

WELCOME TO THE HISTORIC GOLD MEDAL ORCHARD

REMEMBERING OUR PAST, ENVISIONING THE FUTURE

You are standing in McElmo Canyon where it joins Trail Canyon. This is the site of the historic Gold Medal Orchard. It represents one of hundreds of remnant historic orchards located in Montezuma County and across Colorado. First planted in 1890 by James Giles, the orchard soon earned its name by winning a gold medal for the quality of its apples and peaches at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904.



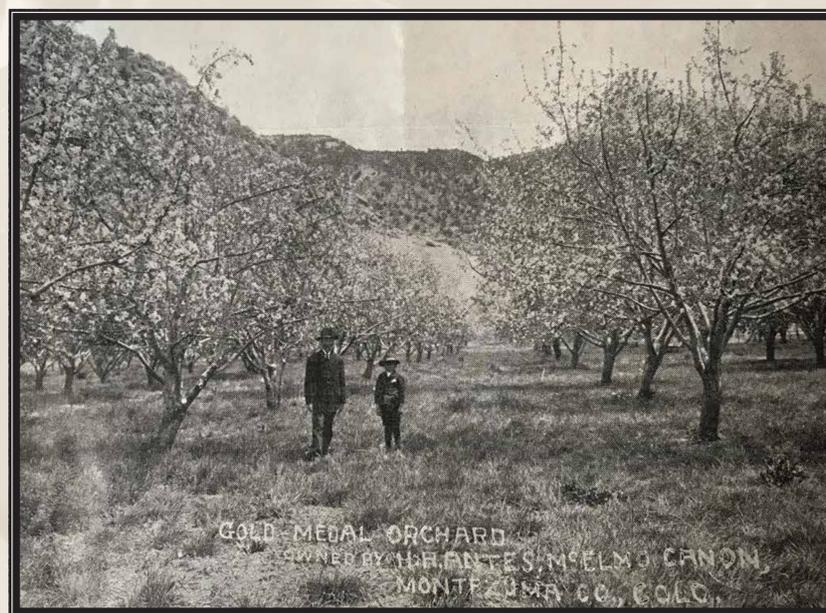
A coveted gold medal (L) and Montezuma County fruits on display at the 1904 World's Fair (R). Both represent the quality and diversity of fruit that historically grew here that have been restored to the site.

Remaining on-site are several old apple, pear, and quince trees, portions of the historic orchard fence; and under the grand cottonwoods are two historic homes with sheds and a privy.



The orchard has been in the Duncan-Vencil-Kenyon Family for over 100 years. Since the time she was a little girl, Vivienne Kenyon remembers riding with her dad, William Vencil, in his truck to take fruit to market.

Close your eyes and imagine what you would have seen while standing here at the turn of the 20th century. Fruit trees spread across the canyon floor, pink, white, and red blossoms snowing down in the spring, limbs heavy with crops throughout the summer and fall. Apples, peaches, apricots, pears, cherries, and plums ripening in the warm sun and cool evenings in the perfect location to grow beautiful and flavorful fruit.



Reverend Howard Antes and son in 1909. Inscription reads: Gold Medal Orchard Owned By: H.R. Antes, McElmo Canon, Montezuma CO., COLO

Time passed, the trees grew into their grandeur, and then slowly faded into the landscape. Over 100 years later, only a few historic trees remain, hardy remnants of the orchard's former glory. Heritage fruit varieties were lost, and the story of the Gold Medal Orchard and its prize-winning fruits was nearly forgotten.

Today, the story of the Gold Medal Orchard is remembered by the Montezuma Orchard Restoration Project (MORP) through its work to preserve Colorado's fruit-growing heritage. In 2015, the orchard was listed as one of Colorado's Most Endangered Places by Colorado Preservation, Inc. MORP works with the Kenyon family to have it become a Saved Site.



A young volunteer helps replant the orchard (L). The Kenyon Family (Vivienne, far left, and her husband Phil, far right) and MORP (cofounder Jude Schuenemeyer and his daughter Nora, center) joined efforts to restore the Gold Medal Orchard to its former glory (R). They broke ground in 2016 by planting a baby graft (foreground) made from the old Wolf River apple tree (background) before it died.

Open your eyes wide and take a good look at the roughly 400 fruit trees growing before you. They represent rare fruit genetics (primarily apples) that were grafted by MORP from this and other historic Colorado orchards. Envision these young trees of old genetics reaching their prime, and then still growing another hundred years from now. Gifts of our fruit-growing pioneers passed down by MORP for future generations to taste and preserve.



You are invited to share in this vision by becoming a Sustain-a-Tree sponsor at www.montezumaorchard.org