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Gardening has been part of area for decades

By Wendy Richter
For the Siftings

Spring has officially begun, and some area residents are beginning to plant gardens, flowers, and other items in their yards and fields. Years ago, a good bit of agriculture-related news appeared in front-page stories of the local newspaper. Indeed, in 1915, Arkadelphia's *Southern Standard* addressed issues connected to planting, and told of many of the growing season's firsts as the year progressed. Legends and lore, as well as factual information, were all included in the paper's stories.

For example, the March 4 edition of the paper proclaimed that "The Signs Indicate Frost April 22: Prepare Against Destruction of Garden on That Eventful Day." The story read like this: "It is definitely settled that we will have frost here on April 22. John B. Brown is the authority for this statement and he gets his information from the old settlers who have made it a practice during their long

years of living to observe the signs. The conclusion is drawn from the fact that it thundered in February and it is claimed by these old timers that on whatever date it thunders in February, we will have frost in April, on that same date."

By mid-year, the paper reported the arrival of various crops. On July 1, one headline stated, "Mighty Fine Apples." The story read: "W.A. Langley, who was up from Copeland Ridge Monday, has our thanks for some mighty fine samples of some apples which he got from trees on his farm. They are the Kentucky Streak, and when it comes to eating, they hit the spot. All kinds of fruit do well on the Ridge." Another report on the same date mentioned the summer's first watermelons: "The first watermelons of the season were brought into this market on yesterday. One load brought in by Jim Petty from out in Unity was bought by Williams & Phillips and another load brought in by C.F. Clark from Copeland Ridge was bought by J.W. Carter. The merchants paid

about 25 cents apiece for them."

On August 12, 1915, the paper reported that "C.H. Williams, one of the most prosperous farmers of the upper end of Manchester Township, was in town last Saturday and was the first of our farmers to report to us open bolls of cotton in their fields. Mr. Williams says, however, that his are not the only fields of cotton over in his section that are showing open bolls. He remarked, too, that he had seen earlier seasons than this, as he remembered that thirteen years ago he sold a bale on the streets of Arkadelphia on August 22."

Fall crops began to arrive a little later. On October 7, the *Southern Standard* announced that sweet potatoes were being successfully produced in the area: "C.C. Turquette brought in a large bunch of Jersey Sweet sweet potatoes on last Saturday which had been grown on L.E. Burns' farm. There were 19 on one vine, which weighed 5½ pounds. The Jersey Sweet is a northern potato which brings a good price. It has only recently

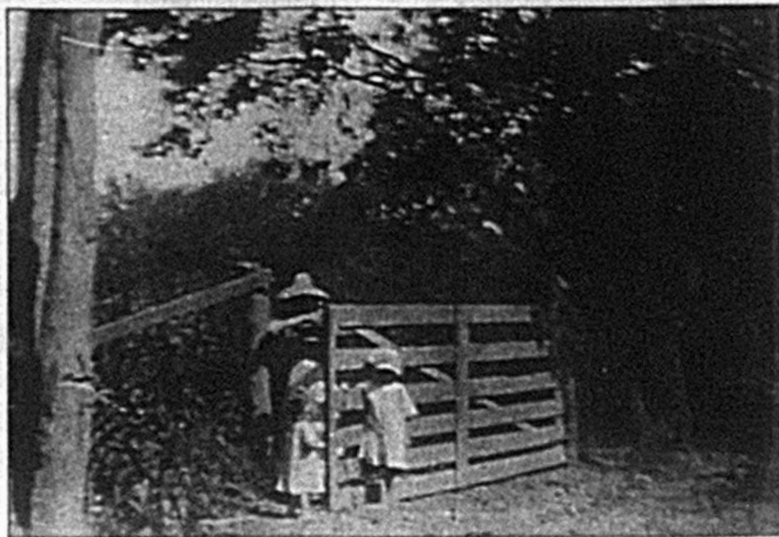


PHOTO COURTESY CLARK COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The standard garden in this part of the state around the turn of the century likely looked similar to this one.

been grown in the South."

Apples made the headlines again on Nov. 11: "You may say what you please about the fine apples of northwest Arkansas, but really the best eating apple we have ever stuck a tooth into was one of the small wine sap apples which Rev. G.W. Burns brought in from his place out at Unity last week."

For additional information about Clark County history, visit or contact the Clark County Historical Museum at the train depot (www.clarkcountyhistory.org or 230-1360) or the Clark County Historical Association's Archives at the Ouachita Baptist University Library (www.obu.edu/archives or 245-5332).