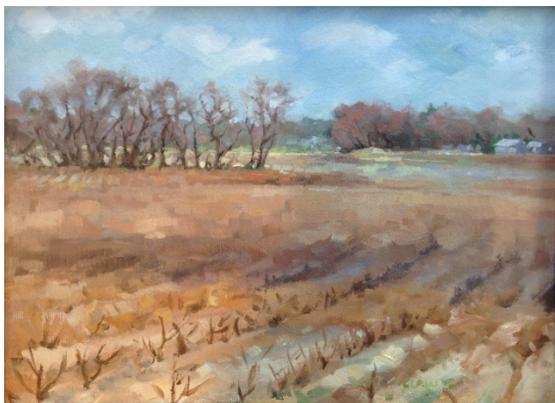


Hammonton: *150 Years of Agriculture*

Hammonton: 150 Years of Agriculture is an exhibition based on the unique historical and cultural heritage of the town of Hammonton. The Noyes Museum of Art of Stockton University, in partnership with the staff and faculty of Stockton University, the South Jersey Culture & History Center, and the town of Hammonton, presents the second exhibition in a two-part series celebrating the town's Sesquicentennial. This exhibition highlights artifacts, documents, photography and artists' interpretations related to the topic of agriculture. Artifacts include historical photographs, antique farm implements and machinery, signs, food processing devices, hand blown glass items and more.



Chicken Farm Postcard, (n.d.)
Hammonton History Project
Contributors: Kramer Hall, Jim Donio



Chuck Law
Windy Day, Blueberry Fields, 2014
Oil on canvas

Exhibiting Artists:

The work of these artists was inspired by the history of agriculture in Hammonton. The work spans a variety of media and includes photographs and paintings of landscapes, architecture, farmers and their families, assemblages of farm implements, and hand-blown glass by WheatonArts and Murano glass artists. Exhibited works are by Jeanette DePiero, Johnathon "Buddy" Franks, Cheryl Knowles-Harrigan, Chuck Law, George Mattei, Abby Elizabeth Schmidt, Liz Wuillermin and Mike Zambelli.

General Agricultural Conditions and Early Hammonton Crops

The soil of the Hammonton, which lies within the Pine Barrens, poses problems for the cultivation of many food crops with the exception of blueberries and cranberries.

Sandy, porous and acidic soil and tough conditions are not optimal for the growth and sustenance of many plants. As of 1866, early crops consisted of cranberries, grapes, pears, quinces, plums and cherries. By 1916, strawberries, peaches, blackberries and raspberries were the predominant crops. In later years, blueberries and sweet potatoes became the characteristic crops of the area.



M.L. Jackson and Son Postcard,
[n.d.]
Hammonton History Project
Contributors: Kramer Hall,
Hammonton

Hammonton's Railroads

The low cost of transportation and close proximity to great centers of population promoted the growth of the farming and manufacturing industries in Hammonton. The town highlighted these features to attract new farmers and factory workers, claiming "Hammonton has advantages comparable, if not superior, to the great West." The benefit of fast, efficient rail transportation to convey perishable fruits and vegetables to the larger markets of the cities allowed local farmers to become prosperous.

Hammonton Municipal Market

Hammonton founded the first farmer's cooperative of its kind in the United States in 1867. It was called the Fruit Growers' Union (or Association), later named the Hammonton Municipal Market and was located on West End Avenue.. Farmers controlled their own market for fruits and vegetables through auctions. Its management, services, expenses and profits were divided among the participants. The Market initially dealt in marketing and shipping members' crops but came to encompass a retail business selling farming supplies (1)

Peaches

Before Hammonton was known as the "Blueberry Capitol of the World," it was known as "Peach City." From 1935 to 1962, there was an annual parade and peach festival that would crown a "Peach Queen." "You didn't even hear of blueberries, you just heard of peaches," said Hammonton's 1949 Peach Queen Carol (Kosowski) Farinelli. Currently, there are no peach orchards located within the city limits. (2)

