

## Reminiscences

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E. S. Hubbard, Federal Point, Florida.

Coming from Middletown, Conn., I landed at Federal Point from the steamer Rosa, Capt. Joe Smith, Sept. 3, 1880, to clerk in the store of my uncle, Capt. Edwin Smith.

The people were talking about planting strawberries. In 1876 J. C. Folsom, who with his partner, J. E. Tenney, founded Federal Point, while riding horseback in the country back of what is now Hastings, noticed in the garden of a native farmer a bunch of strawberry plants full of large red fruit. When the runners were made he secured all he could get and the next winter carried the fruit in milk pans out on the wharf and sold them to passengers of the numerous river steamboats, then the only means of traveling in Florida south of Jacksonville. Bowen Brothers of Mandarin became interested and built a lot of refrigerators, the largest holding 480 quarts; and in 1879 Federal Point shipped 40,000 quarts and Mandarin 20,000. The first berries to go into market sold for \$5.00 per quart and when the price got down to \$1.00 per quart the growers stopped shipping and sold the remainder of the crop in local markets. The first winter I was here the plants began to rust, which summer killed both old plants and runners so largely that the growers shifted to Wilson's Al-

bany, a poor berry comparatively, and the original "Federal Point" berry became extinct. This was before the day of knowledge as to fungi and fungicides.

That winter I made my first visit to the Mays' orange grove at Orange Mills, which with the Rembert grove at Drayton Island were the two oldest orange groves in Florida. These groves were planted by Zephaniah Kingsley about 1824 (Kingsley was one of the most unique characters in Florida), after it was ceded to the United States by Spain in 1821. He occupied Fort George Island at the mouth of St. Johns river: Was sugar planter, slaver and accused of piracy. Fort George Inlet empties into the ocean just north of St. Johns river jetties. Kingsley's fast schooners traded across to Africa and evaded discovery by being moored against the rocky bluff at the north end of the island, their rigging being festooned with Florida moss. Kingsley married an African princess, and his two daughters, for a consideration of \$20,000 each, were married to two Englishmen. Their descendants are still living.

There were 3 or 4 acres in the original part of the Mays grove. They were sweet seedlings with two to five trunks, having been killed to the ground in the 1835

freeze. There were three types of oranges in the original grove, a round full colored orange not quite so fine flavor as Homosassa; a lighter colored orange slightly flattened and not quite so sweet—an Azorean type; and a very sweet oblong orange known as "Early Oblong," or "Sweet Seville." As the St. Johns and Ocklawaha rivers, with the stage line from Palatka through Ocala to Tampa were the only means of travel in the early days, it would seem that most of the sweet seedling orange trees in Florida were propagated from seed from the Mays and Rembert groves.

The Dancy grove at Orange Mills, 1859, the Hart grove at East Palatka, 1859, the Speer grove at Sanford, 1842, and the Stark grove at Enterprise somewhat later, were the same types of oranges, and the improved varieties, Dancy's old Vini, Homosassa, Stark's seedless and Parson Brown appear to me to be crosses of the Mays' round and early oblong oranges.

There were small yard groves about St. Augustine and at Picolata, which was quite a settlement with a convent, in the early days, being the point of crossing the St. Johns river on the King's road to Tallahassee. Wild sweet oranges were found in the hammocks at New Smyrna after the Civil War, but the Mays and Rembert groves were the only ones of any size set in grove form in the early days.

I was informed by Mr. Andrew Yelvington of Hastings, after the 1895 freeze, that his grandfather told him when a boy that the 1835 freeze killed

very few orange trees to the ground, but that on the 15th of April the same year there was a killing frost that killed most of the sprouts that came out on the orange trees cut back by the February freeze and that but few orange trees survived this frost.

A good many small orange groves were started after the 1835 freeze, but the long scale made its appearance and few trees survived the scale.

The orange grove set out in 1824 by Kingsley at Orange Mills, was for some years before the war owned by Dr. Mays, who with his brother-in-law, Col. Cole, had a large sawmill there. There was a wild sour orange grove on the Cole place adjoining the Mays grove and Mrs. Mays was an enterprising woman who more than doubled the size of the Mays grove, the addition being largely budded with her own hands on sour stock. On my first visit to the Mays grove there were four or five good sized grapefruit trees on the place loaded with fruit. They were looked on as a curiosity at that time and I remember young people of the party cutting them in halves and on tasting the bitter tissues, throwing them on the ground. It was some ten years later before public attention to any extent was drawn to grapefruit as a tonic dessert fruit.

