

## AN HISTORICAL DOCUMENT IN CALIFORNIA AVOCADO HISTORY

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The late Professor R. W. Hodgson, who contributed much to our knowledge of the avocado in California, was a natural scholar who wrote extensively and collected much written material on topics related to tropical and subtropical fruits. Professor Hodgson died May 8, 1966. Much of his personal library, which consisted of great numbers of pamphlets, historical records, books and personal papers, was distributed to appropriate library collections at the University of California Davis, Los Angeles and Riverside. A considerable amount of material of historical significance related specifically to dates was given to the U.S.D.A. Date Research Station at Indio, California. Recently while sorting through some boxes of miscellaneous records and papers which still remained at UCLA, I noted a field record book with the book plate in the cover with the name Wilson Popenoe and contained therein personal notes on early avocado history in California and Florida. Dr. Wilson Popenoe died in June, 1975. He had donated many pamphlets and documents to the Agriculture Library at UCLA during the earlier years 1930-45 when the College of Agriculture was developed on the Los Angeles campus. The field notebook is of considerable historical interest for it contains personal observations on the behavior of several avocado varieties, including the Fuerte. The field notes of 1915 indicate that observations were made on "West Indian Garden Introductions by number and name" (Figure 1). These are correlated to collection numbers of Schmidt. Carl Schmidt had been hired by the West Indian Gardens to collect avocado clones of potential value to the California industry. The Fuerte variety was one of Schmidt's collections introduced into California about 1911 by the Popenoes. The notes in Wilson Popenoe's notebook of particular interest are dated Saturday, October 9, 1915, Altadena, California. The preface under this date is given: "I am copying the following record of the West Indian Gardens avocado introductions from the original notes here in the files thinking it would be worth while to have a duplicate set available in Washington for reference in the future when some of these varieties may have become important in California or Florida and the original descriptions will be of considerable pomological interest—Carl B. Schmidt's Introductions, August to December 1911 . . ." Under a heading, "Varieties from Atlixco, Puebla" introduction number 13 was noted as "Puebla" which according to "Schmidt's correspondence this is called "ahuacate de China." It is black 3x4", the seed tight in the cavity (Figure 2). Introduction number 15 is noted by "Schmidt's correspondence—this is considered very good in Atlixco and is called *aguacate de China*." Popenoe wrote in the margin "Fuerte" "(formerly el Fuerte)" . . . "Unusually strong grower. Upright. Buds very readily. Some anise odor in leaves" (Figure 3).

The two varieties Puebla and Fuerte have played an important role in the development of the avocado industry, particularly in California hence information on their historical

development is of interest. The history of the Fuerte variety has been recorded and related on many occasions. The survival by mere chance of the then newly introduced Fuerte after the West Indian Gardens nursery had been subjected to a severe frost is described in part by Popenoe (1). "What happened to the avocado pioneers in the winter of 1912-13 is now history. Jack Frost played a few favorites and when the smoke of battle had cleared away and we had taken stock of our salvage, all that we had left to represent our effort and expenses was four plants of Number Two and five or six of Number Fifteen. From these we have since propagated others, until we now have several hundred five and six-year-old trees chiefly of Number Fifteen variety." Continuing in the same report Popenoe indicates "the term *ahuacate de China* is of indefinite application. In general it implies fruits of good size and quality especially those which are smooth and comparatively thin-skinned." A detailed description of the parent tree and the fruit is included in this report of 1920.

On page 86 of the notebook is pasted in a copy of the first meeting of the "California Ahuacate Association" (Saturday, October 23, 1915) (Figure 4). Among the speakers on this occasion were Judge C. Silent, I. J. Condit, M. E. Jaffa, W. Popenoe, J. E. Coit, F. O. Popenoe, H. J. Webber, D. Fairchild, E. B. Rivers, J. C. Bosche and the president of the association, E. G. Hart. Notes are included which describe the variety Topa Topa (Figure 5), and a discussion held in Washington, D.C. with G. N. Collins of the U.S.D.A. on December 15, 1915, concerning avocado classification (Figure 6). A description of the composition and function of the Committee on Varieties and Nomenclature of the California Avocado Association is given on page 88 (Figure 7).

The remainder of the notebook contains miscellaneous notes on several subtropical fruits such as *Psidium cattleianum*, *Carissa*, papaya, *Tamarindus*, mango, *Feijoa*, white sapote and others. A score card for avocado quality, avocado classification and various notes on avocado propagation and culture are in pencil.

This notebook of Wilson Popenoe is a document of historical interest to the California avocado industry. It will be placed in the Library Collections at the University of California, Riverside, where other documents on avocado are kept.

