

'Blueberry Queen'

N. J. Collection
Reference Only



Elizabeth C. White

Elizabeth C. White dedicated 40 years to the perfection of the fruit

By LARONA HOMER

Have you noticed how red the blueberry fields are throughout Burlington County? Aflame with color, the bushes give the spirit a welcome lift after the pranks of winter.

Soon, large clusters of snowy white or deep pink-tipped flower bells will appear on stems laced with delicate green foliage. The beauty continues as the flower clusters develop into pale green berries. These will turn to a velvety blue-pink, and finally ripen to the succulent purple fruit we enjoy so much.

As far back as New Jersey history is recorded, huckleberries have grown in the Pine Barrens. Here, the soil provided the necessary acid; the drainage was good. But the berries were small and seedy. They cracked when bitten. These, however, were the forerunners — the ancestors of the large, luscious "silent" berry of today.

The development of these berries was done through the experiments of Miss Elizabeth C. White, who devoted 40 years of her life working to produce the big, luscious blueberry from the wild huckleberry.

The White family history is truly one of activity and dedication.

Miss Elizabeth's grandfather, Barclay White, was a Quaker. After completing his schooling, he worked on his uncle's farm in New Lisbon. All the money he had earned was put into proper-



Blueberries. . .

ty, until he became the owner of several successful farms.

But his interests encompassed a wide range of activity. For years he was involved in Indian affairs, both locally and on a national level. He had personal contacts with Buffalo Bill, Brigham Young and several Indian chiefs. He was much disturbed by the manner in which the white man was constantly encroaching upon the rights of the Indians, and he worked for laws to protect them.

Elizabeth's father, Joseph Josiah White, or J.J. as he was known, was born in Springfield Township, Burlington County. Following his education at Friends Central School in Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Polytechnic College, J.J. became

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interested in cranberry cultivation.

His grandfather gave him 100 acres of land known as the Rake Pond Tract in the New Lisbon area. While clearing it, he became acquainted with Mary Fenwick whose father owned a plantation on Cranberry Run. According to FAMILY HISTORY, J.J. has written, "She, concluding to assume the risk. . . we were married on the 11th day of November 1869. This alliance was the direct result of my having engaged in the cranberry business and proved to be my most successful venture."

After many years, J.J. inherited the Fenwick bogs from Mary's father. He then incorporated and named all his holdings, "Whitesbog," under the name

of J.J. White, Inc., with his three daughters and two sons-in-law as stockholders.

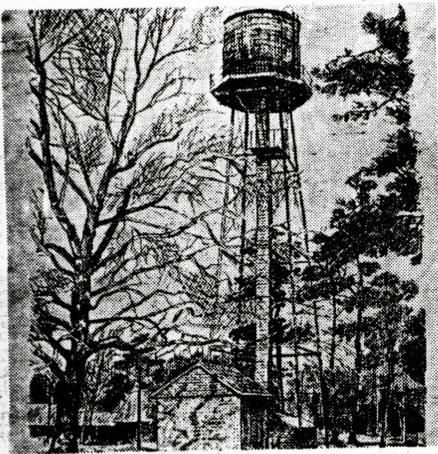
But it was his daughter Elizabeth who became "The Blueberry Queen." She was born on Oct. 5, 1871 in New Lisbon. As a child, she loved the cranberry bogs and would often accompany her father on his regular trips there. He realized her interests and taught her the many requisites for raising good berries — when it was necessary to flood the bogs; the kind of insects injurious to the buds, pollination and weed control.

As a young girl, she often went into the bogs alone. Of these excursions she wrote, "When my father was engaged in work in which I could not follow, I wandered about, getting acquainted with the beautiful wild flowers or sampling the fruit on the huckleberry bushes that grow in such profusion on the dams and margins of the bogs."

Her interest in the wild huckleberry kept growing. She talked to her father about the possibility of cultivating the native fruit and he, too, became interested.

During her ventures, she found an article, "Experiments in Blueberry Culture," written for the U.S. Department of Agriculture by Dr. Frederick Coville. He had succeeded in rooting blueberry cuttings. Miss White wrote to him, and there followed an extensive exchange of corre-

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The water tower at Whitesbog.

