

## Our Family Farm in Alpine Utah Van Burgess

“My family probably went in the orchard business in the early 1930s because it seemed like a good cash crop. We started out with apples and pears as I remember. At one time we hauled apples out of Alpine and shipped them to Omaha, Nebraska on the rail. We would fill 80 rail cars of apples. That’s like 80 semi-trucks. And that was just from Alpine in one fall pick. There was no storage, there were orchards all over, and you’d pick the apples in bushel baskets. I can remember 3 or 4 thousand bushel baskets. They’d sit for two or three weeks and then we’d haul them down to the rails and load them on the cars. Those were probably the war years. 1942-1944.

Production to begin with was very small. My father made a comment, ‘I don’t know much about raising fruit, but I’m going to look around to kind of see where it doesn’t freeze.’ So he studied some areas where it didn’t freeze in the springtime, and he acquired those sites. He also said, ‘I looked up in the mountains and I saw the trees all growing on the north slope, I didn’t see any trees growing on the south slope, it was just brush and oak so I decided to buy orchard property that sloped north and put trees on the north slopes.’ That’s pretty pioneer isn’t it. And that’s how we got started.

In the apple cellars my father put two stoves that burned coal. Dad lived about a mile from the house and he’d walk out in the wintertime every evening and fire the stoves. He’d stay up until midnight and then, ‘bank ‘em,’ get them hot and turn the damper so they’d hold to morning. Then when morning came the temperature wouldn’t freeze the apples. My brother went on a mission in 1933 or 1934 and my dad had 400 bushels of apples in one of those apple storages. It was in January. A peddler came by and said, ‘have you got any apples that aren’t frozen?’ and Dad said, ‘yes.’ And the peddler looked down and said, ‘I’ll take ‘em.’ Dad had 400 boxes and the peddler paid him \$2 a box. Dad made \$800 that January in the 1930s. It paid for his son’s mission. It was 21 degrees below zero and Dad was selling apples out of the cellar that weren’t frozen.

The biggest marketing program in the 1930s and 40s were probably peddlers. A peddler was somebody who owned a truck and would come by your place and say, ‘can I buy 50 boxes of apples, or 25 sacks of potatoes?’ and they would come in and buy them and take them up to Rock Springs, Wyoming or Evanston, or the Uintah Basin. We raised a thousand bushels of Jonathon apples and they would sell within 30 days to peddlers who’d take them to housewives. That’s because housewives would can them.”



Van Burgess, a farmer and orchard owner from Alpine, Utah, gave an oral interview about life on a Utah farm. In one part of his interview he talked about his family’s apple orchard.