

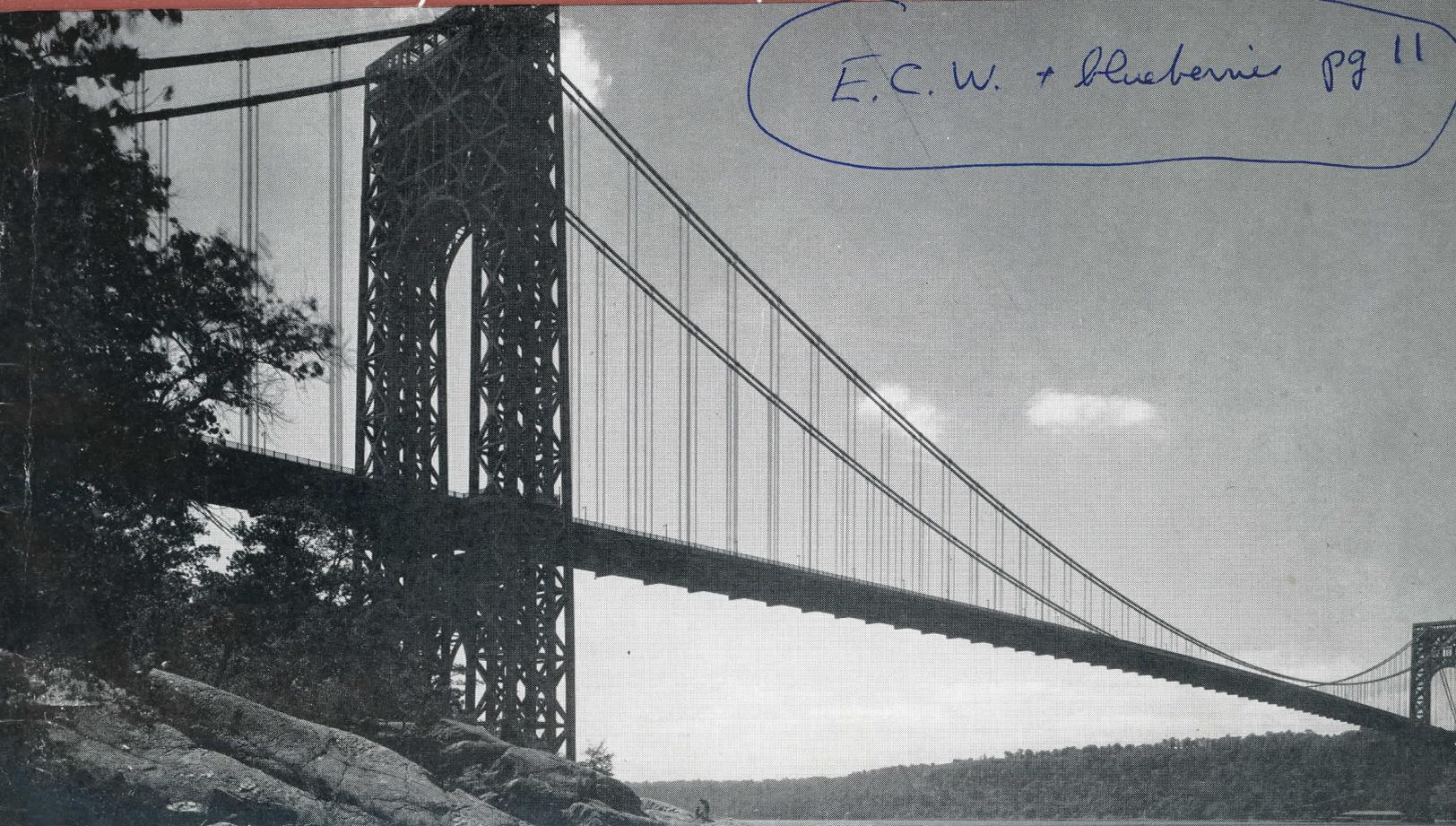
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N. J. Blueberry Industry

Joseph J. White and daughter, Elizabeth, are responsible for developments of industry which gives Employment to 3,000 at peak season.

*By Arlene Reasoner
N. J. Dept. of Agriculture*

AN INDUSTRY which has been responsible for the transformation of worthless land into highly productive acres and for permanently extending periods of employment—that is what a bowl of luscious cultivated blueberries represents. This meal-time treat can be found decorating Eastern breakfast tables the year around; as an out-of-season canned fruit in winter and as the aristocrat of the fresh berries in late June and July.

Nature has played her part, of course, in the development of the cultivated blueberry, but science, advancing hand in hand with nature, is responsible for the size and flavor as well as the mounting popularity of these berries.

