Blueberries, History, and Entomologists

Prior to the Colonists discovering the blueberry in the wild, the Indians ate the berries, dried them, and ground them into a powder to add to cornmeal. When we think of blueberry culture in South Jersey, the names of Elizabeth White and Whitesbog come to mind. Two botanists whose names are not as well known were important contributors to the blueberry culture of today.

The first truly cultivated blueberries were developed in South Jersey when Elizabeth White of Whitesbog noticed that the blueberries growing in the pine barrens were of different sizes and flavors. She had young boys dig up and replant the bushes of the biggest and best in an experimental garden to cross-pollinate the better varieties. In 1911 Miss White learned of the work Dr. Frederick Colville was doing with the USDA, and asked them if they could cooperate in this work. Dr. Philip Manucci, a Rutgers University professor of entomology, saved the New Jersey blueberry and cranberry farmers from being wiped out from insects by his research in disease resistant strains.

Dr. Frederick Vernon Colville

"...As life trustee, and particularly as chairman of the [National Geographic] Society's Research Committee since 1920, he [Frederick Colville] guided wisely the choice of fields for exploration and supervised tirelessly the many expeditions of The Society that have been sent to all parts of the world.

Ever modest but always greeting new tasks with enthusiasm, Dr. Colville spared time from a crowded career for the service of the National Geographic Society. In his life's work as botanist of the United States Department of Agriculture, he made contributions to the advancement of botanical knowledge that are unique and lasting in their usefulness.

His brilliant work in developing the wild blueberry into a cultivated crop of important commercial significance in the acid, sandy soils of our eastern coast was only one of the outstanding achievements of a lifetime of scientific accomplishment.

It was his keen insight and careful experimentation that led to recognition of the part played by acidity of soils in the development of many plants and the importance of a period of chilling temperature for normal flowering and fruiting of plants of the Temperate Zone...

In the Department of Agriculture he served continuously from 1888, rising to the position of principal botanist in the Division of Plant Exploration and Introduction. He was acting director of the National Arboretum, was instrumental in the formation of the Seed Laboratory of the Department of Agriculture, and formulated the policy for the use of national forests as grazing lands. He was also Curator of the U.S. National Herbarium from 1893 and joint author of "Standardized Plant Names," and many important scientific papers." [National Geographic, Vol. 71, Issue 5, 1937. Obituary of Dr. Colville]

In the June 1916 issue of National Geographic, Dr. Colville published an article about the experiments with and development of the blueberry in conjunction with Elizabeth White, of Whitesbog. In 1949, a variety of blueberry was named after Dr. Colville.

Jeff Macechak, our Education Director, has developed the character of Dr. Colville for our outreach program relating to the history of agriculture in Burlington County.
A Boatload of Booze and Bumbling

Copyright 2006, by Parry Desmond

Burlington County’s judiciary has an illustrious history. But the court system ran into a snag during the Prohibition era, when county officials’ ineptitude and hubris resulted in a bungled bootlegging case.

That misadventure began when Charles Carslake, an ex-Prohibition agent, and five state cops, who were tipped off by the Ku Klux Klan, arrested 50 armed bootleggers, and several local men on Oct. 1, 1925. They were caught unloading more than 1,000 cases of European whisky, champagne and liqueurs, worth millions of dollars today, from a barge docked along the Rancocas Creek in Willingboro. The confederacy had been transferred to the barge from a ship in the Atlantic.

The troopers and Carslake arrived at Adams Wharf shortly before midnight, and with handguns drawn, ordered the men to surrender, and falsely claimed the area was surrounded by a large number of police officers.

After each of the raiders turned down a $15,000 bribe offer to “forget about” the crime and release the prisoners, 30 of them were loaded into one of the bootleggers’ trucks, and they were transported to Burlington City for processing.

Meanwhile, the other 25 detainees were herded into the barge’s cabin until they could be taken to Burlington City. They used gasoline from an engine used to pump bilge water to set the cabin on fire, destroying it and burning the barge to the waterline on the cabin end. The fire caused the barge to sink partially in the shallow water, but didn’t touch the cargo.

Most of the defendants would never testify before the grand jury and escaped conviction because they were released on “inadequate bail” after they gave court officials fictitious names and home addresses.

“While the cabin was burning, several of the men leaped into the creek and started swimming toward the opposite bank. The troopers and Carslake fired several shots into the air and warned the swimmers that, unless they turned back and surrendered, they would shoot to kill. The shots and threats had the desired effect,” reported the New York Times, and the troopers regained control of the prisoners.

