

To: Friends of Old Apples
From: Tom Brown

November 27, 2005

Apple Search---2006

Many people helped me in my search for heritage apples during the past year. The assistance was greatly appreciated and resulted in about seventy-six apple varieties being found. They include the following apples: Allison Stripe (Pounder), Baldwin (red & green), Baldwin (yellow), Banana Pippin, Banana Sweet, Beck Searcy, Ben Hur, Benham, Benson, Betsy Crockett, Brimstone, Bitter Buckingham, Buffalo, Bull Nose, Bumblebee, Fall Banana, Canning, Cannon Pearmain, Cheese (Barker's Creek), Ducky (Winter Pearmain?), Fall Queen, Frost Proof, Gentry Stripe, Gladstone, Green Hill, Green Skin Pippin, Green Witch, Horse (green, very large), Hundred Dollar, Jim Goins, Juicy Queen, Lady Watermelon, Mosby's Best (Lowery), Mammoth Pippin, Mealy, Melungeon Gold, Nonsuch (oblate, green with red), Ohio Sweet, Old Man, Pearmain, Pound (Butner), Pound Pippin (greenish-yellow, flat, conical), Red Wine (seedling), "Red Rusty", Rusty Golden, Sal, Sally Crockett, Sheepnose Sweet, Shannon, Sink Hole, Smokehouse (white), Sparger, Spartan, Sugar, Sunrise, Sweet Bausel, Tompkins King, Upton, Virginia-Ben Davis, Vine, Ward, Wallace Sweet, Water Core (red), Water Sweet, Yellow Pippin, and Yellow Winesap. I have also located the following, but I have not seen the actual apples: Beaufort, Black Amish, Bonnie, Edney June, Ferguson, Granny Sweet, Jonathan (earlier), Jumbo Winesap, Primie, Reasor Green, and Tyman Red. The Shannon was an especially important find, previously being a major southern apple variety. It was found high on top of a mountain in Smyth County, VA. At the same site, I also found a Yellow Winesap and a Pound Pippin. The apples found included some with very interesting names: Green Witch, Ducky, Buffalo, Melungeon Gold, etc. The Melungeon Gold apple has a beautiful barrel shape and a very interesting connection. When the very earliest explorers reached this country, they discovered a group of people in northeastern Tennessee with Mediterranean facial features living with the Indians (Native Americans). There was some talk of them possibly being descended from a Portuguese shipwreck. These mixed race people are called Melungeons. In addition to old apples, I also discover much interesting historical information---the story of the '23 flood, a "pitch stone" location, the loss of a families' food store just before winter, etc.

During the last six years I have met many thousands of people. They have allowed me to collect apples at their homes, and also collect scion wood for grafting. The apples I collect are used in displays at outdoor festivals; this results in my meeting additional people who tell me where to find even more old apples. Many of the old apples I collect are "unknowns". I constantly compare these apples with old nursery fruit descriptions and with other apples people have described to me. It might take a couple of years, but usually I can identify these apples if they have any prominent distinguishing features.

My new digital camera will help to better document the apples found each year.

Finding the old apples is just the initial step. I then work to get them back into circulation, which is accomplished by several methods. During the summer and fall, I mail boxes of apples to at least six people who either are associated with preservation orchards or sell heritage apple trees. This allows them to examine the apples in detail and determine if they should add them to their collections. About 125 apples I have found are now in preservation orchards and about 250 are in the collections of people who sell heritage apple trees. Some of these organizations or businesses are: Horn Creek Living Historical Farm (Pinnacle, NC--Lee Calhoun, orchardist & southern apple expert), Big Horse Creek Farm (Lansing, NC--Ron & Suzanne Joyner), Century Farm Orchards

(Reidsville, NC--David Vernon), Apples, Etc. (Lansing, NC--Danny Harvey), The Urban Homestead (Bristol, VA--Tim Hensley), Neighbors Orchards (Gadsden, AL--Joyce Neighbors), Jerry Appleseed Nursery (Ketchikan, AK--Jerrold Koerner), Kelly's Old Time Apples (Big Stone Gap, VA--Steve Kelly), plus several others. I supplied them cuttings for grafting free of charge. This effort is fun and rewarding. The preservation orchards and heritage nurseries helped reintroduce almost half of the 600 apples I have found. I plan to approach County Agriculture Agencies to see if a program can be developed to get the remaining apple trees reintroduced through discounted tree sales.

Here are some country sayings people have shared with me during my apple visits:

"If your nose itches on the right side, then a man is coming to see you; if the left side itches, then a woman is coming." "It is bad luck to take the ashes out of the stove between Christmas and Old Christmas (Jan. 6th)." Left Benge, Wilkes Co., NC.

"A whistling woman and a crowing hen always come to a bad end." Linda Caudle, Yadkin County, NC.

"For the twelve days of Christmas (Dec 25th to Jan 6th), each day rules the respective month in predicting its weather." Belle Cranfill, Yadkin Co., NC.

"If the right hand itches, then you are going to shake hands with a stranger; if the left hand itches, you are going to get money." Linda Hall, Wilkes Co., NC.

"It is unlucky to burn dogwood, the tree of Christ." James Hodges, Yadkin Co., NC.

"When katydids set up a racket, it will be six weeks to a frost." Patsy Wiggins, Unicoi Co., TN.

"When there is a light wind from the east for three days, then it will rain." "When bees build in the ground, it will be a hard winter." Hoyt Combs, Watauga Co., NC.

"You should let the last apple fall from the tree. If you pull it, the tree will not have any apples the next year." Susie Edwards, Carroll Co., VA.

"When you hear owls in the winter, it will snow." Lloyd Richardson, Wilkes Co., NC.

"When you hear thunder in the winter, it will snow in nine days." Clint Burke, Wilkes Co., NC.

"The number of fogs in August, predict the number of winter snows." Fanny Brown, Wilkes Co., NC.

"When days begin to lengthen, the cold begins to strengthen." Phoebe Mc Grady, Wilkes Co., NC.

"If there is water on the timber on New Years morning, then there will be plenty of fruit that year." Paul Adams, Wilkes Co., NC.

"My grandfather (Jason Frazzell) bought timber. When I was a boy, I walked up a mountain with him to look at the timber. He said that there would be a deep snow by morning. This did not seem reasonable, since it was a fairly warm March day. The next morning, about twelve inches of snow fell. This was in 1937." He correctly predicted the snow, because he noticed that all the rabbits were going down the mountain, (so they could get next to a stream, not to be snowed in). Earl Frazzell, Jackson Co., NC.

I hope that the coming year will be a great one for you and your family!!!

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