Thirty years ago, much of Burlington and Ocean counties was waste land known as pine barrens. Scattered families in the region depended for livelihood on the sale of wild berries in season and on earnings from picking and packing cranberries.

For some years the White family had cranberry bogs dotting Burlington County—down on the Wading River, on Rake Pond, near New Lisbon and in the vicinity of what is now known as Whitesbog.

Energetically pushing his cranberry development, Joseph J. White would discuss with his eager young daughter, Elizabeth, the possibilities for cultivating swamp huckleberries as well. Needing similar soil and climate, the huckleberry would ripen in July and early August while the cranberries were not harvested until September and October. The period of employment for the native pickers would be lengthened at the same time that the joint berry production might be expected to yield an increased income.

But the work of selecting the finest and sweetest huckleberries from the bogs and the difficult problems of propagation for this plant seemed insurmountable.

Bulletin Starts Work

Then, in January, 1911, Elizabeth White obtained a copy of a new bulletin from the United States Department of Agriculture which was entitled "Experiments in Blueberry Culture," by Frederick V. Coville. It discussed broadly the principles governing the develop-

ment of blueberries in common with cranberries and allied plants, which differ so widely from the principles of growth for most other plants.

Although the terms "blueberries" and "swamp huckleberries" were used interchangeably a slight difference was recognized in the seeds. Huckleberries have 10 comparatively large seeds like miniature peach pits which crack between the teeth when eating them while the seeds from the blueberry are so small that one does not distinguish them when eating.

The cultivated berries at Whitesbog are properly identified as blueberries and conform with the New England requisites for the large "seedless" berries which have brought fame to Cape Cod pastries for generations.

Studying the blueberry bulletin together Miss White and her father determined to write to Dr. Coville offering co-operation in his blueberry experiments.

Dr. Coville accepted their assistance and within the year Miss White received from Washington a few blueberry plants, seedlings of the best bush located up to that time by Dr. Coville, carrying on his own research in New Hampshire. Fre-



CHARLES S. BECKWITH

who is Chief in cranberry and blueberry Research, New Jersey Experiment Station, Pemberton, and Secretary-Treasurer of the American Cranberry Growers' Association.

quently Dr. Coville visited the White plantation and kept Miss White informed of the progress of his experimental work.

Miss White, with her knowledge of local conditions, was able to select a large number of excellent wild bushes and, with her cranberry-growing experience,



MISS ELIZABETH C. WHITE

studies one of the promising blueberry hybrids in the United States Department of Agriculture trial fields at Whitesbog.

was able to see clearly the commercial possibilities of blueberry culture.

Pine People Help

"The help of the pine people has been indispensable to the success of my search for fine blueberry bushes," Miss White declares. "I never ceased to wonder how they led me through pathless thickets and undergrowth, where all the bushes looked alike to me, to the one bush which was producing berries superior to the surrounding plants in the bog." The collected bushes were each named for the person who found them.

"These people developed real enthusiasm for the work we were carrying on at Whitesbog. Besides helping in the collection of new berry bushes, men of the vine barrels learned to help with pruning and other duties connected with the propagation and cultivation of the berries," Miss White added.

With Dr. Coville freed from many of the growing problems and able to concentrate on the hybridization work, he developed, in a relatively short time, some remarkable varieties. Dr. Coville's eldest son, Stanley, did excellent original work in the pruning of blueberries and wrote up the subject for the bulletin on Blueberry Culture published by the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station. He also drew detailed illustrations for the booklet.

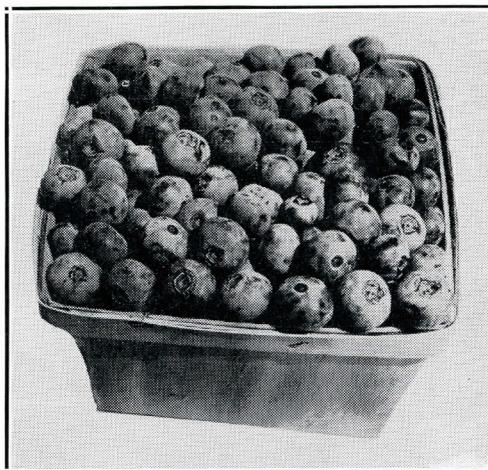
Only a few of the many bushes at first selected met all the requirements set for them. Today, recognized varieties include "Rubel," "Pioneer," "Cabot," "Rancocas," "Concord," "Jersey" and "June."

The blueberry growing industry developed rather slowly because of the fact that it took a number of years for a bush to come into profitable bearing, but as soon as some of the bushes were producing berries, great interest was expressed. Various growers procured plants of the selected varieties and set out new plantations. By 1927, there were enough growers to organize a cooperative selling organization, and today the New Jersey Blueberry Cooperative Association is predominant in the blueberry market.

