

FARM LIFE

A Century of Change for Farm Families

THE EARLY INDIGENOUS NATIVE American tribes called it “Grandmother Earth” and lived by the principal of “oneness” with the earth and the seasons. No one could own the land as it was for everyone and a part of everyday life. The riches of the land we now call the Columbia River Gorge sustained “The People” for thousands of years. From the berries growing on the hillsides, to the camas root, to the fish in the rivers, they harvested what they needed and no more. Today we still harvest the bounties of the Gorge but as an agrarian society.

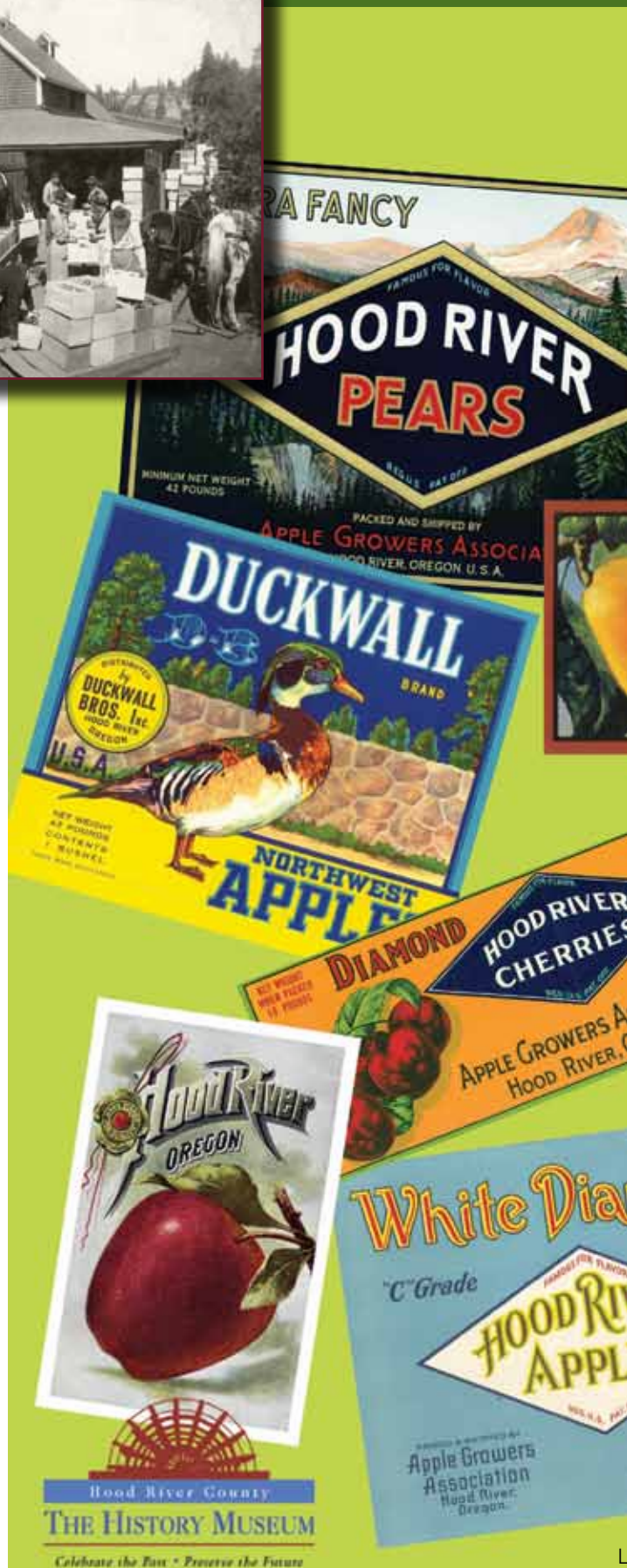
In his book “It All Began with Apple Seeds” the late author David Burkhart tells the story of an employee of the Hudson Bay Company. As he was about to depart England in 1825 for the company’s headquarters on the mouth of the Columbia River, the ladies who attended his farewell party gave him seeds from the fruits served at the event. Upon his arrival at Fort Vancouver, these seeds were planted and produced what is widely recognized as the first cultivated fruit trees in the Pacific Northwest.

