

The American Pomological Society and Its Value to Apple Producers¹

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The American Pomological Society is honored to meet again with North Carolina apple growers. Only 8 years ago, the two groups met jointly here in Asheville. Between these two meetings, the Society has met jointly in winter meetings with fruit growers of Iowa, Virginia, Wisconsin and Minnesota, Arkansas, Niagara Peninsula in Canada, Colorado and Ohio in successive years.

Perhaps one shouldn't need to explain the meaning and objectives of a Society almost 125 years old. Probably most of you have had some contact with the Society, and I know several of you are members. For those who haven't encountered the word, pomology means simply the science and practice of fruit growing. The term rightfully refers to all fruits, including of course the tree fruits, cane fruits, and berry crops.

Groundwork for the Society was laid by a National Congress of Fruit Growers held in New York in 1848 under the leadership of Marshall P. Wilder. Two years later, this organization became the American Pomological Society. Over the ensuing years, growers, nurserymen, research workers, and other fruit industry people have cooperated to make the Society a spokesman for needed changes in North American horticulture. It served as the parent Society for the formation of the American Society for Horticultural Science to serve the professional segment of the industry just after the turn of the century. Its mem-

bers foresaw the need for an official registration of new varieties and the Society has helped physically and financially to support the "Register of New Fruit and Nut Varieties" since its inception in the early forties. The Society recently published a book on apple varieties and is in the process of completing another book on the history of pomology in North America. It has periodically published lists of varieties and species of fruits available as scionwood throughout North America.

The main objective of the Society over the years has been to support the origination, testing, and dissemination of improved fruit varieties. Early lists of recommended varieties by the Society are about the only source of accurate information on the origin of some of our important early varieties which became parents of our present-day ones. In 1946 the Society began publication of a quarterly journal *Fruit Varieties and Horticultural Digest*, which was renamed *Fruit Varieties Journal* in 1973. This is the logical place for publishing detailed descriptions of new fruit varieties or mutations for the institutional or private breeder or the hobbyist. The journal also specializes in articles comparing varieties in different environments, geographical or cultural; showing new techniques for varietal improvement; and ratings of comparative pest resistance, hardiness, drought resistance and the like. At the same time, the journal is open to the nurseryman, grower or hobbyist with

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specific information on the origin of varieties, adaptation of certain varieties, cultural observations, or needs of the industry. Its use by the amateur sector of the industry is encouraged. At the same time, it is sometimes the only logical place to record significant observations for the professional horticulturist.

One of the founders, Marshall Wilder, started a fund which supports a coveted silver medal awarded to outstanding individuals or organizations who originate important new fruit varieties or who make other outstanding horticultural achievements. Some of the recent recipients have been Paul Stark, Sr., for his role in popularizing the 'Delicious,' 'Red Delicious' and 'Golden Delicious' apples; George Oberle for his presidential series of peach varieties; Dr. John Weinberger and Fred Anderson, professional and amateur (respectively) peach and nectarine breeders in California; USDA for development of virus-free strawberries; and the New York Fruit Testing Association. Outstanding fruit exhibits also have been rewarded with a bronze medal. One such exhibit I remember was an extensive display of the super-red sports of 'Delicious' at our meeting with the Washington State Horticultural Association in 1962. Nominations by any member of the Society are reviewed annually by a committee.

A past president of the Society, John Breggar of Clemson, South Carolina, offers 3 awards annually for outstanding essays on fruit varieties by undergraduate or graduate students. Presently, the Society is matching his awards and would welcome entries from your sons and daughters studying to be better horticulturists.

Outstanding articles in the *Fruit Varieties Journal* also are rewarded by another committee.

Currently there are 900 members

in the American Pomological Society. Understandably, three-fourths of these are in the United States and another one-eighth in Canada. The remaining memberships extend to 41 other countries including Mexico, South and Central America, most European countries, several Middle East countries, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Japan, India, and China. Thus, our publication has a world-wide forum.

Much of the routine of running the Society is carried by the professional segment. This probably is unavoidable because they have facilities available to them (secretarial help, duplicating services, etc.) not usually available to the amateur member. However, the amateur sector has an equal role in the decisions of the Society. This, we believe, has been the reason for its long and successful history.

What does the Society do — and what can it do — to help you, an apple grower in North Carolina?

First of all, the *Journal* can keep you abreast of new developments in varieties, culture, rootstocks, etc., of apples. In the last 3 years, for example, you could have read about 4 new domestic apple varieties and a Hungarian introduction; an evaluation of 32 'Red Delicious' sports and why they have occurred; how the 'Golden Delicious' apple arose, how it performs in Pennsylvania, and its value as a pollinizer. Bill Luce wrote about old apple varieties that have survived. The new book I mentioned earlier on "North American Apples; varieties, rootstock, outlook" was reviewed, as well as a New York publication on apple varieties and a Canadian bulletin on rootstocks. Promising new apple varieties were evaluated for Illinois, Vermont, Japan, the San Joaquin Valley of California, Ontario, and northwestern Washington. Summer and early fall varieties were evaluated under New York conditions. Cultural practices for bearing

orchards in such separated places as New York and Indonesia were discussed. How to make semi-dwarfs of your standard trees was explained. How to propagate by hardwood cuttings was outlined. Also discussed were effects of the rootstock on hardiness of 'Stayman' apples, susceptibility to fire blight of apple varieties in the Southeast and of rootstocks in Arkansas, etc.

Through the "Register of New Fruit and Nut Varieties" you are assured of proper naming and registration of new varieties. All lists covering new varieties originating between 1920 and 1970 are compiled in a second edition book published last year. It is critical we feel that the Society and others continue to support this Register. Main services are to avoid duplication of names, or similarity of names which might lead to confusion and to supply a description of main characteristics to permit intelligent testing.

The loss of all or part of variety plantings in many of our state programs, and even of the plant introduction station at Chico, California, is a major concern of many breeders and of our Society. The loss of this valuable germplasm may seriously hamper the breeder who may need to go back to some of this older material for such characteristics as disease or insect resistance or hardiness. It should be a concern of yours also, because many apple varieties potentially valuable for breeding new varieties when the 'sport' phase is past may not be available. You need to help the Society and the fine breeding programs here in North Carolina and throughout North America to protect their "blood bank" of genetic material.

The previous speaker heads a rootstock committee for the Society. We, unfortunately, are just beginning to fully realize the importance of rootstocks and the need for better ones. The English horticulturists realized

this need well before we did and developed the well-known East Malling and Merton Malling apple stocks for tree size control. These adapt to some situations but are inadequate for others. We need, therefore, specific apple stocks for specific areas and we need improved stocks for peach, plum, cherry, apricot, almond and other tree crops.

The Society has a trueness-to-name committee which has worked for years with state programs to standardize nursery inspection services which find and eliminate variety mixtures in the nursery based on tree, leaf, or gland type, and other non-fruit characteristics.

Another committee periodically prepares lists of scionwood sources for each fruit species in North American collections. These lists are compiled and printed in the *Journal*. They make available to all breeders, public or private, sources of scionwood or pollen of some of the less common varieties and species. Pennsylvania State University researchers have handled this service for several years now.

Two other committees of the Society annually distribute lists of promising tree fruit and small fruit selections respectively available for testing for adaptation throughout North America or in specified regions. Two breeders with the New York Agricultural Experiment Station have handled this assignment for several years.

The Society appoints new committees as new problems and opportunities are faced. Over the years, A.P.S. has been the organization to recognize new problems, needed lines of research, new organizations to meet specific needs, etc. The Society needs the support of your growers and those of similar grower groups throughout the continent to maintain its proud service to the fruit industry.