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## The R. I. Fruit Growers Association

was formed to promote and foster the Fruit Growing interests of Rhode Island, to disseminate a knowledge of Fruit Growing and Marketing, and to assist Fruit Growers to effect economies in buying supplies and marketing their products.

Everyone interested in the subject, whether as grower, seller or consumer is cordially invited to become a member and help to make the society and its work a success.

Annual dues are but one dollar.

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## The Rhode Island Greening

"Beach's Apples of New York" states that the Rhode Island greening is grown more extensively in New York than any other apple except the Baldwin and in some sections of the state it surpasses even Baldwin.

The fruit has a recognized standing both in domestic and foreign markets and sells readily at good prices. As a cooking apple the greening is unsurpassed and as a dessert fruit of its season has few equals. To some tastes it is rather acid but the tenderness of its very juicy flesh, the sprightliness of its abundant juice and the delicacy of its rich and fine flavor is not excelled by any of the numerous varieties that we possess.

The apple, as its name indicates, is green in color, but with the care that is now given its growth it has a blush, often becoming highly colored.

In ordinary storage it is in season from October to March or April.

The tree does not come into bearing very young and in many cases it is classed as a biennial cropper, but in favorable locations with good care, it becomes almost an annual bearer, yielding moderate to heavy crops.

The fruit hangs well to the tree until it begins to ripen, but then is apt to drop to a considerable extent especially in high winds.

## The Origin of the Rhode Island Greening Apple

In writing a paper on the history of an apple, the same as on any other historical subject, one must necessarily depend upon what others have written, or on records, and where both are incomplete, on such other facts or circumstantial evidence as can be obtained.

Therefore I do not claim anything original in this paper on the Rhode Island greening apple, but have written it so as to include what facts I have found in regard to it.

In looking the matter up, I have found other items which I considered of enough interest and value to incorporate in this paper, and have tried to give credit to the authorities from which I gained the information, in each case satisfying myself as far as I could that their statements were correct.

In commencing, then, I quote from "Encyclopedia Britannica," which states:

"Apples have been cultivated in England from the time of the Roman period. They are supposed to have been known and grown in France and Holland, as the names of some species are derived from the French and Dutch. How or when they came to be known in Europe, is not known, but the date is several centuries ago. An English treatise on grafting and planting was published in 1502, and in 1629 Parkinson mentions 27 different varieties, and in 1688 Ray states there were 78 different varieties in the vicinity of London."

What is considered as reliable authority states that as early as 1524, when a man by the name of Giovanni Verrazzano explored Narragansett Bay and the adjoining country, he found apples growing in abundance; and considering this latitude seems to be natural for them, it is reasonable to suppose that they

have grown here in a more or less wild state since as early as any vegetation existed.

The first cultivated apples grown in this country are supposed to have been on trees planted by William Blackstone (spelled by him Blaxton), a man of peculiar qualities and a singular yet interesting history. A graduate of Emmanuel College, Cambridge University, with degrees A. B. 1617, A. M. 1621, and ordained as a clergyman of the Church of England, he became dissatisfied with the rulings of the House of Bishops and emigrated to America, 1625-6. He acquired land from the Indians, and settled, entirely alone, at Shawmut, his farm or lands comprising what is now a large part of the City of Boston.

In 1634 he was prevailed upon to dispose of his lands to Gov. John Winthrop, and his party, and in 1635 he settled in the northwest portion of what was afterwards Rehoboth, North Purchase, then called Attleborough Gore, and now Cumberland, R. I. He was a man of high literary ability and possessed a library of 136 volumes, which was very large for those days and thought to be the largest in Plymouth Colony. The knoll, arising abruptly from the shores of the river bearing his name, on which his house and orchard were, was cut down some years ago, and the land is now occupied by the Ann and Hope Mill.

This is corroborated, in part at least, by Bliss History of Rehoboth, which says:

"The first apple trees planted in Rhode Island, were set out by William Blackstone about 1635 or 6 at his home at Sturdy Hill, on the shore of the river bearing his name, at a point about three miles above the present city of Pawtucket. His farm was on a high knoll, rising abruptly from the river, commanding a fine view of the surrounding country. Trees grown from shoots from those set out by Blackstone were bearing fruit in 1765, about one hundred and thirty years later, while in 1836 there were three trees, which sprung from original stock

bearing apples known as "yellow sweetings" and "considered the richest and most delicious apple." Mr. Blackstone came frequently to Providence to preach, distributing his apples to his hearers, being the first they ever saw."

