

THE SUTTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SUTTON, MASSACHUSETTS



— BULLETIN —

VOL. VIII No. 2 June 1982

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ON A FIVE DOLLAR INVESTMENT . . .

A Dialogue with Emil Schellschmidt

Is latent talent inbred, or whatever, by which man is predestined to a specific vocation? Let us follow the career of such a person.

Emil Schellschmidt's father was a blacksmith with horseshoeing his principal trade in shop and on location. Emil did not aspire to blacksmithing. On graduation from high school he commenced part time work in a laundry in Wilkinsonville.

He was determined to grow fruit. With money earned in the laundry and retailing apples, he acquired capital enough to purchase an orchard of about 12 acres of "Wealthies" apples in Grafton from a Mr. Green. This brand of apple was popular in the 20's and early 30's. Apple fertilization, controlled insect spraying and prudent pruning resulted in the the orchard yielding a bountiful crop of 700 bushels one year. This orchard was the keystone to his next venture.

In Wilkinsonville Alfred Rock owned a rundown thirty acre farm. Emil rented a small plot from him on Providence Road to sell apples retail. Knowing the place was for sale, but short on cash, he went to the owner and after some haggling paid a five dollar deposit, obtained a receipt and went to the bank where with the Grafton orchard as collateral, he secured a mortgage. The farm had a two family house on it, so with a home and land he greatly expanded his apple business. All this happened in 1918 at the age of nineteen! In the transaction was a real estate agent previously attempting to sell the property for sometime who offered Emil a substantial sum to release his buyer's agreement. Emil declined on the premise that what was advantageous to the agent was worth much more to his future.



EMIL SCHELLSCHMIDT

This farm land had grown to pine and birch trees. During the interim of preparing the land, planting trees and time to produce, Emil rented or leased other orchards. On the Fiske Farm, Leland Hill, he found ten acres of early "Mac" apples which he offered to purchase. The initiative for promoting the acquisition was instigated by the profit from one tree in his Wilkinsonville orchard which yielded a crop that sold for ninety dollars on the Providence market. Eventually, he purchased the Fiske Farm of 200 acres of young trees, a house, and a 125' long barn for sixteen thousand dollars. The first endeavor was to bring the ten acres of "Macs" into full production by good fertilization and irrigation.

Among other orchard sites he leased were the Usher Farm, Grafton and on land of the Rutland State Hospital. From the Dodge estate he added several acres to the Wilkinsonville orchard on which he planted "Red Delicious" apple trees.

One year for the first time he ventured into pears by purchasing the 1936 crop in the Smith orchard south of the Central Turnpike, near Route 146. Being a rather perishable commodity, they picked during the day, loaded the truck and started for the Providence market. A torrential rain storm raised the rivers to a dangerous level. In Woonsocket they perilously crossed an endangered bridge over the Blackstone to reach market the next morning.

Marketing an apple crop for the maximum financial return was of prime consideration. Most area orchard men sold locally. Emil went wholesale in Boston, Providence, Worcester, and eventually to the New York City market. In season pickers are busy filling boxes and these were trucked to market at night, returning the next day for another load to leave that night. Often during the season truck operators would be on the road continuously for a week with only catnaps for sleep. One would deliver apples to a market where the highest prices prevailed. One year the New England market offered only \$1.00-1.50 per box wholesale. On the advice of a Bolton orchardist, Emil equipped his truck with a more spacious body. The New York City trip ended at the market district on lower Manhattan near the Hudson River. Thieves breaking into truck cabs left momentarily without supervision were a constant menace. Police warned drivers about sleeping in cabs.

Profitability in orchard farming depends on many factors such as; pest control, fertilization procedures, blossom control, irrigation, tree spacing, pruning, damage from ice storms, frost, branch breakage by pickers etc. Storage was always a problem and to alleviate the cost of commercial facilities, Emil built his own. On one occasion he raised an existing barn floor to loft level by an ingenious method of jacking and threaded lifting rods. This provided an additional storage capacity of three thousand apple boxes in an insulated area.

While operating the Rutland orchard he found a natural cold storage facility existed in a pine grove that kept the apples very well into November and longer. The higher altitude of the area along with the shelter of the pines may have been the ideal site for a shed with hinged side panels to control ventilization. The remote distance from his main orchard precluded its construction.

