

The Society to 1920

The man actually responsible for calling the meeting at which the Iowa State Horticultural Society was formed was Mark Miller, editor of the *Iowa Homestead*. Miller sent out letters, ran articles in his farm paper, and travelled many miles on horseback to contact interested people. The Society established was the first separate agricultural group to be organized in Iowa. It was closely associated with the Iowa Agricultural Society which was organized in 1853. Today there are literally dozens of groups serving on a state-wide basis in promoting various phases of Iowa agriculture.

Dr. James Weed of Muscatine was elected first president; D. C. Kaufman of Des Moines, vice president; Mark Miller of Iowa City, secretary; and David Leonard of Burlington, treasurer. At the organization meeting, it was decided to hold a fruit show at the State Fair in Burlington in September and hold the next meeting in Des Moines on January 9, 1867, during the annual meeting of the Iowa Agricultural Society.

In 1868 the 12th General Assembly appropriated \$800 to carry on the Society's educational work in fruit and tree planting. This money had to last the Society for four years. The secretary

was to receive \$175 a year, but by 1871, with the secretary drawing only half of his salary, the Society had only \$3.07 left in its treasury. The 14th General Assembly came to its rescue on April 6, 1872, by establishing an annual appropriation of \$1,000. From this sum \$200 was to be used as premiums for the growing of forest trees. Thus, the Society acquired the status of a semi-official state organization with substantial support from the state treasury. This state support has varied somewhat from time to time, attaining a maximum of \$8,800 during the mid-1950's.

One of the duties of the Society was to promote and organize county and district horticultural societies. A number of these were in existence before the Civil War. Several were formed during the 1870's. They finally were reorganized into four regional societies, the Southeastern in 1869, the Southwestern in 1874, the Northeastern in 1891, and the Northwestern in 1892. Each of these regional groups received \$50 annually from the State Society. District societies played an important part in the horticultural development of their sections of the State. By the end of World War I, however, the Agricultural Experiment Station and Extension Service of Iowa State College had taken over many of their activities and their usefulness was greatly reduced. The district societies were disbanded by 1924.

Early interest in horticulture in Iowa centered

more on the production of fruits, especially the apple, than on its decorative phases. Vegetables, especially potatoes, cabbage, and onions, were well adapted to the soil and climate of the new State and were immediate necessities of life. Z. Hollingsworth of Montrose, Lee County, well describes the condition of horticulture in Keokuk about 1850: "The yards in the city of Keokuk are not only bare of trees and shrubs but with a few exceptions without fences. Market gardening is at a very low ebb. Vegetables are scarce and dear. Apples from wagons are rare—a few from Illinois." Nevertheless, people were hungry for fruits. Apples, pears, peaches, plums, and cherries from their home states constituted the first plantings of the early settlers.

Many of the first fruit trees planted before Iowa became a state were either seedlings or trees from eastern nurseries. As the tide of settlement moved westward, a demand for trees for windbreak and woodlot purposes developed, especially in the prairie areas where native trees were found only along the streams and rivers. Consequently, one of the first needs of the early settlers was a planting of trees and fruit plants of various kinds. The first nursery stock was brought to Iowa on river boats from Ohio and Indiana.

As settlement moved westward and northward in the State, other men began to supply the need for nursery stock. Often there would be only one

nursery to a large area. But in many counties, especially where there was a need for windbreaks and woodlots, many small nurseries were started to supply this need for trees. For instance, soon after the Civil War ended there were seven small nurseries in Bremer County alone, all of which have long since disappeared. The men who established these nurseries and orchards were few and often far removed in distance from other men with similar interests and problems. So it was to be expected that they would welcome a society where they could meet and talk over problems.

This is also the reason why most of the early members of the Iowa State Horticultural Society were either nurserymen, orchardists, or both.

As the land became settled and cities and towns developed, there arose an increasing interest in ornamental plants. Many of the plantings in the Society's experiment stations were not only different fruit varieties but ornamental trees and shrubs as well. As the demand for ornamental plants grew, nurserymen started to propagate them in increasing numbers; and in some cases, nurseries, such as M. J. Wragg Nursery in Des Moines, specialized in ornamental stock. As late as 1900, practically 90 percent of the stock produced in Iowa nurseries consisted of fruit plants and 10 percent ornamentals. Today at least 98 percent of such stock consists of a wide variety of ornamentals.

This change of interest is reflected in the membership of the Horticultural Society. However, even in the early days, members did not confine their interests to fruits and trees alone. Old annual reports of the Society contain many papers and talks on subjects embracing the entire horticultural field.

