

To: Friends of Old Apples
From: Tom Brown

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Apple Search---2014

In my apple search, I have always had the goal to find 1,000 apple varieties; I did a careful inventory and learned that my total was now up to 1,035 trees. These were trees in an old context that I personally visited and collected scion wood for grafting. I do not accept scion wood from major collectors; I find my own trees and learn their stories in the process. Also there are 53 other varieties that people have told me about but I have not yet seen the tree. As added evidence that the seemingly rare apples were actually "all over the place"; I found a Leather Britches apple near Bat Cave, NC about seven years ago, then this year a man told me about remembering a Leather Britches tree from the Bowling Green, KY area. Varieties recently located include: Banana (very large), Benoni, Bethel, Bishop Pippin, Buncombe (striped), Buncombe (yellow), Carver, Cauley, Cooney, James Ray Sweet, Johnny White, McClure, Morris Pippin, Red Harmon, Red Hill, Red Poston, Smokey Twig, Strawberry (late), White Hall, & Willow Twig. My new apple discovery goal is to find at least 1,500 apples and to get the rare ones back in circulation, at least five trees each in known locations. [I offer apple trees for sale at \$5 less if I can select 50% of the order; this assures that people get to enjoy the rare apples.]

This year I would like to share with you **Stories of the Great Depression** that people told me while searching for old apples. The Depression started with the stock market crash of 1929 and continued through the 1930s. The market crash caused many banks to fail and created additional panic. Unemployment rose to 25%, farm prices plunged, and industrial production declined over 45%; this was also the era of the Dust Bowl. The following comments illustrate the extreme economic difficulties encountered during our most challenging decade:

"Father carried \$0.25 in his pants all summer; that was all the money he had."---*Betty Williams*

"No one had money; when you worked for a farmer, you were paid in corn."---*James Ford*

"Mother said they were so poor that they had no cornbread to eat for weeks."---*Dillard Bryant*

"Fifty cents was all my grandfather had to his name in 1930."---*Wendell Lett*

"Mamma lost all her money when the Mississippi bank failed."---*Mike Everett, Sr.*

Saving the Family Farm---Everett McGoldrick, became the primary breadwinner for his family at the beginning of his seventh grade year when a bad stroke befell his father, John McGoldrick. Everett's mother, Daisy, had died when he was seven years old. The year 1932 found the hill country farmland of east Tennessee in the depths of the Depression. All spring and summer Everett tried to get anyone to hire him for a nickel or a dime for daylight-to-dark work. He worked many days for barter. He would help a farmer cutting his tobacco for a promise of a ham when the hogs were killed in winter. The miller might offer some coffee for help in grinding grain. It was nearly impossible to get cash money for any kind of work.

John McGoldrick owed a payment of \$5.00 on the farm each December 31st. If this was not paid they would lose their home. By September, Everett decided to walk to Morristown, the nearest town, "just a good stretch of the legs", about eight miles, away. He went into every establishment he could think of that might use some farm produce to raise the money. No one seemed to need the corn or wheat, the family had for sale. He even visited well-to-do homes in hopes of selling apples that were ripening. Everyone said they had no need of his produce.

Everett was just about to give up and go home when he went into the Cherry Cafe for a cup of coffee before returning home. He noticed the nice selection of fruit, nut, and meringue pies

that the owner offered for sale. He asked the man if he could use any nuts for making his pies. The man first asked about pecans, but Everett said there were few pecan trees around. The man then said that he could really use some black walnuts for pies. He said that several women had asked for these, as well as, apples and pecans, during the Christmas season. Soon Everett and the owner made a bargain that he would bring in a large flour sack of walnut kernels by early December in exchange for the \$5.00 the family needed.

All that month Everett picked black walnuts from trees located around his and neighboring farms, and in abandoned fields. By late September, Everett and his father spent each night after supper cracking out walnuts to fill the sack. By the first week of December the sack was filled. Everett and John had stained hands from the tannin in the walnut hulls, but they also had the satisfaction of having earned the money to keep their farm for another year. Everett never forgot the help the owner had given him. When he grew up, he made sure his family stopped by Cherry Cafe every time they went to grind feed in Morristown. They always had a piece of one of the owner's delicious pies and a cup of coffee. *Ginger McGoldrick Spradlin* [Ginger and her husband, Bobby, live on the family farm originally purchased by Everett McGoldrick in 1938 with funds earned by working in the CC camps for eighteen months. I originally met them when I went to their farm to look at their large Pig Nose apple tree.]

Local Justice---Times were really difficult in rural middle Tennessee during the Great Depression. People of that area were self-reliant, prideful; but they still had the compassion to help others with their very limited resources. In the community, one family was extremely destitute, their children had shockingly shabby clothes; they were constantly asking for a "cup of sugar", a container of lard, etc. to just barely get by; their need seemed to be very desperate.

