

C. I. James

On May 10, 1910, came C. I. James, a native of Ballenger, Texas, with his bride, the former Olive Kelly, to Laplace, Louisiana, to become the station agent for the Yazoo and Mississippi Valley Railroad company. In 1911, he moved to Reserve and took over the station agency there.

While in Laplace, Mr. James, who was always industrious, started his interest in the purchasing and packing of vegetables for out-of-state shipments. During the year he spent in Laplace, he came into contact with the farmers there and found they were having difficulty in packing their vegetables so the produce would arrive at destination in first-class condition. Studying their problem, he conceived the idea of using the refrigerator car, which could be properly iced, so he proceeded to buy a carload of cabbage to be shipped to Chicago in a refrigerator car. It was agreed with his wife that if this cabbage would be received in first-class condition he would go home smoking a cigar. Not very long after the shipment, his wife saw him coming home, puffing on that cigar. That was his first venture, and from then on, he continued to ship. He reached the peak in 1932, when his shipments were as much as 120 cars of vegetables, which meant the shipping of fourteen different commodities from this parish into other states.

In 1918, he made his first venture into real estate, purchasing a strip of land near Garyville which is known as Hope. On this land, he planted 30 acres of cotton, which proved unsuccessful due to climatic conditions. "All stalks and no cotton" was the result of this experiment.

In 1921, he purchased a portion of Cornland Plantation, which was formerly the Edrington brothers' property, subdivided the front section into lots which he sold to the people of the community, and later he financed the building of homes on the sites.

In 1923, he left the employ of the railroad company and went into farming, packing and shipping and real estate in a more intensive way. Today, he has under his personal supervision a large number of acres of cane and vegetables under cultivation.

Mr. James owns his own home on Marmillaud street, which is near the industrial part of the town. He is president of the Farm Bureau Federation, and since 1927, has been a director of the Bank of St. John.

He is the father of two daughters – Mrs. Felding Reed of Baton Rouge, and Oliveira, a pupil of the Leon Godchaux Grammar school – and one granddaughter – Martha James Reed.

Eyraud, Msgr. Jean M. & Donald J. Millet, *A History of St. John the Baptist Parish with Biographical Sketches – St. Peter's Diamond Jubilee*, Marrero, LA: Hope Haven Press, 1939, p. 73.