

RAMSEY COUNTY

# History

*A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society*

Fall, 2003

Volume 38, Number 3

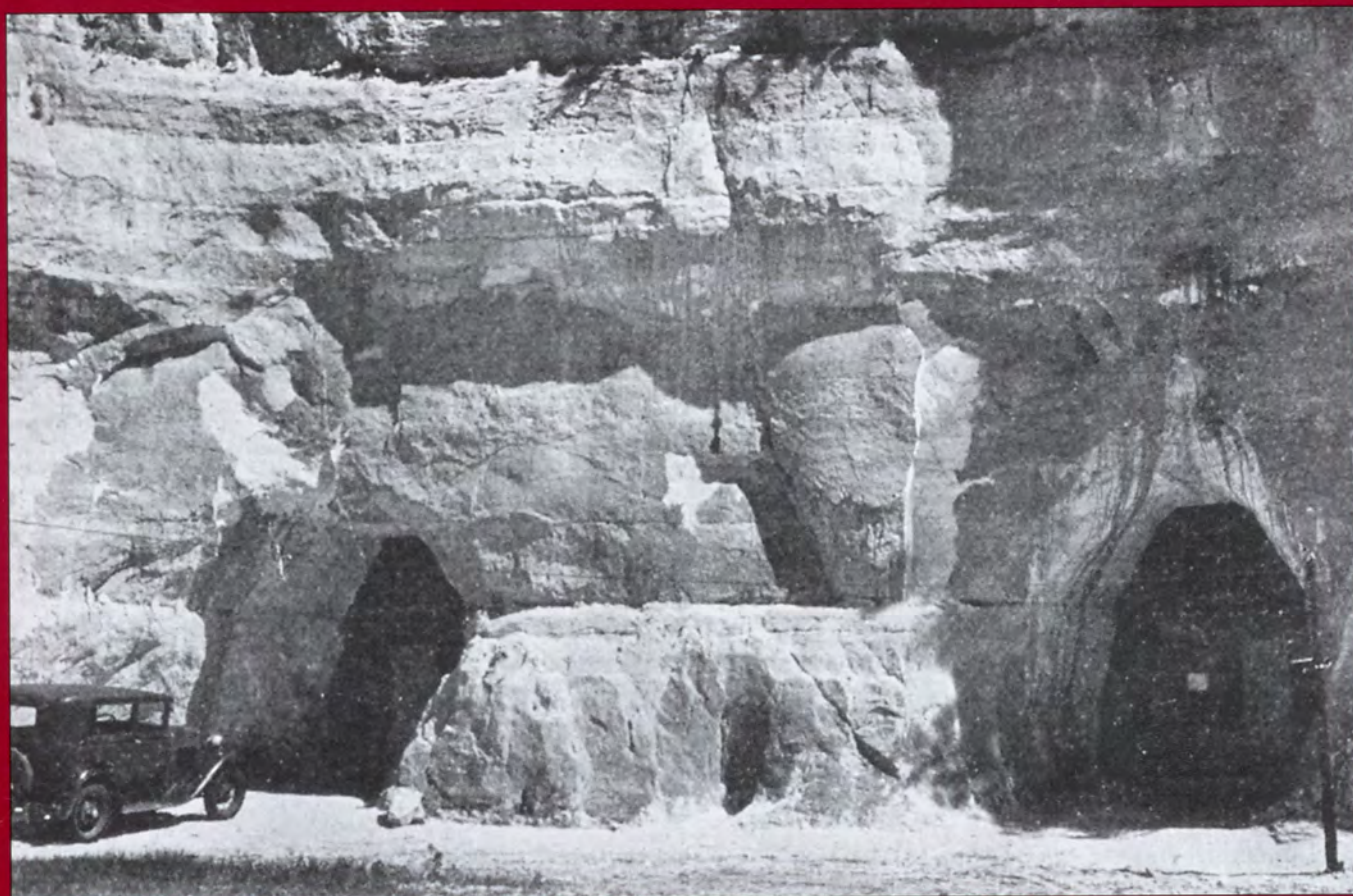
Alfred Adler and his 1937  
Lecture at the St. Paul  
Women's City Club

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## *St. Paul Underground*

The University Farm Experimental Cave and  
St. Paul as the Blue Cheese Capital of the World

—Page 4



Caves like these in the Twin Cities bluffs along the Mississippi River were used for ripening the Roquefort-like cheese that almost caused an international incident with France. See article about Minnesota's Blue Cheese beginning on page 4. Photo from the National Butter and Cheese Journal, January 10, 1935.

