

McIntosh, Clarence

Ancestor's apples keep Clarence happy

By HARRY MULHALL
Staff Reporter



CLARENCE McINTOSH

Clarence McIntosh can count on finding his name in almost every food store—almost anywhere.

It never comes as a surprise. For generations, the family name has been associated with one of the sweetest things that ever happened to mankind's digestion.

Clarence is the great, great grandson of John Allen McIntosh—the settler who crowned his homesteading ingenuity by developing the McIntosh apple.

These days, there are other varieties of apples to choose from.

But, the ones Clarence brings home in his shopping bag to his Turnbull Street senior citizen's apartment, are invariably McIntosh.

It's not a matter of family pride. It's simply that—even after all this time—the big, red, aromatic McIntosh still is one of the best apples anywhere, believes Clarence.

"I wouldn't turn down other apples. It's just that they're not quite up to the McIntosh," he claims.

And this is a year to especially recall his ancestor. It's a 200th anniversary.

As Clarence tells it: John Allen McIntosh came to Canada in 1781, after a stint at farming the Mohawk Valley in northern New York.

He settled on land near Iroquois, in western Ontario's Dundas County.

It was on that acreage he discovered a

tree with large red apples. He grafted it with wild crab apple and began a nursery, giving the young trees to neighbors.

His son, Allen, expanded the propagation further afield. The McIntosh became a prime apple throughout North America.

Today, orchards of McIntosh cover several million acres across the continent, says Clarence, and the produce can be found in marketplaces around the world.

Branches of the family have also proliferated.

Clarence, now 68, who grew up on the McIntosh farm, says he recollects family reunions as a lad that drew hundreds of near and distant relations.

A war veteran, he was a federal agricultural inspector before coming to Belleville in 1950. He worked as a research assistant with the federal entomological research centre in the city, which was closed in the late 1960s.

He hasn't visited the old farm near Iroquois for years. It is now marked as a national historic site.

And, that's how it should be, indicates Clarence.

The McIntosh is something like the Canadian-invented telephone, he says. The fruit with the distinctive flavor and family name is among symbols that are reminders a cultured Canada didn't blossom just last week.

And, his great, great grandfather was a social benefactor in more ways than one, Clarence adds with a chuckle.

The reason: "They say an apple a day keeps the doctor away. Well, a McIntosh apple a day will keep two doctors away."

Intelligencer
March 12, 1981