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LIGHT AHEAD FOR OREGON PRODUCERS OF EXTRA FANCY QUALITY APPLES, IS WORD OF SECTION'S BIGGEST GROWER

The Matter of Varieties Discussed -- Apple Growing a Highly Specialized Industry -- Spraying Must Be Maintained--Not a Poor Man's Game--Survival of the Fittest--A Favorable Reaction Is Looked for, Following a Law of the Economists.

(B. W. Johnson, writer of the following article, solicited by the editor of The Statesman, is secretary and manager of the Oregon Apple Company, Monroe, Oregon, having the largest strictly commercial-apple orchard in the Willamette valley district; nearly 400 acres. This company markets the OACO BRAND of apples.)

By B. W. Johnson
Based on the government's estimate the apple production of the United States for the current year is 206,000,000 bushels. This,

however, is much above the annual average. If all these apples were placed in ordinary boxes and these boxes placed end to end they would encircle the earth three times and leave enough over to reach from Portland to Boston. To grow, handle from tree to car and market this vast crop requires the services of thousands of trained workers. Much care and speed is required in handling the crop during the months of September, October and November each year. Northwest and Oregon's Share In 1921 the apple production of the Northwest was 55,000 cars or over 40,000,000 boxes. About one-sixth of this crop grew in Oregon and was valued at about \$5,000,000. The apple industry in Oregon represents an investment of approximately \$30,000,000.

The Investment
Ten to twelve years are required to bring an apple orchard into commercial bearing. Counting cost of land, nursery stock, pruning, tillage and interest, the cost of a developed orchard varies

from \$500 to \$1000 an acre. After waiting so many years, profits are dependant upon a number of factors such as soil, air drainage, elevation, varieties, quality and quantity of production, and markets. In western Oregon the deep red soils of the root hills, ranging from 300 to 1000 feet above sea level, seem best adapted to apple raising. On these hills is found a good quality of clay, while the range in elevation provides air drainage; and air drainage is a mighty important factor in providing insurance against frost losses during the spring months. Unless trees are well cared for and kept in a healthy vigorous condition they will not attain their proper growth. As production costs per acre are about the same regardless of the yield per tree it is important that maximum production be attained in order that the cost per box be kept at the minimum.

The Matter of Varieties
In the matter of varieties there has been altogether too wide a range. And in this connection, adaptation of varieties to districts is a matter deserving of more serious consideration. No district can hope to excel in the production of all the various varieties of apples. Western Oregon can produce a much better Newtown than either Yakima or Wenatchee, while the Delicious does better up there. Hood River excels the northern valleys of Washington in the growing of Spitzbergs, and Western Oregon properly claims credit for producing Winter Bananas and Ortley's of the highest quality. In the future apple growers will do well to confine their plantings to the few varieties best adapted to their respective sections.

For western Oregon I advise planting Winter Banana, Grimes Golden, Ortley and Newtowns and on the heavier and richer soils, King of Tompkins county. For a red variety the Red Rome promises well. We can also grow the Jonathan and Spitzburg, but the white varieties seem better adapted to our soil and climate and evince a tendency to more consistent annual cropping.

Highly Specialized Industry
The growing of apples is a highly specialized industry. Even the development of an orchard, beginning with the selection of the land and the nursery stock,

and the planting of the trees, should be in the hands of an expert. When one has to wait ten or a dozen years it behooves an orchardist to start right or he will ultimately land in the poor house. Pruning is a science. During the first ten years of a tree's life the pruning should be handled under the direction of a trained, experienced pruner. Many Northwestern orchards have been nearly ruined by inexperienced tree butchers who claimed to be professional pruners.

In western Oregon, where we have dry summers and no irrigation, frequent tillage is a very necessary orchard practice. Only by frequent and thorough tillage can the moisture be conserved, and without sufficient moisture trees will not grow and thrive properly. After an orchard comes into bearing it should be plowed as often as every two years. Two to four double disings annually should be insisted upon. Following the disings light tillage with a weeder or harrow, preferably the latter, should continue at frequent intervals up to the middle of August. This tends to keep down vegetable growth and retards evaporation of the moisture content of the soil. Should it rain during the growing season a crust will form on these western Oregon soils and an immediate tillage should be given in order to break this up. Otherwise the moisture will rapidly escape.

Spraying Is Necessary
Spraying becomes a more important problem each succeeding year as the trees reach the bearing age. Innumerable insect pests and fungus diseases pester the life of the apple grower. Technical knowledge is required to detect some of these pests, and careful and scientific spraying methods are essential if they are to be properly controlled. We have found that high pressure spray outfits are best suited to our requirements. Where we used to use 150 to 200 pounds pressure better orchardists now maintain a pressure of 300 to 400 pounds.

Thinning Is Important
Too little attention is given to the matter of thinning. The domestic market does not take kindly to small sizes. In the past orders were usually booked to cover natural run of sizes, with not to exceed ten per cent of 1.75s and smaller. But the past two years has witnessed a decided change on the part of the trade, or rather, the consuming public. Size specifications are now a distinct feature of the average sale contract, and many buyers are drawing the line at 1.50s, while 1.63s seem to be the limit. With the increasing proportion of small sizes in the Northwest and the decreasing demand for them, the grower has got to thin more generally and systematically than heretofore or go broke. Outside of a limited export demand for five tier apples of late keeping varieties such as Newtowns, the consuming public is insisting on having large apples, and the wise grower is going to meet the situation by doing more and better thinning. Thinning not only promotes size but increases the proportion of the better grades of apples, because in the thinning operations many a misshapen, wormy and scabby apple are eliminated, and the subsequent cost of picking and handling is obviated. Apples should be spaced from 6 to 8 inches on the limbs, and only one fruit in a cluster allowed to mature. Thinning costs vary from 5 to 15 cents a packed box, depending on conditions, but is generally money well spent.

