A pound of *Pyrus Malus*, please

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THE FASCINATION OF THE NAMES applied to apples is compounded by the fact that they did not always remain stable, or rather that the fruit had different appellations in different places. Indeed, the United States is not as uniform either in speech or in nomenclature as one would ordinarily assume. Whether one eats cottage cheese or schmierkase depends on the location of the restaurant; the flicker is a woodpecker in some parts of the country and a yellow hammer or high hole elsewhere; the common chicory, with its warm blue field flowers, is also known as succory or coffee-weed or blue sailors, and the bream which Henry Thoreau caught in Concord River would be identified as pumpkinseeds or sunfish in other areas.

Likewise with apples. To most New Englanders the Baldwin apple is as familiar as Plymouth Rock, but it has also been known as the Woodpecker apple, the Pecker apple, or Steele's Red Winter. The Rambo, once popular in the Philadelphia area, was also called the Romanite or the Bread-and-Cheese apple or even the Seek-no-further; the Gloria Mundi masqueraded as the Baltimore, the American Mammoth, and the Ox Apple. Varying names for the Ortley included the Ohio Favorite, the White Detroit, and the Greasy Pippin, whereas the Berry apple was also called the Pound, the Red Hazel, and the Red Warrior. Variant names for the Detroit apple included the Crimson Pippin and the Red Detroit. The Pomme de Neige had Fameuse or Snowy Chimney as alternative labels, and the Horse apple from North Carolina was known as the Summer Horse or Yellow Hoss.

In 1817 William Coxe of Burlington, New Jersey, one of the first American pomologists, published a book about fruits in which one chapter was devoted to apples.[1] He provided illustrations and careful descriptions of a "selection of one hundred kinds of the

[1] William Coxe, *A View of the Cultivation of Fruit Trees, and the Management of Orchards and Cider* (Philadelphia, 1817), pp. 100–173.

most estimable apples cultivated in our country," and in each case commented on the quality of the fruit and its place of origin. Occasionally Coxe's remarks about individual apples were as pungent as the fruit he was describing. Thus of the early summer Pearmain he wrote: "It frequently cracks open on the tree, and bursts from its own weight in falling." The Monstrous Pippin, sometimes called the Gloria Mundi, was the victim of its bulk: "its uncommon size subjects it to be blown down, and to be stolen: it is not therefore a desirable apple beyond a few trees in a collection." The Father Abraham he termed "a small apple of a flat form," while the Swaar he called "a large green apple, of great and uncommon flavour and richness." Unqualified praise was given to the Newton Pippin: "This is in most of its varieties the finest apple of our country, and probably of the world."

Even better known than Coxe's book, however, was the treatise of Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Fruits and Fruit Trees of America*, first published in 1845 but revised and enlarged by the author's brother, Charles Downing, in 1867.[2] Downing extended Coxe's original list by arranging his varieties into groups. The First Class Apples included such familiar names as the Baldwin, the Jonathan, the Northern Spy, the Ortley, the Porter, and the Winesap, together with many which have since disappeared. Second Class Apples included the Michael Henry Pippin, the Vandevere, and the Detroit Red, which today only a specialist would recognize. Third Class Apples were qualified for special places and special conditions.

Downing's Fourth Class Apples were good only for the cider press, and his Fifth Class were useful only for ornamentation. He also listed apples suitable for propagation in regions of the country and named thirty-two species selected by growers in Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, and Iowa.

In 1896 an Illinois professor of horticulture, T. J. Burrill, stated that 1,200 varieties of apples had been planted in the university orchards with considerably varying results.[3] Some 350 trees with such names as Crow's Nest, Father Abraham, Genesee Chief, Neversink, and Winter Cheese did not live to bear fruit. Among the 500

[2] Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Fruits and Fruit Trees of America* (New York, 1867).

[3] T. J. Burrill, *Varieties of Apples*, Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Illinois, July, 1896, Bulletin No. 45, pp. 297–348.

varieties which did produce fruit were the following names: Betsey, Bushwacker, Fourth of July, Magnum Bonus, Maiden's Blush, Nelson's Victory, Nine Partners, Nickajack, and Sparhawk. But Burrill specified the William Prince, the Hicks, the Jonathan, Coon's Red, and Limbertwig as some of those bearing greatest promise.

