Maxwell Jay Dorsey (1880-1966)

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The sudden death, on July 22, 1966, of Dr. Maxwell Jay Dorsey, retired Head of the Department of Horticulture at the University of Illinois, marked the passing of an individual widely known and respected, not only by the personnel of all segments of the horticultural industry, but also by members of such allied scientific disciplines as botany and genetics, and by his colleagues and many friends in the University community.

Dr. Dorsey was born near Dresden, Ohio on May 3, 1880. He graduated from Michigan State College in 1906, and received his Ph.D. degree from Cornell University in 1913.

He was horticulturist at the University of Maine, 1906-07; Assistant Horticulturist at the New York Experiment Station, 1907-10; Horticulturist in charge of fruit breeding at the University of Minnesota, 1911-1921; Head of the Department of Horticulture, West Virginia University, 1921-25. He came to the University of Illinois as Head of the Division of Pomology in 1925, was selected as Head of the Department of Horticulture in 1940, and retired in 1948. He was Secretary-Treasurer of the National Peach Council from 1949 to 1957.

He was far-sighted enough to recognize the need for training in the basic sciences in the solution of the ever-increasing problems in horticulture. He was one of a relatively small group of horticulturists who changed the method of investigations from simple experimentation to research that made use of the techniques of other areas of knowledge, and thus inaugurated the impetus for the development of the present intensive search for knowledge concerning the basic facts about the life processes of horticultural plants.

Dr. Dorsey was a skilled anatomist and cytologist, techniques which he used in fruit breeding and in the study of the development of the reproductive organs of fruits in relation to sterility, fruit drops, and fruit development, and in the determination of the characteristics of frost injury to fruits and of their subsequent development.

While at Minnesota he made the crosses which resulted in the introduction of the widely-grown Latham red raspberry, and of apple varieties adapted to the Minnesota climate. At the University of Illinois he carried on an extensive program in peach breeding, in addition to his administrative duties and other research. From this work he introduced the six peach varieties known as the Prairie series

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from the fact that the word Prairie was used as the first part of the name of each to designate them as coming from Illinois, the Prairie State. One of these, Prairie Dawn, is still being grown for its early maturity, high quality, and resistance to spring frost injury. All of the six are used in breeding because of their hardiness and resistance to the bacterial spot disease. The Comanche variety, which is extensively grown in Texas, also resulted from this breeding program.

In recognition of his contributions to horticultural science he was elected to Honorary Life Membership in the National Society of Horticulture of France, President of the American Society for Horticultural Science for 1924, and as a Fellow in the latter society. He was awarded the Alumni Award for Distinguished Service by Michigan State College in 1952, the Centennial Citation by Michigan State University in 1955, and the Wilder Medal of the American Pomological Society in 1957.

The Mericourt Pear From Tennessee

B. S. PICKETT*

A new pear variety named Mericourt, developed by the Tennessee Agricultural Experiment Station, has been released. The crossing and selection work was initiated by Dr. J. A. McClintock, former member of the Horticulture Department, in 1928. Dr. Brooks Drain continued the work when Dr. McClintock left the staff. Following Dr. Drain's retirement a few years ago, the Horticultural staff maintained a close watch on the selections. Among them was one designated as Tenn. 38S63.

Mericourt (Tenn. 38S63) is the result of a cross between Seckel and Late Faulkner made in 1938. Late Faulkner is a chance seedling with fruit characteristics similar to those of Keiffer, and high survival characteristics under Tennessee conditions. Seckel is a small-fruited variety of *Pyrus communis* ancestry with very high sugar content, a dark red blush, and for the species, quite resistant to fireblight.

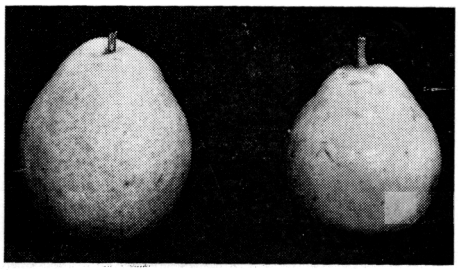

Fig. 1. Mericourt—a new Tennessee pear of high dessert quality.

Seedlings of the Seckel x Late Faulkner cross were planted at the Mericourt Experiment Station at Clarksville, Tennessee. The first recorded fruit was harvested in 1947. In 1952, a replicated planting of the Mericourt clone was made at the Highland Rim Experiment Station at Springfield, Tennessee.

Performance

Yields for the period 1961 through 1965 presented in Table 1 are from the Highland Rim Experiment Station at Springfield. Winter temperatures at this station have varied from a low of —23°F. to the 70's during the month of January and from —7° to above 75° during February. These temperatures provide a severe test of hardiness for pears. Mericourt has survived in the same planting where Duchess failed, and has produced good crops in years that resulted in

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