Everyone was stunned when the "poor" father bought a farm; they knew that they had been deceived and taken advantage of at a time when the needs of their own families were great. People of that era settled their own local problems in their own way, without involving a Sheriff or Judge. Several weeks later six stern-faced men showed up at his house after supper; he was told that they wanted to talk to him down the road. They said, "We do not hold it against you for buying the farm, but you have taken advantage of the entire community and this has to be made right". They each presented him with a list of things they expected: a dress for a wife, a pair of badly needed shoes for a son, a bolt of cloth to make children's clothes, coffee, sugar, etc. These lists were not requests, the "poor" man knew that if he was to remain in the community he needed to supply every item---and he did. *Billy Turnbo*

Saving the Bank---Carol Ware's grandparent's income was from raising peaches and banking near Kingston, TN. Her Mother's job as a small child was to arrange the top peaches in the basket so the pretty side was up. The fruit was then put on a barge, transported across the river to a railroad and then shipped "up north". During that era they used "monkey jars" to carry water to the workers in the fields; these were unique ceramic jugs with a top opening for drinking and smaller opening to allow air to enter for a smooth water discharge flow.

Grandfather, John Parker was President of the Kingston bank in the early 1930s. There were perhaps 10,000 banks that failed during the depression; with no federal deposit insurance, this meant that a person's entire life savings could be wiped out. The concern for safety of the banks caused many depositors to withdraw their money, creating "bank runs". Mr. Parker realized that there was about to be a run on the Kingston Bank. Fortunately Arthur Stowers, who owned a large hardwood and logging business, was John's son-in-law. Arthur went to the bank and talked to the assembled crowd, telling them, "You do not need to be

concerned about your money; I will personally guarantee every cent in the bank.” The run was stopped and the Kingston Bank remained open during the difficult years of the 1930s.

Carol is a potter who makes wonderful and imaginative clay sculptures, featuring many different animals; I have a fish and a turtle I purchased from her. She has several Monkey Jars.

Better Clothes---James Garland told me about his Grandfather, Will, who never used the word “Depression” instead he called it the “Panic”. Once Will encountered a scarecrow and realized that it had better clothes than his rags, so he swapped clothes. Cash money was hard to come by, so it was fortunate that Mother got a small pension of about \$8 which they used to pay property taxes. James is renowned for his gourd dulcimers and his knowledge of mountain lore and his music. He told me how to make “flu syrup”---moonshine, 40 Bamagillia buds, glycerin, rock candy, honey, lemon juice; “once you drink this, you will sleep a good five or six hours”.

A Measure of Success--- After he got his crops in, Carl Luttrell would go to Illinois to pick corn until mid-December. Then he would return to his home in Kentucky where he would pay off his store debts, buy seed corn, purchase a few Christmas gifts; if he had \$20 remaining, then he would consider that he had a good year. *James Luttrell* [He has a large heritage apple orchard.]

Amazing Faith--- In central Tennessee, Marie Cripps remembers stories told about Shellie Bates, a former neighbor who had a strong faith in God. Shellie’s husband died just before the start of the Great Depression, leaving her with a small poor farm and five children to care for. When there was nothing in the house to eat, she would gather all the children around her and would pray that God would help them; frequently their prayers were answered the same day.

Once Shellie needed a chicken to feed a very sick son; the family prayed together and later that day a neighbor approached the home with a chicken under his arm. The strong religious faith of many helped them through the extreme economic difficulties of the Depression. [Marie has a seedling pear tree with immense pears of good quality, for eating & cooking.]

Making Things Better---Nina Graves Adkins’ husband was killed in a railroad accident in 1921; this left her with a subsistence farm near the New River, six children and she was two-months pregnant with another child. This was a seemingly impossible situation with the coming Depression. They frequently had only one meal a day and it was a sparing one. Nina’s strong love provided the inspiration so that these poor kids grew rich in spirit. They were so extremely impoverished, that their situation actually improved when three sons went to work for the CC camps and had to send home the majority of their pay. Out of this determined family the children became successful adults. Emma (youngest daughter) graduated from college in an era when not many women went to college. PJ served in all three branches of the US military, ending his career as a Sargent Major. James became a minister. Bill became a building contractor and then owned a car dealership, missing the war because of a short leg. Most of the boys served in World War Two. Arvil said that “Blue Grass and baseball” saved his life: while in Britain, they were going to play music in his tent but someone forgot their guitar pick, they had walked down to get it when a buzz bomb hit his tent area. Then he was scheduled to be in the first wave to hit Omaha Beach, but a sprain in a military baseball game resulted in him being in the less-lethal fourth wave. All these kids came out of the Depression with the strong will to make things better for themselves; they were the people of the Greatest Generation who were so vital in building our great country. *Bob Adkins*

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