

**BRIEF HISTORY OF  
EARLY HORTICULTURE  
IN OREGON**

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Brief History of Early Horticulture in Oregon by J. R. Cardwell

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UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

BRIEF HISTORY

of

# Early Horticulture in Oregon

By DR. J. R. CARDWELL  
PORTLAND

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## THE FIRST FRUITS OF THE LAND.

A Brief History of Early Horticulture in Oregon.

By DR. J. R. CARDWELL, Portland.

*For many years president of the Oregon State Horticultural Society.*

The first settlers found here in the indigenous fruits, a promise of the abundant yield of the cultivated varieties which they were not long in introducing with most gratifying results. There were here the apple—*pyrus rivularia*; the plum—*prunus subcordata*; the grape—*vitis Californica*; two elderberries—*sambucus glauca* and *sambucus pubescens*; the blackberry—*rubus ursinus*; four raspberries—*rubus nutkanus*, *rubus leucodermis*, *rubus pedatus*, and *rubus spectabilis*; the strawberry—*fragaria Chilensis*; several wild currants—*ribes aureum*, and others; three gooseberries, edible—*ribes Menziesii*; four or more cranberries—*vaccinium parvifolium*, *vaccinium ovalifolium*, *vaccinium macrophyllum*; the barberry—*berberis aquifolium*, known as the Oregon grape, our State flower; salal—*gaultheria myrsinites*; Juneberry or service berry, black haw—*crataegus Douglasii*; filbert—*corylus rostrata*; chinquapin chesnut—*castanopsis crysophylla*, and others perhaps not enumerated.

The introduction of the first cultivated fruits in the country in 1824 by employees of the Hudson Bay Company is a pretty story with a touch of romance. At a dinner given in London, in 1824, to several young men in the employ of the Hudson Bay Company bound for the far distant Pacific Coast, a young lady at a table, beside one of the young gentlemen, ate an apple, carefully wrapped the seeds in a paper and placed them in the vest pocket of the young gentleman, with the request that when he

arrived in the Oregon Country he should plant them and grow apple trees. The act was noticed and in a spirit of merriment other ladies present from the fruits of the table put seeds of apple, pears, peach, and grape into the vest pockets of all the gentlemen. On their arrival at the Hudson Bay fort at Vancouver the young gentlemen gave the seeds to the company's gardener, James Bruce, who planted them in the spring of 1825. From these seeds came the trees now growing on the grounds of the Vancouver barracks, as transferred to the Government on the disbanding of the company. This story we have from David McLoughlin, the son of Dr. John McLoughlin, Mrs. McLoughlin, Mrs. Whitman, in part, and others.

Mrs. Whitman, in September, 1836, in a letter to her mother, writes of her visit to Vancouver, and her admiration of these fruit trees and their fruits as follows: "On arriving at Vancouver we were met by several gentlemen who came to give us a welcome. Mr. Douglas and Doctor Tolmie and Doctor McLoughlin of the Hudson Bay Company who invited us in and seated us on a sofa. Soon we were introduced to Mrs. McLoughlin and Mrs. Tolmie, both natives of the country, half-breeds; after chatting a little we were invited to take a walk in the garden. What a delightful place it is, what a contrast to the rough barren plains through which we had so recently passed: here we find fruits of every description, apples, grapes, pears, plums, and fig trees in abundance; also cucumbers, melons, beans, pease, beets, cabbage, tomatoes, and every kind of vegetable. Every part is very neat and tastefully arranged with fine walks lined on either side with strawberries; at the end of the garden is a summer house with grapevines."

The apple and the pear trees, and the grapevines from these seeds are yet annually bearing fruits on the grounds of the government barracks at Vancouver. Not long ago



I visited these seedling trees, now eighty years old, hoary chroniclers of time, yet showing a vigorous growth. Mrs. Gay Hayden, of Vancouver, informed me she had eaten fruit from these trees for fifty-four years. The fruit is not large, but of fair quality. Fortunately Government does not allow a tree to be removed or destroyed without an order from the department. Capt. Nathaniel Wyeth, in his diary of 1835, speaks of having grafted trees on his place, Fort William, on Wapatoo Island, now called Sauvies' Island. Grafts and stock must have come from the Sandwich Islands, then the nearest point to the cultivated fruits which early missionaries had brought to these islands. As Captain Wyeth left the country soon after, we have no record of his success with these fruits. As Indians and trappers had little care for trees or cultivated fruits, this venture can not be considered in any historical record of the introduction of grafted fruit in Oregon.

