

Fruit Industry Project Is Designed To Preserve Historic Past

A Review of Orchard Heating

Features

Sports

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Do you have an old smudge pot (that's what they were in 1910) behind the barn?

If so, don't throw it away. And don't view it with disdain. It may be a museum piece. For - there's a project under way to collect items of historical value relating to the development of the fruit industry in the Rogue River valley.

Those early contraptions for orchard heating, as frost protection is called today, are an integral part of that development. That's why they are wanted by the Fruit Growers League of Jackson county and the Jackson county extension service, co-sponsors of the project.

The project is designed to preserve for posterity the exciting early history of the industry which exerted a strong influence over the character of the Rogue valley as it is today.

Museum Home Is Planned

When completed, the collection will be given a home in the Jacksonville Museum.

The fruit industry still has an impact upon southern Oregon economy. But, as the population grows, there are many people who do not know the stories of those early day struggles, experienced by growers and shippers between blossom time and shipment of fruit; nor the lures used to draw "the best class of people" to the valley of the Rogue. They haven't even heard of the big freeze of 1924.

Members of the Fruit Growers League have voiced the fear that if they do not capture the story today it will be too late.

Emphasis On Photographs

In launching the project, particular emphasis will be placed on photographs of orchards and packing houses or equipment used prior to the year 1910. Don Root, president of the Fruit Growers League, and C. B. Cordy, Jackson county horticultural agent, explained. They are being assisted in the research by Seth Bullis, who came to the valley in 1913.

Needed are personal photographs of individuals involved in pioneer orchard operations, newspaper and trade journal articles, fair trophies, pamphlets, promotional literature and letters or personal sales records.

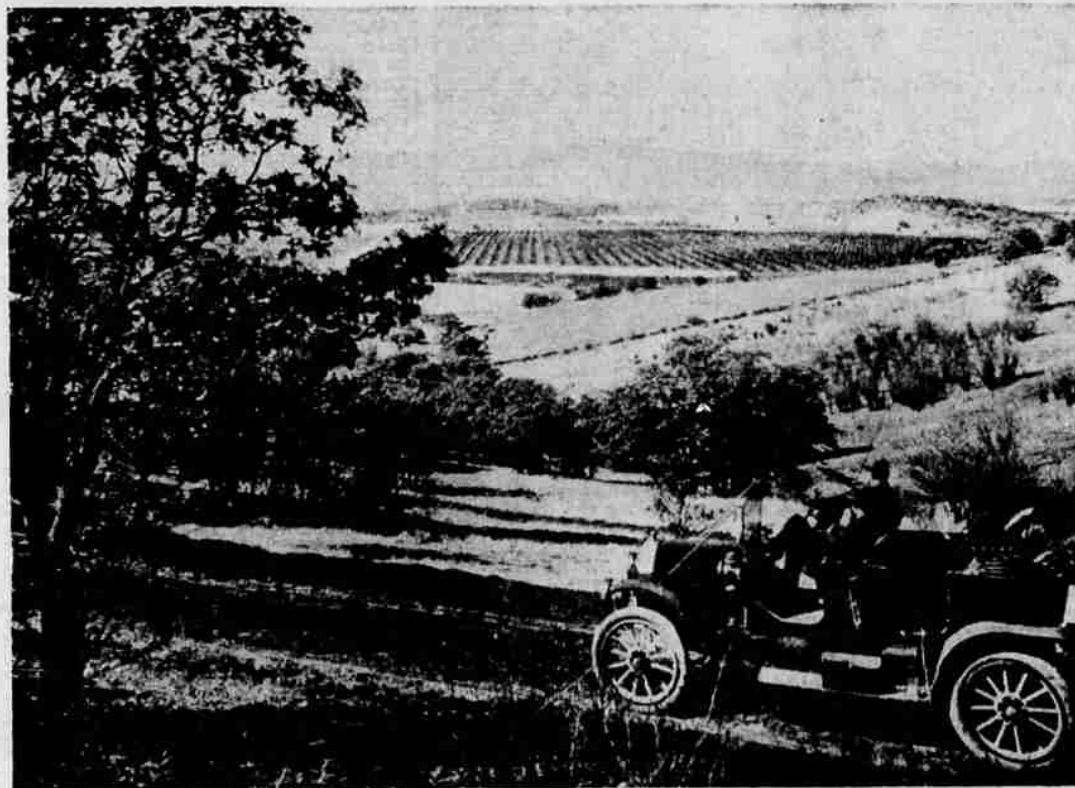
A selection committee will be designated to accept the material and assist in identification of materials contributed. In addition, a committee will arrange for interviews with persons who recall significant events.

Chairman of Committee

W. B. Barnum, Jr., is chairman of the public relations committee of the Fruit Growers League, which sent out the appeal for contributions to the museum project.

Many souvenirs of the early "Fruit Bloom" have already come in and with their perusal the history of that stimulating period, filled with promises, unfolds. There is a story in practically every item. But since this is the season when fruit buds tremble on the limb and orchardists read thermometers and shudder, a review of orchard heating is given precedence over other phases of orcharding.

"Protection against frost injury is by no means a new thing" to quote P. J. O'Hara, pathologist and special meteorological observer, Medford, Ore., Nov. 1, 1911.



These two unidentified young blades are surveying orchard developments from what appears to be the Foot-hills road. The caption of the picture reads: "In productive ness and in picturesque beauty, this valley is not surpassed by any other of similar area."

