables. Despite this seemingly small amount of acreage, a significant share of the produce that goes into the nation's market basket comes from Maricopa County. During a short period in the fall, and again in spring, lettuce growers in and around the Phoenix area supply nearly all of that salad ingredient consumed in the nation.

Menu For a Banquet!

In fact, Maricopa County produces complete meals in abundant variety. A sample menu of food — all produced within sight of the modern, high-rise buildings that dot the Phoenix skyline—might be: chilled grapefruit or cantaloupe, tossed green salad with scallions, olives, celery, or radishes; roast beef or leg-of-lamb with potatoes and broccoli or cabbage; milk; rolls and butter; and pecan or lemon meringue pie for dessert.

In all, more than 100 different agricultural commodities are produced in and around the Salt River Valley.

Upwards to 90 percent of all the milk consumed in the state also is produced in Maricopa County. The 250 dairymen in the county are among the most modern and efficient in the world. Pipeline milkers and stainless-steel cold-wall bulk storage tanks are the rule rather than the exception. Rations are formulated with scientific accuracy. Average herd size exceeds 150 cows, and average production per cow approaches 11,000 pounds of milk annually. This burgeoning dairy industry employs thousands and brings in nearly $30 million each year.

Where Cattle Grow Fat

Livestock and cattle feeding is even more important. At last count, Maricopa County had more than 100 modern feedlots capable of holding some 300,000 cattle. Each year, nearly 750,000 beef animals are "fed out" in the valley. Indeed, only since 1955 have people outnumbered cattle in Maricopa County. There also are some 14 meat packing plants in the area, plus three tallow plants. Together, they employ more than 1,000 persons.

Maricopa County's poultrymen, vying with other agriculturists in efficiency, own a third of the state's laying hens and produce a third of the eggs produced for market in Arizona.

Considerable Agribusiness

Needless to say, other industries closely allied to agriculture also abound. This includes 63 cotton gins, 4 oil mills, 15 citrus packing houses, 32 vegetable packing sheds, a dozen commercial feed mills, a score of agricultural chemical firms, not to men-

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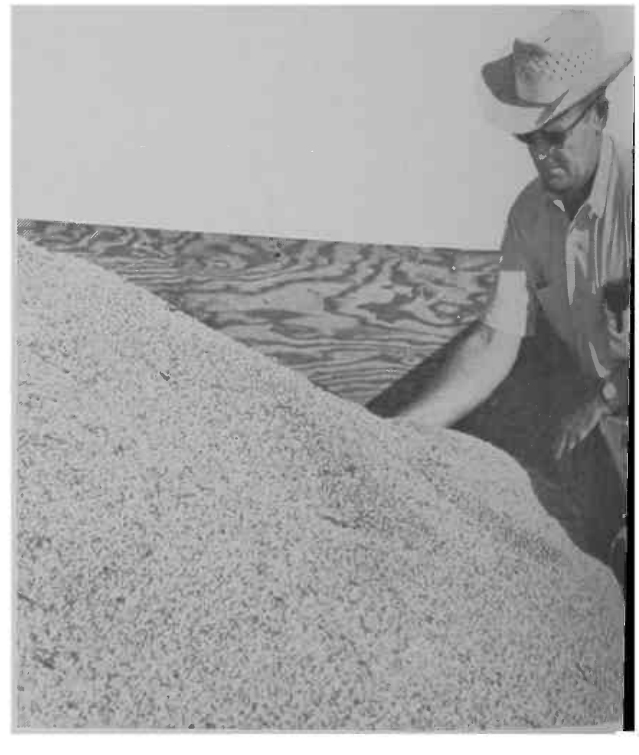
TOLLESON FARMER, Joe Sheely, looks over some of the grain sorghum which he harvested in 1965. The crop averaged a phenomenal 11,051½ pounds of grain to the acre!



Bob Halvorson, county agent with typewriter and camera as his working tools, was born in Wisconsin. He had two years of college at the University of Wisconsin, finished work for his degree in English at The University of Arizona in 1955, and that same year was appointed to the U of A Extension staff, going to Maricopa County. As county agent on the staff there, he has been reporting the marvels of Salt River Valley agriculture ever since. He is intense about his job, about the agriculture he reports upon, and he does that job with dedicated vigor and marked ability.

New Book on Arid Lands Published by UA Press

"The Changing Mile," a new book based on University of Arizona studies of recent vegetation changes in the Southwest, has been published by the U of A Press.

Authors of the 317-page book are Dr. James R. Hastings, UA associate professor of meteorology and research associate in the Institute of Atmospheric Physics, and Dr. Raymond M. Turner, U.S. Geological Survey botanist formerly of the UA faculty.

The new work offers surprising findings of extreme changes in vegetation which have occurred since the 1880's, and explores the respective parts played by man and climate in altering the face of the 40,000-square-mile desert region covered by the study. The desert region studied in southern Arizona and northwestern Mexico ranges from sea level to mile-high altitudes.