None of the prisoners was armed when they arrived at Burlington City’s municipal building because they had tossed their weapons into the creek, or into the high grass near the wharf and along the road.

The defendants were quickly released on nominal bail, which the gang leader—who claimed his name was John Cohen—peeled off $500 and $100 bills from a huge roll of walking-around money.

The illicit booze was brought to Mount Holly the next day in the bootleggers’ trucks seized in the raid, and many residents watched as the cases were unloaded and stored, under guard, in a commercial garage.

Burlington County residents initially congratulated the courageous raiders. But, good golly, there was fury around Mount Holly several days later when people learned that most of the defendants would never testify before the grand jury and escaped conviction because they were released on “inadequate bail” after they gave court officials fictitious names and home addresses. Many of the defendants claimed they lived in a Camden neighborhood, which had been razed recently to build the New Jersey end of the Delaware Memorial Bridge (now the Ben Franklin).

State Supreme Court Justice Frank T. Lloyd also was angry. He “launched forth with a bitter volley” when he began his charge to the grand jury almost two weeks after the raid, and delivered a “scathing indictment” of county judicial and law enforcement officials. Lloyd claimed the $14,500 total cash bail for the bootleggers “smacked strongly of bribery and corruption, and if that were not the case, the officials were plain stupid.” He also expressed doubts that “plain stupidity” was responsible for the wholesale release of the defendants. Instead, he suspected it was “a conspiracy of gigantic proportions.”

And a New York Times editorial observed: “One not need to be a prohibitionist to resent such a flouting of the law as this was, and the much-vaunted ‘Jersey justice’ was made a farce by it. One cannot help wondering what continued on page 4
A stroll through a local cemetery revealed that the world of the early 20th century was not much different than the world we live in today. Let me explain. First, my name is Ted Engine and I am a history major at Rowan University. I began an internship at BCHS in late December and have been lending my hand wherever necessary. Along with the work of accessioning items in BCHS collection and routine office assistance, I tried my hand at a little detective work.

One winter morning before arriving for work, I decided to have a look through the Union Methodist Church cemetery where I came across the graves of three family members that all died over the course of several months, in 1902. The patriarch of the family, Henry B. Sharp, aged 41, died January 14th 1902. In May of the same year, his wife Helen, also age 41, and her 14 year-old son, Edwin M., died on the same day. Knowing that the mortality rate from illness was much higher in that era, I wondered whether some disease had taken the lives of this young family. To my surprise, I soon found a much darker answer to that question.

Henry Sharp was married to Helen in the year of 1882. In 1887, Helen gave birth to Edwin M. named after Henry’s father Edwin S. Sharp. According to Boyd’s directory of Burlington County 1897-98 (a resource book found in BCHS’ excellent library), Henry Sharp ran a jewelry business at 335 High Street in Burlington City. The 1900 federal census confirms this information, and by these accounts at least, there seemed to be nothing out of the ordinary.

In early 1902, though, the ordinary façade of this family began to change. On the evening of January 13th, a vice raid was executed by the “Law and Order Society” that ensnared Henry Sharp. Upon returning home that evening he calmly recounted the story of the raid to his wife, failing to include the details of his own involvement and arrest. Sometime later that morning while his wife and son slept, Henry ended his life with a pistol.

According to a published report, the suicide was attributed to a financial trouble at Henry’s jewelry business. As the events of May 13th unfolded, a different explanation would be offered.

On May 13th, Mrs. Helen Sharp visited with friends who commented that she seemed especially agitated and prone to dire predictions of bankruptcy for her family. After returning home from her visits, Mrs. Sharp waited for her son to fall asleep. Mrs. Sharp entered his room, put a pistol to his temple and pulled the trigger. Mrs. Sharp then returned to her room and slit her throat with a straight razor. In the space of five months, all three members of the Sharp family had died horribly tragic deaths.

The papers reported the story in great detail including the method of death, the results of Mrs. Sharp’s wound (nearly decapitated) and the possible motive for the murder suicides.

When the will of Mrs. Sharp was probated, it stipulated that if she outlived her son the State of New Jersey was to get the estate. According to the news accounts no one knew for sure whether Mrs. Sharp or her son actually died first. If he was still living when she committed suicide, the State wouldn’t get the money.

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**Blueberries, History, and Entomologists**

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Dr. Philip E. Marucci

"Philip E. Marucci, the scientist who single-handedly rescued New Jersey blueberry farmers from a wave of pestilence and turned their crops into one of the states most important agricultural businesses, died on Friday [April 1994]."

