

ON THIS DAY IN WEST VIRGINIA HISTORY FEBRUARY 20



On February 20, 1995, the West Virginia State Senate adopted a resolution designating the Golden Delicious as the official state fruit.

CSO: SS.8.23, ELA.21, ELA.8.22

Investigate the Document: (*Charleston Daily Mail*, October 18, 1962)

1. In what county was the Golden Delicious Apple discovered?

2. What tool did Mr. Mullins use as a young boy to mow around the apple tree which produced the first Golden Delicious apples?

Think Critically: What are the following state symbols of West Virginia?

- State Fruit: _____
- State Bird: _____
- State Flower: _____
- State Animal: _____
- State Tree: _____

Why do states have state symbols? What do you think they represent collectively? If you were given the choice to have *something* represent West Virginia as a state symbol that is not one currently, what would it be? Why?



Charleston Daily Mail

FINAL

EDITION

CHARLESTON, WEST VIRGINIA, THURSDAY EVENING, OCTOBER 18, 1962

FIVE CENTS

ROVING THE VALLEY

Dunbar Man 'Discoverer' Of Golden Delicious Apple

By **ADRIAN GWIN**
Of The Daily Mail Staff

It's apple time again in West Virginia, and no apple gives more delight than the Golden Delicious.

That it's a native son of the Mountain State is a story known around the world wherever the



GWIN famous nectar-flavored yellow apple is grown — and where it is not grown? The story has been known for years, how the first tree was discovered as a wild volunteer on a hillside of Porter's Creek near Odessa in Clay county.

The Stark Brothers nursery of Missouri made the story and the apple famous. Stark brothers promoted the apple and developed it from the one tree, which they bought lock, stock and barrel back in the early 1900s.

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HERE'S NEW TWIST TO THE OLD STORY

And now comes a new twist to the old story, in the form of a man who says that he is the man to whom the world owes homage for first discovering the tree.

He may be right. It's his story.

He is J. M. Mullins, now a man in his 87th year and living in Dunbar, though he spent his lifetime until recent years in Clay County.

"The true story of that first Golden Delicious apple tree never has been told," he said. "But son, I'm here to tell it now, for the first time. There are a lot of facts about that tree that haven't been told before. Told straight, that is.

"What I'm telling you is fact. I was there."

The elderly man settled in a chair and raised a finger to emphasize his words.

"I was born in 1876 on the farm where that apple tree later became famous. My dad was L. L. Mullins, who owned the farm.

"Now one day, when I was about 15 years old, that would have been about 1891, dad sent me out with a big old mowin' scythe to mow the pasture field.

"I was swingin' away with the scythe when I come across a little apple tree that had grown about 20 inches tall. It was just a new little apple tree that had volunteered there. There wasn't another apple tree right close by anywhere.

MOWED AROUND IT AGAIN AND AGAIN

"I thought to myself, 'Now young feller, I'll just leave you there,' and that's what I did. I

mowed around it and on other occasions I mowed around it again and again, and it grew into a nice lookin' little apple tree and eventually it was a big tree and bore apples.

"Now my dad later gave that piece of the farm in a trade to my brother, B. W. Mullins, and later still he traded the farm place to Uncle Anderson Mullins.

"Uncle Anderson had a brother-in-law named Gus Carnes, and one day Gus and Uncle Anderson decided to send some of the apples to the Stark Brothers nursery to tell what kind of apple it was. And that was when the tree become famous and started the Golden Delicious apple line, for it was that tree that has produced every last one of the Golden Delicious apple trees that have ever grown anywhere.

"The Starks sent a man to look at the tree, just like you've heard, and they bought the tree and the ground for 30 feet around it and eventually they fenced it. They were to get all the fruit from the tree, down to the last apple.

**PAID FIFTY DOLLARS,
NOT FIVE THOUSAND**

"But they never paid the \$5,000 that it was said later they paid.

I know how much they paid and it was \$50 that first time, for all the fruit that come from the tree and they was to pay a 'marketable price' for the fruit. And that's a fact."

"Where'd it come from? Well, we always figured it this way: There was a row of four or five little scrawny apple trees down near the house that bore a yellow appie something like the Grimes Golden, only smaller.

"We always called it the 'Annit apple' — no, I can't spell it, but that's what we called the little yellow apples, and we always figured that this tree grew from a seed off one of those trees. The first apples from the new tree were small, and though the taste of them was 'way different from the Annit apple, it looked a lot like it.

"The Starks grafted and improved and made over the new apple, but that's the story of where the Golden Delicious (Starks named it that, after they got the rights to the tree) came from."

"I just wanted you and everybody else to know that I'm the fellow that didn't cut down that apple tree seedling one day when I was mowin' the pasture field."



HE SPARED THAT TREE—Bright-eyed and his memory clear at 86 years of age, J. M. Mullins recalls a day more than 70 years ago when he spared a tree seedling as he mowed the pasture field with a scythe, and thus started on the way to fame the first Golden Delicious apple tree. Now a Dunbar resident (504½ Park Avenue), he was a Clay County resident until recently.