Hon. Samuel Greene Arnold, in his "Historical Sketch of Middletown," states that six acres of land in Newport were granted to Mr. Codding in 1640 for an orchard, "the second one in the state."

I take it for granted he means the Blackstone orchard as the first one.

In the Records of the Town of Portsmouth mention is made in deeds of orchards and trees being conveyed with land as follows:

"Jany. 25, 1654-5 Henry Knowles deeds land and orchard to Thos. Lawton.

"April 3, 1661, Rebecca Cornell deeds to Richard Holt land and the fruit trees on it."

In a book published in London in 1674 entitled, "An Account of Two Voyages to New England in 1673," I find the following:

"The fruit trees prosper abundantly. Apple trees, Pear trees, Quince trees, Cherry trees, Plum trees, Barberry trees.

"I have observed with admiration that the kernels sown, or the succors planted produce as fair and good fruit without grafting as the tree from whence they were taken.

"The Country is replenished with fair and large orchards.

"It was affirmed by one Mr. Woolcut (a magistrate in Connecticut Colony) at the Captain's Mess aboard the ship I came home in that he made five hundred Hogsheads of cider out of his own orchard in one year. Cider (Syder) is very plentiful in the country and ordinarily sold for ten Shillings a hogshead. At the tap-houses in Boston I have had an ale-quart spiced and sweetened with sugar for a groat, but I shall insert a more delicate mixture of it. Take of Malaga-Raisins, stamp them

and put milk to them and put them in an Hippocras Bag, and let it drain out of itself. Put a quantity of this with a spoonful or two of Syrup of Clove gilliflowers into every bottle, when you bottle your cider and your planter will have a liquor that exceeds passada, the nectar of the country."

In this same book I find the following, showing that while they did not have to combat the San Jose Scale, they did have other troubles, which demanded their attention.

"Their fruit trees are subject to two different diseases. The Meazels, which is when they are burned and scorched by the sun, and Lousiness (lowsiness) when the wood-peckers jab holes in their bark.

"The way to cure them when they are lousy is to bore a hole into the main root with an auger and pour in a quantity of Brandy or Rum and then stop it up with a pin made from the same tree."

These items prove that the apple has existed and has been cultivated longer than many of us have supposed, unless we accept the theory as literally true, that the apple actually existed in the Garden of Eden. While the variety which we now know as the Rhode Island greening possibly may not date as far back as some others, it is probably the oldest of those that are considered most desirable to produce.

For several years the claim was made that the original Rhode Island greening apple tree was on the farm of Dr. Solomon Drowne at Mt. Hygeia in Foster.

Mr. Thomas R. Drowne, owner of the Mt. Hygeia Farm, states that when the Drownes purchased this farm at Foster about 1801, the tree in question was supposed to be about eighty years old, which would bring its origin about 1720, but as we have evidence that the Rhode Island greening existed prior to this time, it would be proof that this was not the original Rhode Island greening tree.

Bailey's "Encyclopaedia of American Horticulture" gives a picture of this supposed original tree as it looked in 1900 and has quite an article on the subject, but this article and the cut were furnished by Prof. George E. Adams, who has since been convinced that this could not have been the original tree for the following reasons:

I understand that after writing this article Professor Adams made a special trip to the Drowne Farm in Foster to ascertain *positively* whether the sapling really came from the roots of the old tree or was a seedling from fruit that happened to drop near it.

Mr. Drowne at that time so firmly believed that it was the original tree, that he would not permit Professor Adams to make the examination he desired to, for fear of injury to the tree by uncovering the roots. But I think it is generally conceded and not contradicted, as far as I have been able to find, that this sapling, as it was called, did come from the roots of the old tree.

Besides this, Mr. Drowne states that the shoot *which came from the roots of the original tree* there, was grafted by him, which goes to show that it did not bear the good Rhode Island greening such as the parent tree produced, as otherwise it would have been unwise to graft it. It seems to the writer that these facts should decide at least one point, and that, that the greening tree at Mt. Hygeia was *not* the original one.

