Thomas F. Lee and Leeland

By 1917 Thomas F. Lee is heavily promoting sales of his farm land west of Harlingen. His Lee Land Company has offices in what he calls Leeland (now the Stuart Place area south of West Business 83), Dallas, Oklahoma City, and St. Louis. He is utilizing excursions to generate sales. One brochure exclaims "Our luxurious private steel Pullman car leaves the Union Station, St. Louis, the first and third Tuesdays of each month for the Home of the Golden Fruit--Leeland--the heart of the Rio Grande Valley." His brochure titles are "The Magic Valley", "Telephone for Rain", "Golden Fruit", Harvest at Christmas Time", and "My Southern Home."

Lee is to construct a substantial attractive two story building on his property. (It still exists several miles from Harlingen at 7901 West Business 83.) It is a sales draw and termed a community clubhouse. When Lee later sells his holdings to the Stuarts, this piece of the property, now termed the Stuart Place Community Center, is used for many years by community residents.

It is in 1912 that Robert Terry Stuart of Kaufman County, TX first comes to the Valley. His development work starts in 1916 with investments near Harlingen, Brownsville, Edcouch, and tracts near Mercedes and Mission. He was born near Terrill in Kaufman County, TX on 1/24/80. His parents are Texas born, his grandparents having come here from Scotland when Texas was a republic. He is educated at the Sam Houston School in Huntsville and the M&F Institute, Chicago. In Oklahoma City he becomes president of the Mid-Continental Life Insurance Co. and the Robert T. Stuart and Co. Investment Banks. He married Maude Elizabeth McKeboons 6/30/04.

1916 Otis E. Stuart comes to the Valley. He and his brother, R.T. Stuart, who as noted, had acquainted himself with the Valley as early as 1912, later develop and promote Stuart Place with its 10,000 acres, probably the largest individually owned agricultural and citrus fruit property in South Texas. Brand names are Stuart's Premium and Stuart's Tree Ripened. Its two packing sheds handling products have a total of 10,000 square feet. R.T. is a resident of Oklahoma City and president of the Mid-Continental Life Insurance Co. (of Oklahoma.)