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# RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 36, Number 3

Fall, 2001

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Publication of *Ramsey County History* is supported in part by a gift from Clara M. Claussen and Frieda H. Claussen in memory of Henry H. Cowie, Jr. and by a contribution from the late Reuel D. Harmon

## A Message from the Editorial Board

This issue of *Ramsey County History* opens with Greg Brick's absorbing examination of how and why agricultural researchers at the University of Minnesota produced a Roquefort-like blue cheese in the caves on St. Paul's West Side from the 1930s to the 1950s. Many local people know that in the days before modern refrigeration, St. Paul's pioneer brewers had taken advantage of the constant cool temperatures in the caves to store beer, and some people knew the caves had been used for raising mushrooms, but author Brick introduces us to the little-known world of blue cheese production in these caves.

Additional articles in this issue present Roger A. Ballou's account of a 1937 lecture by the famous psychologist Alfred Adler at the Women's City Club and Susan C. Dowd's research into the mysterious 1902 death of an unidentified, beautiful young woman near the railway station at Dayton's Bluff.

Fall is always a great time for apples. To honor this year's apple season, Ralph Thrane, the resident horticulturalist at the Society's Gibbs Museum in Falcon Heights, contributes a summary of his work in choosing and growing the Heritage apple varieties that have been planted at the Museum. This issue closes with author DeAnne Cherry adding another piece to our ongoing series, "Growing Up in St. Paul," with her recollections of her teenage years living on St. Paul's Avenue in the 1950s.

The Editorial Board of this magazine also wants its readers to be aware that Paul Nelson's article about St. Paul's smallpox epidemic of 1924 that appeared in the Summer issue has caught the eye of a present-day researcher at the Medical School of the University of Minnesota and is being used in conjunction with contemporary studies of this dread disease. Our thanks to Paul for his timely work that may, in a small way, contribute to the future betterment of all.

*John M. Lindley, Chair, Editorial Board*

# The Gibbs Museum Heritage Orchard And the Comeback of the Ancient Apple

**E**ditor's Note: Apples are an ancient fruit and just as much an immigrant to America, as were the settlers of Jamestown and the pilgrims of Plymouth. While the passage of time has obliterated much of the landscape that was familiar to those early arrivals, apple trees not among them. Today, these immigrants are known as Heritage apples and they still flourish among far-flung American orchards and backyards. The following article traces the history of the apples that even today are being grown at the Gibbs Museum Heritage Orchard maintained by the Ramsey County Historical Society at the southeast corner of Cleveland and Larpenteur Avenue in Falcon Heights.

## Ralph Thrane

Apples likely originated in the Dsungarian Alps, a tall mountain range separating Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and China in an area still hailed as "the original wild apple forest." Apple horticulturists and enthusiasts (generally called pomologists) disagree on the exact time frame, but all apples introduced before the beginning of the twentieth century are considered antiques, also called heirloom, heritage, and historical apples.

These heritage apples of yesterday are staging a comeback. In 1900, according to one source, between 7,000 and 8,000 named apple varieties were grown throughout the United States. Today, only several hundred survive and only a dozen of two are still grown commercially. With the development of reliable refrigerated boxcars, orchardists began selecting those varieties that would be fit to travel. Rather than flavor, high and dependable production, bruise resistance, shelf life, and cosmetic perfection were the qualities growers sought. As grocery stores became the markets for apples and existing trees died, thousands of old varieties became extinct.

As resident horticulturist for the Gibbs Museum Heritage Orchard and a master gardener, I searched the country seeking some of the old varieties. Since many of the older varieties were grown for cooking in earlier years, I sought out apples for that purpose as well as for simply the joy of hand-eating. However, I had to consider hardiness, as well, with the result that I had to eliminate a number of the fine old varieties.

The following list gives the names of

the varieties in the Gibbs Museum Orchard, and some of the background and attributes of each of the selections:

### Noble Golden

A large, round, clear bright yellow apple with a few red spots, the Noble Golden is



Ralph Thrane at Apple Day, Gibbs Museum Heritage Orchard, September 14, 2003. All photos with this article are by Maureen McGinn for the Ramsey County Historical Society.

of great culinary value because it cooks into a richly flavored frothy puree with a beautiful golden color. An English variety first noted in 1820, it recently has been discovered to surpass other eating apples in Vitamin C. This is one of the best of the cooking apples.

### **Spitzenberg**

Dating back to 1790, and said to have been a favorite of Thomas Jefferson and George Washington, this is an attractive red apple with crisp, aromatic yellow flesh and a wonderful rich sweet-tart flavor. A late ripener, it stores well and is considered by apple connoisseurs to be unsurpassed as a winter eating apple. The Spitzenberg was Jefferson's first choice at Monticello. As soon as he returned from his years as America's minister to France, he planted more Spitzenbergs in his sprawling orchard. The Spitzenberg may be marginally hardy in Minnesota, but we have grafted it to a special rootstock that may increase its hardiness. Special steps are needed to prepare it for winter.

