



December 2015

Dear

The Montezuma Orchard Restoration Project (MORP) hopes your Thanksgiving was full of gratitude, family, friends, and of course....*apples*. *Apples*...the more we learn about their history, variety, resilience, and place in the Montezuma Valley, the more thankful we are that apples root deeply in our culture.

This year MORP has taken great strides in documenting and preserving our rich fruit-growing heritage. We invite you to read about our work and to *please support MORP with a year-end, tax-deductible donation*.

But first, a little about apples....

HOW DID APPLES GET HERE?

Native to the Kazakhstan region of Asia Minor, by 2500 B.C. apples grew throughout Mesopotamia's Fertile Crescent—present day Iraq and Syria. As Greeks and Romans advanced the art of grafting, apples spread northwest into Europe. By 1650 apples had made their way across the Atlantic and expansive orchards were planted specifically for cider along the eastern seaboard. Cider, often a replacement for non-potable water, became the national drink as well as a source of currency. New varieties were grafted and grown from seed, and in 1905 17,000 apple cultivars were catalogued in American publications.

By 1905 apples had arrived in the Montezuma Valley. In the late 1800s, fruit-growing pioneers planted orchards in Weber Canyon, McElmo, Lewis, Lakeview, Arriola, Haycamp, "German Town", and Lebanon. Montezuma County fruit took three of four gold medals awarded to Colorado at the 1904 St. Louis World's Fair; two years later, our local fruits won 97 blue ribbons at the Colorado State Fair. In 1922, **over 48,000 apple trees** were documented in Montezuma County by state horticulturalist, Dr. E.P Sandsten. He described 49 varieties and listed nearly 900 trees as "unknown". From homestead gardens to commercial orchards, apples were prized for fresh fruit, juice, cider, baking, saucing, vinegar and feed. In 1934, the E.W. Neal Orchard in Arriola shipped 30,000 bushels—600 tons—of apples to Texas. But sadly, local apple production declined with post-WWII development of commodity apples in the Pacific Northwest. A mere handful of apples were replacing the wide diversity of taste and abundance so carefully crafted by our forefathers.

WHY MORP?

Thankfully, hundreds of heritage orchards, thousands of old trees and numerous varieties on the verge of extinction still live, of great value in their rarity, genetics, hardiness and range of flavor and uses. These remnants of pioneer work, together with a deep respect for our agricultural heritage and sense of place, fuel MORP *to preserve the rare fruit genetics, document our fruit-growing heritage, and restore an orchard culture and economy to our region*. Through orchard workshops, historic research, engagement with knowledgeable people and renewed interest in local food and cider, an active interest in orchards is again taking hold. With your help, *MORP believes that the remarkable orchard culture and economy that once existed here is again possible*.



Classic Stayman apples, prized for cider

2015 MILESTONES

2015 has seen many milestones for MORP. Taking a leap of faith in the value of old apples, MORP founders Addie and Jude Schuenemeyer closed Let It Grow Nursery to devote themselves full-time to the work they have been voluntarily doing for seven years—locating orchards, identifying fruit varieties, grafting trees, teaching workshops, and restoring and re-planting orchards. Then, thanks to a clear vision and support from folks like you, MORP received its first grants this year, giving the Board of Directors confidence to create three part-time positions. They bestowed the titles of Orchardist to Addie and Jude, and Director to former Board President Nina Williams. This fall, our orchardists mapped 28 orchards—one with 500 trees—and located eight apples we had not seen before! Their names are as intriguing as the apples: Northern Spy, Yellow Bellflower, Ben Davis, Stayman, Winter Rambo, Liveland Raspberry, Richard's Graft.

GRANT SUCCESS!

Building on our momentum, the Colorado Department of Agriculture awarded MORP \$60,000 to collect scion wood, graft and grow 3,000 heritage trees; enlist the USDA Plant Germplasm unit to identify unknown varieties; conduct grafting and pruning workshops; plant orchards at elementary and high schools with the Montezuma School to Farm Project; and conduct a market analysis for fresh fruit, juice and cider. The Gates Family Foundation and Whole Foods Market stepped up to provide matching funds, and the Kenney Brothers Foundation granted support to map and survey local orchards.



Possible Ben Davis apples found this fall

PLEASE HELP PRESERVE THE LEGENDARY QUALITY OF MONTEZUMA VALLEY FRUITS

While grants are crucial, they are temporary. Only steadfast community support creates viable institutions, and *it is your support that will ensure MORP's long-term success* by enabling us to map orchards, research history, identify old apples, graft heritage trees to distribute to the community, plant school orchards, work with CSU to cultivate heirloom apples in Yellow Jacket, teach workshops and ultimately work with fruit growers to tackle production challenges such as labor, codling moth, marketing and distribution. *Please make a generous year-end, tax-deductible donation today, and help keep Montezuma County "Orchard Country".* No amount is too small.



MORP sees resilient beauty in what others often see as an old mess. Our aim is NOT to preach about what to do...but rather to inspire an appreciation for our fruit heritage...so that folks see old orchards as assets rather than burdens.

With great appreciation and best wishes for the holidays,

Nina Williams, Director
Addie and Jude Schuenemeyer, Orchardists
Ken Amling, Joyce Lawrence, Sara Miller, David Sanford,
Bryan Shanks, Sarah Syverson, Dusty and Martha Teal
(Board of Directors)