Prominent Farmers and Farming Families in Hammonton

- **George W. Pressey** came to Hammonton in 1860. He invented the first apple-paring machine; the Pressey and Farnum Lever Spring; the Pioneer Stump Puller; the American Star Bicycle; and incubators for hatching and raising chickens - the Hammonton Incubator and the Pressey Brooder.
- **Samuel Anderson, Sr.** arrived in 1860 and bought a farm on Middle Road. He started a flour and feed business which his son continued operating until 1923.
- **John Scullin** came to town in 1867. He was an agent of the Fruit Growers' Association and was known as the most successful apple farmer in Hammonton.
- **Curtis S. Newcomb** arrived in 1874. He was a prolific "butter farmer," a member of the Town Council and an elected school trustee.
- **DeMarco Family:** Rocco DeMarco and his two brothers left Naples, Italy at the turn of the 20th century and settled in Hammonton. He farmed and organized and supplied farm labor, and eventually managed his own cranberry farm. Rocco's son, Anthony, was a produce broker and owner of New Jersey's second largest cranberry farm. In 1965, Anthony's son Garfield took over the family cranberry business.
- **DiMeo Family:** Michael and his brothers Salvatore and Nicholas left Sulmona, Italy in the early 1900s. Michael settled in Hammonton, establishing his blueberry farm in about 1910. His sons, Frank, Anthony, Sr., Michael and William all worked on the family blueberry farms. M. DiMeo, Sr. (son of Frank DiMeo) co-owned by fourth generation blueberry farmer, Anthony DiMeo and third generation blueberry farmer M. DiMeo, Sr., who were working together.



Tourists at Blueberry Farm, (n.d.)
Photograph, Hammonton History Project
Contributors: Kramer Hall, Hammonton

- **Parkhurst Family:** In the early 1900s, Luman Hurd Parkhurst successfully managed his father Paschal Parkhurst's farm, with crops such as berries, peaches, apples and sweet potatoes. Luman's brother, Merrill, and his son Laton, were some of the first to grow peaches in Hammonton. Before he grew only peaches and apples, Laton also grew dewberries, which were widely popular. He was described as one of Hammonton's "most prosperous farmers" by the newspaper at the time.



A Peach Orchard Postcard, August 21, 1941
Hammonton History Project
Contributors: Kramer Hall, Jim Donio

- **Galletta Family:** Brothers Al, Duke, and Bill Galletta began the Atlantic Blueberry Company with four acres of blueberries in 1936. The farm was originally owned by Lester Collins under the name of Atlantic Company for the Culture of Cranberries. The first blueberries were planted to keep workers busy before the cranberry harvest. Using the original hybrid blueberry plants cultivated by Elizabeth White in the early 1900s, the Atlantic Blueberry Company produces thousands of tons of blueberries during a one-month harvest. The Galletta family continues to run the business and their farms now span over 1,000 acres, said to be the world's largest cultivated blueberry farm.

Cranberries and Blueberries

Although they are native fruits adapted to the climate and conditions of the Pine Barrens, cranberries and blueberries require different conditions to thrive. The cranberry is a native North American plant that grows in low fields, meadows, bogs, and along streams. In the early days of cranberry cultivation, the berries were either picked by hand or using large, wooden scoops. Currently, they are grown in man-made bogs and harvested using the "wet-harvesting" method that began in New Jersey in the 1960s. The berries are gathered by flooding the bogs to loosen the vines from the ground. Workers use mechanical "beaters" to free the berries from their vines and then the fruit is directed towards a conveyor belt.