Picking and Marketing
Before picking time arrives the grower should have boxes, ladders and other equipment ready and the fruit should be picked as early as maturity will permit and rushed from tree to car as rapidly as possible. The keepability of apples is greatly enhanced by getting them under ice quickly.

Western growers should remember that they are from 2000 to 3000 miles from market and that apples grow abundantly in the sections of the east where our apples are sold. If we are to sell at a profit back there we must grow apples of quality and size, free from scab, scale, worms, etc. So far as extra fancy quality is concerned, we have no eastern competition. However, they do raise fancy and choice grades, and, being close to market centers, they easily compete and even handicap us in disposing of the lower grades. It follows then that we should strive for a larger percentage of extra fancy quality and at the same time insist that the grade and pack be maintained at a high standard. Growers who contend for a revision downward of the grading rules are doing themselves and the industry an injury.

Maintain the Standard
In western Oregon, where orchard districts are generally small and production light, it has been difficult to maintain the highest standard of production. Happily this situation is improving. In this connection it might be mentioned that there are too many persons growing apples as a side line with pigs or cows as the main line of production. In most cases this practice ought to be prohibited by law. Pigs and cows demand attention two times a day in most boisterous and commanding tones. And they get it. The apples get only such time and attention as may be spared from the pigs and cows, and usually that isn't worth while. As a general proposition fruit growing and general farming should be divorced.

Not a Poor Man's Game
That apple growing is not a poor man's game has been amply proved during the past dozen years. Regardless of crop conditions, an apple orchard should have the best of care every year. If this is dependent on income from the fruit, next year will witness the neglect of many orchards. Owing to unusual climatic conditions which prevailed during the growing season of the past year, the crop is not up to standard either in quality or quantity. Fruit handled under the most approved conditions has not held up as usual. Coupled with this has been a weak market and the worst car shortage ever known. As a result millions of boxes of apples have deteriorated in the packing houses of the Northwest waiting for cars, and growers have sustained staggering losses. This condition has not applied to the apple industry alone. Perishables of all kinds have been marketed under most adverse conditions and generally at a loss. Potatoes, for instance, are hardly worth digging, to say nothing of the cost of seed, planting and tillage. Many apple growers will likely be unable to weather the stress following the present disastrous season, and as a result, many orchards will be neglected if not abandoned.

But the orchardist who is able to keep his head above water and cares for his trees is bound to be a winner in the end. Consumption of apples is increasing, yet the planting of apple trees has not kept pace with losses during the past dozen years.

1920 Peak of Production
The consensus of opinion among those who ought to know is that the peak of production was reached in the United States in 1920. In recent years there has been a heavy mortality among apple trees, both east and west, and this has been a matter of serious concern. As consumption has increased, the outlook for better prices is improving, especially those years when the eastern crop is short. Since 1914 until this year apples have commanded good prices.

While losses, due to a combination of unfavorable circumstances, have been heavy this season, there is every reason to believe that we are due for a favorable reaction which will wipe out the deficits of 1922. Otherwise we will rise up en masse and swear the economists who have vouched for "The Inevitable Law of Equal and Opposite Reaction" and move to the South Sea Islands.

THE QUESTION OF VARIETY IS A VERY IMPORTANT ONE IN APPLES

Prof. Lewis Still puts the Ortley at the Head of the List for the Salem District, and the Winter Banana, Grimes Golden, Rome Beauty, Delicious and Jonathan Stand High with Good Authorities for Commercial Orchards in This Section--The Demand Is for Extra Fancy Apples, and the High Prices Are Realized for the Best.

How do you know what to plant? The question of varieties is a very important one in the commercial apple industry of the Salem district. There is nothing concerning the industry that is more important.

C. I. Lewis, now managing editor of the American Fruit Grower Magazine, has a lengthy article in the November issue of that publication, under the heading, "How Do You Know What to Plant?" Prof. Lewis, who was one of the principal officials of the Oregon Growers Cooperative association before going to Chicago a few months ago, covers the whole country in the scope of his article, pointing out the kinds and varieties that should be grown, for the greatest success, in all states and sections.

In The Salem District
In the course of his exhaustive article, Prof. Lewis says: "In a district like Salem, Oregon, typical of that section, plant fruits that are not grown in many other sections of the United States; for instance, loganberries, sweet cherries, filberts, English walnuts, pears, prunes

importance to the industry that a more adequate supply of cars be furnished and that freight rates be materially lowered. It now costs about 90 cents a box for freight and icing--or heater service--to eastern points. This year the carriers are getting more per box for hauling it to market in most instances, than the grower receives after gambling with nature, in producing the fruit, besides an outlay of some fifty cents a box involved in getting the fruit from tree to car.

Survival of the Fittest
If "the survival of the fittest" is a law which must apply to the apple grower as well as to those engaged in other lines of business, the owner of a well cared for orchard of desirable commercial varieties, has little to fear. This statement of course is based on the theory that he will follow approved orchard practices in the matter of pruning, spraying, tillage, etc., such as is recommended by the experiment station at Corvallis.

Western Oregon apple planters would do well to consider some of the above varieties in future plantings. The Red Rome Beauty is identical with the common Rome Beauty--except for its solid red color, which adds much to its attractiveness and market value.

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