"The protection of plants and fruits from frost injury dates back perhaps more than 2,000 years. It is known that the Romans practiced heating and smudging as a protection against frost injury; this fact is vouched for by Pliny, who recommended the practice. A French agriculturist in the 16th century recommended the use of wet straw and half-rotten manures to produce a heavy smoke. In the latter part of the 18th century the practice of smudging was compulsory in parts of Germany, and failure to comply resulted in prosecution before an officer of the law."

Looking back to the early 1900s when "everyone was young and everyone seemed gay," even on a smudging

party; the local fruit growers find that the first orchard heating in the Rogue valley was probably done by burning manure. (What a shock to organic gardeners to learn that valuable commodity just went up in smoke).

Those who complain, and loudly, about orchard heating today should have been here then. They are unaware of the progress that has been made throughout the years. It has been a step by step improvement program with each step taken after extensive study and experimentation.

Manure was burned, according to O'Hara, "to produce a dense smudge."

The object, apparently, was to produce this dense

smudge just before sunrise. The word "smudging," an anathema to orchardists in recent years, was freely used then. For smudging was exactly what they did.

"In the Hollywood orchard, owned by A. C. Allen, wood also was used for its heating effect, and the dense smudge was produced by adding quantities of stable manure to the wood fires," the booklet reports. "An examination of the fruit shows that the method worked very well."

Protected By Burning Rails

Moving to the next step in the booklet sets forth that J. G. Gore's orchard, protected by burning old rails, showed few injured fruits. "In connection with the wood, Gore used a small amount of crude oil, which he threw upon the wood fires along the east side of the orchard so as to produce a dense smudge just before sunrise."

Other orchards using this same process were Randall, Brown and Pooter and Gould.

The burning of wood for crop protection was followed by the adoption of coal. The Ideal coal heater, designed to hold 25 to 30 pounds of coal, was found to be very satisfactory from a heat standpoint but difficult to prepare and fire.

Briquets supplanted coal and the lard-pail oil burner appeared on the scene as Pathologist O'Hara claimed. "The protection of orchards from frost injury is not an experiment in Rogue River valley. A perusal of the records in the office of the pathologist will show that the experimental stage in practical orchard heating has passed."

Sliding Lid Burner

The sliding lid burner brought dispatch of the lard-pail-styled item, and oil was being accepted as the best fuel for orchard heating. Years went by but experimentation did not stop, contrary to O'Hara prediction in 1911. Out of it came the seventh attempt for something more efficient, less costly and more acceptable by a more complaining public. It was the lazy flame burner with a stack. It was adopted.

Its successor is the return stack burner in vogue today. Orchardists have agreed to retire 20 per cent of the open heaters in favor of approved types each year until there are no open burners left in orchard heating in the Rogue valley.

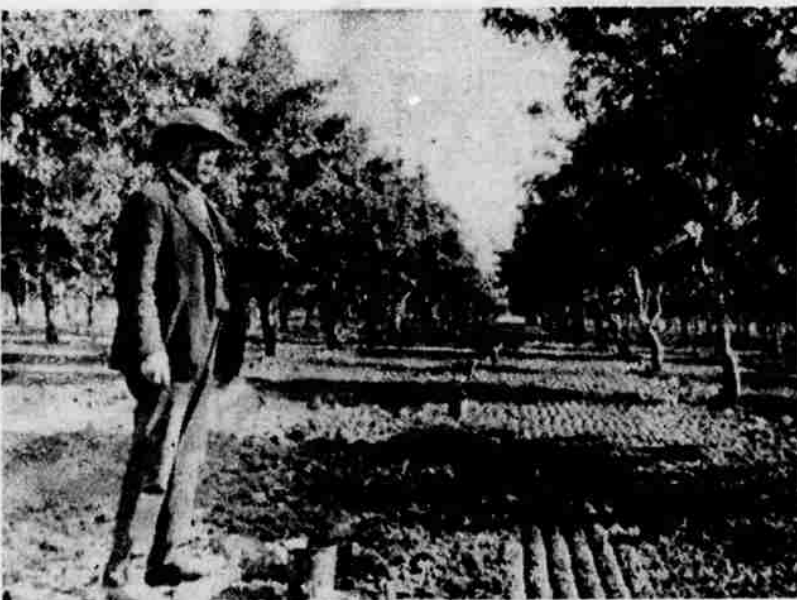
Pres-To-Logs are burned in a number of orchards in five gallon buckets. The investment is low since the buckets are cheap. Just any old bucket will do, and the logs throw out an intense heat.

Wind Machines Tried

Wind machines have been tried out here for a number of years. There are four now in the valley. They have been found satisfactory in California, but the difference in air inversions here limits their protective scope. They are used in conjunction with heaters.

Jackson county was the first fruit district to have an organized frost protection program, officially started in 1918. Cordy recalled in reviewing the history. Activities pointing toward frost prediction, however, started when O'Hara was pathologist as early as 1909.

The progressive spirit which dominated the industry then, lives on and if there are improvements to be made, they will be tried here. "The experimental stage is not past."



In the Snowy Butte Orchard at Central Point these "Fresno pots" shown in the picture were placed between Winter Nellis rows in a manner "not to interfere with cultivation."



This orchard was owned by the late J. G. Gore of Medford. Using old rails for heating, he saved his crop, valued at \$1,000 per acre, for four years in succession, according to the report in Better Fruit, 1911 publication.



This is the heater most recently adopted for the protection of fruit buds against frost. It is definitely a heater, not a smudge pot, and has been widely approved for effectiveness and lowering of smoke irritation.



This photo shows the Hollywood orchard with the manure burning to create the desired smudge. Straw and rubbish were used with the manure to start the flames which ignited the manure.



These coal heaters were used in the Phipps orchard in 1910. The county agent's office has received one, which will be added to the Jacksonville Museum exhibit.