...As a Rutgers University entomologist, he is credited with developing insect-resistant species of cranberries and blueberries that essentially kept this branch of farming from being wiped out.

"He was the George Washington Carver of the berry industry," said Mary Ann Thompson, a Southampton attorney and Pinelands preservation activist.

...Marucci entered Rutgers as a student in 1932. Marucci returned to Rutgers as a professor of entomology in 1951. Shortly thereafter, he developed the Marucci-Rock Bottom Formula, a now-standard berrying tactic that allows farmers to predict low nighttime temperatures in the bogs at noon the previous day, enabling them to better guard against frost.

During these years, the berry industry was being ravaged by insects. In the late 1950s, Marucci made the landmark discovery that a breed of leafhopper carried blueberry stunt disease. His finding led directly to the development of new berry strains that not only resisted insects, but also allowed bogs to increase their yields.

Additionally, he operated state berry research laboratories in Pemberton, New Lisbon and New Brunswick." [Jim Donnelly, BCT staff writer, April 19, 1994]

The Rutgers University Research and Extension Center in Chatworth is named for Dr. Philip Marucci.
Deer Ate Apple in Man’s Hand While Gunner Slept

A Pemberton deer hunter went to sleep last Thursday afternoon while on stand in the woods near Chatworth. His disappearance was noticed by his companions, who started to search for him. He was found about an hour later by Victor Bush, sound asleep, with a deer nibbling an apple in the gunner’s hand. At the sight of the hunters the deer, which was a buck, fled.

The hunter, Woolston Hargrove, stated that he sat on the ground while waiting the drive and started to eat an apple, which is the last thing he remembered until awakened by the other members of the party.

Why We are Called the “Garden State”

Bountiful West-Jersey

I have seen an apple tree from a pippin kernel yield a barrel of curious cider; and peaches in such plenty, that some people took their carts a peach-gathering; I could not but smile at the conceit of it: They are a very delicate fruit, and hang almost like our onions that are tied on ropes: I have seen and known this summer, forty bushels of bold wheat of one bushel sown; and many more such instances I could bring.... We have from the time called May until Michaelmas, great store of very good wild fruits, as strawberries, cranberries, and huckleberries, which are like our bilberries in England, but far sweeter; they are very wholesome fruits. The cranberries much like cherries for colour and bigness— an excellent sauce is made of them for venison, turkeys and other great jowl, and they are better to make tarts than either gooseberries or cherries; we have them brought to our house in great plenty by the Indians... As for venison and fowls, we have great plenty: We have brought home to our houses by the Indians, seven or eight fat bucks of a day, and sometimes put by as many; having no occasion for them; and fish in their season very plenteous.

— Extract from letter of Mahlon Stacy to his brother in England, 1680

A Boatload of Booze and Bumbling

has, or will, become of the several truckloads of liquor that were seized.”

The editorial was prophetic, because an inventory of the guarded booze showed that 10 cases were missing, and that wasn’t the only time some of the liquor fell into the wrong hands.

And as a result of the officials’ errors, only eight defendants—the four bootleggers whose true identities were confirmed by registration data for their vehicles seized at the site of the raid, plus the local men (Paul Dusigich, Addison Bentscliffe, Charles Sharp and Wilmer Raff) who helped unload or store the booze—went to trial in May 1926.

It was a theatrical jury trial, replete with astringent accusations, as delegates from the Women’s Christian Temperance Union and local church congregations packed the courtroom, and defense lawyers challenged prosecution witnesses’ testimony in an effort to make them appear to be the real defendants. The churchgoers feared the defense’s strident campaign against the forces of law and order was putting the prosecution’s case at risk.

They had reason to be worried. All four defendants were acquitted.

Several days after the trial, Judge William A. Slaughter, said the jurors had been “remiss in their duty.”

Petitions signed by thousands of frustrated county residents were presented to the U.S. Attorney in Trenton, demanding that the federal government pursue the case. The feds chose not to pick up that loose ball.

And nearly three years passed before the true identity of the gang’s ringleader, who claimed to be John Cohen, was revealed. He was Max “Boo Boo” Hoff, who was often characterized as “King of the Bootleggers” when he was the focus of a grand jury investigation in Philadelphia in 1928-29. Hoff’s bootlegging syndicate made about $5 million (more than $50 million today) annually, with the assistance of corrupt police, politicians and bankers.