The Hudson Bay Company introduced the first cultivated rose, as early as 1830, a pink rose, with the attar of rose aroma. An occasional Hudson Bay rose may yet be seen in the old yards in Oregon City and at Vancouver. It is sometimes called the Mission rose. Miss Ella Talbot, on Talbot Hill, just south of Portland Heights, has one more than forty years old. The Biddle rose—the Chinese Daly—1852, probably the second importation. The Gillette rose, 1853, the third and most valuable, is now widely distributed. The cut-leaved Evergreen blackberry came from the Sandwich Islands. I first saw it early in the fifties, covering a thirty-foot trellis in the dooryard of J. B. Stevens—"Uncle Jimmie Stevens," as he was known. From him I learned that it came from the Sandwich Islands, reported to be a native of one of the South Sea islands. One of the Feejee islands is covered with it. Seth Lowelling originated the Lowelling, the Black Republican, and the Bing cherries, in the sixties. The Bing

was named after a faithful old Chinaman. He also originated the Golden prune in 1876. The Silver prune was a misnomer of Coe's Golden Drop, perpetrated by a nurseryman about 1875. The Lambert cherry was grown by J. H. Lambert and presented by him to the Oregon State Horticultural Society at the annual meeting of 1896. The Bremen prune, the Imperial Precose, the Ickwort plum, Reine-Claude, Vert, and the favorite French table plum, the Merabel, were in my importations from Germany in 1872. The Bullock prunes were seedlings of the seventies grown by Mr. Bullock near Oswego. A. R. Shipley, some time in the sixties, imported from the Eastern States forty-five varieties of grapes, American and European varieties. For some years he grew quite a vineyard, was an enthusiast in grape culture—a business man retired to the country for love of horticulture. A close observer and a good cultivator, he did valuable work for the grape industry, and was the acknowledged authority on the subject. He discarded all European varieties, and advised the cultivation of only the American varieties for the Willamette Valley. In answer to my request to name the three best varieties for the market, he said, "If I were setting out three hundred grapes to-day, I would first set one hundred Concords, then another one hundred Concords, then another one hundred Concords," adding, "that is, to make money."

In early days we had agricultural literature. The first paper was the *Oregon Farmer*, August, 1858, published at Portland by W. B. Taylor & Co., Albert G. Walling, editor. A file of that paper in the rooms of the Oregon Historical Society reads well to-day. It was published from 1858 to 1863. Then came the *Oregon Agriculturist*, Salem, 1870 to 1872, by A. L. Stinson. E. M. Waite published a paper for a time in Salem. The *North Pacific Rural Spirit*, W. W. Baker, publisher and editor, Portland, started in 1867, is

now published and edited by M. D. Wisdom. To-day we have the *Rural Spirit*, Portland, *Pacific Homestead*, Salem, and *Oregon Agriculturist and Rural Northwest*, Portland, published and edited by H. M. Williamson, and the *North-west Pacific Farmer*, Portland, published and edited by Frank Lee.

The early history of fruit-growing presents to the student at once, a most romantic and a thoroughly practical and matter-of-fact series of interesting pictures. It is related of some of the earliest settlers in the Willamette Valley that nothing more thoroughly and painfully accentuated their isolated condition than the absence of fruit trees on their newly-made farms. Half the beauty and pleasure that brightens the life of youth and childhood, it is not too much to say, is found in the orchard of the old homestead—the sight of the trees in bloom, the waiting and watching for the first ripe fruit, the in-gathering of the fruit in the fall, and the storing of it away in bin and cellar for use in the winter around the ingleside.

Is it any wonder, then, that when some of the early settlers were called to southern Oregon to aid their fellow-countrymen in repelling the attacks of Indians, and finding there wild plums and wild grapes, they brought with them on their return, roots of the former and cuttings of the latter, in the hope that these foundlings of the southern forest would take kindly to a more northern soil? In this act of transplanting was illustrated the world's hunger for the fruit of the vine and tree, so beautifully illustrated by Whittier in his poem commencing with these lines:

"The wild grape by the river side  
And tasteless ground-nut trailing low,  
The table of the woods supplied."

The old Puritans could not have been such terribly stern and uncompromising foes of the good things of life,