

THE CRAIG FRUIT FARM

By GUY TRAIL, '25

The Ideal Location of This Modern Fruit Farm, Along With an Almost Virgin Market, Makes This Orchard One of the Valuable of Its Kind in Arizona

Nestling in a quiet valley on the very tip-top of the Pinal Mountains on the picturesque Miami-Superior highway is the Craig Fruit Farm, the largest and most unique apple orchard in Arizona. The location of this remarkable ranch, both with respect to profit and pleasure, is all that could be desired.

It is an eleven mile climb from the bustling mining town of Superior to this mountain farm, 4,500 feet high. The climate and scenery could not be

sons, Robert and Gerald, have things about their own way when it comes time to dispose of their fruit.

Mr. Craig bought the land he now has in orchard in 1878. Just a few miles away was located the famous Silver King mine which was traded by a soldier doing duty against the Apache Indians for a pair of boots, and from which was taken \$14,000,000 in silver and gold. The Craig ranch was first used for cattle. A few trees,

petition with the best in the country.

Eighteen carloads of apples were sold off the farm in 1918. With a good crop his apples will average 20,000 pounds to the acre. Even before the present "million dollar" highway was built past his door, he sold \$2,000 worth of cull apples at his roadside market in a single season. All of the fruit is marketed through wholesale dealers in the nearby mining towns. He starts selling the mid-



JUST A SECTION VIEW OF THE CRAIG FRUIT FARM.

improved, if made to order. Down the other side of the mountain, 11 miles away, is Miami; and, 17 miles away, Globe. Both are big mining camp towns with a population large enough to snap up the fruit output of the Craig ranch and call for more every season. This fruit farm is in southern Arizona; where, at ordinary altitudes, apples will not grow because of the excessive heat. At the Craig ranch apples and peaches and the small fruits do excellently. Best of all, no irrigation is needed. Timely rains provide enough moisture while on the surrounding desert everything is parched and dead. Incidentally, it is 50 miles to any other commercial farming, so D. I. Craig and his two

planted about the ranch house in 1875, gave proof in the form of luscious red apples of the excellent location for an orchard, and as time went on more trees were set out. At present there are 55 acres in bearing apples, 5 acres in peaches, and a few acres in apricots. When the two sons complete their horticultural education at the University of Arizona they will increase the plantings to 120 acres without clearing more land. In all, 200 acres can be put to fruit trees.

The apple varieties now are Jonathan, Stark's Delicious, Baldwin, King David, Wealthy, Ben Davis, Rome Beauty and Grimes Golden. Mr. Craig won second prize on apples at the St. Louis World's Fair in com-

dle of July and feeds his markets until about February when he takes his last boxes out of storage.

Yes, there is an up-to-the-minute cold storage plant on this unique ranch. Mr. Craig was in the cold storage business before he took up fruit farming. Naturally, he decided to put up a plant on his apple ranch when his business reached the proper volume. He uses ammonia refrigeration in his plant which has a capacity of two carloads. With his common storage, ten carloads of apples can be put away and fed out as the market demands. The artificial storage works very nicely with peaches. It permits him to hold them two weeks and have

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them immediately available for his many customers who come to the ranch for fresh fruit. His sales start just as soon as harvesting begins and they will run from five boxes to 20,000 pounds a day. By spreading his market Mr. Craig has no trouble disposing of his crop and meeting outside competition. His prices are determined by what the fruit growers in the Northwest are getting for their crop, although he can undersell them, if it is necessary.

In the last 18 years there have been only three absolute failures and only one year when the fruit crop did not pay expenses. The failures were due to dry years and spring frosts. There was no crop the past fall, but despite the driest year in the history of Southern Arizona the fruit trees on this ranch did nicely on 14.71 inches of rain. The yearly average on this mountain top is 25 inches, according to records at the ranch for 35 years.

Moisture retention, however, is one of the major problems. To conserve his soil water, Mr. Craig keeps a dust mulch in his orchard, both winter and summer. He often discs as many as ten times a year. He tried plowing, but discarded that method of tillage several years ago. He is firmly convinced now that discing is the logical cultivation for an orchard, because it conserves the moisture and permits feeder roots of his trees to come near the top of the soil.

The outstanding impression one gets at this novel mountain orchard is its completeness. The spray equipment is of the type recommended by Cornell University. The pruning methods and equipment are based on the experience of scientific fruit men. Packing and grading is as carefully done as in the great co-operative houses of

the Pacific Coast. All of the apples are sent to market in a standard Northwest apple box with an attractive label of the Craig ranch on each. The roadside market in the fruit season is open for business from 6:30 o'clock in the morning until 7 o'clock at night.

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