

# What's in Season from the Garden State

Biweekly Highlights from Cooperative Extension, a unit of Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

October 1, 2007

## Harvest History Detectives: What's Rutgers have to do with NJ Ag?

*Excerpted from History of Cook College: George H. Cook and the Land Grant College, by Dr. Barbara Munson Goff, formerly Assistant Dean, Academic Programs*

As the State University of New Jersey, Rutgers is a source of esteemed higher education and state pride in its football and women's basketball teams for New Jersey. But aside from the academics and athletics, there is a large component of Rutgers that is solely dedicated to serving the needs of New Jersey residents through research and outreach. It's been said to be one of New Jersey's best kept secrets and it plays a large role in agriculture. It is known as Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES) and the Cooperative Extension unit. While the names have changed recently, the institution and its mission go back a long way. So, pull up a chair and grab a mug of hot cider, and herein lies a crash course in how Rutgers NJAES came to be.

'Twas in 1766 that Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey was founded by the Dutch Reformed Church as Queen's College to educate the future leaders of their church (who at that time had to go to the Netherlands for their seminary training and ordination) "for young men destined for study in the learned languages and in the liberal arts, and who are to be instructed in the philosophical sciences".

Skip ahead a century. While the US was engaged in the Civil War, President Lincoln signed the Morrill Act (Land Grant College) in 1862. Sponsored by Congressman Justin Morrill of Vermont, the act gave to every state that had remained in the Union a grant of 30,000 acres of public land for every member of its congressional delegation. The states were to sell this land and use the proceeds to establish colleges in engineering, agriculture and military science. Over seventy "land grant" colleges, as they came to be known, were established under the original Morrill Act; a second act in 1890 extended the land grant provisions to the sixteen southern states. (Note: Although originally started as agricultural and technical schools, many of them grew, with additional state aid, into large public universities.)

Rutgers Professor of Chemistry George H. Cook, lobbied for Rutgers to become New Jersey's land grant college and the Rutgers Scientific School (as it was then called) was established in 1864. A 100-acre farm on the outskirts of New Brunswick was purchased from the estate of James Neilson to serve as the school's experimental farm. That land is now the heart of the George H. Cook campus of the Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (the renamed Cook College).

The next component in the evolution of what is today called Rutgers New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station, was the 1887 Hatch Act, which amended the Morrill Act by establishing funds for state Agricultural Experiment Stations "to support agricultural research as well as promote the efficient production, marketing, distribution, and utilization of products of the farm as essential to the health and welfare of our peoples and to promote a sound and prosperous agriculture and rural life as indispensable to the maintenance of maximum employment and national prosperity and security."

The land-grant triad was completed in 1914, with the Smith-Lever Act. This act established the Agricultural Extension Service, which located the faculty of what



*A modern image of an inspired George H. Cook creating Rutgers as a land-grant institution in 1864. Cook was the first full-time non-clerically trained faculty member at Rutgers. Cook made the critical difference in the fight with Princeton for land-grant designation; due to his experience as assistant state geologist, he knew the state better than anyone at Princeton, and he and the professor of mathematics, David Murry, did the necessary lobbying of the legislature. Later Cook established the Agricultural Experiment Station on the College Farm.*



*The new buildings at the Agricultural Experiment Station and the newly founded College of Agriculture in the 1920s. They are now named Thompson, Martin (Administration), and Bartlett halls. The school kept its practical agriculture close at hand; note the corn growing just across what is now Lipman Drive in New Brunswick.*

**RUTGERS**  
New Jersey Agricultural  
Experiment Station

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**New Jersey Department of  
Agriculture's Jersey Fresh &  
Seafood Availability Report**

**Current:** Radishes  
Apples Spinach  
Arugula Squash - Acorn,  
Baby Arugula & Butternut, Spaghet-  
ti yellow & zucchini  
Baby Spinach ti  
Basil Sweet Corn  
Beets Sweet Potatoes  
Cabbage Swiss Chard  
Cilantro Tomatoes  
Collards Turnips  
Cucumbers White Potatoes

