

A JOURNEY OF A HUNDRED YEARS BEGAN WITH A SINGLE TREE.

Author: Heather Clarke

Gossman planted his first nursery at the confluence of the Columbia and Okanogan rivers and appropriately so, called it the C&O Nursery. Gossman convinced his nephew Bert Snyder to move from Iowa to join him. As it turns out, Gossman's science background and Snyder's college education were a winning combination. Within a few years, C&O relocated to Wenatchee, Washington, where it still is today.

C&O Nursery quickly earned a reputation for having high-quality apple trees. They created a nursery catalog, and using his science background, Gossman developed new varieties of apples.

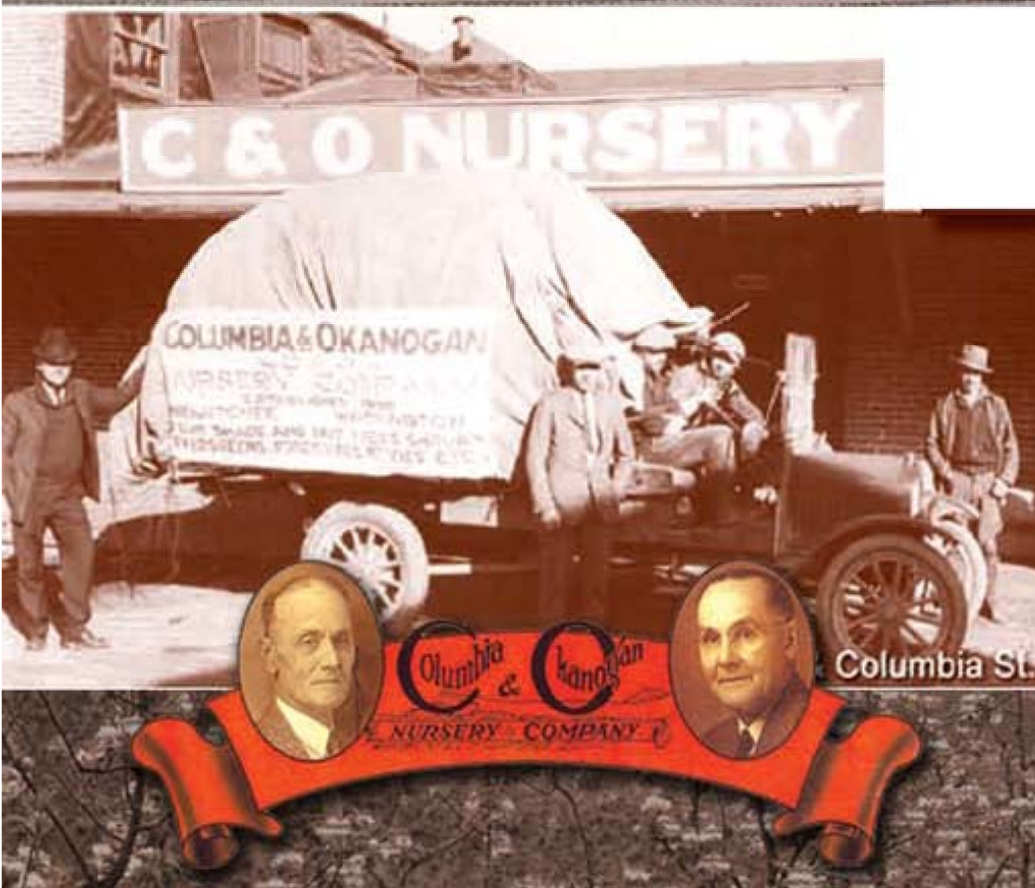
In fact in 1923, C&O Nursery developed the Richared Delicious apple. This was the first red delicious apple to make a name for itself, and it has now been grown in the millions and distributed worldwide.

The innovation didn't stop there.

In 1934 C&O Nursery received a patent for the Shotwell – the first patent for a Red Delicious apple. In 1951 C&O Nursery was one of the first northwest companies to be awarded the highest award in horticulture, the Wilder Medal, for its work in developing new apple varieties.

C&O now has more than 20 plant patents to its name.

The superior apples and work ethic



IN 1906 A MINNESOTA SCHOOL
TEACHER, ANDY GOSSMAN,
GAVE UP HIS CLASSROOM,
HEADED WEST AND INVESTED
HIS SAVINGS IN APPLE TREES.
NOW, MORE THAN A CENTURY
LATER, C&O NURSERY IS STILL
PRODUCING SOME OF THE
CLASSIEST APPLES AND FRUITS
IN THE NORTHWEST.

of the C&O Nursery has kept it going strong.

The company owes its success to the hard work and dedication of four generations of family – Bert's sons John, Bob and Gene; their sons Jack, Dick, Todd, Gary and Jim; and most recently, Jack's son Shad. Todd Snyder, Bert's grandson, is one of six C&O Nursery owners, and he believes being a family-owned business makes them a better company.

"Being a family business makes us very similar to the many orchards that we sell to. Agriculture seems to stay family-oriented, with orchards and companies being passed from generation to generation. This similar background helps us relate to our customer's successes and difficulties."