#### LITERATURE CITED

1. POPENOE, W. 1920. Atlixco. Ann. Rept. Calif. Avocado Assoc. 1919-1920. 24-43.

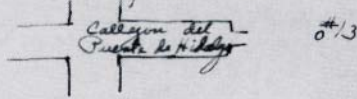
## W.S. Es. Introductions by number and name

Schmidt # 2	✓ Plata
" 7	✓ San Sebastian
" 9	✓ Canyada
" 11	✓ Queretaro
" 13	✓ Puebla
" 14	✓ Lords
" 15	✓ Fuente (formerly El Fuente)
" 16	✓ Redondo
" 17	✓ Verde (formerly Calif. Troop)
" 18	✓ Merito (formerly El Merito)
" 19	✓ Perfecto (formerly El Perfecto)
" 24	✓ Calor (including # 22)
" 25	✓ Canto
" 28	✓ Alto
" 29	✓ Atlixco
" 32	✓ Oro (formerly El Oro)
" 33	✓ Montezuma
" 35	✓ Miles
" 37	✓ Sinaloa
" 38	<del>✓ Cortez (Lost?)</del>
" 39	✓ Grande (formerly El Grande)
" 40	✓ Schmidt
" 41	✓ Obispo
Formal # 6	✓ Ameca
Johnston # 3	✓ Colonia
" 6	✓ Johnston
	✓ Papacatipatl
	✓ Ixcam (formerly Hacinghualt)

FIGURE 1

Varieties from Atlises, Puebla.

No. 13 No. 13. Vicente Pineda. Age of tree, 20 yrs.  
Height 35 ft, trunk 8" thru. Season Sept,  
Puebla fruit 2 1/2 x 4", purp. sk. with small seed.



As to Schmidt's correspondence this is called  
'ahuacate de China', it is black, 3 x 4",  
the seed tight in the cavity.

Side well dried with dropping base for. Very rapid grow

PUEBLA (NUMBER THIRTEEN)

Description: Form, pyriform, not necked; size, medium; dimensions,  
length, four, diameter, three inches; surface, smooth; color, purple; skin, thick  
and tough, separating readily from the flesh; flesh, yellow, greenish towards  
skin; flavor, fine; quality, good; seed, small, tight in cavity; season, Septem-  
ber and October at Atliseo, Mexico.

Collected at Atliseo in 1915

PUEBLA—Another fall fruiting variety, season September and October; a  
thick-skinned, purple fruit of medium size and fine flavor, with small seed. A good  
commercial variety.

Is this the Guatemalan Pepper?

Tested with Ortol Nordhoff, false reference?

No. 14 No. 14. Matilde Dion, Calle Manuel  
Buen Rastro #2. Age 25 yrs, Height 35 ft.  
Gordo trunk 8" thru. Fruit round, 800 on the  
tree, purple, gahua.

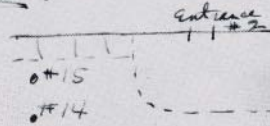


FIGURE 2

also to Schmidt's correspondence this is an  
extra good fruit, 4" in diam, rough black.

Variety not growing at W.D.G.

No. 15

Fuente.

(formerly  
El Fuente)

No. 15. Matildi Dion. Age 25 yrs,  
Height 30 ft. trunk 1 ft thru. Fruit long,  
green, season Oct. and Nov.

also Schmidt's correspondence this is considered  
very good in Atlixco, and is called aguasote  
de China. Fruit 4x3", nutty flavor, seed  
small, tight in cavity.

NUMBER FIFTEEN

Young trees of this variety are doing well at the present time in California, and it promises to be one of the best medium sized fruits in a commercial way. It is of good shape for packing and shipping and of extra fine quality.

Description: Form, oval; size, medium; dimensions, length, four, diameter, three inches; surface, somewhat rough; color, green; skin, thick, separating readily from the flesh; flesh, yellow, smooth and buttery; flavor, rich; quality, very good; seed, small, tight in cavity; season, October and November at Atlixco, Puebla.

Unusually strong grower. Upright. Beds very  
readily some resemble other in loc.

FIGURE 3

# The California Ahuacate Association

Has Called a Meeting of its Members for

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23, 1915

At Hotel Alexandria, Los Angeles

The Meeting will be called to order at 9:30 A. M. and continue to 5:00 P. M., with an Intermission from 12:00 to 1:45 P. M.