Hoff and his pals made most of their money by detoxifying millions of gallons of industrial alcohol at processing plants they controlled. One of the plants was the Burlington Industrial Alcohol Co. in Burlington City.

After the alcohol was made fit for human consumption, it was railed to points on the East Coast and in the Midwest.

Hoff was officially linked to the 1925 smuggling operation in Burlington County, when grand jury investigators in Philadelphia found evidence of a $10,000 check, which had been used to pay for the tugboat that towed the liquor-laden barge up the Rancocas. The check was drawn on one of the fictitious accounts set up by the bootleggers in a $10 million-dollar money-laundering scheme in collusion with a Philadelphia bank.

Despite mountains of evidence against him, Hoff escaped indictment by the grand jury in Philadelphia in 1929.

Parry Desmond is writing a book about “Boo Boo” Hoff, and is looking for additional information about him. Desmond lives in Downingtown, Pa., and can be reached at parry37@aol.com or 610-269-8037.
Come and celebrate
“DON’T GIVE UP THE SHIP” MONTH
at the Burlington County Historical Society
IN HONOR OF CAPTAIN JAMES LAWRENCE’S 225TH BIRTHDAY

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 1, 2006 • 3-5PM
Model ship contest and display (throughout October... if you have a ship to enter, please call us!) featuring the Philadelphia Model Ship Society, a performance of sea faring songs by musical group “Don’t Give Up the Ship”, living history appearances by Captain James Lawrence himself, tours of the Lawrence house and, of course, birthday cake!

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 29, 2006 • 2-5PM
The celebration continues with speakers Paul Tobin and Christopher George. Rear Admiral Paul Tobin, USN (Ret.) is Director of Naval History at the Naval History Center. He will be speaking on “Victories from Defeat in U.S. Navy History”. George is founding editor of the Journal of War of 1812 and author of Terror on the Chesapeake: The War of 1812 on the Bay. Also, a crew reunion from the Destroyer Lawrence, the “Don’t Give Up the Ship” essay contest (in partnership with the Burlington County Times), artifacts from the ship Lawrence, tours of the Lawrence house and much, much more!

Both events will be held at the Burlington County Historical Society’s Corson Poley Center, located at 454 Lawrence Street in Burlington, NJ. Admission is $5/adults and $3/children.
For more information, please call us at (609) 383-4773.

Milestones of Paper
By David D. Gladfelter, NLG

At the busy intersection of Main Street and Mount Laurel Road not far from my home in Moorestown is an old brownstone post with inscriptions cut into two sides. One side has “10 M to C”, the other “8 M to M.H.” The post is an old fashioned milestone, marking the distance in miles to Camden along the former Moorestown and Camden Turnpike, now Camden Avenue, and to Mount Holly along the former Mount Holly stage road, which also became a turnpike and today is known as Marne Highway. Both roads are connecting segments of Burlington County Route 537. The roads were laid out in the 1790s and the milestone, and others like it, may date from that period.

Collectors of New Jersey paper money have “milestones” of their own. I refer to the first series of bank notes issued by Mount Holly’s Farmers Bank of New Jersey, shortly after being chartered by the Legislature in 1815 as the 10th bank in the state and the first in Burlington County. Each of the 8 denominations in this series, $1, $2, $5, $10, $20, $50 and $100, bears on it the unusual inscription “17 Miles from Philadelphia.” Bank officials must have thought that if the stream of commerce were to carry some of their bank notes too far from home, it would help in redeeming them if the notes had directions to Mount Holly printed on them. (Of course, everyone would know where Philadelphia was.)

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Milestones of Paper

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The $1 denomination "Milestone," Wait 1285, is illustrated herein, along with a 2x detail showing the directional inscription. All of the surviving notes in the "Milestone" set are either proofs or unissued remainders, the circulating ones having been redeemed or lost. They were printed by the Philadelphia firm of Murray Draper Fairman & Co. Two examples, of the $5 and $10 denominations, were in the Christie's sale of the ABCCo archives; neither is listed in Wait. Those denominations that are listed are all given the top rarity of R7 (1-5 examples known).

Somewhat more available to collectors, although still scarce, are the "little Milestones," fractional-denomination scrip notes payable at the Farmers Bank and issued by individual merchants. These notes come in denominations of 6?, 12?, 25 and 50 cents and are dated Jan. 20, 1815, at Mount Holly. The engraver was William Kneass of Philadelphia whose imprint is on the notes. Kneass later became a U.S. Mint engraver and is credited with the design of several gold and silver regular issue and pattern coins.

