

To: Friends of Old Apples
From: Tom Brown

December 7, 2002

Apple Search---2003

I want to thank everyone again for your assistance in helping me locate heritage apples in 2002. It was a very productive year in which about 130 apple varieties were found. One of my top finds was the Hall apple which is a great tasting small red apple, long thought extinct. It was one of the most highly regarded dessert apples in the south.

Last year I found the Junaluska apple with the help of John Crawford of Macon County. It was the famous apple which can probably be traced back to a tree originally owned by the Cherokee Chief, Junaluska. This year I was proud to be able to donate three grafted Junaluska apple trees which were planted at the Chief Junaluska Memorial and Gravesite near Robbinsville, NC. I also donated four Junaluska trees to the Lake Junaluska Assembly and one tree to the Tsali Manor Senior Center in Cherokee.

The complete list of rare and lost apple varieties found during 2002 is as follows:

Accordian, Amy, Ann, Balsam, Baltimore Red, Bank (Wilkes Co.), Barn, Big Rambo, Billy Sparks Sweetning, Biscuit, Bitter Queen, Black Bud, Black Limbertwig, Branch, Buckingham, Bug Horn, Burningtown Spice, Butler, Candy, Catawba, Cherry, Chickasaw, Chintz, Church, Coffee, Coffey Seedling, Council, Cow, Cullasaga, Curtis Cheese, Curtis, Darnell, David's Winter, Davis (large), Donnely Sweet, Dula Beauty, Everhart, Fall Limbertwig, Fall Rose, Fired Sweet, Flat Top, Golden Twig, Gold, Gragg, Grandma (Madison Co.), Green Horse, Green Pearmain, Green Russet, Green Sweet (Wilkes Co.), Half Acre, Hall, Harding, Horseshoe, House, Ingram, Iron Wedge, Jack, Jarrett (fall), Jarrett (summer), Jeff Cox, Jewel Smoker, Joe Buff (Yellow Buff). Juicy Sweet, July Stripe, Kansas Sweet, Karn, Lady Blush, Lady Finger, Late Queen, Lewis Green, Lieby, Little Brushy Spice, Little Limbertwig, Lute's Great Keeper, Manson Beauty, Miller, Mongolian, New York World, Nantz, Neverfail, Night Dropper, Nim, Nursery, October, Paint, Pokey Seedling, Pound Russet, Powder Spring June, Puff, Rabbit, Red Bird, Red Harvest, Red Horse, Red Jordan, Red Pippin, Red Sheepnose, Rockingham Red, Romanite, Rubez, Ruslin, Rusty Pippin, Scott, Sealy, Sheep, Sidelin, Spice (Ashe Co.), Stine (McAfee), Sugar Core, Summer Buff, Sweet Buff, Tommy, Tough Hide, Trout, Twenty Ounce, Virginia Ben Davis, Water, Water Core, Water Sweet, Watts Limbertwig, Wax, West, Wilson's Red June, White Buckingham, White Sheepnose, Winter Fleming, Winter Queen, Winter Neverfail, World's Wonder, Ruby Red, Yellow Queen, Yellow Sheepnose, Yellow Spitzenburg, and Yellow Sweet (Avery Co.).

What is even more fascinating than the apples themselves are the stories behind them.

In the early 1900's the Brushy Mountain Nursery of Pores Knob, NC sold an apple called the Mongolian. It was large to very large, flat, "the reddest red you have ever seen", very waxy, and ripe in the fall. Two years ago I found that there might be Mongolian trees at an old Fortner home place on the Wilkes/ Alexander County line. I actually never visited the site because I then learned that the very old trees had been pushed out in a land clearing operation. Bad luck such as this in just missing an apple variety is rare. More typical is the "good luck" which followed over the next two years.

Herb Key of Wilkes County made contact and wanted to show me some apple trees in Virginia where he worked repairing stringed musical instruments. Through him I met J. C. Greear who said that he would help me look for the old apples. Mr. Greear in turn introduced

me to Leslie Call who had several old trees (Cotton Sweet, Neverfail, etc.). The next winter I went to her home to get cuttings for grafting. One of her apples was called the "Clothes Line" apple because it was a single limb grafted into a tree and extended over her clothes line. The following fall I went to see some of the apples Ms. Call had collected for me. Also she had about five of the Clothes Line apples. As soon as I saw them, I said to myself, "This is probably the Mongolian", as it perfectly fit the unique description. I later showed the apples to three Fortner family members who confirmed the identity of the Mongolian.

Finding the Mongolian was incredible good fortune, but more was to come from this single trip to Virginia. About two miles before I reached Ms. Call's home I saw three men standing in front of a garage. I stopped and talked to them about old apples. One of them (Hobert Hall) mentioned that he had an apple tree he wanted me to look at. After visiting Ms. Call's I went by the Hall home. The tree still had many apples. The apples were large, almost round, greenish yellow, with a little red blush and some russet spots, and having a delicious flavor. It perfectly fit the description of the Catawba apple which had been in the area. I later mailed some of the apples to a man in Rockingham County who confirmed the identification, having seen the apples in Patrick Co., VA.

Did you know that there is a connection between the US Dept. of Agriculture's decision to import Russian apple varieties in 1870 (including the Lieby apple) and my search for a very rare North Carolina gemstone called Hiddenite? I grew up about 15 miles from the old Hiddenite mine and as a child I was always fascinated by the stories involving the mine. When I remarried I wanted to give my wife a special ring with a Hiddenite stone. Unfortunately when the man mounted the stone he used a soft type gold and improperly modified the mounting. This resulted in the stone eventually being lost (cry, cry, cry). I then started trying to find another Hiddenite stone. I eventually went to the home of an excellent gemstone cutter, Paul Burton. On one of the visits I decided to ask Mr. Burton's neighbor (Paul Curry) about his apple trees. He had a Queen apple and he also described a Leiby apple that he remembered from the Shepherds Cross Roads area of Wilkes County. This started a two-year search for the Lieby. The search was complicated by the fact that there was another apple in the area called Liddy. When I had trouble finding the Lieby I started to wonder if Lieby could just be another way of saying Liddy. In the past I had talked to Paul Clanton, of Iredell County, about the old apples he remembered. One time when I called his home, he said that he wanted to show me some trees at the home of a neighbor. The apples were medium to large, round and a little pointed, yellow almost covered with dull red streaks, and having a good but slightly dry taste. When someone mentioned the name Lieby at a near-by store, it finally dawned on me that the apple could possibly be the Lieby, as it fit the general description. It was later positively identified as the Lieby. What is so exciting about the old apple search is the wonderful and unpredictable routes down which I am eventually led. I never did find a Hiddenite stone, but instead Mr. Burton cut a beautiful clear green Moldavite stone (formed from condensed rock vapors after being hit by a meteorite---Czech Republic).

I hope you and your family have a very happy holiday season.

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