

## **When Preserved Figs Were Popular in Sugar Land**

There was a time when figs were preserved in Sugar Land. Robert M. Armstrong writes about it in his book, Sugar Land, Texas and The Imperial Sugar Company.

According to the book:

In the late 1920's, Sugarland Industries had entered into a venture which very nearly proved disastrous to both Industries and the Imperial Sugar Company, the processing and marketing of preserved figs. Fig trees had become a popular and potentially profitable venture in the areas around Dickinson, Webster, Texas City, Pearland and Friendswood, Texas. Packed in glass jars, preserved figs, which were very sweet and used large quantities of sugar, suddenly became much in demand by consumers, and the business started to grow rapidly. The large quantities of sugar being ordered by the fig packaging plants attracted the attention of the sales department at Imperial, and a good friend of Eldridge, names R. J. Clymer, prevailed upon Eldridge and Kempner to form the Texas Fig Company as an investment of Sugarland Industries. The records of this company are not available but its investments seemed to be concentrated in the manufacturing, packaging and sale of the preserves, and not in the orchards. They converted the old Sealy Mattress Company plant into a fig-processing facility; and apparently tried to corner the market in the south Texas area by buying and building several other processing plants and contracting for vast amounts of figs from the growers.

At just about the time when the fig company had expanded its ownership

and its production to a high level, the market for the product collapsed. The public, which had at first seemed to have an almost insatiable demand for the processed figs, suddenly found them too sweet for a steady diet. Business dropped precipitously.

This occurred in 1932, during the Great Depression and caused great financial difficulties for Imperial and Sugarland Industries which was forced to pay off some \$1.8 million to creditors. (an interesting historical note: the New York lawyer who wrote the charter for the Industries inadvertently spelled "Sugar Land" one word). Sugar Land survived these difficult financial times and continued to flourish.

**Sugar Land's history has been marked by a strong economy, even during times of economic hardship throughout the country. This trend continues today as sound financial management and an aggressive economic development program pay dividends for Sugar Land.**

Sugar Land was recently among 25 American towns included on *Forbes'* list of Top Towns to Live Well. *Forbes* said cities on the list "boast cultural amenities, pro-business environments, highly educated workforces and enviable salaries."

*BusinessWeek* recently also named the City one of the nation's Best Small Cities for Startups. The magazine identified the best small startup city for each state based on several factors that shape a city's entrepreneurial climate from the education level of the workforce to the amount of venture-capital investment to the number of startup businesses.

*Article as seen in the Fort Bend Star*

Money Magazine and CNNmoney.com rank Sugar Land as one of America's Best Places to Live.  
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