In the mid-1800s the fertile valleys and open spaces called homesteaders across the plains to Oregon. Tall mountains, abundant water, mild weather, and obtainable land claims brought families from the east and mid-west to seek a new life on farms in the “promised land.” Vegetables, grass, wheat, and fruit flourished, and communities sprang up across the state. Farming and agriculture became the driving force behind community growth, industry, and economy including the development of granges, churches, businesses, and schools.

Hood River County can trace the beginning of organized farming back to Nathaniel Coe, who in 1855 cleared land in the area that is now filled with downtown shops and businesses. His seeds came from the Luelling Nursery in the Willamette Valley, from nursery stock in Rochester, NY, and from seeds Mrs. Coe collected when she peeled a bushel of apples on her journey west. From this beginning we have the agricultural society we now live in. Hood River’s fruit is recognized and acclaimed worldwide.

After the Coes, more families arrived. They came from the eastern U.S., but the Hood River Valley also attracted immigrants from Finland, Germany, and other parts of Europe. Over the years severe weather and consumer choices would affect the variety of crops—from strawberries in the late 1800s to apples and then pears, and now grapes. The Gorge received its own wine appellation. The Gorge’s stunning natural surroundings are paired with an abundant and bountiful harvest, unmatched anywhere in the world.

In the spirit of our agricultural roots, The History Museum of Hood River County has chosen to honor the farmers and orchardists of our region through a special exhibit opening March 25, 2010. The exhibit, *Farm Life: A Century of Change for Farm Families and Their Neighbors*, is the story of farm families and rural communities facing change. It does not approach this subject through the technology of farm life, but rather through social and cultural contexts. Visitors to this exhibit will explore





how political, economic, and cultural roots influence families today, both on and off the farm. The study of American agricultural history and the rural experience provides important insights into the evolving character of American community life.

“The History Museum of Hood River County is grateful to host this exhibition through partnership with the National Endowment for the Humanities and their NEH on the Road program,” said Connie Nice, Museum Coordinator. “The museum Board of Directors and volunteers have been planning and preparing for this exhibit the past two years; we look forward to an opportunity to showcase such a vital component of the cultural heritage of our county and our state.”

Farmer, author, and photographer Michael Ableman kicks off the opening of the exhibit March 29 with a program: *Feeding the Future: Stories and Images from the New Frontiers of Food and Agriculture*. His book, “Fields of Plenty”, published in 2005, revolutionized people’s perceptions of farming and food source. The event is co-sponsored by the Hood River Residents Committee, Gorge Grown Food Network, and The History Museum.

His talk begins at 5:30 p.m. with a reception for Mr. Ableman at The History Museum. At 7:00 p.m. his program will begin at The Columbia Center for the Arts. Books will be available for purchase. Tickets are \$10.00.

In addition, The History Museum developed a series of Monday night programs, Farm Life Voices, which will be held at the Museum beginning April 5th at 6:30 p.m. Free admission.

Hood River is the only place in Oregon where this nationally touring Farm Life exhibit will stop. It will be on display March 25 – June 20. Visit www.co.hood-river.or.us/museum or call 541-386-6772 to learn more.

Farm Life Voices Programs

6:30 p.m. Admission: FREE

April 19th

From "The Farming Game" to "Farmville"
30 Years of Fantasy Farming

April 26th

Sharing the Rural Experience
The Appeal and Promise of Agri-Tourism

May 3rd

Harvesting Images
Stories of a Photographic Journey Across Oregon's
Farmland Featuring Peter Marbach

May 10th

Thinking Outside the "Barn"
Adding Value to Farms & Farm Products

May 17

DIRT! The Movie

A movie that brings to life the environmental, economic,
social and political impact that the soil has.