### **Wolf River**

Extremely large, round, oblate, and beautifully red, and a great apple for the teachers desk, the Wolf River originated near Wolf River, Wisconsin, about the time of the Civil War. It is very vigorous, extremely cold-hardy, a premier drying apple, and good for pies and other cooking.

### **Red Astrachan**

An ancient Russian apple, but known in America for only the past 150 years. It ripens in early August. A bit tart for eating out-of-hand, it's treasured because it makes the finest apple pie and sauce. Very hardy, but bears in alternate years.

### **Dolgo Crab**

Brilliant crimson oval-shaped fruits make this the premier variety for jelly. A prolific flower and pollen producer, it attracts lots of bees, making it an excellent pollinator. The Dolgo Crab ripens in late August; is very hardy, with Russian ancestry, vigorous, resistant to scab, cedar apple rust, mildew, disease, and fire blight. In my experience, it's also insect resistant. The tree's beautiful flowers and reddish green foliage make it popular as an ornamental tree.



*A big juicy apple on Apple Day.*

### **Cox's Orange Pippin**

An English variety of the Orange Pippin first emerged in 1825 in the orchard of Richard Cox, a retired English brewer, but it had been grown in America from the earliest days. Even today it is regarded as having such a rich, unique flavor that it has earned worldwide acclaim. W. V. Taylor, in his 1937 classic work, *The Apples of England* called Cox's Orange Pippin the "greatest apple of this age." The flavor is described as rich and nutty with an outstanding blend of sugars and acid. A dull orange red fruit, its flesh is yellow, firm, sweet with a slight tartness and very juicy.

Though famed for munching, it also makes a superlative applesauce and cider, stores well, improves with age and is known as the classic desert apple. The vigorous tree bears young, blooms late, and might be biannual. This old heritage variety is the parent of one of the "new" apples, the Gala.

### **Malinda**

Described as an "antique variety of distinction," the Malinda originated in Vermont and was introduced in 1860. It's an excellent eating apple with a sweet aftertaste and very hardy. The Malinda is con-

sidered the Number 1 ancestor and one of the parents of many of the Minnesota varieties, including the Haralson, Chestnut Crab, Beacon, Sweet Sixteen, and Honeycrisp, and thus deserves a place in our Heritage Orchard.

### **Dudley**

This was the most widely planted variety at the turn-of-the-century in the northern United States. The trees bear young, with heavy annual crops, are extremely hardy and long-lived. An eighty-year-old Dudley orchard in Bayfield, Wisconsin, is still bearing. The apple is firm, but tender, aromatic, mild sub-acid with very juicy flesh.

### **Duchess of Oldenberg**

Originated in the upper Volga region of Russia some time around 1700, the Duchess was introduced into England in 1817; it became a popular Victorian variety, reached America in 1835, and is still grown. The apples are medium large with red stripes over a yellow background. The flesh is juicy, with a rich sub-acid flavor. The trees are early-bearing, long-lived, hardy, and disease resistant. The Number 1 commercial apple in the early 1900s, the Duchess is used extensively for cooking.

### **Haralson**

The most famous release by the University of Minnesota but its date of selection (1913) and release to the public (1924) may not make it as old a variety as others. However, the fact that it has been popular for almost ninety years and is still likely the Number 1 apple in terms of acreage and consumer appeal earns the Haralson a place in the Gibbs Museum Heritage Orchard. This is another offspring of the Malinda variety. Hardy, excellent quality, bright red striped, crisp and juicy with tart flesh, the Haralson is an all-purpose apple, excellent for both eating and cooking.

### **Beacon**

This also is a later University of Minnesota release (1936), but it also is a highly popular variety--one of the most popular early maturing (late August) for cold climates. It's a bright red, crisp, juicy apple still grown in Minnesota and elsewhere. Its parents are the Malinda and the Wealthy.

## Wealthy

Developed in 1860 by Peter Gideon in Excelsior, Minnesota, the Wealthy is an excellent early fall apple. Crisp, tender, very juicy, it's sub-acid, often stained red and excellent for eating, sauce, and cooking--often called the best pie apple. Winners of the Bayfield, Wisconsin, Applefest Festival Apple Pie Contest will often admit to using the Wealthy. The tree is productive, extremely long-lived and hardy, but susceptible to disease.

## McIntosh

Developed in Canada in the 1870s, and perhaps as early as 1810, the McIntosh was the number one apple in Canada and number 3 in the United States in 1990. It's still popular for eating and growing; bright red, unusually tender with a thin skin, a sprightly, tingly taste, an appetizing aroma, and white flesh. Hardy, vigorous, it ripens in early to mid-September in the Twin Cities region.

