

# Photo of the Month

## The Apple Industry



W.E. Brown apple orchard, Rogers, circa 1900. Negative N007936

Before the coming of the railroad, local agriculture had been largely subsistence farming, with some tobacco grown as a cash crop. Once railroad transportation was available, fruit production became the backbone of the local economy. Benton County became the leading apple-producing county in the nation; the 1901 crop of 2.5 million bushels set a national record for a single county.

Local apples were judged to be high in quality, winning major awards at the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis and 308 prizes at the 1915 Panama Pacific Exposition in San Francisco.

There were over 300 local apple varieties with names like Mammoth Black, Collins Red, Highfill Blue, and Arkansas Black. The orchards supported a wide range of related businesses, including produce stores, barrel manufacturers, and nurseries. Production of apple cider vinegar was a major industry. By the 1920s disease and late frosts were plaguing the apple industry and county agents began to urge farmers to diversify and end their dependence on fruit production. The Great Depression of the 1930s ended completely the era of The Land of the Big Red Apple, and soon poultry became the leading agricultural product of Benton County.