Blueberries have a simpler method of cultivation and harvesting, with little evolution in the picking process. Originally, they were picked by hand, which is still a common harvesting practice. Early inhabitants of the Pinelands used a "knocking system," accomplished by freeing the bulk of a plant's berries by placing a basket directly underneath the bush, and hitting the trunk with a rubber hose or club. Contemporary mechanical blueberry pickers are much faster and use a similar knocking process by straddling the rows of plants and shaking the berries from their stems. (3)

Blueberry Industry

In 1910, Elizabeth White and Dr. Frederick Coville, a botanist, began research to domesticate the wild blueberry. White's family farm in Whitesbog, New Jersey, served as the first place to grow the cultivated "Highbush" blueberry. Selecting the most desirable wild plants from the Pine Barrens, they cultivated the blueberry bushes to be commercially grown by local farmers. Developing plump, juicy and sweet blueberries that were easy for field workers to pick, this research eventually led to the cultivation of the modern blueberry, earning White the nickname "Blueberry Queen." For her contributions to the agriculture industry, White was the first female to receive a citation from the New Jersey Department of Agriculture. (4) (5)



Elizabeth Coleman White
Photo courtesy of New Jersey
Women's History, Rutgers University

North America is the world's leading blueberry producer and, despite its small size, New Jersey remains the second-largest producer of blueberries in the country. Most of the harvest is located in the Pine Barrens of Atlantic and Burlington Counties with 80% of New Jersey's harvest coming from Atlantic County. The success of blueberry plants is dependent upon the pH of the soil



First Blueberry Queen, Shirley Kemmerer, Crowned in 1953
 Photograph, Hammonton History Project, Contributors: Kramer Hall, Hammonton Historical Society

which must be between 4.0 and 5.5. With the exception of the pH of 5th soil, blueberry plants are a very low-maintenance crop to grow. These plants do not require careful pruning, and are resistant to most pests and diseases.

There are three types of blueberries: Lowbush, Highbush, and Rabbiteye. Highbush blueberries, typical of Hammonton, produce a large quantity of large, sweet fruits and are found in wetlands and drier upland wooded slopes from Nova Scotia west to Wisconsin, south to Georgia and Alabama. Left alone, these plants can reach from 5 to 15 feet; in a garden, they range from 6 to 12 feet. Lowbush blueberries produce small berries with intense flavor. These plants are not as bountiful, only producing 1 or 2 pints of berries per plant and reaching 1 or 2 feet in height. Rabbiteye blueberries are native to mild-winter regions along the Atlantic coast and coastal Alaska. Flourishing in hot and humid summers, these plants grow from 10 to 25 feet, and tend to be most resistant to droughts. (6)(7)

Blueberry Festival

The Hammonton Blueberry Festival has been held every summer since

1986. A beauty pageant for the title of “Blueberry Queen” was held in 1953 and in 1963 through 1965. The Festival sells over a million fresh-picked berries, as well as blueberry jams, donuts, muffins, pies and blueberry-filled cannolis.



Blueberry Pie Eating Contest, (n.d.)
 Photograph, Hammonton History Project
 Contributors: Kramer Hall, Hammonton Historical

Opening Reception at Kramer Hall – Hammonton

Thurs., 9/15: 6 - 8pm (Third Thursday) Free & open to the public

Acknowledgements: This exhibition was a collaboration between the Noyes Museum and the citizens of Hammonton, area artists, Stockton faculty and staff and the South Jersey Culture & History Center. Stockton student interns contributed research. Thanks go out to the Donios, DeMarcos, Parkhursts, Wuillermins, Antiques Marketplace and an anonymous contributor.

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6. <http://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/08/04/428984045/how-new-jersey-tamed-the-wild-blueberry-for-global-production>
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A MEMBER OF GEISINGER HEALTH SYSTEM

This exhibition was made possible in part through the generous support of the AtlantiCare Healing Arts Program.



The South Jersey Culture & History Center



Funding for the Noyes Museum of Art is provided in part by the NJ State Council on the Arts/Dept. of State, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts; the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation; and the Mr. & Mrs. Fred Winslow Noyes Foundation