Huckleberries.

FIGURE 3

I WILL PAY FOR HUCKLEBERRY BUSHES, from ONE to THREE DOLLARS a bush, when the largest berries on it will not drop through holes the size of the blue spots.

The money will be paid in the late fall or early winter, about the bushes are dug.

In addition to the money for the bush I will pay for any time the finder may spend in taking me to the bush and helping dig it.

No bush will be paid for unless a bottle of its berries is sent to me and the bush is marked with my own labels.

Bottles with labels inside and a gauge giving the size of the smallest berry wanted will be furnished to anyone who thinks they can find such bushes.

If you want bottles send me a post card giving your Post Office address as well as the place you live, or send me or my agent about it.

My agent nearest here is,

When picking berries carry a bottle in your pocket and a gauge tied to your clothes and you may be able to earn \$10 or \$15 without extra work.

Elizabeth C. White.
New Lisbon, N. J.

June, 1914



Sunningive — the home of Miss White.

Elizabeth White's "ad" for huckleberries.

'The Blueberry Queen'

(Continued from Page 4)

spondence.

She offered to experiment with the blueberries, using both cuttings and seeds from the bushes from Dr. Coville's home in New Hampshire. Planted here in the New Jersey Barrens, they were raised under excellent conditions with controlled pollination. They were carefully watched and the results recorded.

Miss White felt that a larger berry could be grown if the parent bushes were better material. She enlisted the help of the "pine people" who knew the area well and had the ability to find that one special bush among the mediocre. She advertised in the stores for huckleberry pickers. She recruited deer hunters. Often she accompanied one of the "Pineys" along the sandy roads or through the swamps looking for the exceptional bush.

She equipped each of her searchers with an aluminum gauge which had a series of different size holes. The size of the berry could be determined by the diameter of the hole through which it dropped. The largest berries were put in a jar and returned to Miss White. The bush was tagged and the location noted.

The finder received \$1 to \$2.50 for this sample. In addition, he was paid for guiding Miss White to the bush. These bushes were then cut into six- to eight-inch length pieces which would start new plants. Miss White also developed new bushes by grafting.

The variety of blueberry usually takes its name from the finder. Rube Leek, one of Miss White's foremen, discovered an outstanding bush near Chat-sworth. She was afraid to name

it the Leek berry. People might immediately think of the onion-like smell of the garden vegetable of that name. So the initial L was added to his first name and it became the Rubel berry.

Miss White continued her experiments with Dr. Coville, in conjunction with the U.S. De-

partment of Agriculture. New strains were constantly appearing. They included the Harding, Sam, Adams, Dunfee, Pioneer and Katherine. In 1928 the Whitesbog Blueberry Nursery was added to the J.J. White Inc. cranberry company.

Miss White still found time to actively work for the development of the Vineland Training School, the Four Mile Colony in

New Lisbon, the Commission on Housing for Migrant Workers and the New Jersey Board of Charities. She was also founder of the Tru-Blu national co-op of blueberry growers.

From the results we enjoy today, it is obvious that Elizabeth White was a woman ahead of her time. Her dedication has given us one of the luscious taste adventures of spring. ■

For our young readers

Make a pressman's hat

1. Lay down 4-page section of newspaper with folded edge on your left.
2. Fold lower left corner up to center.
3. Fold upper left corner down to center.
4. Fold long edge of top sheet to base of triangle. Crease.
5. Fold it up again over triangle to form hatband. Turn hat over.
6. Fold right edge in 1/4 inch past center of hat. (For larger sizes, do not fold over as far.) Fold left side to right in same manner.
7. Fold lower right and lower left corners up to bottom of hatband.
8. Fold entire lower flap up over hatband.
9. Fold top of flap down. Tuck into hatband.
10. Fold peak down to bottom of hatband. Tuck into hatband.
11. Open hat wide and flatten out top. Fold peaks down to bottom of hat. Crease top edge and tuck ends into hatband.
12. It is not known when or where the first pressman's hat was made, but records show it was being worn in the U.S. as early as 1748. Pressmen wear the hat for protection against ink, grease, oil and paper lint. Source: Cincinnati Post