

“It Takes a Community.....”

Marshall C. Lamb, Ph.D.
Research Leader, the National Peanut Research Laboratory

The old saying “It takes a community.. ” has been used for many years to describe the collective actions of like-minded citizens to accomplish a goal. This saying is certainly true of the citizens and businesses of Dawson and Terrell County, whose actions years ago ultimately decided the location of the USDA, ARS National Peanut Research Laboratory (originally called, Peanut Marketing Laboratory). The history of how the idea for such a laboratory was conceived, the struggles to get the laboratory approved, and the decision on where to locate the laboratory are all very interesting.

The idea originated in 1957 when the National Peanut Council established the Peanut Improvement Working Group, which developed a formal resolution recommending the establishment of a peanut laboratory to conduct research on peanuts and peanut processing. This group then formed a Lab Planning Committee with representatives from growers, shellers, manufacturers, and brokers.

In 1960 the committee met in Washington with U.S. Department of Agriculture officials to outline the peanut industry’s idea and to seek guidance on what information should be included when approaching Congress with the idea. The outline was developed into a formal plan that was unanimously approved by the Board of Directors of the National Peanut Council in 1960.

Three key Members of Congress were involved: Steve Pace, Elia “Tic” Forrester, and Richard B. Russell. In June 1961, Senator Richard B. Russell submitted the proposal for a peanut laboratory to the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations. In July 1961, Congress passed the bill authorizing funds for the laboratory. Senator Russell announced Dawson, Ga., as the location for the facility.

Criticism soon emerged from other peanut production areas about the location of the laboratory. As a result, in October 1962, the U.S. House of Representatives eliminated the money appropriated for the facility in Georgia. The Senate also agreed to remove the money, and expressed hope that the Department would include the laboratory in the next year’s budget request.

This is where it actually “Took a Community,” as the citizens and businesses of Dawson and Terrell County stepped up and made a difference by providing donations to purchase the 16-acre tract of land where the National Peanut Research Laboratory is currently located. They then deeded the land to the government to establish the laboratory. This action made the difference, as acknowledged in a letter by Dr. George W. Irving, Jr. (Administrator for the [USDA, Agricultural Research Service](#)) addressed to the “Public-Spirited Citizens Who Donated The Building Site for Peanut Research Laboratory” where he stated “You have had a special role in the development of the Laboratory through your civic-minded action in helping make a highly

acceptable building site available to the Department at no cost. The fact that a building site would be deeded to the Department at no cost was of specific interest to the Congress.”

Those who donated, and the amounts donated, included:

C.H. Dale and A.M. King	\$100	J.B. McPherson	\$150
R.P. Whatley	\$50	Dr. G. Fain Martin	\$100
Dr. Billy Martin	\$100	Dawson Builders Service	\$200
J.P. Cannon	\$50	Dr. Richard Stapleton	\$100
Dawson Machine Shop	\$100	Dawson Broadcasting	\$250
James G. Wright	\$100	E.J. Pace	\$100
J.C. Daniels	\$100	Ms. Sarah Markette	\$50
Dawson Motor	\$250	W.L. Ferguson	\$100
H.H. Reid	\$50	Dr. Robert Cross	\$30
H.S. Jennings	\$100	King and Hill Agents	\$100
Smith and Edwards	\$100	Dawson Compress and Storage	\$500
Estate of T.B. Raines	\$300	Bills Drive-In	\$25
Tri-County Ready Mix	\$50	Ferguson Company	\$200
Dozier Drug Company	\$200	R.D. Smith Insurance	\$100
Perry Feed and Seed	\$100	Mr. and Mrs. Julian Lay	\$100
Belk-Hagins	\$100	Lewis Hardware	\$100
Dawson Music	\$50	Dr. W.H. Bridges	\$100
Raines and Locke	\$100	J.L. Nicholson	\$100
DuPree Funeral Home	\$100	Western Auto	\$50
Larks	\$50	Malooof's	\$500
Dawson Pharmacy	\$200	Dawson Supermarket	\$100
J.W. Duskin	\$100	Oaklawn Motel	\$150
Collier and Cox Tire	\$100	Colonial Florist	\$100
Dawson Electric and Plumbing	\$100	V.L. Singletary	\$50
Woolf Hardware	\$50	Terrell Implement and Supply	\$100
Terrell County Tractor	\$250	Dr. Walter D. Martin	\$100
Dr. Charles M. Ward	\$100	Kuzzins Department Store	\$100
Don R. Jones	\$200	Oxford Distribution Company	\$200
Dawson Lions Club	\$200	Sumter Electric Membership	\$250
Stevens Industries	\$1,500	Bank of Terrell	\$1,600
Bank of Dawson	\$1,600		

The total amount was \$12,155.

In 1968, ground was broken for the laboratory, and the dedication ceremony took place on November 21, 1969. The entire staff of the National Peanut Research Laboratory is proud to be part of Dawson and Terrell County. Thanks to all of those listed above whose actions were responsible for locating the laboratory in Dawson. We look forward to many more years of being part of the community and serving the US peanut industry.

Attachments (links to pdf documents)

- Itinerary inside the invitation to the groundbreaking ([attachment 1](#))
- Ground breaking ([photo 1](#))
- Progress report on construction from USDA to peanut grower, interested friends, and other interested friends ([attachment 2](#))
- USDA reports to Sen. Russell that ARS began moving into the new facility ([attachment 3](#))
- Reed S. Hutchinson named as Director of the NPRL ([attachment 4](#))
- The first employees named to staff the NPRL: ([attachment 5](#))
 - Charles E. Holaday, leader of peanut quality investigations
 - Jack L. Pearson, leader of sensory evaluation studies