Experience proved a valuable asset to the profit-loss ratio. Expertise in orchard husbandry paid dividends in larger and healthier apples. One year the apple blossoms came early followed by a frost. However, to everyone's amazement the trees put forth a second set of blossoms-considered a rare phenomenon in nature. These trees grew a bountiful crop of excellent apples. Emil attributed this unusual occurrence to healthy trees, well cultivated. In another instance on a leased 10 acres, the

First year the trees grew small "Mac's" - an inferior market product. In the second and third year after proper care the crop grossed seventeen thousand dollars from the ten acres. Determination by the buying public necessarily phased out the standard "Wealthies."

Emil's ingenuity in equipment design and innovation was a great asset. He modified "off the shelf" units into more efficient machines. From Fall River he acquired a bucket hoist to elevate pickers into working position, thus replacing ladder picking. Two gas engines mounted on the rig proved rather clumsy so he removed them and by a transmission linkage utilized the towing tractor engine. The rig became more mobile with better efficiency. Pickers could now be raised to tree top height to remove the choice sun ripened apples without damage to the branches or knocking apples to the ground by the handling of ladders. Another unit, a sprayer rig was provided with three heads on the tractor. With the tank of chemical in tow, spraying consumed a minimum of time.

Naturally cider making became part of the business. From Marble Village, Emil acquired a large size cider mill, formerly the property of Oliver Plante. The heavy parts were loaded onto a timbered dray for conveyance to its new site in Emil's barn to be rebuilt. The copper lined piston was lowered into place by jacks and blocking.

Apples from the orchard were put into cold storage until pressed. This made a better, clearer quality of cider. Immediately following a pressing the cider was transferred to insulated iced storage to inhibit fermentation. Cider at the beginning of the season lacked the full coloring of a reddish tint that the public apparently expected. A few beets were added to the pressing for color, but as the season progressed these were omitted. The maximum for one day reached 29 barrels or approximately 1600 gallons. Filter cloths were machine washed in clear water and hung out to air dry to keep them "sweet."

A drink of cool cider on a hot day, especially working in the sun is ambrosia to most persons. It is related that when a rather persistent roadworker kept appearing for a cider handout once too often, somehow the next solicitation for a drink became spiked with jolop (a potent physic). After a distressful afternoon the culprit got the message and in the future by-passed his free loading.

Emil's career in orchardry holds many memories....good years along with the lean. The extreme satisfaction of a lifetime devoted to a singular accomplishment is an achievement of merit. The dividends from the original five dollar investment compounded to such a degree that a visionary would have declined to prophesy. Yet, the story is now history.



June 1982

SUTTON BEAUTY APPLE

By - Carilyn E. Philbrook

Sutton Beauty Apple's Past

Stephen Waters was the developer of the Sutton Beauty Apple. He was born on April 13, 1735 and he died in 1819. In 1728, Richard Waters II. (Stephen's father) purchased 234 acres of Sutton land. Stephen built his home there in about 1757. His apple orchard was the largest orchard in the region.

Stephen's orchard was on the side hill facing Lake Manchaug in West Sutton with a southeast exposure. The apple's ripening and its coloring was effected by the southern exposure. Old orchardists claimed that Stephen's orchard was in an ideal location.

The Sutton Beauty was an excellent apple. The apple has a yellow stripe with bright red skin. The flavor is mildly subacid. It was picked in late fall and early winter. It was difficult to prune the tree into a satisfactory shape. The straight, upright growing habit of the Sutton Beauty tree made it unpopular with commercial growers.

What orchardist Stephen Waters looked for in his apples was a heavy bearer, early bearer, fair size of fruit and good color. The fruit had to keep well and could be shipped well.

Stephen built a large cider mill. Many people from miles around enjoyed his apple cider. The cider was also used for vinegar. His fresh apples were stored in barrels for eating and cooking during the winter. The metal stencil he used for marking his apple boxes is still at the Waters Farm [see photo].* After the fresh apples were eaten up the people used the dried cutup ones. The apples were used in cooking.

J. and J. E. Tourtellotte from Providence, Rhode Island would purchase apples from Sutton's apple farmers. They sent two men to Sutton to trade and pack the Sutton apples into barrels. Then the apples were shipped to Providence. Some apples went all the way to England. Did the Sutton Beauty Apple find its way to England?

Sutton Beauty Apple's Present

Renovation operations for an apple orchard include pruning, grafting, fertilization, plowing and cultivating, cover crops spraying. The orchardist had to control three fruit insects. They were the codling moth, San Jose scale and the tent caterpillar. The larva of the codling moth is the fat worm which is found in the apple. By 1950, the orchard business became a more and more complicated business. The Worcester County Extension's fruit specialist in the insect and disease control program required about twelve carefully prepared and timed sprays.

