

To: Friends of Old Apples
From: Tom Brown

December 5, 2006

Apple Search---2007

This past year was one in which I spent more time in Virginia. My apple search involves much driving and I had to contend with \$3.00 a gallon gas. I was still able to find about forty apple varieties. They are as follows: Annette, Balsam Sweet, Big Andy, Bietigheimer, Biscuit Horse, Black Benham, Black Buff, Bradson, Bushy Top, Buttermilk, Daisy Sweet, Candy Stripe, Cane, Cooper Red, Equinetelee, Glori Mundi, Harrelson, Hen House, Henry Clay, Horse (elongated), July Cluster, Larry, Leather Coat (yellow), Mammoth Horse, Martin Sweet, Morton Sweet, Mule Face, Orchard, Paradise Sweet, Pittsburg, Poplar, Pound Royal, Primie, Raleigh, Red Sweet June, Red Winter Sweet, Seedin Simpson (?), Spake, Speckled Gem, Sam Whitson, Summer Strawberry, Water Spout, White Bellflower, Winter Sweet Russet, Troy, Tall Top, and Vandever.

One of the apples found involved the search for a descendent of the most celebrated apple tree in the country, the Handy Apple Tree. In 1900, there was an apple tree west of Stuart, VA which was famous for its incredible size, measuring 10 feet in circumference and having a branch spread of 71 feet. One year it produced 110 bushels of apples, being used to make brandy. The tree was named for the owner at that time, Mr. Sparrel Handy.

I knew that the tree was long gone but I thought that surely someone grafted a tree off this very famous tree. I visited Rye Cove where the tree had been located but found nothing. Then David Sheley contacted me as he had been researching the history of the tree. David added an important bit of information---that the tree was called a Bushy Top, because the branches grew straight up. Later I met two area people who remembered the Bushy Top apple. There was an old orchard near Meadows of Dan that a Mrs. Barkley had told me about. She knew the identities of all the apples but one. I realized that this unknown apple fit the description of the Bushy Top. I showed the apples to Mr. Cecil Handy and Coy Yeatts who both said that it was the Bushy Top. It was a thrill to hold the medium red apple in my hand, a grandson of the country's most famous apple tree.

I would like to share some fascinating stories told to me in my apple search.

Country Doctor---Mrs. Ruth White told me of her uncle, Dwight Myers, who was a country doctor in northern Iredell County, NC. Dr. Myers was widely known as a very good doctor who would go for long periods without sleep if it was necessary to better care for his patients. When treatment was complete and it was time to pay, he was known to say, "Before you pay me, let's first wait and see if you get better."

Dr. Myers frequently used native plants in his practice, also treating for arthritis.

A Mr. Lambert had been bitten by a rabid animal. He was so wildly delirious that he was chained to a tree. Because of his wild condition no doctors would come. Finally Dr. Myers was called. He not only came but treated the man and he fully recovered.

About 1941, Ruth was 14 and living with her parents in the Crutchfield area of Surry County. Her father was recovering from a heart attack and Dr. Myers came to see him. It was a very cold winter night with snow and ice on the ground. A family in the community had heard of Dr. Myers and had asked him to come and see their very sick baby girl. She was almost constantly sleeping and would not wake up. Ruth went along to show Dr. Myers the home. When they arrived, they had to walk a long ways through the snow to get to the house. It was dimly lit as they had no electricity and there was an open fire in the fireplace. Dr. Myers

examined the child and asked to see her medicine. He threw it into the fireplace and told them to not give any more of it to her. He then said, "What this child needs is a good Horse apple". After much diligent searching the parents found some Horse apples in Virginia. They fed these to the child and she got well. The child's name was Sylvia White and she credits Dr. Myers with saving her life.

Amazing Neighbors---I have spent many hours apple searching in the area around Roan Mountain State Park, TN. Someone told me that I should contact Spence Stocton since he knew a lot about old apples. I called him and he told me about many varieties that had been in the area. He also told me about old apple trees at his neighbors, the George Neilson family. From what everyone said, I was sure that Spence was in his 80s.

At a later date I was in the area and decided to drop by Spence's home. I knew the address. I found the mailbox and thought that it probably went with a house across the road. The home was large and very new. It had at least five large rooms and a two-car garage. I went up to the front door, knocked, but no one was at home. Through the glass door I could easily see a large expanse of the interior with attractive new furniture and beautiful hardwood floors. I thought to myself, "Surely this must be the wrong home, because eighty year olds do not build new homes with completely new furniture."

Later I called Spence and he told me that yes indeed it was his home. He then proceeded to tell me both the tragic and amazing story behind the new home. In the winter of 2002 their house was completely destroyed by fire. This was very tragic, but the situation was made even worse because the Stocton's had no insurance.

Then Spence found out what amazing neighbors he had. In a little over two months they rallied together and built him a beautiful new house and filled it with new furniture. They also gave him clothes and canned goods to last a year. All this was done completely free to Spence, without him contributing a penny. People were also mobilized from far away, with one church in central North Carolina contributing \$5,000. During the construction, one day Spence counted twenty-eight carpenters working on the house at the same time. If you ever want to move to an area with truly wonderful people, then you should select the Cove Creek area of Carter Co., TN.

Unexpected Auction---T. E. Webster of Franklin Co., VA told me how he acquired his 113 acre property which included an old house. He had just returned from the Korean War and he and his wife wanted to buy some property in the Dillon's Mill area where they grew up. His only resources were a small amount of severance pay from the Army and his income from a grocery store job. Before looking for property, T. E. visited his local banker and found that he could qualify for a loan up to \$5,000.

They then learned that a 113 acre farm was going to be sold at auction and the property included an older house. There were many people at the auction. T. E. made an opening bid of \$2,500. No one else bid and so he got the property for a very low price. It turned out that the people attending the auction were neighbors who were there to bid in case someone was trying to buy the property who would not make a good neighbor. They knew T. E. and knew he would be a good neighbor. During the auction, one man was laying across the hood of a pickup. He rose up and asked his son who had just bid. The son said T. E. The man replied that it was fine and slumped again on the pickup.

I hope that 2007 will be a truly memorable year for you and your family!
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