

Mrs. May Stafford Tells Story About Sydney N. Croft

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store, tried them in the greenhouse for him from time to time to see how certain specimens would perform in the greenhouse.

Mr. Houghton was very free with his bulbs, giving one or two to anyone who would plant them. They became common in the door yards of Bandon, but no one seemed to think of them commercially. He gave two bulbs—each of what he considered the best types—to the late Mr. Rasmussen of Bandon. One of these two was the mother lily now known as the Croft. Mr. Rasmussen propagated them so carefully, and in a couple of years had a row clear across the front of his city lot.

Mr. Houghton grew his lilies at Bandon and Crooked Creek, south of Bandon for five or six years. Then he moved them to Tillamook. At Tillamook, in '25, he persuaded two business men to go into the lily business with him. They incorporated in 1937 and were getting along profitably in competition with Japanese bulbs on the market. Mr. Houghton says as time went on he had added and grown many kinds of lilies and daffodils. It was at this time that the late Mr. Amadon came along and worked for Mr. Houghton for two or three years.

In 1930 the depression overtook them and the corporation was

liquidated. Mr. Houghton took his share of the lily bulbs back to Maryland where they failed to grow. He went back to work for the department of agriculture again and is still with them. At the present time he is growing a large number of azaleas for the government to plant along a federal project in Virginia. His advice to you is "Don't give up to depressions."

Mrs. O. C. Shindler, whose husband is the present druggist at Bandon, got her eyes on Mr. Rasmussen's row of beautiful lilies and admired them so that Mr. Rasmussen gave her two large bulbs when he dug that fall. She planted them in her yard and let them grow. After some time—two or three years—she noticed they were not doing too well. She investigated and found the ground, where her lilies had been, was just full of bulbs. She dug them up and divided them, planted back what she wanted and piled the others on the ground. Just as she was about to finish the job, Sydney Croft, who lived next door, came along on his way home and asked her what she was doing. She said she wished him to take these bulbs home with him and plant them for his wife. He said he had to spend his time raising things to eat and that she must not put such notions in his wife's head. Thus they kidded one another, and he started for home. Her mind was made up that Mr. Croft should take these lilies, so she pretended to be mad about it. Mr. Croft turned back, cupping his hands to his mouth as he returned: "Give me those darn things. I'll plant them in the garden."

She said she put them all into his hand, a round double handful. Mr. Croft took them home and made a trench in one of his garden rows and dumped them in and covered them up.

Mrs. Shindler did not care about her lilies so much. Later, when Mrs. Dan Plymale, the originator of the Ace lily, became interested in lilies in a bigger way, Mrs. Shindler gave Mrs. Plymale all the bulbs she had. Mrs. Plymale kept them until the Bandon fire. After the fire she told Mr. Croft he could have them if he could find them. Mrs. Shindler says she never lost any time grieving because she insisted that Syd Croft accepted her left-over lily bulbs and bulblets.

Mr. Croft's row of lilies in his garden grew so well and showed so much appreciation for being in well-cultivated soil, by blooming beautifully and profusely, so he became interested. His wife said he never before could get interested in flowers. He conceived the idea of selling lily bulbs to tourists at 50c each. He sold

a considerable number that way but the main thing—his interest in lilies increased, so did his lily bulbs. In two years he had so many he didn't know what to do with them. He sent a dozen to his childhood friend, Mrs. Maude Watson of Markhan, Wash.

Mr. Croft said he couldn't give bulblets away. No one seemed interested. His wife suggested that he put an advertisement in the local newspaper, "Bermuda Lily Bulbs, 5c each."

Later, Mr. Davids of the Arm-croft & Royston Bulb Co., Los Angeles, contacted Mr. Croft and obtained some of the stock and sent small quantities to many different greenhouses throughout the United States to see how they would act in different climates. All reported them "tops." But no one could find out where Mr. Davids got them.

Mr. Croft liked the shorter of the two kinds of lilies he had. He segregated them, and later named the shorter one "Croft." The others he sold to W. L. Crissey, Brookings, who established it on the market as "Est-tate."

