

The Spokane Beauty Apple

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Interest in this old variety, Spokane Beauty, has uncovered information that may be of historical value to horticulturists and hobby gardeners. This information came to light recently through the efforts of Mr. Ivan J. Donaldson, Fisheries Biologist, Bonneville Dam, Bonneville, Oregon, who successfully located budwood near the original tree.

Most of the historical information written here originated from letters and from direct personal conversations with Mr. C. Bert Miller, recent owner and long time operator of the Milton Nursery Company, Milton-Freewater, Oregon, whose father, Mr. Aaron Miller, discovered the variety.

Mr. Aaron Miller and family came to the Walla Walla Valley of southeastern Washington from the Santa Rosa area, Sonoma County, California in the year 1872, and at first lived on a farm known as the Maxon place. This pioneer farm was located about 7 miles east of the city of Walla Walla on Russell Creek, in the foothills of the Blue Mountains. It was in the year 1894, on this farm, that Mr. Miller discovered a seedling apple which he named the Maxon Seedling. After establishing the nursery at its present location near Milton-Freewater in 1878, Mr. Miller propagated, among other apple varieties, nursery trees of this new variety. It was listed in some of the early Milton Nursery catalogues and sold under the name of Maxon Seedling.

The new variety was popular locally, and was displayed at the Spokane National Fruit Fair in 1895 and

1896 as part of a Milton Nursery display of nursery grown fruit varieties and fruit tree stocks. It was awarded first prize by the show judges who, at this time, renamed it "Spokane Beauty." Thereafter the variety was propagated under its new name by nurserymen throughout the Pacific Northwest.

A considerable number of trees of Spokane Beauty were propagated and sold, but it was never considered a first class commercial variety for the fresh fruit market. However, it was considered a very good general cooking apple. The following is a description of Spokane Beauty taken from a 1903 catalogue of the Oregon Nursery Company.

"Largest apple known, a prodigy for size: of extraordinary beauty; color greenish yellow, shaded and striped with deep red; flesh crisp; juicy, rich with a delicious high flavor, unsurpassed for cooking or drying; a very long keeper."

Starting about 1915, the Delicious-Red Delicious era arrived in the Pacific Northwest, and the Spokane Beauty, along with many other popular varieties of the time, vanished from the scene.

Mr. Ivan J. Donaldson, in his quest for information about this variety, discovered some of the trees in an old family orchard near Thornton, Washington. It is felt that these old trees were grown and sold by the original discoverer. This and other old apple varieties of the period had been widely planted in the home orchards of surrounding Palouse country.

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