

NEWS RELEASE

Northwest Cotton Growers Gin, Moscow, Kansas

MOSCOW, Kansas-- If Eli Whitney were around today, he would enjoy visiting the southern High Plains of Kansas, Texas and Oklahoma.

You see, Whitney is credited with inventing the cotton gin in 1794.

He would probably get a kick out of seeing what cotton is doing today west of Dodge City. He would particularly like to visit the Northwest Cotton Growers gin at Moscow, Kansas.



Here, gin manager Jerry Stuckey is overseeing the completion of a ginning a second record cotton crop on the High Plains.

Cotton is new to this area regularly known for such crops as wheat, corn and grain sorghum. But the development of cotton varieties for a shorter growing season, biological resistance to herbicides and insects has allowed farmers to include one more arrow to their quiver of crops.

Before 2000, cotton was almost unknown on High Plains farms. How Stuckey and another farmer, Tom Lahey, came to be cotton farmers and shortly after, cotton ginners, is an interesting story.

"Tom Lahey and myself were the first two people to grow cotton in this area," Stuckey said. "I had 40 acres of semi-irrigated cotton and Tom had 40 acres of dryland in 2000. I was trying to see if I had a full profile of water when I planted the cotton if it could hold out until I finished watering corn. I got water to it Aug. 24 and 25 and it made 1,101 pounds of lint to the acre."

The next year, the two farmers planted 600 acres of cotton apiece, some of their neighbors did likewise and as they say, history was made. In 2001, about 4,500 acres of cotton was planted in the Moscow area, Stuckey said. They had to haul it to Hereford, Texas to gin it, he said.

Deciding they had to solve the problem of processing the promising new crop, five farmers met with Stuckey to do a feasibility study on building a cotton gin.

Those people were myself, Tom Lahey, Bob Davis, Randy Lucas and Jay Garetson," Stuckey said.

In January, 2002, after receiving several bids from gin manufacturers, they contracted with Lummus Co. to build a new gin. "We formed a closed cooperative and sold shares to raise \$1.2 million," Stuckey said. "We got a USDA guaranteed loan and a local bank loaned us the additional \$2 million we needed to build a gin."



The new gin was completed in October, 2002. Due to the increasing cotton acreage in the area, the gin size was doubled in 2004. "We now have a four and a half bed module feeder, split 12 overhead, four 170 gin stands, double lint cleaning and a 60 bale per hour Premier Dor-Les press," Stuckey said.

They upgraded all of the gin electronics in 2004 as well to make it a state of the art facility, he said.

Expecting to gin around 49,000 bales of cotton this season, the gin has been running 24 hours a day, seven days a week ever since, he said.

Current Northwest Cotton Growers gin board members are: David Light, president; Kenny Lunsford, vice president; Tom Lahey, Dell Cullison, Randall Lucas, Nick Hatcher and Pat Rooney.

Stuckey grew up on an Indiana dairy farm, served in the U. S. Air Force and became an industrial electrician. After marrying, he moved to the Moscow area in 1975 and started farming.

Stuckey expects cotton production on the High Plains will explode because of the high cost of fuel and fertilizer and the declining water table. "It only takes one-third the water and fertilizer to grow cotton that it takes corn," Stuckey said.