Prof. George E. Adams of Kingston College, in his paper on this subject read before the Rhode Island State Grange, says:

"The Town of Smithfield claims to have presented the world with this variety, based on the following facts: On the farm of Frederick W. Winsor, a few rods southwest of the lime kiln on the northern verge of Fruit Hill, stands a Rhode Island greening tree, which is locally known as the "Daughter Tree." This tree

is a limb of the mother tree, which was broken off in the September gale of 1815, and which upon being thrust into the rich, moist soil, took root and became an independent tree. The mother tree was planted by Mrs. Winsor's great-great-grandfather during King George III's reign in 1748. It was, therefore, 141 years old when it was cut down in 1889. From these two trees Mr. F. M. Perry, a nurseryman of Canandaigua, New York, secured many scions, which he disseminated throughout New York and the Middle States.

I have failed to find any evidence that will warrant a statement that this mother tree was the real original tree, and have looked up many other "original tree" stories with like results.

Authentic records of trees of this variety that were planted about 150 years ago in the soil of North Providence, on the farm of the late Lemuel Angell, are still in possession of that family. It was introduced into the old Plymouth Colony from Newport in 1765: from there it was carried into Ohio in 1796 by General Putnam.

In the "History of Newport County," page 704, we read:

"The original Rhode Island greening was raised in an old stone barn, once a greenhouse, on the Bowler farm. The original cutting was brought from England in a potting tub."

I am inclined to discredit this, as I am the article by "Shepherd Tom" Hazard in his Johnny Cake letters, which reads as follows:

"On the north, contiguous to Vacluse in Portsmouth, R. I., the residence of "Shepherd Tom," there lies the old Isaac Chase farm, which in the olden time was owned and occupied by Mr. Bowler, a rich East India merchant of Newport. Mr. Bowler had a beautiful garden and took great delight in beautifying his grounds and hothouses with exotics from all parts of the world.

"On one occasion a Captain Chausan,

of one of Mr. Bowler's East India ships, chanced to rescue from shipwreck a prince of the royal blood of Persia, whose father, in the fervor of his gratitude for saving and restoring to him his son, presented to the captain from his own garden situated on the site of the ancient Garden of Eden, a young apple tree growing in a porcelain tub, which was declared to be one of the few direct lineal descendants of the tree of knowledge.

"On his arrival in Newport Capt. Chausan, as in duty bound, presented the young tree to his employer, Mr. Bowler, who was delighted beyond measure by the precious gift, and thought to guard and protect it by placing it in a hothouse, some remains of which are yet to be seen, but was admonished in a dream, by an angel claiming to be Mother Eve, to do no such thing, as the climate of southern Rhode Island was, if anything, a little more favorable to its growth than that of southern Assyria, from whence it was removed. Mr. Bowler had such faith in the vision that he had the tree carefully removed from the tub or vase, with the earth attached, and transplanted into Rhode Island soil, where it grew and flourished beyond his most sanguine expectations, and finally developed into what has ever since been called the Rhode Island greening."

I feel quite positive that both Adam and Eve would have been only too glad to have had the descendant of the original apple tree come to Rhode Island, which so nearly approaches the perfection which we are told existed there, but am wondering if such were the case how long it would have been before the Eves of Rhode Island would have picked the forbidden fruit and insisted on the poor, weak, but sinless Adams of Rhode Island, partaking of it with them!

About 1832 the *Rhode Island Republican* published a series of articles relating to the early history of Rhode Island, one of which,

on the Rhode Island greening apple, reads as follows:

#### *History of the Greening Apple*

"The Rhode Island greening apple, so-called, is a large, fair apple of a greenish color: is ripe late in the fall, and is the best apple, for cooking, perhaps, of any in this country. It has a pleasant and agreeable acid, and is an excellent eating fruit, from Christmas, as long as it can be kept, which in some cases, has been until the summer following. It is now extensively cultivated in the Eastern and Middle States, and we believe everywhere bears the name of Rhode Island greening."

I have tried to establish the origin of this tree on my own farm, which came into the possession of the Greene family in 1638, and was owned continuously by them up to the time I purchased it in 1900, but I have found nothing which will allow me to make this claim.

I also find in a communication to the *Providence Journal* in 1879, signed F. D., the following:

#### *Origin of the Rhode Island Greening*

"From Mr. Henry S. Vaughn of Providence, we have the following account, obtained from a newspaper clipping of about forty years ago, found in a scrap book, and purporting to have come from the Greene family. 'In the early days of the Colony, on the Island of Rhode Island, in the present Town of Middletown, stood a popular inn, a little north of the bridge over the brook on the east road near the house now owned by the heirs of William Fales, formerly owned by Joseph Bailey and previously the home of William Bailey. The brook has been known as Bailey's brook; and the region is known as the Greene End, as the inn was kept by a Mr. Greene. Near this resort for pleasure parties from Newport, known as Greene's Inn, as a natural fruit, grew the apples of which we speak, which soon gained a great

reputation for excellence, and were at first called Greene's Inn apples, or the Greene Inn apples, which name by an easy and gradual transition, came to be the Greening Apples. When introduced to the main land and other parts of the country, as it soon was, they were termed the Rhode Island greening'."

