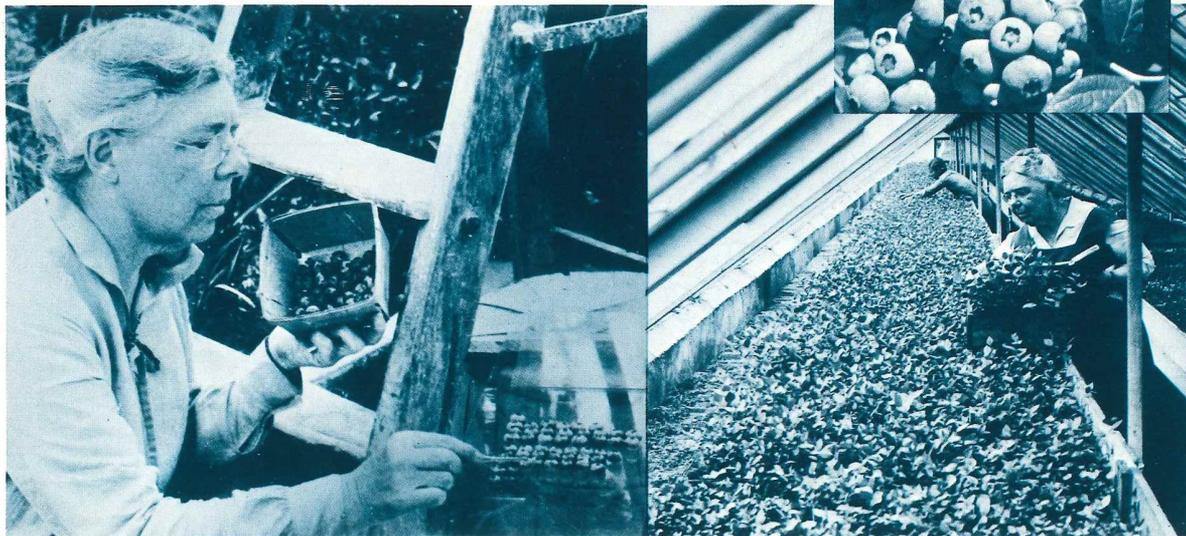


A Capsule of New Jersey History . . .



Photos of Miss White courtesy of New Jersey Department of Agriculture

Elizabeth C. White: THE BLUEBERRY LADY

ELIZABETH WHITE was born at Whitesbog, deep in the New Jersey Pine Barrens, in 1872. She died at the same place in 1954 and never was truly happy unless she was deep in her beloved pine woodland. Miss White found fame and fortune there by cultivating swamp huckleberries into the rich blueberries that make New Jersey first among all blueberry centers.

Her grandfather and his five sons trudged through the trackless forests and swamps before the Civil War to find native cranberries on the Wading River. One of the sons, Joseph, started a cranberry bog at Rake Pond in 1869 and there three years later Elizabeth was born.

She was a real child of the pines. Her father brought Elizabeth turtles, teaberries, mats of white-starred pixie moss, striped sunfish and insect-eating pitcher plants from the forests and swamps, and she went often to the cranberry bogs to paddle in the nut-brown water of the ditches. When her schooling ended, she resided permanently at Whitesbog.

For a long time cranberries dominated the White thinking. Elizabeth became the first woman member of the American Cranberry Association (and in time, its first woman president). Swamp huckleberries on the edge of the bogs brightened the summer menu but the Whites saw them chiefly as one of God's natural blessings.

Then, in December, 1910, Elizabeth White read of United States Department of Agriculture experiments in blueberry culture. A month later she offered to finance experiments and in the spring of 1911 she

started sending New Jersey seedlings to F. V. Coville, the Department of Agriculture botanist who was conducting the study in Washington, D.C.

Excited by the possibilities of blueberry culture, Miss White constantly drove through the pine forest in her horse and buggy in search of exceptional plants. Shy natives brought her plants or led her along sandy roads to bushes too tall for transplanting — from these she made her cuttings. She always carefully credited her helpers by using their names to identify especially fine varieties.

The nation's first commercial shipment of cultivated blueberries was made from Miss White's plantation in 1916 and New Jersey was on its way to national leadership. Still active when she passed her eightieth birthday in 1952, Miss White retained two dedications: she cherished her extensive blueberry plantings, and she stoutly defended her woodland neighbors against those who sneeringly dismissed them as backward "Pineys." Miss White was always proud to call herself a Piney.

When Miss White died in 1954, New Jersey blueberry plantings covered nearly five thousand acres and brought \$4 million annually to growers in New Jersey. Today blueberry plantings exceed eight thousand acres and represent one of New Jersey's leading cash crops.

Indeed, in New Jersey at least, the blueberry might with justice be called the "Whiteberry," in tribute to a lady who loved her place of being, loved the people who lived there, and combined those loves to make the blueberry one of New Jersey's foremost treats.

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