The early settlers knew little about the extremes of climate in this new country. They planted the varieties of fruits with which they were familiar in the eastern states. They were in for a rude awakening. The winter of 1842-1843 was extremely cold and long. The Mississippi River north of Keokuk froze solid in November of 1842 and remained closed until April 8, 1843. In March of 1843, the temperature dropped to below zero every day of the month. Trunks of large trees split open from limbs to roots. In some cases people said, "We could see through the trunk." This so-called "test winter" was followed by others. By 1880 at least five such winters had caused considerable damage. In some cases entire orchards were wiped out, and in others only the more winter tender varieties of fruits and ornamental plants were killed or injured. This was discouraging, but the Horticultural Society set for itself the task of finding varieties of fruits that would live through our Iowa winters without injury. Many and long were the discussions regarding the hardiness of not only various fruit varieties, but of many kinds

of ornamental trees and shrubs. Almost every year the Society printed a recommended list of fruit varieties for planting in various parts of the State. These were continually being changed as new varieties were introduced and serious faults found in others. Interested members of the Society, in various parts of the State, made experimental plantings mainly to test varieties to see if they were adapted to their localities. Each local experiment station was in charge of a superintendent, usually the farm owner, who received \$25 a year and expenses to the annual meeting. By 1897 there were 18 such stations. For the most part they were well handled and provided valuable information regarding the hardiness and adaptability of various horticultural plants.

Many species of trees and shrubs were also tested at these stations. M. J. Wragg, a nurseryman at Waukeg, suggested the Russian Olive. He also mentions in the 1883 Society's report that Iowans coming back from gold mining in the Pikes Peak area of Colorado brought with them the Colorado Blue Spruce, one of the most beautiful of ornamental trees. It was soon found that where seed was used to produce the blue spruce that only about 25 percent of the seedlings had the desirable silvery blue color that makes them so beautiful. The rest produced needles of a predominantly green color. Immediately, nurserymen experimented with various methods of propagat-

ing this spruce by cuttings or by grafting to reproduce the more colorful types. Today, a number of varieties are available. The hardy Catalpa was introduced by Suel Foster, Muscatine nurseryman, who promoted its planting as an ornamental tree.

During the past 100 years only 11 men have served as secretary of the Iowa State Horticultural Society. Of these, three were largely responsible for its development and program. They were J. L. Budd, Wesley Greene, and Robert S. Herrick.

Iowa horticulture owes much to Professor J. L. Budd. He had been a nurseryman near Shellsburg, Benton County, when, in 1877, he was called to head the Horticultural Department of the then Iowa Agricultural College at Ames. Professor Budd continued in this position until his retirement in 1899. Prior to this he had been one of the first members of the State Horticultural Society. He served 17 years as its secretary, from 1873-1885 and again from 1892-1895. He was largely instrumental in establishing and supervising the Society's experiment stations. Not only was Professor Budd an inspiring teacher but he was most active in improving the horticulture of the State. Many of his students were so fired by his enthusiasm that they became leading professional horticulturists. It was his daughter, Etta Budd, who, while teaching at Simpson College, Indianola,

persuaded George Washington Carver to attend Iowa State. Professor Budd furnished a room in his home for Carver and later hired him to manage the college greenhouses.

Budd was born July 3, 1835, at Peekskill, New York. He received his education in the public schools of Monticello and the Monticello Academy and Normal School. For a time he attended Hiram College in Ohio. In 1857 Budd came to Illinois where he taught school for a year. In 1858 he purchased a farm at Shellsburg and established the Benton County Orchards and Nursery, a successful business enterprise and highly valuable as a testing project for fruits.

Budd's selection to head the department was based on his scholarly attainments, his outstanding ability to appear before the public, his successful experience in orchard and nursery management, and his high standing among the horticulturists of Iowa. Budd did not seek the position; it was urged upon him by the Trustees of the College.

Professor Budd's enthusiasm for experiments, particularly in orcharding, was boundless. He collected and planted trees and scions of all promising apples, pears, and plums; planted a variety vineyard of grapes; and was in constant demand as a speaker at farmers' meetings on shelterbelt, windbreak, and garden and orchard plantings.

Budd's greatest enthusiasm was for apples. "I talk of the coming apple all the time," said he.

