

WHEN AVOCADOS WERE KING

Discover the delicious story of how
avocados—including the homegrown
Reed variety—shaped Carlsbad.

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Carlsbad's rise as a culinary hotspot has not been made from scratch. It's been rediscovered through the city's agricultural heritage, a rich history rooted in avocados. After the dry farming of beans and before the creation of the Tecolote Ranunculus, there was the avocado.

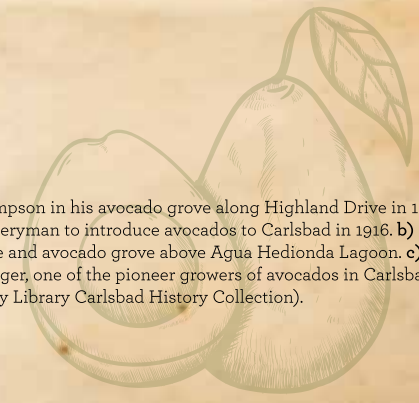
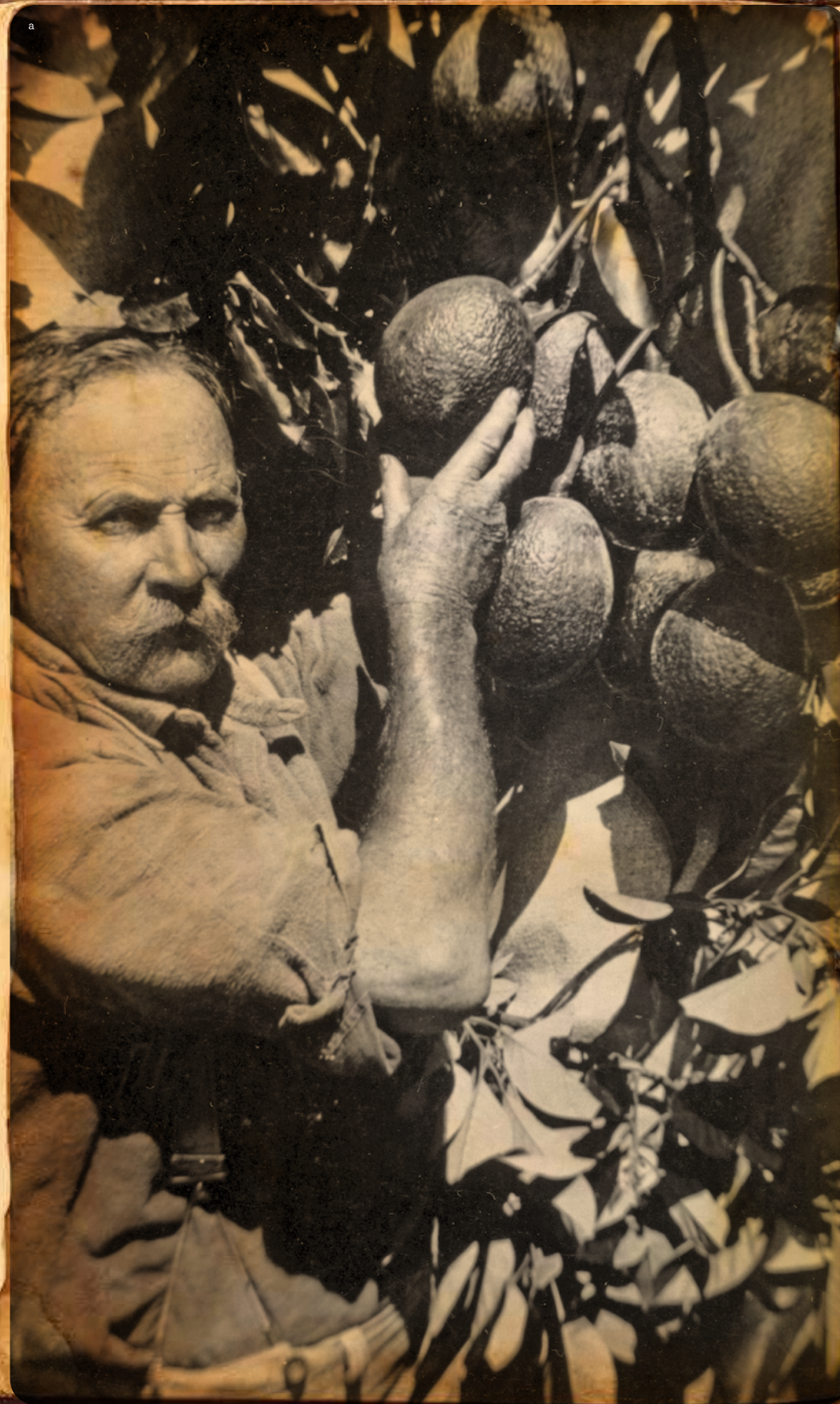
Back in 1916, the first avocado trees arrived in Carlsbad and were planted by Orange County nurseryman Sam Thompson. A few years later, other pioneer growers followed and settled on acreages marketed by developers as "avocado" land, plots filled with fertile soil and strategic proximity to water sources. Highland Drive runs along the crest of Carlsbad's old avocado lands.

