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A.B. Michael (1877-1964)

Inducted 1964

Highlights

Indian River

Wabasso

Deerfield Grove, Inc.

Cocoa Beach

American Fruit Growers

Orchid Island Grapefruit

Florida Citrus Exposition

Indian River Citrus League

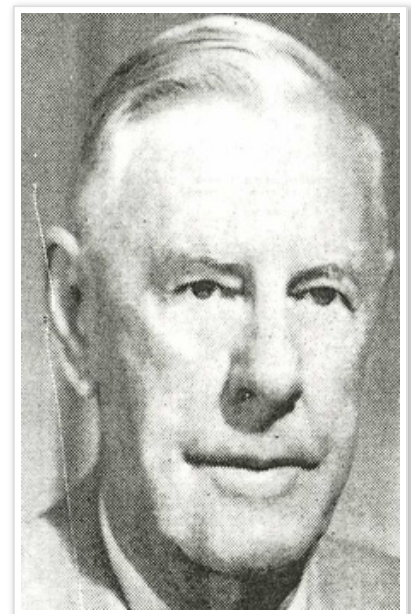
Florida Citrus Mutual

Florida Citrus Commission

Bio

A.B. Michael spent more than sixty years as an important member of the Florida Citrus Industry. He was often known as the “Dean of the Florida Citrus Industry” due to his lengthy involvement with many different facets of the industry.

He was born in the West Virginia town of Paw Paw, which was in the midst of the state’s apple growing region, in 1877. He moved to Florida with his parents in 1886, settling near the town of Wabasso in the Indian River region. He spent much of his adolescence working on a two-master schooner.



In 1902, he started his own grove on Orchid Isle, near Wabasso. He consolidated his holdings with Deerfield Groves, Inc. of Cocoa Beach in 1917. He later became both the manager and president of the firm, with which he was affiliated for many years. Michael also helped to manage American Fruit Growers from 1919-1946. His Orchid Island Grapefruits were shipped around the world and known for their excellent citrus quality. Michael's excellent grapefruit once won the top award at the Florida Citrus Exposition three years out of four, having not even entered the one year he did not win. Michael believed strongly in such events as the Citrus Exposition, and often used his own money to fund Indian River participation.

Michael was a strong proponent of Indian River Citrus. He helped to form the Indian River Citrus League in the 1930s, and served as a director of the organization. Under Michael's leadership, the organization's membership increased dramatically. When controversy arose over the use of the Indian River name, Michael helped to protect it by getting legislation to define and protect its usage.

A.B. Michael served on the Florida Citrus Commission during Governor Millard F. Caldwell's administration, from 1945-1949. In the late 1940s, he once again assisted in the formation of a new agricultural organization, Florida Citrus Mutual, which he helped to form along with such other prestigious citrus growers as Latt Maxcy and James Morton. He played a strong role in recruitment for the new cooperative and once again used his own resources to help fund the organization in its infancy. He later served as a director of the organization and was even named vice-president emeritus.

Michael was also active in politics, campaigning hard for Dan McCarty in 1948, when he lost the governor's race, and then also in 1952, when he won.

During his career, Michael also served on the Everglades National Park Commission and on the Florida State Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. He was also a member of the Citrus Advisory Committee.

Michael was said to have a finger in everything that was good for the grower. He believed in keeping every possible avenue for citrus sales open, and was an outspoken advocate of quality and recognizable brands. He was recognized as contributing more to grade improvements than any other member of the industry. Michael was known for a catchphrase he used about the industry: "Don't fret".

A.B. Michael continued working well into his eighties. In 1964, he suffered a car accident while returning from work, and he died from complications shortly thereafter. Tragically, he had lost his wife, daughter, and grand-daughter in an auto accident only nine years earlier. At his funeral, many of Florida's most prominent citrus figures came to pay their respects to the "Dean of the Florida Citrus Industry." He was inducted into the Florida Citrus Hall of Fame in the same year that he died, 1964.

Florida Citrus Hall of Fame

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