A bulletin written by J. R. Magness in 1941 for the United States Department of Agriculture gives in a compact thirty-two pages as complete an account of the American apple situation as the non-specialist could wish.[4] Magness commented that orchards were producing better fruit from fewer trees. The Northeastern section of the country, including parts of Michigan and New York, produced about 25 per cent of American apples, with the Baldwin the best known but being rapidly replaced by the McIntosh. The Rhode Island Greening, Northern Spy, Wealthy, Delicious, Ben Davis, and Duchess were also favorites. The central Atlantic section produced slightly less, with the York Imperial and the Winesap being the best known. The Ohio Valley and adjacent areas accounted for about 10 per cent of the crop, with the Rome Beauty, Grimes Golden, Jonathan, Winesap, Delicious, and Ben Davis being preferred.

The Southwestern section and the North Central section produced together less than 6 per cent. The important Western section, from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific Coast and including mostly irrigated territory, grew 34 per cent of the crop. In Washington, Delicious apples were the most popular, and this variety together with the Winesap, the Jonathan, the Rome Beauty, and the Yellow Newtown accounted for 90 per cent of the orchard trees. In other parts of the transmontane West the order was somewhat different, and varieties like the Ortley, the Esopus Spitzenberg, the Gravenstein, and the McIntosh had local importance. Magness remarked that if varieties like the Baldwin, the Ben Davis, the Northern Spy, and the Wealthy were gradually dropping from their preferred positions, it was because of growing preference for what is called the dessert apple, such as the Delicious, the Winesap, and the McIntosh.

[4] J. R. Magness, *Apple Varieties and Important Producing Sections of the United States*, Farmers' Bulletin No. 1883, United States Department of Agriculture, November, 1941, pp. 1–32.

New varieties of apples are being constantly introduced, of course, and compete with the long established names in the market and on the table. In Minnesota the Haralson apple has become most profitable. In 1964 the Canadian Department of Agriculture announced the production of three new varieties, all early fruiting apples: the Quinte, the Caravel, and the Ranger (which is defined as a cross between the Crimson Beauty and the Melba).[5] Today the criteria for a successful apple are an excellent dessert quality, an attractive appearance, and ample productivity. The seedlings that the widely peregrinating Johnny Appleseed scattered throughout Ohio and Indiana in the early nineteenth century had few of these characteristics.

S. W. Cole over a century ago was concerned about the labeling of apples, even though he recognized the necessity of differentiation: "It is acknowledged that the producer of fruit has the best right to name it," he wrote. "If he neglects it, the discoverer of a new kind may name it; and next in order comes the claim of him who introduces it to the public. All uncouth, and very long names should be avoided, as Ramshorns, Hogpen, Back of the Barn Apple, etc. All apples decidedly sweet should include in their name the term *Sweet* or *Sweeting*."[6]

When there are thousands of apple varieties to differentiate and characterize, great accuracy in nomenclature might seem unattainable; indeed, it is difficult to imagine greater irregularity than actually exists. The textbook listings of apples commonly characterize them by the size, the shape, the color, the weight, the juiciness or mellowness, and the keeping qualities of the fruit. Generally too, the productivity of the trees is considered, and most pomological descriptions mention the basic function of the apple being identified: cooking, cider, or dessert. But at this point the cleavage between apples and their names begins.

Many apples bear the names of the men who first discovered, grew, or grafted them, or the man on whose property the tree flourished. One thinks immediately of the Baldwin apple, originally produced by Loammi Baldwin who found an apple tree with superior fruit while surveying the Middlesex Canal. Or the famous

[5] *Toronto Daily Star*, December 31, 1964, p. 17.

[6] S. W. Cole, *The American Fruit-Book* (New York, 1860), p. xii. The first edition of this book appeared in 1849.