I have searched the town records of Middletown and elsewhere trying to find evidence or proof that such an inn existed there, but cannot find it mentioned except in a heresay way, although I find where John Greene and his wife, Katherine Greene, Sept. 25, 1778 deeded 80 acres in one piece and 16 acres in another to William Chace of Providence.

These tracts were in the vicinity of Bailey's brook, but no mention is made of an inn or hotel on the land conveyed. I find no record of where this land was deeded to John Greene and his wife, so presume it was before the Town of Middletown was set off from Newport in 1743.

This "tradition" seems to have become historical, for in the "History of Rhode Island," by Rev. Edward Peterson, page 101, we find where the author says: "It is stated that the first tree of the kind came up spontaneously near the wall, by the brook, which runs through the farm of Joseph I. Bailey, Esq., in Middletown, the owner at that time being a Mr. Greene: from him the apple took its name. It is highly celebrated and much sought after."

Mr. William S. Slocum, of Newport, R. I., relates the following, which although not positive evidence, certainly adds much to show the original tree was in Middletown:

"Just before the beginning of the Rebellion or Civil War, upwards of fifty years ago, when I was about 22 years old, I was riding one day with Mr. James M. Smith, a respected and esteemed citizen of this town. He told me that he had been told some years ago by an old townsman, that he had heard the old men tell, that, in the days when stage coaches ran be-

tween Newport and Boston, there were taverns or inns at intervals along the route: that the first one after leaving Newport, called Green's Inn, was located near Green's Brook, now known as Bailey's Brook, in Middletown, about two and one-half miles out: that here, both going and coming, the stages stopped to let out or take on passengers, to water the horses, to receive or deliver letters, and parcels or packages that had been entrusted to them, and the passengers would alight as a relief from sitting and riding, and some of the men would go in and patronize the bar.

"In apple time the proprietor would have a dish of apples on the bar for the free use of his patrons, and those apples were much sought after by the traveling public and came to be known among them as Green's Inn apples."

This was corroborated a few days later by an article which appeared in the *Newport News* signed by Elijah Anthony, of Jamestown, R. I., reading as follows:

"As there is quite an interest just now in the question of the origin of the Rhode Island Greening, I would like to tell my little story concerning the same. In the November issue of the *Daily News* was the account given by William S. Slocum, at a Grange meeting held in Middletown October 17th. That was, with but a few minor exceptions, identical with what I was told when a boy.

"My father was born in 1796 and lived until 1888, when he died on the farm adjoining the Bailey place, which used to be the Greene's Inn Farm. I was also born and lived there until my 25th year. My grandfather was born in 1767 and lived there until he died in 1842. He descended on his mother's side from the Goulds, who owned and occupied quite a large tract of land north of the Greene's Inn place. So I think my story has come down through quite a long line of ancestry, and Mr. Slocum's account is the same as the one that I remember.

"When I was a boy, Joseph I. Bailey owned the place and lived there, and the house at present looks just the same as it did then. I can remember it 70 years. The correspondent from Portsmouth some time ago mentioned that the origin of the Rhode Island greening was on the Bowler farm down on the old Wapping road, in what is now called South Portsmouth. That was the first time I ever heard of such being the case."

This evidence (although circumstantial) coming as it does from so many different sources and without anything to contradict it, would seem to be proof that the original Rhode Island greening apple did come from a seedling tree on the farm of a Mr. Greene who kept a tavern near what is now known as Greene's or Bailey's Brook in Middletown, R. I., about two and a half miles from Newport. But before we render our verdict in this way let us go back farther to a time before the days of stage coaches and long before this inn was built, and we will find, in Elizabeth C. Brenton's "History of Brenton's Neck," a good claim that the Rhode Island greening preceded these events.

In order to show the characteristics of the man, his habits, and his desire for the best, and most beautiful of everything, as evidence that he would naturally want to raise and would appreciate so perfect and desirable an apple as the Rhode Island greening is, I take the liberty of quoting from this history:

"William Brenton left Hammersmith, England, and came to Boston in 1634. He brought with him a commission from Charles the First dated 1633 which allowed him to take so many acres to a mile of all the lands he should survey in the New England Colonies.