Being family-owned is probably the only constant for C&O Nursery being

in an industry that is always changing. In fact, Snyder loves his job because of its unpredictability, "Everyday is a little different from the last. It's based on agriculture, which of course, has Mother Nature directly involved." He especially finds it interesting that every year the crop will be distinctly unique – between Mother Nature and the economy – it's hard to know what to expect.

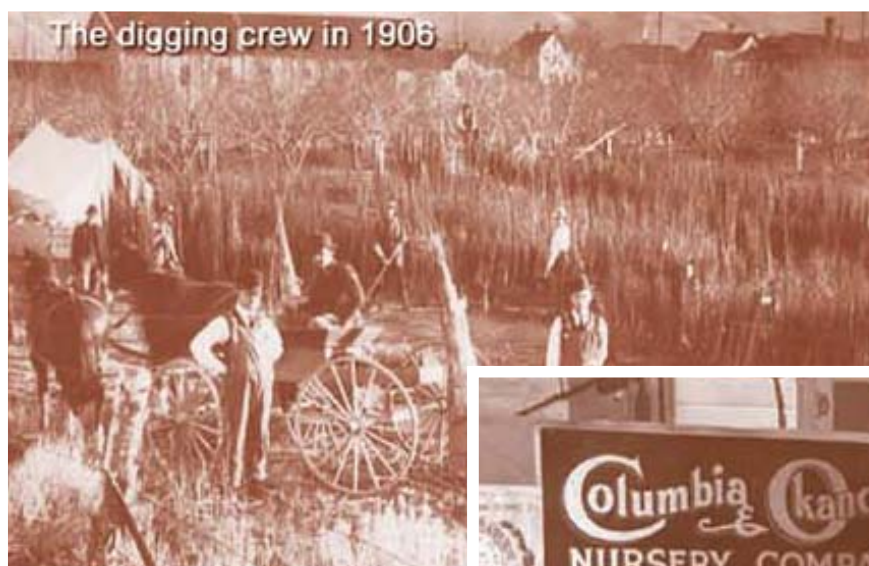
"It keeps us forever on our toes, trying to change and adapt to what's ahead of us. If we didn't continually adapt, we'd be left behind," said Snyder.

Although the core of the business began with apples, it didn't take long for the C&O Nursery to branch out to other fruit varieties. In fact, they now also grow pears, plums, prunes, cherries, peaches, nectarines and apricots. Each fruit has lots of varieties.

Apple and cherry orders continue to lead the pack as far as popularity and number of orders. Of the apples, Early Fujis, Galas and Honeycrisps™ are among the top requested varieties. Other top sellers are the Prosser Cherries, Stellar® Peaches, Flamin' Fury® Peaches, Bronze Beauty Bosc™ Pears, and Concorde® Pears.

C&O Nursery primarily serves the commercial orchardist that operates from just a few acres up to thousands of acres. They will sell a single fruit tree to a homeowner, if they get the itch to have their own fruit tree, but keep in mind most trees do require a pollenizer variety, so it would be rare to actually have only one tree in your yard — space for two is more practical.

It takes two years to produce the size of trees that C&O Nursery prefers to sell, so each year entails jobs directed at both the first- and second-year crops. Planting is done in the spring, with budding specific varieties onto those planted rootstocks in August and September. The trees that have been growing for a year (the second year trees) are dug in November and stored in temperature-



controlled warehouses in Wenatchee and Quincy. These stored trees are shipped the following spring (February through May) at the same time that the “new” rootstocks are being planted in March and April.

It’s a never-ending cycle that keeps C&O Nursery staff continually busy.

C&O Nursery grows its trees in the Columbia Basin, near Quincy, where they have 600 acres of growing space and process as many as 3,000 orders a year. The operations and offices are still in Wenatchee, which serves as the central shipping hub. They go from having 40 employees during the slow months to up to 200 during the busiest season.

With more than a century of orcharding and fruit growing behind them, C&O has seen the industry change over time. Snyder has seen the number of orchards decreasing, while the size of the existing orchards increasing.

“There has been a definite trend from lots of s planting only a few trees, to fewer orchards planting many trees. Smaller businesses are being bought up by larger companies or the smaller orchards are using the land for something else, such as housing,” Snyder commented. “Our emphasis has had to shift



Trees are loaded with care onto a C&O truck for delivery.

to fewer people, but they are planting more trees.”



Another important change of the times is the increasing demand for new and improved varieties.

C&O Nursery makes meeting this new consumer demand a top priority and is partnering with fruit growers globally, through

the International New Varieties Network (INN), to put together winning combinations.

The mission of INN is to bring together nurseries from across the globe to manage fruit varieties worldwide. All INN nurseries agree to share newly-created fruit varieties for the purpose of testing and commercialization.

“Membership in this worldwide organization is so important to developing the best varieties of fruits possible. I’m proud of the fruit, especially the apples that we’ve produced in Washington and the reputation that we have globally for our fruit,” said Snyder.

Washington’s reputation for classy fruit can be partly attributed to that Minnesotan teacher who dreamed of growing apples in Eastern Washington and to the four generations of his family that have worked hard to keep that dream growing.

C&O participates in Farm Bureau’s Retro/Safety and Employer Services programs. To learn more about the C&O Nursery, visit www.c-onursery.com or call 509-662-7164.



The six current Snyder owners of C&O Nursery pose for a picture.