## PROGRAM

JUDGE CHARLES SILENT, . . . . . Glendora  
"Educating the Public"  
PROF. I. J. CONDIT, University of California, . . . . . Berkeley  
"New Items of Interest"  
PROF. M. E. JAFFA, University of California . . . . . Berkeley  
"Food Value of the Avocado"  
WILSON POPENOE, Agricultural Explorer, Department of Agriculture  
"The Avocado in Florida and Other Lands"  
DR. J. ELIOT COIT, University of California . . . . . Berkeley  
Discussion Leader

2:00 P. M. to 5:00 P. M.

F. O. POPENOE, President West India Gardens . . . . . Altadena  
"Varieties"  
DR. H. J. WEBBER, Director of Citrus Experiment Station . . . . . Riverside  
"Station Work for the Avocado"  
C. P. TAFT, Fruit Grower . . . . . Orange  
"Things to be Looked Out For"  
DAVID FAIRCHILD, Agricultural Explorer, in Charge Bureau  
of Plant Industry . . . . . Washington  
"Foreign Contributions to American Avocado Growing"  
E. B. RIVERS . . . . . Los Angeles  
Marketing  
J. C. BOSCHE . . . . . Los Angeles  
Marketing from Mexico  
EDWIN G. HART, President California Ahuacate Assn. . . . . Los Angeles  
"The Association and its Purpose"

Anyone interested in the production or marketing of the Ahuacate is invited to be present as a guest of the Association, and all growers are invited to exhibit their fruit.

Address CALIFORNIA AHUACATE ASSOCIATION, Los Angeles

FIGURE 4

Monday

Altadena Calif

Oct. 25 1915

Tapa  
Tapa  
AwoceaksGrown by E. S. Thacher,  
Nordhoff, Calif.

Form oblong-pyriform,  
scarcely necked, weight  
8-10 ops. length  $5\frac{3}{4}$ "  
breadth  $2\frac{3}{4}$ " diam. base  
slender, stem inserted  
to one side, with no  
cavity, apex rounded,  
with a slight tip at  
stigmatic point; surface  
smooth or very slightly  
pitted, glaucous, purpled  
black in color, with few  
minute russet dots; skin  
thin tender, adhering closely.

flesh deep cream colored, pale greenish near  
skin, slightly fibrous, of rich nutty flavor,  
rather dry and meaty; seed cavity large,  
long, seed coats loosely adhering to its walls;  
seed slender, conical, 2 ops in wt, loosely surround-  
ed by the seed coats. quality good. Season  
October - November (?).

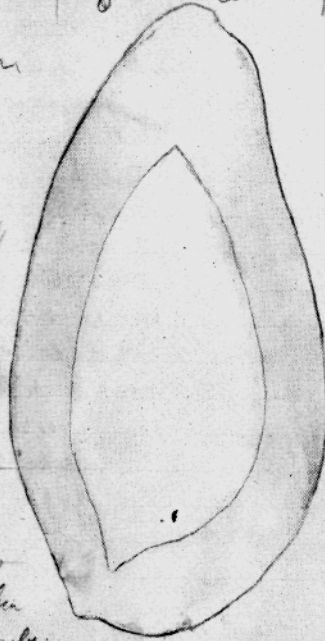


FIGURE 5

Wednesday Washington D.C. Dec 15 1915

Avocado  
Classify-  
cation. In talking with G. N. Collins re classification of avocados, he emphasizes the following points:

Leaf and flower characters should be used if possible. Thinks leaf characters of Guat. type may be distinct enough from those of So. American to serve as a character.

Differentiation of skin from flesh much more marked in Guat. than in So. Am. type, and a useful character.

Character of seed coats important. Has never seen a Guat. fruit with loose seed coats.

Thinks there are several types or perhaps species represented among the avocados of Guatemala.

Thinks my classification satisfactory for practical purposes. The names of the types are apt to be misleading.



California Avocado Association

Committee on Varieties and Nomenclature

1. This committee shall consist of a chairman and two other members, to be chosen annually (3) by the executive committee.
2. It shall be the duty of this committee to:
  - (a) Describe and record all new varieties of the avocado which come to its attention, so that accurate information respecting <sup>new</sup> varieties may be available to members of the association.
  - (b) Consider questions of nomenclature, particularly of new varieties submitted for registration by the society, and make recommendations concerning the same.
  - (c) Maintain a list of varieties, which shall include as far as possible all those existent, together with all available information concerning each, in order that members of the association may at any time be furnished with all available data concerning any variety.
  - (d) Prepare, as occasion may demand, score cards, rules for judging, and other material of a technical <sup>descriptive</sup> ~~scientific~~ character, for consideration by the society.

FIGURE 7