

## Arkansas' Original Apples

ROY C. ROM

The apple of commerce, *Malus x domestica* (*Borhk*), is not native to North America. Over the centuries it moved with people in migration or along established trade routes from its place of origin, the Caucasus Mountain region between what is now Iran and Russia, into Western Europe. The apple's introduction to North America is reputed to have occurred in 1534 when the explorer Jacques Cartier brought it to the Indian village of Tadoussac (Canada). Colonists also carried apples with them as they settled our eastern shore.

In the late 1820's an influx of settlers from Tennessee, Georgia and the Carolinas moved to government land in the Ozark region of what is now Northwest Arkansas and introduced the apple to that area. The Ozark uplift, a broad plateau with elevations of 1500 feet above sea level and a rolling surface terrain, has a natural blend of altitude, rainfall and temperature for apple production.

Mr. J. Holt of Lincoln, Arkansas had an apple tree nursery established by 1827. The Shannon family of Evansville started one in 1830, as did J. B. Russell in 1833, near Cane Hill. Soon orchards were planted. The first in Benton County was set out by a Cherokee Indian woman in 1840. Ironically, the venture was abandoned because of insufficient slave labor. In the last half of the 19th century the Frisco Railroad was influential in promoting the planting of apple orchards.

As orcharding flourished in Northwest Arkansas, there was great opportunity for seedling trees to be discovered.

There were many such seedling finds, "Arkansas' Originals," discovered in the state. Each had its unique characteristics.

Perhaps the most famous is the 'Arkansas Black.' It originated on the farm of a Mr. Brathwait, northwest of Bentonville, and first fruited in 1870. The 'Arkansas Black' attracted attention because of its deep full color which is almost black. The apple has a fine-grained yellow flesh. The flavor is good, juicy, rich and subacid. This fruit's greatest asset, in the days of no refrigeration, was ability to store well.

Horticulturally, the tree was inferior, subject to apple scab disease and low production. J. T. Simpson of the University of Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station remarked in 1896 that the 'Arkansas Black' was not desirable for commercial planting. Today the 'Arkansas Black' survives as an antique Arkansas original apple with a loyal following of sentimental consumers.

Often confused with the 'Arkansas Black' is the 'Arkansaw' or 'Arkansas.' This cultivar was found in Washington County north of the Rhea community. Seeds of the 'Black Twig,' a colloquial name for the 'Winesap' apple, were planted there about 1840. The seedling tree designated as 'Arkansaw' was found and propagated in 1869. It is an excellent apple in many respects, both in tree and fruit characteristics, similar to the 'Winesap.' Lack of productiveness limited its commercialization in Arkansas and other areas. This apple gained renown locally as 'Arkansas Black Twig' or 'Mammoth Black Twig.' The Arkansas State Horticultural So-

**Table 1. Seedling finds which became Arkansas varieties.**

Name	Arkansas Locality	Approximate Date*
Ada Red	Springdale	1890
Ashton	Cincinnati	Pre 1890
Beach (Lady Piprin)	Bentonville	1855
Coffelt	Benton County	—
Collins	Lincoln	1860's
Elkhorn	Pea Ridge	1860's
Etris	Bentonville	1873
Evans	Lowell	Pre 1890
Florence	Bentonville	Pre Civil War
Givens (Ark. Baptist)	Gentry	1870
Hasting's Red	Benton County	1870's
Highfill	Springtown	1869
Howard's Sweet	Cincinnati	1860
King David	Durham	1880's
Mock	Prairie Grove	Pre 1890
Oliver Red (Senator)	Washington County	1870's
Ozone (Martin's Red)	Ozone	1870's
Rutherford	Cove Creek	Pre 1890
Shannon	Boonsboro (Evansville)	1833
Springdale	Springdale	1890's
Stevenson Piprin	Pope County	Pre 1836
Summer Champion	Lincoln	1880
Tull	Grant County	1840
Wilson June	Cane Hill	1850

\*Date first found, or first propagated, first reported or estimated.

ciety passed a resolution early in this century condemning the renaming of apples with local names and held to the name 'Arkansaw'.

There are numerous 'Arkansas Original' apples. Table 1 lists a few of the 50

or more seedling finds that were named. Each had a local and/or short lived popularity. Then national commercial apple marketing (after 1920), settled on just a few cultivars including 'Jonathon,' 'Red' and 'Golden Delicious,' 'Rome Beauty' and 'McIntosh'.

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