Stephen Waters developed the Sutton Beauty Apple by skillful grafting. Grafting method - the new grafts or buds must be put on the tree's water sprouts. They are found on the low part of the trunk and on the main branches. Also, what is known as a crown or backgraft may be used. The branch to be grafted is sawed off at the desired height. That branch is found down towards the trunk and the scions. Cut the branch into a thin wedge. Push down between the bark and the wood. The reason for this method is for the scions and stock to unite firmly. It takes several years for it to be united. During this time one must be careful that the scions are not blown off by a strong wind.

In 1970 there was a planting ceremony at Old Sturbridge Village in their preservation orchard. At that time the Sutton Beauty Apple was added to their orchard. Some members of the Sutton Historical Society attended the ceremony, among them was Dorothea Waters Moran.

Now the Worcester County Horticultural Society oversees the orchard. Both the Sutton and the Sutton Beauty Apple were known to exist in 1848. William Reid, Coordinator of Agriculture at Old Sturbridge Village said, "the apple trees make a fine addition to our orchards and are doing real well."

At a Sutton Historical Society meeting one evening, the conversation was about old varieties of apples. The "Sutton Beauty" was discussed as well, and we then had the opportunity to sample and buy the apples. It was a rare treat for all.

Sutton Beauty Apple's Future

Mr. G. Harold Powell did an experiment with some "Sutton Beauties." On a September 15, he picked the apples and stored them within three days. The apples were kept in good condition until March. He picked additional "Sutton Beauties" the same day for experimentation. The only exception being they were not stored for two weeks. By January 1, they were badly decayed. The apple's commercial value dropped 40% to 70%. All due to a two weeks delay in getting the apples into a storage house.

The Sutton Beauty Apple already has a future in Sutton. At the original Sutton site, now owned by the Town of Sutton, some trees will be grafted with Sutton Beauty Apple's scions. So far, the scions are taking well on their trees. Thus, the Sutton Beauty Apple is being perpetuated.

The Sutton Beauty Apple's scions can be purchased through the Worcester County Horticultural Society. The cost is about one dollar for each scion. One can contact the Horticultural Society for more information.



Brass stencil for imprinting
on Waters apple boxes



Dan Griffith grafted a Sutton
Beauty scion to this wild apple
tree. Note branches on right
side growing upward

References:

Local Sutton Families

William Reid, Coordinator of Agriculture at Old Sturbridge Village.

The Orchard Committee of the Worcester County Horticultural Society.

Volume one and Volume Two History of Sutton, Massachusetts

Lippincott's Farm Manuala-Production Orchardring by Fred G. Sears, M.S.
copyright 1914 reprinted 1916

MONTHLY MEETING REVIEWS - By Betty L. Pentland

April - The monthly meeting was postponed because of a severe snowstorm to April 13. Fred Baldwin gave a detailed account of expenses incurred and monies received on the weathervane project for the new Town Hall under construction. The subscription fund was over subscribed and he suggested the surplus money be used in Town Common improvement. Donald King reported on a scholarship fund being established in Northbridge honoring the Historian Peter Hackett. Speaker for the evening was Helen Ordung who explained and exhibited the many examples of this craft from the recycling of discarded items into useful articles.

May - The oldest member of the Sutton Historical Society, Flora Holbrook Dudley passed away at the age of 101, [see December BULLETIN issue for life story]. Dr. William Brierly reported on the Bay State Historical League conference at which an impressive display of Sutton and Millbury informational items were exhibited. Paul Rogers was the guest speaker. His main theme was the historical evolution of gardening from Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greek, Rome, French and English and their structural effects on our present day garden designs. He explained the functional aspects of these gardens in both practical and artistic usage. He detailed their influence on political and historical matters in our country. His slides beautifully illustrated examples in the discourse. After the formal presentation, he patiently answered many individual inquiries.

June - This meeting was spent in preparation at the Blacksmith Shop for our annual "Oldies and Goodies Sale" held the following weekend at which time \$342. was raised.

1982 . APRIL, MAY, JUNE . WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

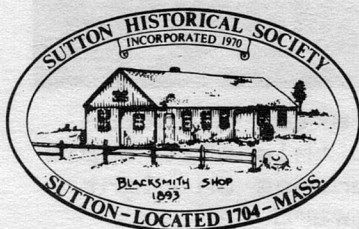
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