

To: Friends of Old Apples
From: Tom Brown

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Apple Search---2010

People might think that all the old apples are gone, but I found about forty-five last year, bringing my total for my twelve-year apple search to over 900. They include the following apples: Candy (lg, flat, grn-yel), Corn, Dixie, Douse, Dumpling (lt grn, ribbed), Duchess of Oldenburg, Early Raspberry, Fall Beauty ?, Fall Jenetting, Foster, Gloria, Goddard, Granny Christian, Granny Sweet, Greenskin, Hard Times, Hass, Hume, John David Sweet, Joshaway, Kodak or Kodiak, Lock, Miss Celia, Mountain Sprout, Mountain Winesap, None Better Seek-No-Further, Old Field (yellow), Palmer, Pig Nose, Rainbow, Ralph, Red Clayton, Red Coat, Rose (Roe) Sweet, Rusty Coat Sheeponose, Sam Steele, Shenandoah, Short Core, South Garden, Strawberry (very early), Thinskin, Vance, White Rome, Winter Queen, Winter Sheeponose, and Yellow Annet. For some of these, I have been told where a tree is, but I have not seen the actual apple.

To find the old apples, the main thing is to simply get off the sofa and “get out there”; here is an example. Two people in Franklin County, VA had told me about a Red Coat apple, mentioning it near Union Hall and also near Burnt Chimney, which are about twelve miles apart. On a pretty Saturday I decided to start in the south at Union Hall and then drive country roads up to Burnt Chimney, hoping I would get lucky and find a Red Coat apple. My plan was to stop where I saw people congregated, at country stores, or where I saw old apple trees. I drove up my very first road for one mile and saw three men under a shade tree. I stopped and asked them if they knew of a Red Coat apple; all three did and they told me of one certain location and two other probable locations. That day I also found a Dumpling apple and a Shenandoah in that same area by asking “who else has old apples”. In another part of Franklin County, I followed up earlier leads and found Vance and Granny Christian apple trees. Not every day is this productive!

Four years ago in Grainger County, TN, I was told about Pig Nose and Joshaway apples. These were long-ago apple memories for the people, but I thought that it would be a great shame if these, once prominent apples, slipped into oblivion. I made a promise to some day return to the area to look for the apples. This year I did go back and was fortunate to find two trees of each. The Pig Nose is red, good tasting, and has an odd shaped bottom end. The Joshaway is a wonderful, yellow cooking/eating apple. This opportunity to restore our agriculture heritage is what makes the apple search so exciting.

Hundreds of people have sent me letters and emails over the years. I would like to share some of their stories; heart-warming remembrances which you will enjoy.

Forbidden Fruit---“When I was a lad, over a half century ago, my family’s neighbor had an apple tree in her yard. I and my school buddy would climb the tree and collect a couple pockets full of the fruit. Returning home to present my prizes to my Mother, I would be reprimanded, and forced to go to the neighbor’s house and apologize. The neighbor thanked my Mother for keeping me honest, and would give our family a bag of her apples, saying that if I wanted some apples that all I had to do was knock on her door, and she’d be glad to share. Neither of these ladies could understand the joy of climbing a tree and swiping forbidden fruit. While the pies that were baked with the gift apples tasted good, they couldn’t start to compare to the wonderful taste of an apple taken directly from the tree.” Email from “Uncle Bear” [actual identity unknown].

McGlamery Ghost---“After Grandpa died at 103 years of age, Grandma (Sarah Laws, age 76) went to live with Mr. and Mrs. John McGlamery, to be their house keeper. Mr. McGlamery had a big fourteen room, two-story house, on Warrior Creek. Grandma chose a room upstairs which had a little fireplace. Now, this house was ‘hainted’ (Grandma told it many times) her words: ‘Many a time on a dark, cold, rainy nights I seen a tall, slim young woman, come in through the closed, front hall door, her head cut off, blood running down her long snow-white gown, climb the stairs, and disappear, when she reached the top landing. I wasn’t afraid of her; the dead can’t hurt no one’.”

“Mr. McGlamery died in 1935, my Grandma moved, and then in 1956 my husband and I bought the house, dismantled it, and took the best heart pine and added to our house. We have heard someone snoring upstairs when no one is there and an inside door often comes open when it is tightly shut.” Royster Laws Wolfe, Wilkes County, NC.

Fond Childhood Memories---“My father was a great lover of apple trees and kept them pruned up nice like an old English painting. My Mother loved the apples and could do great things with them such as pies, cakes and dumplings and the best apple butter in the world, not too spicy or sweet, but smooth as a lake on a still day.”

“I enjoyed your dog stories. We have had several dogs and always treated them as one of the family. We rescued a dog from a flood and he seemed to be in shock. My little boy (who is 46 now) started across the road, when a huge trailer truck came careening down around the curve. The dog jumped off the bank and knocked him out of the road. Thanks to Big Red my son is still living.” Ila Lyall, Greenbrier County, WV.

An Amazing Mom---“Mother taught us to place cocoons we found in her sewing machine drawer, and when anyone heard fluttering it was time to let it out. Many times it was the Lunar moth.” “I remember the delicious deep-dish pies my Mother made. She always made several because our family was so large. We had fresh milk from cows we used on the pies, and cooked with fresh butter; all which made the taste so much better for all of us. Mother did farm work too. She was a woman I know no other like. She’d get up every morning, bake biscuits for breakfast and after that, in summer, she’d have our lunch cooked by 9:00 AM so she could work at other things. If she wasn’t gathering vegetables, she was looping tobacco, or sewing on her pedal machine, for all ten of us. We raised tobacco, cotton, corn, wheat, rye, millet, watermelons and cantaloupes, peas (field), pine trees, turkeys (Mammoth Bronze), chickens, guineas, hogs, and cattle (milk and beef) and other small grains, and apples. They kept us busy! They produced two medical doctors and five farmers and me!” Victoria Weaver, Moore County, NC.

“Lost Trees” poem---“Another forest went today. They cut and pushed the trees away. Don’t seem to care – that trees help the air. They want to build a shopping mall, so many stores inside one wall; and then the parking lot. It’s finished now and people shop; but building of the malls don’t stop. Just down the road not far away they’re building a new mall today. The old mall isn’t old at all, but most will move to the new mall. The old one will then just be left – most of its stores left bare, and no one seems to care. How many trees that had to go? All’s left an empty mall to show; is this the way the country grows?” An original poem by Edna Morgan, Gaston County, NC.

A special event this year was a trip to Iceland---stunning scenery and friendly people.

I hope the economy will greatly improve in 2010 and that your family will prosper.

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