All this time Mr. Croft was getting more and more interested and convinced that his pet lily was worth something. He talked lilies to everyone. "Come over and see the Croft lily," his wife often heard him say. After the Bergen test Mr. Croft dug up much of his vegetable garden and planted all his lots to these lily bulbs. He was just starting to make some money from the sale of bulbs when the Bandon fire came along in 1936 and burned his home.

By that time Mr. Amadon had moved his stock to Harbor, where Mr. Crissey had lilies growing for three years. Mr. Croft dug his bulbs and moved to Harbor. He rented the Oscar Benson property and planted his lilies there. Everyone became lily-conscious. It was the psychological time because Mr. Crissey and his friends had been successful.

A neighbor, Mrs. Laverne Olson, conceived the idea that all the people of this community could begin paying their taxes if they could get a market for the bulbs. She had tried raising all kinds of bulbs, and had been very liberal in interesting others in bulbs. I'll never forget the way she persuaded me to turn salesman. She had talked repeatedly to me, offering half of all I could sell. I finally accepted, but I didn't know anything about the bulbs, or bulb marketing.

To make a long story short we loaded our car full of bulbs and headed north, peddling door to door to make expenses as we went. We sold a few (\$25. worth) to the green house operator at Myrtle Point. The balance of our load went to Mr. Bergen at Marshfield for \$93.

Many a thrilling sales trip has followed until we gained some real experience in bulb marketing. When Mr. Croft moved in, across the road, he heard of our bulb peddling for most of the neighbors who had bulbs let me sell for them, giving me half of all I could get for them.

Well do I remember the first time I ever saw Mr. Croft. He came puffing up our driveway where my car was being prepared for a trip. He had a shoe box, a cigar box and several other small boxes in his arms and a lily bulb in each hand. He said: "Do you suppose you could sell some of these?" My reply was: "I think so, if you'll tell me what they are." He said, "White iris, yellow callas, yellow iris, etc. but these are gigantum longiflorum Bermuda lily bulbs. I'll let you have two boxes of them provided you don't tell anyone where you got them."

Well! such things as Mr. Croft's gigantum longiflorum Bermudas can't be held down.

I sold the two boxes to Paul Peters at Clackamas greenhouse and the whole world knew he got them. A traveling salesman saw these lilies performing in his greenhouse and recognized them as the lily Mr. David had introduced to the market. Mr. Peters got excited. He called us on long distance telephone, saying, "I bought two boxes of lilies from you. I will buy 10,000 every year. I will come to see you."

Not 24 hours later I heard a noise in the kitchen and before I could get there Mr. Peters met me at the living room door, hat in hand. He seemed anxious. He made that same speech again. "I've come to make the deal." I said to my husband, "I guess I won't have to peddle any more." He replied, "It surely looks like it." Mr. Peters told all who asked him where he got the two boxes of lilies. Consequently we got so many orders, we never were able to fill them, unless it develops that we may have too many this fall.

Meanwhile Mr. Croft plodded away in his lily patch across the road. His health was failing. His wife became seriously ill with goitre. He asked Mr. Stafford to help him dig his bulbs. He had grown them just one year. He and Mr. Stafford became good friends. He liked the careful way

Mr. Stafford handled and listened to his lily. When it became evident he give up, he asked Mr. Stafford to take the bulbs on his behalf. Mr. Stafford half for his pay. He became specially reduced by his bills that he had to let some other deal. When time came we were not deliver his half to Mr.

The Crofts were moving one hospital to another. Finally he became able to get to the home of Mr. Croft where they were tending for. He finally was able to get his car. In 1941 they returned to Harbor. By that time the going night. That summer my sales amounted to \$100. It was hard to hear them over their losses. We persuaded him to rent a land and let us give him the same chance he gave us in lilies but he said he was able. But his whole interest in his lily. He went back to Washington and tried to get with the Watson lilies. He cold, and passed away Oct. 25, 1941.

The work he started for the Stafford's realize we have made progress. Continued on last page

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