

LEARNING TOGETHER #4

National City and Citrus



In 2018 California was the # 1 citrus fruit producing state in America. Citrus fruit includes lemons, limes, oranges and more.

1. What 2 two cities near National City are known for growing lemons?

You may have thought of Lemon Grove (due to their name) and Chula Vista (due to their annual Lemon Festival). Both those cities do have a history of growing lemons and other citrus fruits to sell for the fruit or to make into juice.

National City also used to citrus orchards to produce fruit for sale.

Today, most of the land in National City and neighboring areas that was used to grow citrus has been paved over for homes, businesses and roads. California continues to produce the majority of lemons grown in America, but they no longer come from this area.

Eastern National City in 1928:



This aerial view shows the large lots with rows of fruit trees that were characteristic of eastern National City. The Dickinson-Boal house at 1433 24th Street and the house across the street belonging to Wallace Dickinson, son of Col. William Dickinson, at 1430 24th St. were both built in 1887. Photo made in 1928. ©SDHS #81:12267.

Workers packing up lemons:



Interior of factory for packing lemons at the foot of 23rd Street in 1906. ©SDHS #10759.

National City also grew olives:



Frank Kimball promoted agriculture, planted orchards, grapes and olives, founded a Grange society in 1875, and organized the first County Fair in 1880 that would later move to Del Mar. His "Virgin Olive Oil" was produced at his Southern California olive mill, which was located at 8th Avenue and 23rd Street. Photo ca. 1887. ©SDHS #9737.

2. One reason citrus fruit, olives and other agricultural products stopped being grown in National City and the surrounding areas had to do with Sweetwater River Dam being built. Why would that harm fruit production?

Jot down some ideas (answer at the end):

3. Do you know what a lemon tree looks like? See the picture below. The next time you are out walking in your neighborhood be on the look-out for lemon trees!!



Source: Arizona Daily Star

Answer to Sweetwater Dam question: Before the Sweetwater River Dam was built to create the Sweetwater Reservoir the river water continued to flow through the South Bay area and good be used to irrigate the trees.

Much of the information and the pictures for this lesson were taken from "National City in Pictures" by Steven Schoenherr.