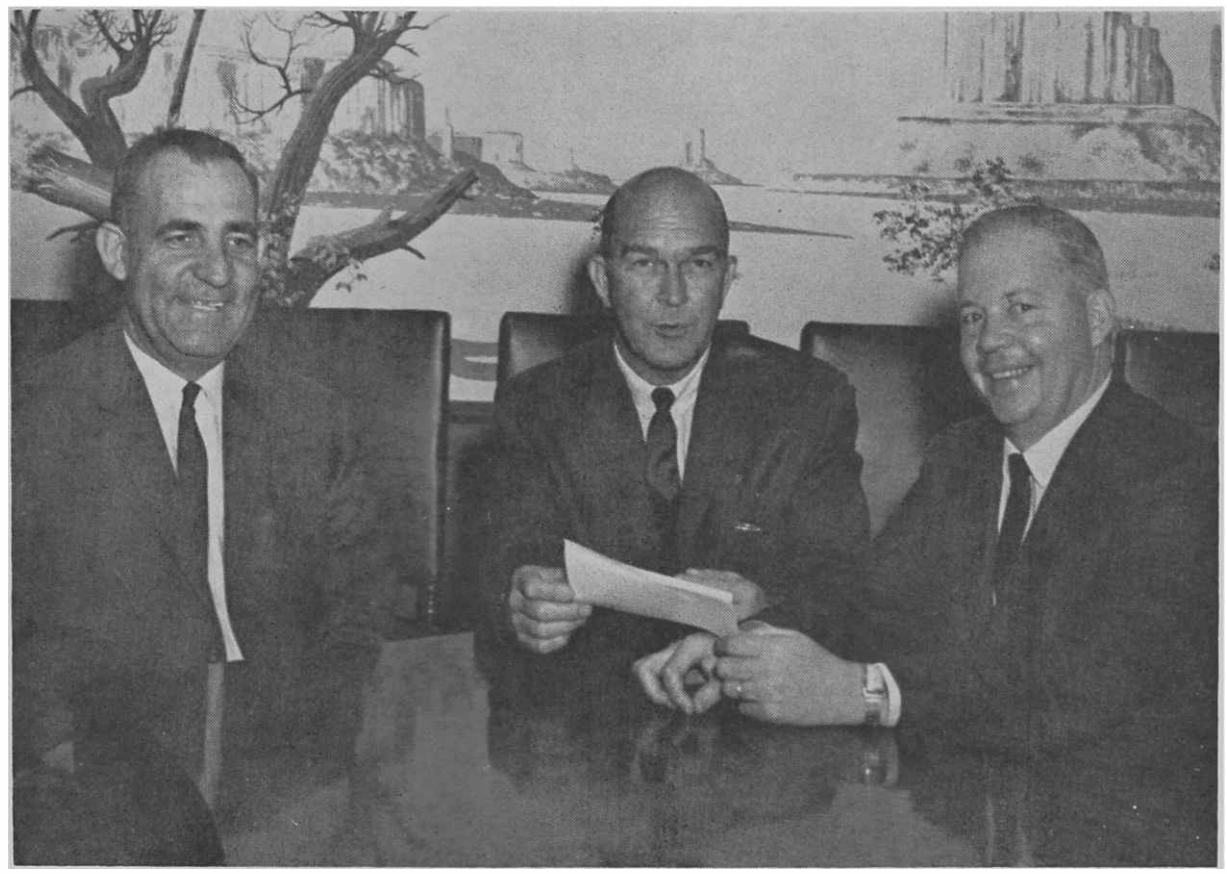
The book's highly readable text and more than 200 illustrations encourage readers to make valid interpretations regarding changes which have occurred. Shown on facing pages of the book are 97 pairs of matched photographs taken from exactly the same vantage point with as many as 85 years intervening.

The dramatic photo comparisons show such things as the death of oak forests, the invasion of mesquite trees in large areas that formerly were grassy, and the disappearance of the saguaro cactus from certain areas.

Hastings, senior author of the work, credits numerous U of A, USGS, and other people for their contributions and assistance in preparing the book. Regarding old photographs used in the work, he said: "We are indebted to the people who clicked a shutter at the time and place right for our purposes."

The book is available at all book stores.

Sears $2,000 Check Aids 4-H Leader Training



A check for $2,000 is handed by J. R. Metcalf, center, to Graham P. Wright, right, to aid the U of A program of 4-H leadership development throughout the state.

Metcalf, manager of the Sears Roebuck store in Tucson, is giving the fund on behalf of his company. Wright is state 4-H club leader in the U of A Extension Service. At left is Marvin D. "Swede" Johnson, U of A vice president for university relations.

This is the 11th year that Sears has made a $2,000 contribution to this program in Arizona.

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tion trucking companies, farm credit institutions, implement dealers, and many more.

In short, agriculture is Maricopa County's most important and profitable natural resource. And despite marching rows of houses and unprecedented urban growth, it continues to be the backbone of the county's and the state's economy, and it still hasn't reached its peak potential.

Five Research Centers

Even now, new crops and better ways of growing the old ones are being developed at one or another of the five agricultural experiment stations which The University of Arizona and the U. S. Department of Agriculture maintain jointly in Maricopa County. These include one devoted to cotton research, another to citrus, a third to poultry, one to vegetable and forage crops, and one to basic research in water conservation.

In addition, farmers and ranchers themselves are busy searching for new and better ways to do things. Farming and ranching long ago ceased to be a way of life in the Salt River Valley. Highly capitalized and highly specialized, agriculture in Maricopa County is a business in every sense of the word, and likewise her farmers are businessmen in every sense of the word.

Problems have arisen, to be sure. Encroaching houses have pushed farmers out into pump districts where the water is precious and often of poor quality. Restrictive sanitary regulations passed by local government agencies have forced cattle feeders and dairymen to relocate far out on the fringe. Land values in some sections of the valley have appreciated to the point to where a farmer no longer can afford not to sell.

Future Is Bright

Despite all of this, however, the future looks bright. Through the smog created as a result of urban development, it still is possible to see a future for agriculture in Maricopa County. In fact, if anything, it may be bigger and more important than it has been in the past.