

Apples

Pecans, peaches and pines are not the only trees that have played an important role in the history of Georgia's diverse agriculture. Apples are perhaps one of the state's oldest horticultural crops.

Jarvas Van Buren, a native of New York, was one of the state's earliest apple enthusiasts and promoters. He came to Georgia in the 1840's, purchased 10 acres of land in Habersham County, and established the Gloaming Nursery near his Clarkesville home. Gloaming was one of the early nurseries in the lower South featuring apples.

Van Buren was responsible for developing a system of nomenclature for naming native Georgia apple trees. He was an avid collector of southern apple seedlings with most of his specimens coming from old Cherokee Indian orchards in North Georgia and the upper Piedmont. He believed that these native apples needed only to be gathered and improved in order to develop a fruit equal to New York's best apples.

Habersham and Hall Counties were the center for Georgia's new apple industry. However, farmers throughout the state began to take notice of the selection of good trees and realized that it cost no more to raise good apples than it did to raise poor ones. The "apple a day" slogan became popular during this period as enthusiasm for apples spread and physicians recommended fruit to help maintain good health.

Colonel Singleton Buckner of Milledgeville is said to have had a typical orchard in 1860. His 50 acre orchard contained 7000 trees planted 17 feet apart each way. Some of



Buckner's trees produced as many as eight bushels each year. The fruit was marketed primarily in Montgomery and Savannah selling for five to seven dollars per barrel.

By 1860, Georgia farmers were proving that they could produce a successful apple crop. "No part of the United States has progressed more rapidly in pomology (the science of growing fruit) than has the Southern states in the past eight years," said Van Buren. "Apples in the upper portion of Georgia, where cotton does not grow are becoming a staple production; and even this year, when the crop is a failure, 40 to 50 thousand bushels of apples will be carried to market." Van Buren felt that the lack of transportation was the greatest obstacle hindering the development of Georgia's horticultural crops.

Fruit and vegetable production was encouraged during the Civil War years in order to prevent scurvy. In 1863, the Southern Cultivator stated, "Three cheers for the Buckners (a family in middle Georgia