Most common of the "little Milestones" are those issued by John Black, who was one of the first directors of the Farmers Bank. One of Black's 25 cent notes is illustrated herein, along with a 2x detail of the "Milestone" inscription. Other merchants whose names appear on the "little Milestones" are Wm. Irick, J.S. Nugent and Cha. Shreve. Wait lists a "Wm. Brown (?)" as issuer of No. 1283, a 12? cent note; the signature must have been faint or otherwise hard to read, I have not seen it. John Black's notes can be found in all 4 denominations, but not all denominations are known for the other merchants.

[originally published in Jerseyana, April 2001]

Burlington County Historical Society Hours

Hours of operation: The Burlington County Historical Society is open to the public Tuesday through Saturday from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. Tours of the entire complex including the Bard-How, James Fenimore Cooper and Captain James Lawrence houses, the museum gallery exhibits and library are $5 for adults, $3 for children under 12. Admission just to the museum exhibits and library is $3 for adults, $1.50 for children under 12. We offer group and school tours by appointment and can accommodate groups up to 100 people. The BCHS facilities can also be rented for meetings and cocktail parties.

The King's Library and its Scrip

By David D. Gladfelter, NLB

For Al Zaika's final issue of Jerseyana we take you back to 1765 when New Jersey (as it was then spelled) was still a British royal colony. On June 11th of that year, King George Ill granted a royal charter to the "Incorporated Library Company of Bridge-Town." The charter was obtained through the influence of Charles Read of Burlington, an attorney and landowner, secretary of the colony, for- mer speaker of the colonial assembly and member of the Religious Society of Friends. The charter, still in existence today, is signed by Read as an agent of the Crown and contains the names of all 61 of the incorporators. The list includes many family names still prominent today in Burlington County, such as Haines, Budd, Brainerd, Shinn, Bispahm, Woolston and Goldy. The Bridge-Town Library was the fifth to be established in New Jersey, and the second in Burlington County, seven years after that in Burlington City.

In those days the Township of Mount Holly was also known as "Bridge-Town," a name that is coming back into use as the community begins to discover its historical roots. For example, one can now enjoy fish and chips with draft beer at the Bridgetown Pub, a modern-day watering spot "in downtown historic Mount Holly." Numismatists will note that the pub is hard by the original building of the Farmers Bank of New Jersey, opened in 1815, which until last year was the oldest continuously-operated bank building in the state. Both names were used for the Burlington County seat during the early to middle 18th century, with "Bridge-Town" gradually dying out by the time of the Revolution.

The library opened for business on the second floor of the old Township Hall with a stock of about 150 books. In an era when (per Pomfret) "the average family owned at most a Bible, a catechism, a hymnal, or a religious tract or two," the collection had to be practi-

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King's Library

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The New Jersey and Pennsylvania Almanac for the year of our Lord 1817:

Method of treating Burns and Scalds, etc. by Professor Smith, of the Medical Institute

In accidents of this kind, the further burning or scalding should be prevented by dashing cold water on the part, or by plunging the part into cold water. This will extinguish the fire where the clothing is burning; and in scalds, it will arrest the farther effect of the heat. After this, there should be any clothing on the parts affected it should be removed and bets of cotton applied so as to cover all of them.* These should remain 12 or 24 hours. Then remove them and anoint with oil of turpentine and apply cotton again.

*In case the skin be broken apply a clean rag wet with rum — keep wetting the rag with rum as fast as it dries.

Cure for a Felon

Take a piece of rock salt, about the size of a butternut, wrap it in a cabbage leaf, if it be bad, if not, in a piece of brown paper, cover it with coals, as you would to roast an onion; after it has been roasting about twenty minutes, take it from the fire, and powder it very fine; mix it with as much common soap as will make a salve; if the soap be not pretty strong of turpentine, (which may be known by the smell) then add a little more to it. Apply the salve to the part affected; in the course of a few hours, and sometimes in a few minutes, the pain will be relieved. After this, if a supperation has taken place, it must be healed like a common sore.

Recipe for the Gravel

Take a double handful of water-melon seeds and throw them into about a pint of gin — let them stand for about a week, in a warm place, being frequently shaken together. When so prepared, take half a wine glass two or three times a day, or as you require; any thing to drink, at table or otherwise.

READERS:

What are ‘Felon’ and ‘Gravel’?

[originally published in Jerseynia, June 2004]