

# George Broughton, Pioneer Fruit Grower, Looks To New Future

George P. Broughton of Grand Junction has planted and raised a great many fruit orchards in the fifty years he has lived on the Western Slope. Just two years ago, a serious heart condition forced him to sell one of the finest orchards in the Grand Junction area.

He traveled around the country a bit, then settled down in Grand Junction to become a city man, tending the lawn and shrubs around his home at 1304 Ouray.

Now Mr. Broughton is 86 years old, and his greatest ambition is to get out once again and raise still another orchard.

He has serious plans for doing this too. His doctors advise a lower elevation to ease his heart condition. That rules out the Western slope, so Broughton is seriously thinking of moving to the Yakima Valley, Washington, resting up a little, then starting in again. Two years ago, when he was only 84, he pruned and cleaned his Mantey Heights orchard—all 40 acres of it—without anyone assisting him.

"It's a waste of time for me to sit around here in the house," says Broughton. "I don't like this city life at all. I want to be able to get out and do something."

## Born in Wisconsin

Broughton was born in the little town of Glendale, Wis., in 1869. After spending his boyhood in that state, he and his father moved to Canon City, Colorado. There he got into the fruit business by planting his first orchard.

In 1903, he and his young family moved to a farm about eight miles south of Montrose. Here he set out apple trees. Needing help to plant the orchard, he hired the neighbor's boy, a young, stocky youth named Jack Dempsey, later to become heavyweight boxing champion of the world. Broughton remembers Dempsey as "strong as a bull, and very quick in his work." With Dempsey's help Broughton soon succeeded in establishing an excellent fruit farm.

Bitten by the moving bug again, Broughton and his family pulled up stakes and moved to Olathe, where he bought a 64 acre

farm north-west of the town. Before long, he had these acres planted to apples and was looking around for something more to do. He bought 20 more acres for more apples, and then bought still 20 more acres for yet another orchard.

## Plenty of Apples

Now Broughton had plenty of apples, but the question was what to do with them? He proceeded to build a storage unit 50 feet wide and 170 feet long. When picking time came he filled the entire unit with apples to the height of six feet. Then when shipping time arrived, the Broughton farm shipped one car of bulk apples each day for 28 days.

About 1932, Broughton became interested in an area along the Gunnison river in the canyon between Delta and Grand Junction. "There was nothing but a trail down into the place," he says, "and the whole area was filled with rattlesnakes, prairie dogs,

hundreds of cottonwood trees, and rocks—lots of rocks."

Friends advised Broughton not to buy the site, but he was convinced fruit would escape the frost in the shelter of the canyon. He bought the place, and now run by his son Donald, it is known as the Broughton Fruit Farm, a very successful orchard.

He accomplished two things at once when he cleared the land of trees and rocks. By piling them up along the shore of the river, he found he could cut down the amount of water that washed onto the place in the spring when the river ran high. It worked very well except for one year when the water ran higher than usual and killed about ten acres of trees.

## Killed Snakes

When first planting the farm, Broughton killed a great many rattlesnakes. One morning, when coming into the kitchen for breakfast, he found a rattlesnake

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comfortably curled up under the stove. The rattler soon paid for it's invasion.

In developing irrigation for the 10,000 tree farm, Broughton reconstructed an old water wheel, reestablished it on a point of the river shore, and soon had enough water to supply all his irrigation needs. Later, he constructed a new, 22 foot wheel, which is still being used today.

Besides the constant work of orchard raising, Broughton raised a family of six children, four boys and two girls. One of the sons, Donald, took over the canyon farm and runs it today. Another son, Robert, is the manager of the United Marketing Fruit selling organization in Delta.

## Became Landlords

In 1946, Mr. and Mrs. Broughton moved to Grand Junction to try city life for awhile. They purchased the Central Hotel, an apartment house at 348 White Ave. and became landlords.

But orchards had more appeal to Broughton, so in 1949, he purchased a 40 acre tract about one mile north of Patterson on Mantey Heights. Here he set out trees again, alternately spacing apples and pears, and raising one of the finest orchards in the Grand Valley.

Two years ago, however, he sold the new orchard because of his heart condition. But looking back over his career, and back at the more than 29,000 fruit trees he has planted on the Western Slope, he says "If I had it all to do over again, I'd probably do it just exactly the way I did the first time."