

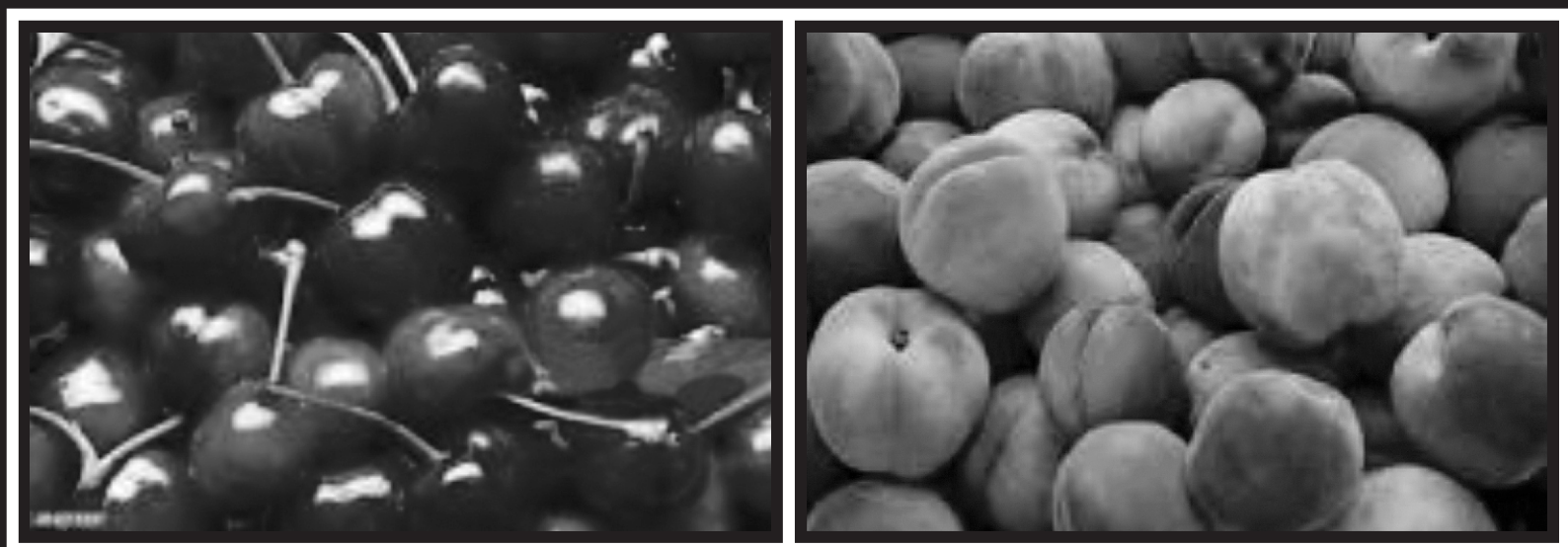
THE FORGOTTEN FRUIT WAY

From the 1920's Providence bench was well known as an area full of orchards and small fruit farms. Customers from northern Utah and southern Idaho came to buy fruit that was famous for its size and quality. From the 30's through 70's Providence was the fruit and berry center of Cache Valley.