Many Are Cranberry Growers

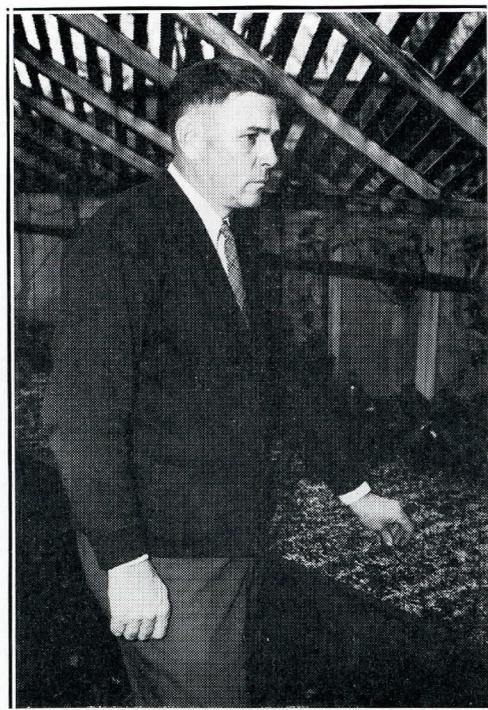
Many members of the Blueberry Association are also cranberry growers and active in that organization. They contemplate a freezing process for cultivated blueberries during the 1939 season in order to make the berries available to consumers in the same condition as when they were picked.

Officers of the Blueberry Cooperative Association are: President Theolore H.



A quart box of cultivated blueberries from the scientifically developed bogs in Burlington County. Note that the size of these berries permits only seven to the row in this quart container.

Budd, Pemberton; vice-president, Lester Collins, Moorestown; secretary-treasurer, W. A. Jarvis, New Lisbon; executive committee, T. H. Budd, Pemberton, F. S. Chambers, New Lisbon, Elizabeth C. White, Whitesbog, Ezra Evans, Medford, Lester Collins, Moorestown, H. G. Huntington, Moorestown, Edward Crabbe, Toms River, Harold B. Scammell, Toms River, A. E. Spear, Vineland, John E. Cutts, Tabernacle, Stanley Coville, New Lisbon, Thomas Hamilton,



DR. STANLEY COVILLE

New Lisbon, carries on the cultivated blueberry experiments begun by his father, Frederick V. Coville, before 1910 and has been responsible for excellent original work in the pruning of blueberries as well as for literature and drawings on the subject.

Egg Harbor, Charles DeLong, Egg Harbor and Herbert Beebe, Pemberton.

In 1916, Miss White made her first sale of cultivated blueberries. Unfortunately they were unknown at that time, and the 17 32-quart crates brought only \$114.81; about 22 cents per quart. Producers have received as much as 80 cents a quart for their berries during some seasons, but the price appears to have become stabilized, due to a more abundant supply, with the average return to the grower last year about 29 cents per quart.

The total income for 1938 was approximately \$304,000, while nursery sales of cultivated blueberry plants totalled about \$50,000. Most of this income was disbursed among the natives who picked the blueberries.

Valued at \$600 to \$1,000 An Acre

From bog land, worthless and unwanted, has grown an industry valued at from \$600 to \$1,000 an acre. Today there are plantings in Atlantic, Burlington, Ocean, Monmouth, Cumberland, Cape May and Gloucester counties. It is estimated that a total of 3,000 persons are employed during the peak of the season.

Since the advent of frozen foods, the cultivated blueberry industry faces a far broader outlook than sales to fresh fruit markets and processing plants could offer, and holds promise of assuming its rank as one of New Jersey's most profitable agricultural activities.

With the formative years behind them, and the period in view of outside competition in the production of blueberries, as well as from increasing supplies of other formerly "rare" fruits and vegetables, New Jersey's cultivated blueberry growers are meeting problems of packaging, marketing and distribution in the same way that they have overcome other difficulties threatening to hinder the growth and achievements of this industry.

A reduction of \$548,573 in the sum paid into the State Teachers' Pension and Annuity Fund has been approved by the legislative appropriations committee, because of the paper profit to the fund of \$1,367,948 realized on the sale of the Camden-Philadelphia Bridge bonds.

The Bendix airplane plant at Hasbrouck Heights has announced that its Brooklyn factory will be closed on May 1 and 1,000 employes will be transferred to New Jersey. At present the Erie Railroad is running a train from Jersey City in the morning and from the Bendix plant at night for the benefit of 150 of these workers who are commuting.