## Fameuse Snow Apple

Believed to be of Canadian origin from seeds brought over from France as early as 1730, the Fameuse is delicious for eating out-of-hand. One source commented: "Its pure white flesh under a bright red skin is juicy and refreshing." It's thought to be one of the McIntosh's parents. Popular in the United States for more than 150 years, the Fameuse is deep crimson, tender, aromatic, juicy, sweet and tart, hardy and long-lived.

## Rhode Island Greening

Known in Rhode Island in 1650, this was the favorite American cooking apple in Colonial times. It's an excellent cooking and drying apple from a long-lived tree. The Northwestern Greening is a similar and perhaps related variety that originated in Wisconsin in 1827 and is a hardy, excellent apple for cooking.

## Chestnut Crab

A 1946 release of the University of Minnesota, this is a comparatively new release but we selected it as a sample of a full-size tree on a standard root stock. We planted it off to one side because a full-size tree creates problems for spraying the pruning. However, it is quite disease

resistant and somewhat insect resistant as well. Not a "good looker," it is yellowish brown, russeted, odd shaped, and slightly larger than most crab apples, but is perhaps the finest-eating crab apple. It has been called "the lunch bucket apple" because of its size—a preference of children during the "lunch bucket" era.

## Yellow Newtown Pippin

Originating in Newtown, Long Island, in 1759, the seed of this apple is thought to have been carried to New York from England around 1666. This high quality dessert and processing apple as said to have been bred by early colonists to satisfy British quality standards and keep well during the long ocean voyage. It can be kept in cold storage until May.

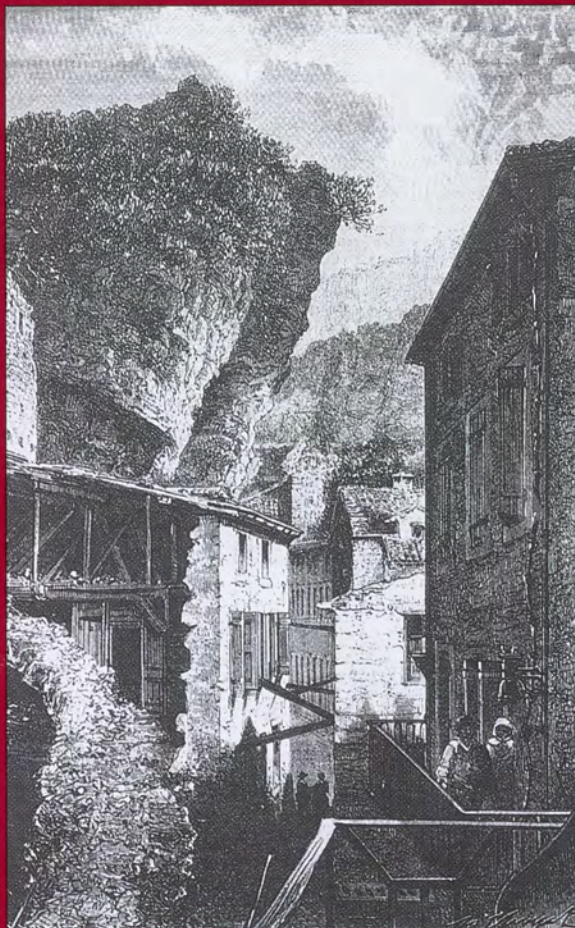
George Washington seems to have dealt with stress by pruning the trees of his

Mount Vernon orchard. His preferred apple was the Newtown Pippin, which was introduced to him by Thomas Jefferson and is still a favorite with antique apple connoisseurs. Jefferson also grew the Newtown Pippin, one of his favorites too.

Benjamin Franklin was said to have shipped barrels of carefully cached Newtown Pippins to Europe to help establish American trade abroad. Later, when Andrew Stephenson, America's foreign minister to the Court of St. James, presented the new Queen Victoria with several casks of Newtown Pippins, she pronounced it the royal favorite and exempted American-grown Newtown Pippins from British import taxes. This apple ripens in later October, too late for the Minnesota climate, but it merits inclusion in the Gibbs Museum Heritage Orchard because of its historical significance.



*Author Ralph Thrane talks with two young visitors at the Gibbs Museum Heritage Orchard.*



*The celebrated Roquefort caves of France where Roquefort cheese has been ripened since antiquity. Development of a Roquefort-like cheese in the 1930s at the University of Minnesota's St. Paul campus, almost caused an international incident with France. See article about Minnesota's Blue Cheese beginning on page 4.*

**R.C.H.S.**  
RAMSEY COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Published by the Ramsey County Historical Society  
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75 West Fifth Street  
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

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