

The Apple De-TECH-tives

Texas Tech class seeks location
of missing heirloom apple
developed in Paris

By Kim Cox
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Sometimes history gets lost along the way, and things get forgotten.

Seeking to remedy some Texas history, Texas Tech University Professor Bryan Giemza and his students have transformed themselves into detectives, specifically, apple detectives.

“Inspired by my friend Lee Calhoun, an expert in southern heirloom apples, who has pancreatic cancer, I decided to offer a course called ‘In Search of Texas Beauty,’ themed around the lost apples of Texas, one of which was called ‘Texas Beauty,’ Giemza said. “The premise was simple: students would learn how to do research by going on a quest for the apples.

“There are 67 apple cultivars historically attributed to Texas. Only two are still in cultivation, the Jonagold and San Jacinto, in case you were wondering.”

One of the lost heirloom apples comes from Paris Nurseries, he said. In the 19th century, Paris resident Dr. William Wynne Stell, who started Paris Nurseries in 1871, developed an apple called the Cleveland apple, so named after President Grover Cleveland.

Dr. Stell grew the apple on his property in Paris, 27 acres on land that is currently between 22nd Street SE and 24th Street SE, between Clarksville Road and Lamar Avenue. With the help of local lawyer Brad Hutchison, who owns property that once belonged to Dr. Stell, the class may be honing in on a still-living Cleveland apple tree.

“No apples or trees yet, but the Clark property has larger lots than the Stellrose property, and a tree could be hiding in the back yard somewhere,” Hutchison wrote in an email to Giemza. “This will give your students something to chew on, but the nursery most certainly had to be on this Stell(rose) tract or on the Clark tract, or both. My friend who says they had an apple tree lived on Lots 28 and 29 in Block 2 of the Stellrose; and the property where he say were may fruit trees would be Lots 3 and 4 in Block 2 of the Stellrose.”

In 1894, Dr. Stell retired from the nurs-

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— Bryan Giemza, Ph.D. and associate professor at Texas Tech University

ery business, according to an article on Lamarcountytexas.org, and sold his interest in the nursery to his partner, Henry L. Clark. An entry from the 1885 Paris Nurseries catalogue lists the Cleveland apple as “apparently named after Grover Cleveland, originally created by a Dr. William Wynne Stell of Paris Nurseries in Paris, Texas.

It is described as being large, an oval, possessing yellow skin, covered with red and “deeper red” stripes; very juicy flesh, subacid/maybe sweet. Ripe in August.”

During his time at the nursery, he developed several different varieties of different fruit, including the Texas Belle, Tudor and Bonner plums and the Cleveland apple and got into a war of words with the world-famous Texas horticulturist T.V. Munson, who is credited with saving the French wine industry, creating phylloxera-resistant rootstocks for grapes.

The class has found one of the heirloom apples they are seeking, Giemza said.

“We actually have discovered one in Washington state, of all places,” he said. “We are tantalizingly close with the Cleveland.”

Giemza is asking Paris residents, especially older Paris residents, if they know where an old apple tree might be growing.

He said the class is building a website for the lost apples, and is asking



U.S. Department of Agriculture Pomological Watercolor Collection. Rare and Special Collections, National Agricultural Library, Beltsville, MD 20705
This watercolor, made in 1907, features the Cleveland apple, an heirloom varietal of apple created in Paris by Dr. William Stell in the 19th century. A class at Texas Tech University is seeking different heirloom apples thought to be extinct.

HOW TO HELP

Professor Bryan Giemza of Texas Tech Univeristy asks that anyone with information or knowledge of an old apple tree, a Cleveland apple tree, to contact him and his class at appledetectives@gmail.com. The class is searching for lost heirloom varietal of Texas apples.

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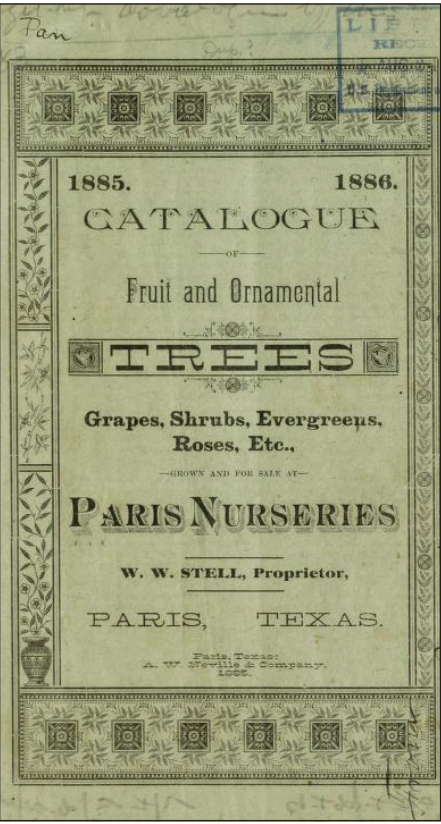
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come together, and our relationship to apples as a source of beauty and wonder, a way of prompting us to look at the world differently.”

And, the search isn’t just academic, Giemza said. Apple trees now are being hammered by a disease called “rapid apple decline” around the nation.

Genetic diversity is one of many ways to combat diseases in the nation’s foodstocks.

“In that sense, our quest is more than academic,” Giemza said.



Submitted Photo

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Submitted Photo

This older appraisal district map shows where Dr. William Wynne Stell’s land was, now between 25th St. SE and 22nd Street SE, from Clarksville Road to Lamar Avenue. The apple was developed on Dr. Stell’s Paris Nurseries in the 19th century.



Submitted Photo

The class taught by Bryan Giemza, Ph.D., an associate professor at Texas Tech, is researching thought to be extinct heirloom apple varieties.