Jonathan, named in compliment to Jonathan Hasbrouck of Kingston, New York. Or the Porter, once a familiar fall apple in the Boston market, which commemorates the Reverend S. Porter of Sherburne, Massachusetts. Or the Hurlbut, which preserved the name of its initial grower, General Leonard Hurlbut of Winchester, Connecticut. Or Grimes' Golden Pippin introduced by Thomas Grimes of Brooks County, Virginia.

Cole's Quince, originally raised by Captain Henry Cole of Cornish, Maine, was extravagantly praised by the grower's son: "When very mellow, remarkably tender, of a mild, rich, high quince flavor and aroma. When in perfection we have never seen its superior."[7] The Morgan apple was produced first by Benjamin Morgan of Gloucester County, New Jersey, and Williams' Favorite was propagated by A. D. Williams of Roxbury, Massachusetts. The Michael Henry Pippin celebrated an orchardist of Monmouth County, New Jersey, and the once familiar Vandevere apple bore the name of a Wilmington, Delaware, family which originated it. The initial grower of the Fairbanks apple was T. E. Fairbanks of Winthrop, Maine; the Priestley apple is associated with a resident of Bucks County, Pennsylvania; and the Minkler Sweet derived its name from S. G. Minkler of Kendall County, Illinois. Sometimes a family name was chosen by the original horticulturist; thus Peter Gideon, who developed the Wealthy apple on the shores of Lake Minnetonka in Minnesota, used his wife's patronymic. But Samuel Allinson of Burlington, New Jersey, who introduced the Maiden's Blush apple must have been either a proud father or an idealist.

Accidental proximity explains a few names. The Smokehouse apple is associated with a wealthy Quaker named Gibbons who grew his trees near a smokehouse. The oddly christened Skunk apple had nothing objectionable either in flavor or aroma but owed its name to the fact that a den of skunks was discovered near the roots of the original tree. Various family traditions no doubt explain the genesis of the Doctor apple, the Grandfather apple, the Minister apple, Aunt's apple, the Mother apple, and the Lady apple (although this is commonly identified as a French import, "pomme d'api"). The Methodist apple from Connecticut, which Downing described as having "flesh white, tender, mild, sub-acid, not rich," probably owes its name to the religious affiliation of its grower.[8]

[7] Cole, p. 99.

[8] Downing, p. 217.

Some apples derive their ordinary appellations from their true or fancied shapes. Rough analogy explains the Sheepnose, the Bullet, the Red Cathead, the Cabbage Head, the Bull Head, and the Lady Finger or Long Pippin. Size suggested other names, notably the Pound apple, the Pound Pippin, the Twenty Ounce, the Monarch, and the Monstrous Pippin.

Sometimes the peculiarities of the tree itself are commemorated in the names of the fruit borne; in this way undoubtedly originated the Fallawater, the Limbertwig, the Willowtwig, the Large Early Bough, the Yellow Bough, and the Kentucky Long Stem. Color of course is one of the primary differentials and remains significant in nomenclature. There are any number of Greening or Russet apples, the name usually prefixed with some geographical description (the Long Island Greening) or the cognomen of the original horticulturist (Shippen's Russeting, originally grown by Justice Shippen of Philadelphia). Early lists of favorites often included the Black apple, the Snow apple, the Golden Pippin. Downing described among his second class apples a fruit called the Beefsteak apple, grown by Joel Davis of Amesbury, Massachusetts, and distinguished by its marbled skin which was splashed and striped with red. Cole gave warm testimony to the virtues of the Magnolia apple of Bolton, Massachusetts, "one of the most beautiful and best of apples, excepting some in the shade lack character."[9]

In similar fashion attempts were made to suggest the taste of the fruit by the name assigned it. The Delicious and Winesap apples popular and numerous today are good examples, but there were many others, some of them long obsolete. Thus early horticulturists grew the Melon apple, the Winter Banana, the Orange apple, the Early Strawberry, the Pawpaw apple, the Pear apple, the Peach apple, the Sassafras Sweet, the Tallow apple, and a fruit enticingly called Sops of Wine.