Severe winters, twice in Budd's time, had killed nearly all the better varieties of apples then being planted in Iowa. Hardiness was needed to provide desirable long-keeping apples for the settlers on the prairies. In 1878 theorizing that Russia and Northern Europe might furnish varieties capable of withstanding Iowa winters, he imported scions of 200 varieties of apples from Moscow and also some cherries and plums. In 1882 he and Charles Gibbs, a Quebec Canadian who financed the expedition, visited England and Europe in search of hardy fruit trees and collected 100 varieties of apples and many of pears, cherries, and ornamentals. Budd propagated these in large numbers in a departmental nursery and distributed them by thousands over the young State. Sales from his enterprise largely financed the field work of the department at that time, but it evoked considerable resentment from the commercial nurserymen. Budd's "Russians" proved of little value in Iowa. Apples that matured just before freezing weather in Russia ripened during July and August when grown under Iowa conditions. They did prove winter-hardy and furnished source material for later apple breeding programs. As these Russian varieties came into bearing, many Society members who had planted them began to doubt their value for planting in Iowa. Finally the "Russian Apple Debate" almost split the Society membership into two camps. Professor Budd said very little but fi-

nally retired as secretary of the Society in 1895 and from his position at Iowa State in 1899. In spite of his failure to furnish hardy apples for Iowa by introducing these Russian varieties, he did more than any other man of his time to develop and improve Iowa horticulture. Professor Budd died at Phoenix, Arizona, December 29, 1904, and was buried at Ames.

Late in 1899, Wesley Greene of Davenport was elected secretary to fill the unexpired term of George H. Van Houten who had followed Budd in 1896. Greene continued in this office until April 1920, to round out 21 years of service. In his last annual report he stated that his office had a mailing list of about 2,500 members. This list presumably included many, if not all, of the specialized societies, district societies, and perhaps county organizations. The 1920 report contained the last published list of members of the central society. The members were classified as follows: Honorary life members—10; Honorary members—5; Life members—531; Annual members—33; Total—579.

Under Greene's management the Society enjoyed two decades of steady growth and sound, fruitful service to Iowa horticulture. The well-educated and scholarly secretary brought to the Society the unusual combination of academic training, the inquiring mind of a scientist, and a deep interest in organizational activities.

Wesley Greene was born November 8, 1849, near Williamsburg, Pennsylvania. In 1857 he came with his parents to Scott County, Iowa. He lived in this State until 1922 when he moved to Cleveland, Ohio, where his death occurred on March 28, 1935.

Greene graduated from Iowa State College in 1873 and from the Law Department of the University of Iowa in 1875. After graduation, he spent five years teaching school and travelling. For the next 20 years, he engaged in farming, fruit-growing, market gardening, and floriculture. During this latter period he became active in various horticultural organizations around Davenport. After becoming secretary of the Iowa State Horticultural Society in 1899, he helped organize the Society of Iowa Florists and served as its secretary for 17 years. During much of this time he was superintendent of the Department of Floriculture at the Iowa State Fair.

While secretary of the State Horticultural Society, Greene prepared and published in the *Transactions*, no less than 78 scholarly papers, most of them involving the application of science to horticulture. Perhaps his most outstanding contribution was *Plants of Iowa*, which was published in 1907. In this he listed more than 3,000 species of native plants, including those which were introduced and are now a part of the flora of the State.

A biographical sketch prepared by Professor

H. L. Lantz of Iowa State College and published in the 1935 Annual Report of the Society closes with this following fitting tribute: "An active, creative life was his, and because of his deep and appreciative interest in plant life he contributed much to the horticulture of Iowa as it relates to better living."

During the period from the Civil War to the end of World War I, the Horticultural Society played an important part in pioneering the selection of fruit and ornamental plants for successful growing in the State. Much of this was done by testing, introducing, and selecting thousands of plants. In February 1888, the Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station was established at Iowa State College and gradually more scientific efforts were introduced to solve the problems of Iowa agriculture and horticulture. Professor Budd started a fruit-breeding program, mainly with apples, but this program was greatly expanded under the direction of S. A. Beach when he became head of the Department of Horticulture at Iowa State in 1905. Along with this more scientific approach to the solution of the problems of horticulture was the development of groups of men with similar interests within their general field. The first of these groups to organize on a state-wide basis was the commercial florists of the State. They formed the Society of Iowa Florists in 1903. The Iowa Fruit Growers Association was organized in 1912, the

Iowa State Vegetable Growers Association in 1913, the Iowa Beekeepers Association in 1915, and sometime before 1920 the Iowa Society of Landscape Architects. Also in 1920, the nurserymen of the State formed the Iowa Nurserymen's Association. All of these people were business, production, or professional men making their living in some phase of the field of horticulture. They were interested in getting together to discuss their own mutual problems. By 1920 a need had developed for a different type of horticultural society. Consequently as Wesley Greene retired after faithfully serving as secretary for 21 years the Society was reorganized under the leadership of a new and aggressive man, a man well trained to assume and guide the future development of the Society — Robert S. Herrick.

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