Historical Sketch of the D. D. Dummit Grove at
Allenhurst, which is Supposed to be
the Oldest Grove in Florida

C. A. Bass, Assistant Nursery Inspector

Terra Ceia, Florida.  
May 15, 1926.

Dear Yothers—

I wonder if your historical committee has
data on the “Dummit Grove”—I secured the en-
closed from Mr. Bass and visited the grove after
the close of the Horticultural Society meeting. It
sure is an interesting place. The most interest-
ing fact, (not emphasized in Mr. Bass’ history)
is that all the surviving trees are budded, not
seedlings. The bud union, (plainly visible and
photographed by me) is about 3 feet above
ground in most cases and may explain the sur-
vival of these trees at the time of the 1835
freeze. It is claimed that all other sweet oranges
were killed at that time on the East coast, if not
in the whole state. Seed and budwood from the
Dummit trees made possible the reestablish-
ment of sweet orange culture in Florida after the
freeze.

The location of course is especially well pro-
ected from cold, high ground, with tide water on
all sides. Next time you go that way—cross the
bridge at Titusville and see the place—about
eight miles from end of bridge, on the “Isle of
Hope” road.

I suggested to the caretaker and to Mr. Bass
that the owner should be prevailed upon to deed
a half acre with a dozen or more of these vet-
erans to the Horticultural Society, or to a local
Historical Society, have them fenced, and a pro-
er tablet erected—make it a sort of “Citrus
Shrine”—if they were in California, special ex-
cursions would be run to see them from all over
the state and United States.

Cannot your Historical Committee take this
up and get action?

Sincerely yours,
(Signed) T. RALPH ROBINSON.

Capt. D. D. Dummit planted out a
grove located about two and one-half
miles south of the canal at Allenhurst,
Florida, about the year 1830. The exact
date of the planting does not appear to be
positively known, or at least the writer
has been unable to find anyone who is
certain. Andrew Jackson, an old darkey
who came to Florida from Savannah,
Georgia, in 1866, and worked for Captain
Dummit states that it was an old grove
at that time and that the trees were then
about twenty-five feet high and the tips
of the branches almost met in the middle
of the rows. The trees in the grove were
planted 20 by 20 feet, and at that time
were producing about ten to twenty boxes
of fruit per tree. From the information
that he had been able to obtain on it,
Andrew Jackson states that he believes the
grove was about 35 years old when he
came to Florida and that ninety years
would be a fairly close estimate of its
present age.

Andrew Jackson said that he heard
Captain Dummit say he got his first bud-
wood from a man by the name of Mr.
Jones, who lived between New Smyrna
and Port Orange on Fowler’s Bay, and
budded some old wild sour orange trees
that were growing wild on the property
on which the old grove now stands, and
from those buds he started his grove. He
also said that the old Jones’ grove is no
longer in existence. From the buds that
PHOTO OF A TYPICAL TREE OF THE DUMMITT GROVE.
SHOWING BUD UNION ABOUT THREE FEET ABOVE
GROUND. MAY 7, 1926.
A few of the 50 surviving trees of the Dummitt Grove, Merritt’s Island. Planted 1830. Taken May 7, 1926. These trees stand where it is believed Capt. Dummitt had a nursery of sour seedlings which he budded, leaving some of them in place.
Captain Dummitt got from Mr. Jones was the beginning of the old Indian River variety of orange that has been planted so extensively on the East coast of Florida. At one time this was considered the best variety of oranges to plant in Florida, and thousands of trees have been budded from budwood taken from these old trees. The history of this grove as given by Andrew Jackson has been verified by Mr. C. H. Quarterman, a pioneer settler who also came to Florida in 1866 and was acquainted with Captain Dummitt.

There are only about fifty of the original trees that were planted out by Captain Dummitt that still remain alive. The caretaker states that they were producing an average of about six boxes of fruit per tree, some of the trees producing more and others less. Most of these trees look healthy at present and appear capable of living several years longer. I measured three of the trunks; these measured respectively, 42 inches, 50 inches and 54 inches in circumference one foot above ground. They average from 25 to 30 feet high and have about an average crown spread of 16 feet.

From the information that I have been able to gather, the grove was well cared for during Captain Dummitt’s lifetime. He kept it worked and pruned and the grove produced good crops. Since his death it has changed hands several times and each new manager gave it only poor to moderate care and never spent any more money on it that was necessary to keep it alive. During the winter of 1894-95, the grove was severely damaged by the big freeze and was severely pruned back. Most of the trees survived but recovered from the shock very slowly. From 1909 to 1914 the grove was thrown away and nothing done to it and suffered greatly from cattle and neglect. The grove was then plowed deeply, tearing up many of the roots that had come to be near the surface of the ground during the five years of neglect. Lots of the trees died from the shock, all that died being grubbed out and new ones planted in their places.

From 1914 to date the grove has been fairly well cared for and commercial fertilizers have been applied for the first time. The trees that have survived have improved in vigor and appear to be in fair condition at present. At no time in the history of this grove since Captain Dummitt’s death, however, can it be considered to have received especially good care and attention. At the present time there are about 2,000 trees of different ages in the grove.

Historical Paper No. 14
January 4, 1926.