At the time, avocados were still an unfamiliar curiosity to the public. They were often referred to as "alligator pears" or "butter fruit" for their textured skin and creamy flesh. To win over skeptics and make avocados a household name, local growers launched Avocado Day in 1923, one of the city's first food festivals.

Avocado Day was a smashing success, attracting Carlsbad residents and visitors alike. Crowds overflowed off First Street (now State Street), spilling into nearby vacant lots where grassroots booths, fruit displays and cultivation conversations were held throughout the day, all centered around avocados. Others gathered around communal picnic tables feasting on avocado-centric dishes such as avocado ice cream, sandwiches and cakes that blurred the line between strange and delicious. Like the tomato, how do we treat an avocado: fruit or vegetable? By 1927, the event attracted 7,000 visitors, a number much higher than the local population itself, establishing Carlsbad as the "Home of the Avocado."

The hum of Avocado Day eventually faded with the beginning of World War II, but Carlsbad's avocado legacy continued through local growers, most notably James S. Reed, a part-time shoe salesman and avocado enthusiast, who developed a variety that was, and still is, one of Carlsbad's best-kept secrets.

The Reed avocado is a true Carlsbad native, developed from seed in 1948 in Reed's backyard. The original tree grew near the corner of Valley Street and



a) Sam Thompson in his avocado grove along Highland Drive in 1928. Thompson was the first nurseryman to introduce avocados to Carlsbad in 1916. b) Local grower Elwood Trask's home and avocado grove above Agua Hedionda Lagoon. c) A grove owned by A.W. Theisinger, one of the pioneer growers of avocados in Carlsbad (photos courtesy of Carlsbad City Library Carlsbad History Collection).





**CHESTER CRAIG
REAL ESTATE**

THE ORIGINAL REED AVOCADO TREE GREW NEAR THE CORNER
OF VALLEY STREET AND MAGNOLIA AVENUE.



CARLSBAD
BY THE SEA
Home of the Avocado

NORTHERN SAN DIEGO COUNTY
CALIFORNIA

Magnolia Avenue, now an intersection where suburbia meets Valley Middle School. The Reed went on to become the only patented avocado variety from Carlsbad, but like most avocados, its culinary characteristics are shared more than its history, concealing its local origins.

Reed avocados spread in cultivation and gained favor among Southern California growers, but they reached national markets during the rise of the Hass empire, which eventually overshadowed the variety commercially. Despite these challenges, Reed avocados quietly carved out a loyal following as a seasonal delicacy savored for their rich, buttery and nutty taste. The variety became loved by specialty growers worldwide, and is now notably planted in Europe, Australia, the United States and South Africa.

Avocados remain a delicious reminder of a time when Carlsbad embraced an innovative agricultural spirit that primed the city for its future as a gastronomic destination. As you wander State Street and embrace the buzz of new restaurants, imagine how it was once filled with the excitement of people sampling their first avocado dish at Avocado Day. Or when you are out for your sunset stroll, turn your attention to the trees around town, and you may spot an avocado tree or two.

Next time you have a craving for guacamole or avocado toast, skip the Hass and search out a Reed, which has the same satisfying creaminess and oiliness but, in a round, supersized package, sometimes double the size. You can find Reed avocados at the Carlsbad Farmers Market during the summer, and there is often a waitlist of foodies eagerly anticipating their arrival. After all, it's not every day we get to sink our teeth into a piece of Carlsbad history as tasty as this.

d) Avocado Day crowds on First Street, now State Street.
e) Attendees sampling avocado-centric foods such as ice cream and sandwiches, a highlight of Avocado Day (photos courtesy of the San Diego Historical Society). f) The Avocado Festival Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce brochure from 1930 advertising Carlsbad as "Home of the Avocado" (photo courtesy of Pat Baldwin).