"During the next three years he became possessed of 10,000 acres on the Merrimac River, in New Hampshire, which has since been known as Litchfield.

"In 1638 he removed with his wife to New-

port, R. I., and became very active in the affairs of the Colony, associating himself with eight others for the purpose of forming a Township on the Island for the support and protection of which they solemnly promised to bear an equal share of expenses in proportion to their estates and incomes.

"The same year, 1638, William Brenton had taken possession of the peninsula called Brenton's Neck, the boundary of which went in a straight line from the Lime Rocks east forming the northern boundary of Rocky Farm and extended quite to the sea shore on every side.

"In this was comprised over 2000 acres of land of the richest soil and presenting the most picturesque scenery diversified with hills, valleys, bays and ponds, fields adorned with most luxuriant grass, jutting rocks fringed with rich foliage, mingled with wild flowers, trees of superior growth (the hemlock, spruce and cedar, the oak, maple and chestnut) crowned the summit of the hills, and east of the little cove, shadows of the majestic oak were oft reflected in the mirrored surface which smoothly rested around the rocky base that sustained them. A short distance southwest of this cove William Brenton had a clearing made, materials brought from Boston and a brick building erected. This edifice was commonly called 'The Four Chimney House.' It was one hundred and fifty feet square, with a hall through the center sixteen feet wide. The roof was constructed with a railing, seats, and a promenade, and after some forest trees were felled, commanded a most extensive prospect of the surrounding country. On the south lay stretched the broad Atlantic, sparkling beneath the noontide sun; and here and there, the white sail of a fishing boat, fluttering upon the swelling billows, while the foaming spray was seen dashing upon the numerous rocks which graced the shore, and rolling majestically upon a smooth and sandy beach. On the north and east was a full view of the harbor, and high hills which seemed to touch the clouds, below which, and peeping

from Goat Island, was Newport in her infancy, embedded in romantic scenery; and more to the west, were the deep blue waters of Narragansett Bay and the outer harbor, with her tiny craft at anchor, or gracefully turning some point in the distance. Around this edifice William Brenton laid out the grounds, forming meadows and pastures, gardens and orchards, the enclosures of which were made of cut granite, three feet wide and five feet high, and trees were planted beside them in succession as they were completed; and from the happy recollections of his boyhood and paternal home, William Brenton named the estate Hammersmith, after the place in England from which he emigrated, and for many years it was his family residence, perhaps while his children were in their infancy, for there most of them were born; and it was the center of all his agricultural business, and the first spot on that Peninsula where nature had been improved by art; and it is said that no expense was spared to place it under elegant cultivation. The fruit trees for his orchards and gardens were brought from England, and there originated *the first Rhode Island greening*, and Yellow Russet. They were far superior to those of the present day, and could be kept without decay for more than nine months. This, it is supposed, proceeded from the new and rich soil from whence they grew."

At this time, 1638 to 1640, Newport, and in fact the whole Island of Rhode Island, was in its infancy, and it is safe to presume that no other person had set an orchard, unless Mr. Coddington's, previously mentioned, preceded this one, or that the now famous Rhode Island greening was in existence anywhere, unless it was on this estate.

I have tried my best to obtain more particulars about this orchard, and why the author claimed that it contained the Rhode Island greening, and if it did, whether it was a seedling, or if it came from England with the other



trees brought from there, but up to this time I have been unable to find anything which throws light on the subject.

As the author claims that much of this history is taken from record, and the rest from documents left by Benjamin Brenton, who was a citizen of Newport, where he spent most of the 93 years of his life, and whom she claims was remarkable for his retentive memory and strong intellect, it seems to me that until further proof is found regarding its origin, we might consider that in William Brenton's home orchard, on his extensive estate, covering the whole of Brenton's Neck, at Newport, R. I., somewhere about 1640, *was the original Rhode Island greening apple tree.*

Even so, it is quite probable that it might not have been so named until later, when the tree which brought the apple to the notice of so many at the Greene's Inn in Middletown advertised it so extensively.

I have spent much time in trying to locate the original Rhode Island greening tree, and am very sorry not to be able to state more definitely and with better proof just where it was.

RICHARD M. BOWEN,  
Buttonwoods, R. I.

