

The Orenco Apple

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All evidence of the origination or history of the Orenco apple has faded into the unwritten files of history. The only information that the author has been able to find was obtained from Fred Serjent, of Orenco, Oregon. Fred worked for the Oregon Nursery Company, of Salem and Orenco, Oregon, for many years. As the story goes, the Orenco apple was found on the fringe on an old pioneer cemetery in Oregon City, Oregon, many years ago.

This variety appears in a color plate of the Oregon Nursery Company color plate book for 1903. It has almost completely disappeared, for all practical purposes. However, there is a tree still standing in the town of Orenco, and one at Westport, Oregon. It is also found in some variety collections.

There are several possibilities for the origin of the Orenco apple. One is that in 1840 it grew from seed accidentally thrown into the back yard of the home of Reverend A. F. Waller. From 1844 to 1857, the "Oregon City" apple grew and bore fruit. We are told that Reverend H. K. Hines gathered 12 bushels from the tree and sold them to W. P. Burns for \$9.00 per bushel. Burns later sold them in California for \$1.00 per apple. The Oregon City tree was moved to the back of a lot at 7th and Main Street in 1857. It was then cut down in 1900 for the erection of a building. The wood from this tree was made into souvenirs which were promoted vigorously.

Although this apple has never been definitely identified, the time table suggests that the Oregon City apple may be the original Orenco variety. Orenco is short for Oregon Nursery Company. The fruit trees that this nursery disseminated throughout the West from 1867 to 1923 contributed to the building of the town of Orenco. One wonders if there is any other city or town in the United States or Canada that owes its name to an apple. A drive through this town in autumn, with its pastoral setting, brings on a nostalgia of by-gone days. The aesthetic imprint that this old nursery left will long be felt.

Description of Orenco

Fruit: Solid red with light colored dots; medium size to large; rather oblate to slightly conic; very attractive; aromatic; flesh white, tender, crisp, juicy, sweet and mild; very good to best eating quality.

Tree: Healthy, hardy, vigorous, productive, and resistant to disease; recommended as coloring best at higher altitudes, but has colored very well at Westport, Oregon, on the Columbia River.

Season: November to May, according to nursery catalogs; but usually ripe for eating out-of-hand in the last two weeks of September in Orenco (100 ft. above sea level).

Other Comments: Orenco on EM IX may be a winner for the home orchard. It is superior to McIntosh Red or Spitzenberg for dessert purposes.