For those who liked more astringent flavors there were the Tart Bough and the Sweet and Sour (like Chinese pork). The Cider apple was both a specific name and a generic term. Sweetings were so numerous as to be almost in a class by themselves, with the Ladies' Sweeting, the Jersey Sweeting, the Golden Sweeting, the Pound Sweeting, Lyman's Pumpkin Sweet, and Danvers' Winter Sweet.

[9] Cole, p. 112.

Several species were imported from Europe and retained their original names, although their qualities were modified in time by experiment. Thus the Hawthornden apple came from the home of the Scottish poet Drummond. William Coxe himself brought into American production the Drap d'Or from France and the Fama Gusta (from Cyprus by way of England). The Red Astrachan came from Sweden about 1816, the Duchess of Oldenburg from Russia, the well-known Gravenstein (still important in California orchards) from a town in Holstein, and the Swaar (from the Dutch word meaning "heavy") from Holland, although it was domesticated at Esopus, New York. The Reinette Franche and the Belle Bonne were obviously of French origin, and the Pomme de Neige came from France via Canada. The Gewiss Good sounds like a Pennsylvania Dutch modification since it originated in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and probably the Gelbe Gestreift had a similar genesis. The Male Carle, an indifferent apple in the American market, was identified by Cole as the first apple of Italy.

The enthusiasm of certain growers accounts for most of the more eccentric appellations and suggests that for a time the quest for a perfect fruit was all but over. In addition to such obvious names as the Exquisite, the Superb, and the Delight, one finds the Better than Good, sometimes called the Juicy Bite, the Melt in the Mouth, the Large Never Fail, the Ne Plus Ultra, and the Sine Qua Non.

If some horticulturists treasured the Rich and Sprightly, others preferred the Holdfast or the Imperial Magnifique. A familiar and much praised nineteenth century variety was the Hubbardston Nonsuch. The name Neversink may owe its origin to the New Jersey Indian name, Navesink River, since in early documents Navesink appeared as Neversink. Certainly the culmination of the pomologist's work is expressed in the label Seek-no-further. Beyond perfection one cannot go.

Most of the above names were further multiplied or modified by the addition of color variants or seasonal epithets. Thus there are the Yellow May and the Yellow June, the Carolina Red, the Early Rose, Early June, Early Ripe, and Early Harvest, the Summer Queen and Summer Rose, the Yellow and the White Belle Fleur (or Bellflower). The autumn harvest brought to perfection the Fall Stripe, the Fall Pippin, the Fall Orange, Pennock's Red Winter,

the Harvest Red Streak from Michigan, the White Winter Pearmain, and the Winter Queen. Another desirable quality in apples is apparent in the names given to those fruits which best resisted spoilage. From Long Island came the Yellow Everlasting, while Young's Longkeep and the Medium Red Long Keeper suggest the importance of durability.

The apple has served as a love charm, a chastity test, an object used in divination, and a means of distraction in tests or races (Hippomenes won a race with Atalanta by dropping three golden apples which the goddess stopped to retrieve). It has been important in mythology, in history, and in agriculture. Many a youngster has been encouraged to eat the fruit by a proverb (an apple a day keeps the doctor away). Politicians frequently operate on the principle that it is unwise to upset the apple cart or profess their devotion to a truth that is as sure as the fact that God made little apples. Contempt may be indicated by saying that a certain paper is not worth a rotten apple, but at the same time the cynic will argue that rotten apples are the sweetest. One can be sure only that the apple of one's stomach is not always the apple of one's eye.

The average housewife in the supermarket today is not much concerned about the species of apples displayed beyond the fact that she knows whether she wants apples to cook or apples to eat. And certainly the merchant is not going to stock hundreds of varieties even if they were obtainable in quantity when his customers can recognize the names of only Delicious, Jonathan, or Winesap. But the enormous number of species once or still existent must give pause to one who knows something of their history. Perhaps it would be best to say to the shopkeeper the next time one fills a grocery list, "A pound of *pyrus malus*, please."

[10] A recent advertisement for Canadian produce is entitled, "*Pyrus Malus:* a Nova Scotia product (Since 1633)." See the *New Yorker* 41, Sep. 18, 1965.

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