

New American Pomological Society Award Honors U. P. Hedrick

R. C. LAMB¹

Dr. U. P. Hedrick, the author of all but one of the Fruits of New York series, probably is the most widely known and read writer about fruit varieties in the United States. It is fitting indeed that the American Pomological Society should name its prize for a paper on fruit breeding or fruit varieties by a college student after him.

Dr. Hedrick was born on a farm in Independence, Iowa in 1870. His parents were pioneers and soon moved to the unbroken forest land of northern Michigan where Hedrick grew up very close to nature. Dr. Hedrick managed to graduate from high school under conditions that would have discouraged most people. He went on to graduate from Michigan Agricultural College. He earned his BS in Agriculture degree in 1893 and his MS in 1895. He went to the Oregon Agricultural College as Professor of Botany and Horticulture for two years. He then returned to Michigan as State Inspector of Orchards and Nurseries for two years. Then he went to Utah Agricultural College for two years and back to Michigan for five years before he came to Geneva in 1905 as horticulturist. He remained on the staff at Geneva for 32 years, the last 10 as Director of the Station.

Dr. Hedrick was an orchard and field oriented scientist, not laboratory

oriented. His interests and concerns fit in very well with the variety testing and fruit breeding work that had been started at Geneva. Very soon he was writing bulletins and papers on a variety of horticultural subjects. He took a keen interest in the breeding work and was instrumental or involved in the release and naming of a great many new fruit varieties. In the period that he served as Horticulturist before he became Director, i.e. 1905-1928, 31 varieties of apple, 5 pears, 3 plums, 1 cherry, 1 nectarine, 14 grapes, 1 gooseberry, 11 raspberries and 14 strawberries were named and introduced. His philosophy was to name and introduce many promising selections and to let them find their own niche in the horticultural industry. As a result, many of the less meritorious introductions from this era failed to gain commercial favor and have been lost. However, there were quite a few that became important cultivars such as Cortland, Early McIntosh, Lodi, Macoun and Milton apples, the Gorham pear, the Stanley prune, the Fredonia and Ontario grapes, the Fredonia gooseberry and the Newburgh raspberry.

Dr. Hedrick gained his widest fame as an author. Long before he came to the Station, work had been going on here to test different fruit varieties to find the best ones for New York State

¹Professor of Pomology, New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, Geneva, NY 14456.

conditions. The year that Hedrick arrived, 1905, the Apples of New York was published. In this, all of the apple varieties that could be obtained were described in great detail not only for their performance in the orchards at Geneva but also their origin, parentage and usefulness in other parts of the world. Colored or black and white photographs of many of these varieties were included. It was the most complete description of apple varieties available at that time. Dr. Hedrick continued and improved this type of publication for the other fruits. All of the illustrations were in color, the size of the books was increased, there was an introductory section on the botany and history of the fruit and the quality of the paper was improved. The Grapes of New York was published in 1908, the Plums of New York in 1911, the Cherries of New York in 1915, the Peaches of New York in 1917, the Pears of New York in 1921 and the Small Fruits of New York in 1925. Also included in this series was Sturtevant's Notes on Edible Plants in 1919.

Hedrick continued publishing with a similar but smaller series on the Vegetables of New York. He took less credit for these than for the Fruit books. Another famous book of Hedrick's that was published by the Experiment Station was A History of Agriculture in the State of New York.

Hedrick not only published Experiment Station books but also had a number of hard cover books published by MacMillan and other publishers. These include The Manual of Grape Growing 1919, Cyclopedias of Hardy Fruits 1922, Systematic Pomology 1925, Fruits for the Home Garden 1944, Grapes and Wines for Home Gardens 1945, The Land of the Crooked Tree 1948, an autobiographical ac-

count of his youth on the farm in northern Michigan, and lastly A History of Horticulture in America to 1860 in 1950.

The last facet of Dr. Hedrick's career was that of an administrator which covers the period 1928-1938 when he was director of the Experiment Station. This was a difficult time that spanned the great depression of the early thirties. At this time it was necessary to integrate the Geneva and Ithaca experiment stations so that there was no duplication of effort. What seemed like a simple and straightforward operation was in fact a difficult job. He assigned separate responsibilities to the departments of Pomology, Vegetable Crops, Plant Pathology, Entomology and Food Science. This was not an easy task and in fact was not completed before Dr. Hedrick retired.

However, it is probably due to the fact that Dr. Hedrick was a horticulturalist that Geneva became a Horticultural Station.

After his retirement, Dr. Hedrick continued to live in Geneva and to write. He was the recipient of many honors. He was awarded honorary doctor's degrees by Hobart College of Geneva and by Utah State College of Agriculture. He was made a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The Massachusetts Horticultural Society bestowed the George Robert White medal on him and the American Pomological Society awarded him its Wilder Medal.

References

- Gates, Paul W. 1966. Ulysses Prentiss Hedrick, Horticulturalist and Historian. New York History XLVII:219-247.
- Hedrick, Ulysses P. 1948. *The Land of the Crooked Tree*. Oxford University Press.