Dill  
Eggplant  
Escarole &  
Endive  
Kale  
Leeks &  
Green Onions  
Lettuces  
Mint  
Parsley  
Peppers  
Pumpkins



Butterfish  
Daylights  
Flounder  
Fluke  
Ling  
Lobster  
Monkfish  
Scup (Porgies)  
Sea Scallops  
(Day Boat)  
Skate Wings  
- Nov. 1st  
Squid  
Tilefish - Nov. 1st  
Tuna  
Whiting

**Farm Raised Hard  
Clams & Oysters**

Littlenecks/Middlenecks  
Specials  
Cape May Salt Oysters  
Delaware Bay Oysters



was then known as the College of Agriculture in each of the counties. "The land-grant concept", refers to the integration of campus-based academic program with experiment station research, which in turn is disseminated to the public by the local extension agents. Extension agents also facilitate communication between the public and the college: a resident calls the extension agent with a problem, which is then communicated to the appropriate experiment station specialist, who is able either to resolve the problem or initiate research into it.

Rutgers NJAES faculty is made of specialists who work on breeding, insects, diseases, weeds, soil fertility for a variety of fruit, vegetable and horticultural crops. They continue a long line of research that has made contributions to agriculture that has made an impact not only on a state-wide basis, but world-wide as well.

New Jersey has not been "rural" for some time, but the college and experiment station met this challenge by enlarging the mission to include the study of pollution problems (the country's first Department of Environmental Sciences), natural resources, fisheries, nutrition, urban gardens, land use planning, small business development, youth-at-risk programs — all of which address the needs of a state no longer predominantly agricultural. In this, Rutgers has led the nation in keeping what had been an "ag school" abreast of the times and local problems without loss of the fundamental land-grant mission. To find your county Extension office go to: <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/county>.

**Old MacRutgers had a Farm....**

Upon becoming the land grant college for New Jersey in 1864, Rutgers acquired its first college farm in New Brunswick. Since that time, Rutgers has established four research farms throughout the state, focusing on various fields of research. The Clifford E. and Melda C. Snyder Research & Extension Farm - Rutgers Center for Sustainable Agriculture is in Pittstown (Hunterdon County); The Philip E. Marucci Center for Blueberry & Cranberry Research & Extension is in Chatsworth (Burlington County); Rutgers Agricultural Research & Extension Center is in Upper Deerfield (Cumberland County); and Rutgers Fruit & Ornamental Research Extension Center is in Cream Ridge (Monmouth County). Two of these farms had been working family farms before they became part of Rutgers NJAES.

Education was a defining ideal for farmers Clifford and Melda Snyder. Clifford was often the first to explore a new idea. Area farmers visited the farm, called Clifffields, and learned about the latest experiment. After Clifford's death in 1967, Melda expanded that concept, hosting informational tours so people could better understand farmers and farming. Their vision and spirit endure today. Upon her death in 1988, Melda Snyder bequeathed Clifffields to Cook College and the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station. Renamed "The Snyder Research and Extension Farm, Center for Sustainable Agriculture" this facility embodies these goals and stands as a testament to this forward-thinking couple.



The present day Rutgers Fruit Research Center was originally two separately owned farms in Cream Ridge. In 1963 when Dr. Frederick Hough was looking for good land in order to expand the Rutgers tree fruit breeding program, which was started nearly 50 years before, farmer William Probasco and the owner of the adjoining acreage sold a total of 250 acres to Rutgers University for the purpose of research. After selling the farm and moving out of the farmhouse, William's son Milton Probasco then accepted a job working for Rutgers on the current research farm which was his former home. He eventually became farm supervisor and for the next 18 years the Probasco family made the farmhouse their home for a second time.

More information on Rutgers off-campus research farms is available at: <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/centers>.

Where to find Jersey Fresh? Ask for it where you shop or dine or go to: <http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov>

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