When I first came to Florida complete commercial fertilizers were practically unknown. Professor Atwater of Wesleyan University, Middletown, Conn., for three or four years had induced several farmers to use nitrate of soda and muriate of potash in connection with raw bone

and super phosphate for field crops. Edmund H. and Walter N. Hart, my future brothers-in-law, were growing young orange trees by mulching the rows between the trees with wire grass and growing cowpeas in the middles with "Ash Element," which was half Charleston phosphate floats and half kainit. They got an immense growth of pea vines, which supplied the nitrogen for vigorous tree growth. It was several years before Forrester's complete chemical fertilizer, composed of sulphate of ammonia, dissolved bone black and double manure salts 4-6-12 came into general use in their groves. People in those days sometimes paid dearly for ignorant fertilizing. Some pioneers at one place were interested in linseed oil mills and applied linseed meal heavily to bearing orange trees. The first year there was a marvelous crop of fruit, the second year a good crop, but about the fourth year a new disease, limb blight, appeared and experts from the U. S. Department of Agriculture could discover no bacterial infections. A friend who had been having good results from Mapes' fertilizers decided to give his trees a change of diet and applied only Canada wood ashes. The fruit was small and sour and the next year he had limb blight. A neighbor planted 100 young orange trees with a quart of cotton seed meal under each tree and lost every tree. A Jacksonville fertilizer company put out a potash and phosphate fertilizer, which I think was similar to ash element, at a much higher price, claiming the orange trees would find nitrogen enough in the soil and another neighbor who used it one

year never did bring his trees back to their former condition before the '95 freeze.

Times have changed in other ways.

At its annual meeting in Palatka in the winter of 1887, the Florida Nurserymen's Association took measures to organize a Horticultural Society. The Florida Horticultural Society was organized at Ocala, April 10, 1888, later to be chartered as the Florida State Horticultural Society. The newly organized Horticultural Society invited the American Pomological Society and the Georgia State Horticultural Society to meet with them at Ocala at the Semi-Tropical Exposition, February 20, 1889. At this exposition was the greatest display of varieties of citrus fruit that has ever been made in Florida before or since. Four of the largest exhibitions had from thirty to fifty or more varieties of oranges alone. Competition was keen for the premiums for the best collections of 20, 15, 10 and 5 varieties and for the best orange of any variety and the American Pomological Society gave silver and bronze Wilder medals to the best exhibits. Some of the nurserymen may have them, but I doubt if any orange grower can exhibit a collection of ten varieties now, and I suppose only a very few members of our State Horticultural Society now ever met the pioneers who blazed the way and did the experimental work that has resulted in the stable conditions of Florida horticulture today.

A. I. BIDWELL.

Mr. Bidwell, when I came here, had a nursery at Arlington, below Jacksonville.

He was the first man to experiment with Peen-to peach seedlings and introduced Bidwell's Early and Late peaches and the Seminole, also the Giant Loquat. A. H. Manville was also in the nursery business, but later edited the Florida Dispatch, which was a most important public forum for discussing horticultural problems and shaping the tendencies of horticultural growth. Colonel Codrington started the Florida Agriculturist in DeLand and introduced Para and Guinea grass some 40 years ago. People who now look to the State Experiment Station for testing out all agricultural and horticultural problems can hardly realize the importance to the State in the early days of one single contribution to general welfare and knowledge.

REV. LYMAN PHELPS.

Mr. Phelps was superintendent of General Sanford's Bellair orange grove at Sanford for a time, and did more than any other man to test out the numerous varieties of citrus fruits General Sanford imported. Major O. P. Rooks first called attention to the King orange, James Mott to the seedless grapefruit, R. W. Pierce

to the Ruby blood orange, E. H. Hart introduced Hart's Tardiff, now commonly called Valencia late orange. Mr. Hart during his life did as much as any one man experimenting with and testing out rare palms and plants. It was his hobby and recreation. He was continually receiving and searching catalogues of all the European seedsmen for ornamental novelties. He had the rare faculty of knowing how to make plants grow. Think of the patience it takes to continually water slow germinating palm seeds for two or more years. This is only a partial list of the men who contributed in the early days towards making the Florida we have today though it is a different Florida than we had before the 1895 freeze.

The old experimenters with their visions and enthusiasms are nearly all gone and instead we have comparatively standardized and stabilized conditions with problems of diseases, insects, fruit handling, transportation and selling which were the lesser troubles in the good old days.

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