

Placer County Fruit Industry

Excerpts from The History of Placer County Horticulture, 1850-1900-- thesis by Sam Gittings

According to the Assessors report of 1856, more attention was paid to the planting of peaches than any of the other fruits and "when all the peach trees now planted reach maturity, this fruit will be as plentiful as tomatoes are at the present.

Ten years after the discovery of gold, in 1858, there were about 185 acres under fruit cultivation in the entire county. . . They did not fully appreciate the fact that orchard raising was a complicated, involved process, requiring an understanding of many factors to raise successfully fruit trees that would bear abundantly. . . One of the most serious mistakes. . . was planting trees too closely. . . another fault was planting of those fruit the grower was familiar with in his former locality, regardless of their suitability to climate, soil, or market. .

Colonel William McClure, of Yankee Jim's presented the editor of the Herald with some excellent cherries, which prompted him to write in a perplexed vein: "that fruit can be raised at Yankee Jim's, twenty miles above here in the mountains, and hauled over roads, where the tolls are wretchedly high and shipped below at a profit, seems strange, but the fruit is better and the thing is being done."

Fruit expansion was slow, comparable to the halting advance of the Central Pacific Railroad. Yet, when the golden spike was driven in Promontory, Utah, in 1869. . . more golden fruit appeared in Placer. In a two year period, from 1868 to 1870, Placer's fruit growers planted 47,478 trees. . . this spurt was largely attributable to the completion of the Central Pacific which opened a seemingly inexhaustible market. This marked the beginning of a new "golden" era for the fruit cultivators of Placer County in particular, and California in general. . . .

The Placer-Nevada History, states: "The credit for loading the first full car of fruit from Newcastle, is Mr. Wilson's it having been sold to Mrs. Astretta, of Denver, who came to Newcastle to examine. . . and supervise the shipment. It consisted of apples, peaches, and some pears, and a few plums, all being loaded in a common boxcar with end and side iron grating for ventilation".

. . .
Other shippers were: Newcastle Fruit Growers and Shipping Association, George D. Kellogg, in the late 1870's. . . 1880's .. Cooperative Fruit Company. . . Silva-Bergtholdt Company, Earl Fruit Company, Porter Bros, and the Pioneer Fruit Company. . .
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