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DUDLEY WARREN ADAMS, PIONEER

by HARRIET M. BRYANT

IN DECEMBER, 1875, a tall, spare man in middle life arrived in a small village in interior Florida. He strolled silently about the town, asked no questions of any of the citizens, moved into the wilderness westward of the village, and walked through the deep sand around the heavy scrub of palmetto growth into the forest of tall pines. No human habitation or evidence of human activity appeared as he continued his way in the wood. On his right he caught the gleam of a small lake, He followed a narrow opening into a cypress woods, draped with fairy-like grey moss, and continued on through the sand until he arrived on a knoll. He looked about him at the lay of the land and gazed at the long, pine-studded slope toward the blue waters of another lake. With a studied, critical eye he estimated the worth of the land about him and decided this was the location that would best meet the requirements for his contemplated venture. Here he planned his homestead, and he felled the tall oaks and pines for a house of logs. A niece, who visited the place as a little girl in 1879, described the house as one built in the Florida style of that day, with long porches running the entire length on both sides, "galleries" they were called, and rooms arranged on either side of a "Blow-Way."

This venturesome gentleman was Dudley W. Adams who came from the rich corn-belt country of Allamakee County in Iowa. His home there was in Waukon near the northeastern corner of the state. Adams was a native of Massachusetts and a direct descendent of Henry Adams, the founder of the famous Adams family, but of the eighth generation. Dudley W. Adams was born in 1832 on a small, rocky farm in Winchendon, a town in the northern part of Worcester County. His father was Joseph Boynton Adams and his mother, Hannah Whitney Adams. His father died when Dudley W. Adams was four years of age, and his mother, with the energy and resourcefulness characteristic of New England women took over the family responsibilities. She gave her son excellent training at home and sent him to grammar school. By teaching school at intervals, he was able to pay for

more advanced study. In 1853 at the age of twenty-one, he went west and used his savings from teaching to buy a small farm in Waukon, Iowa.

During the next two decades he became interested in horticulture and developed an orchard of 4,000 apple trees; at the same time he established the Iron Clad Nurseries. So successful was this first venture that in 1871 he exhibited his fruit at the State Horticultural Fair and won the sweepstakes with 100 varieties of apples, by far the best and largest shown. Again in 1879 he took the sweepstakes with 172 varieties of apples.

He married a Waukon girl, Hannah Heustis, and together they made a home. In 1875, at the age of 43, he left Iowa to escape the severe northern winters, and settled in Florida. Near Mount Dora he cleared land, set out citrus trees, and soon had a 37-acre grove.

In 1888 Adams interested other citrus rowers in the advantage of mutual exchange of ideas. Twelve or more men met in Ocala and organized the Florida State Horticultural Society of which he was chosen the first president, an office which he held until his death in 1897. During the nine years of his presidency the society grew to a membership of 300, constantly increasing its influence and usefulness. It is interesting to go over the reports of the annual meetings of the society and note the wide variety of studies and experiments the members described. By trial and error they made studies of soils, fertilization, spacing and care of trees, and of marketing and transportation. Adams was the inspiring spirit and keen guide in all this early experimentation.

Dudley W. Adams died on February 13, 1897, and the opening session of the Horticultural Society in May of that year was a memorial to him. President George Tabor referred to the sudden passing of Adams by stating: "What is more fitting than when the short, sharp summons came it should find him working among the trees and flowers that he loved so well."

That Adams was much loved and highly esteemed by all who knew him is attested by the spontaneous remarks made on this occasion. Tabor, quite shaken by Adams' death, could say little more than, "My heart is too full for I loved that man. His noble life, his busy life is ended. He has crossed over the vale to the

transvaal and in the words of Macbeth, 'After life's fitful fever he sleeps well'." The rather long remarks of George H. Wright of Orlando are also revealing. He reported that he had known Adams was as devoted to the betterment of his fellow men as he was to his major business and interests in agriculture. His concern was to help his countrymen improve their ideals and ideas, their standing in the community, their character as well as the products with which they worked. Wright reported that he had been a member of the state horticultural society (in Iowa) at the time that Adams served as secretary, and also knew him as president of the Iowa Grange.