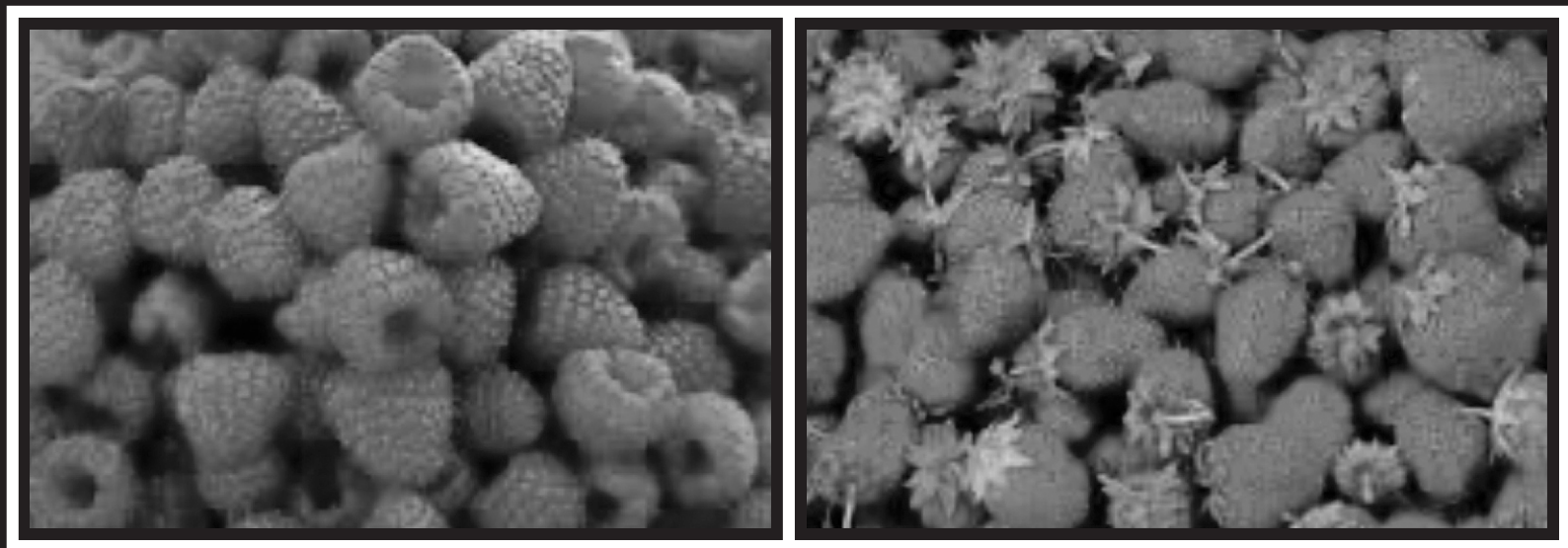


Orchards, along the North Bench foothills, east of Spring Creek Road

John Layne and William Reading were the first to import fruit trees into Providence. The first commercial apple orchard was planted in 1895 by George Drummond Hoggan and David M. Campbell. Around 1908 William R Zollinger had over 15 acres of apples and sold 100 bushels of Jonathon's for \$3.50 only 3 ½ cents a bushel. Apples continued to be a main crop into the 80's for Jess Zollinger and Melvin Bitters.



Due to severe winters the deer population started to move to the benches for winter food. This caused damage to the fruit tree and caused the Utah Fish and Game Commission to build the deer fence, which can still today be seen at the base of the east mountains



Orchards looking from the South Bench with Edgewood Hall in the center of picture.

Providence was settled in 1859 by pioneers who cultivated the south and north bench anxious to fulfill the prophecy that the desert shall blossom as the rose. Wilford Woodruff, a Salt Lake pioneer devoted extensive energy to develop apples, peaches and pears suited to the Utah climate. The first fruit was introduced into the area soon after the pioneers settled. The ground was virgin soil, fruit pests were unknown, and the plants grew to perfection.



F.C. Rossiter and Adolph Baer found peaches did well on the north bench and became a major fruit crop for the Providence farmers and served them well until the severe winter of 1972 killed most of the trees. A large pear orchard was planted at the mouth of Providence Canyon by James Hansen. Prunes, apricots, sweet cherries, and pie cherries were also grown by Joseph Smith, Alma M. Mathews, and the Baer Brothers. .



When the pioneers came to Providence, they found wild strawberries growing in the mountains. Starting in the 20's strawberries, raspberries, dewberries, and grapes became commercial crops. Strawberries reached their peak production in the late 1930's when there were over 75 acres in Cache Valley, the majority being in Providence.

There were over 20 self-sufficient families who provided for themselves as well as provided the community with jobs. There were very few youths who didn't pick fruit to earn extra money.

Among the major fruit growers in the 70's was Joe Baer, Melvin Bitters, Bill Hickmann, Ren Jensen, Morris Mathews, La Var Mohr, Royal Gessel, Bud Kohler, Jess Zollinger, Floyd Newbold, Jay Checketts, Norm and John Ream and Laval Morris.

2022 finds only the Zollinger's farm left. Forgotten reminders of Providence fruit history only remain mingled among the new houses on the north and south bench.