



By Angela Yoder

Art Appreciation in the Washington State Archives Collections
This month: Red Delicious Apples by Asahel Curtis

Art is visual language, telling humanity's story in every corner of the world. Even before the written word, artists depicted life on cave walls, stone, and papyrus. In our own modern times, safely stored within our vaults, are photographic collections. They include images of fine art pieces; of times gone by, of ways of living that have changed and evolved with the growth of our state. Let's take a look at a gorgeous color slide of apples taken between the years 1908-1939.

source: <http://www.digitalarchives.wa.gov/Record/View/BC59EBC9DF2FB20ED7E14FFAAB55E94E>



Red Delicious Apples / Asahel Curtis

This vibrant image was taken by Asahel (Ash-ul) Curtis, brother to the famous photographer, Edward Curtis. Asahel traveled the entire state during his lifetime and took photos or slides everywhere he went. The dynamic movement in this frame has most of the subject in the center of the slide. The shiny red fruits look just ripe for picking. Of course, it would be safe to guess it was taken in late summer or early fall right before harvest. What intrigues me is that the background has vanished and it isolates the subject. Where are the clouds, or other orchard trees? The light source is coming from the top left which could mean it was mid morning here in Washington during that time of year. The apples look very healthy and prime examples of that crop. The limb appears to be so weighted down it could be just feet from the ground. The dainty white spots of the red delicious can be seen on each specimen. Can't you just imagine holding one in your hand and taking a juicy bite? One reason I love taking photos in the natural world is that you come upon it and then create a pleasing frame yourself; the tree is standing there and 50 other different kinds of pictures could have been taken of this clump of apples; different angles, changing where the light source struck them as you walk around the branch deciding which view is most pleasing. You could zoom in one apple or zoom out for the whole tree. Interestingly, the leaf that is closest to us is a little out of focus and blurry which adds depth to this one dimension slide. There is a slight crack or line in the top right of the slide, perhaps damaged during his travels. The leaves appear to be slightly dried out and crispy in the hot weather. There is a small number and signature on the bottom right "54373 Asahel Curtis".

Come see us in the Archives and view these stunning slides with your own eyes. We have lots of pictorial history for you to enjoy and learn about. We would love to see you!