Today among the many interesting recollections of Adams are those of Miss Bertha Eddy of Mount Dora, whose mother was a sister of Mrs. Adams. Miss Eddy recalls vividly her childhood visits to the Adams' home among the groves that overlook beautiful Lake Beauclair. She remembers following her uncle Dudley about the place. He seemed fatherly although he was never a father. If his little companion seemed to be getting tired he would take her hand in his and help her over the rough places, or pick her up in his arms when the way began to seem too long for little feet. Miss Eddy recalls him as a tall, erect man with kindly blue eyes, and wearing the long beard so popular among men at that time. She remembers hearing the story from her mother that in 1893 her Uncle Dudley sent a display of twelve oranges to the World's Fair in Chicago and that he took seven prizes with it. The fair authorities made a wax replica of the entry which they later sent to Adams. This replica is in the possession of that part of the family still living on Adams' old farm near Waukon, Iowa.

The best source for a picture of Adams as a person is found in his own words, from his annual addresses as president of the Florida State Horticultural Society. In one of these he used this clever literary device:

Some years ago a dozen or so gentlemen whose thoughts at mid-day and dreams at midnight were of Florida horticulture met in the parlors of the Ocala House. There and then the Florida Horticultural Society was ushered into being. It was a diminutive infant and its sponsors placed it in my hands to be nurtured through its first years of helplessness. I accepted the charge with many misgivings, but the infant proved to be of good stock and imbued with right principles - and

blood will tell. I have the honor and take great pride today in exhibiting to the sponsors and the people of Ormond my charge, now just entering upon its fifth year, and I am sure you will all agree that he is a full-grown, vigorous, healthy lad for his age and promises many years of usefulness in his native state, and to be a source of just pride to the authors of his being.

After this humorous, flowery bit of oratory, President Adams stated that the work of the society was to determine: "(1) how to grow fruit, (2) how to transport fruit, (3) how to sell our fruit."

The next year at the ninth annual meeting held in Jacksonville, which as it turned out was his last meeting with the society, President Adams gave a humorous account of the beginnings of mankind.

Ladies and gentlemen of the Florida State Horticultural Society. There is an ancient tradition which is very largely confined in that the first parents of the human race were horticulturalists. They lived in a garden. From the best information available it appears that they did not own the place, but were put there to take care of it for the maker and owner. The details of the agreement are somewhat meagre, but as near as can be ascertained at this late date they were to have their board and clothes provided they could make them out of the place, and leave the crop of fruit of one particular tree ungathered for rent. Without more definite information as to the size of the garden and quality of the fruit and the distance from a cash market, we are unable to determine whether our horticultural progenitors made a good bargain or not . . . The record does not say whether the forbidden fruit was a green persimmon or a grapefruit, but they wanted it. When the owner found his tenants, had robbed his reserved tree he cancelled the lease, turned them out of the garden and condemned them to diversified farming.

One more quotation from his speeches indicates the depths of his inner life. In his address at the fifth annual meeting of the society, he declared:

Besides the growing and marketing of our fruits and the mere making of money, the Florida Horticultural Society hopes to have a beneficial influence. We hope to make men better morally, more intelligent mentally and more agreeable socially; for meeting together, we shall be better fitted in every way for the duties of home and citizenship. We shall get new ideas

of how to make our homes enjoyable by adding new beauties, new comforts and new pleasures. In short, let us make these meetings so pleasant and valuable that we shall all be glad to come and our homes so lovely that we shall be glad to return to them.

Possibly in accordance with his wish, the body of Dudley Warren Adams was sent to his old home in Winchendon, Massachusetts, and buried among others of the Adams family. As President Wright of the Horticultural Society stated in May of 1897: "It is difficult to replace him, but thanks to a kind Providence that rules the destinies of men, we have men that love the memory of Dudley W. Adams and I thank God I was associated with him."