

# USDA PLANT EXPLORERS

At its peak the Field Station had over 3,500 varieties of trees, shrubs, and ornamental plants with many originating from foreign countries. In the late 1800s the USDA began to send plant explorers to the far reaches of the globe. Those who successfully completed their

missions came home with plant specimens from such countries as Korea, Bulgaria, Russia, France, and Norway. Plants that could survive at the Field Station would be proven to have a wide range of adaptability and be able to survive throughout this region. Notable plants collected by plant explorers include several lilacs, a wide variety of small fruits, oaks, hawthorns, buckeyes, and lindens.



*Dr. N.E. Hansen, the first USDA plant explorer.*

## Niels Hansen

As the first official USDA plant explorer, Niels Hansen is best known for improving the nursery production standards for crabapples. In 1905 he traversed Russia for 10 months where he collected seeds from a Siberian Crabapple grown in the Imperial Botanic Garden in St. Petersburg, Russia. These seeds grew into the renowned ornamental variety called 'Dolgo'.

While in Alma Alta, Russia, Hansen collected seeds from a redveined crabapple. Due to its extreme hardiness and grafting success rates this variety became the source of all domestic crabapples with reddish-pink

flowers. The redveined crabapple survived at the station for 50 years before succumbing in the early 1980s. Before its passing, cuttings were sent to Geneva, New York, where it survives today. The Cheyenne Field Station has 15 different "children" of the Russian crabapple Hansen brought back with him.

## P.H. Dorsett

While in search of plant material in northern China, P.H. Dorsett visited the Temple of Heaven in Beijing. It was there he discovered a "fine looking specimen of euonymus growing out of a stone wall".

Today this specimen is known as the 'Pink Lady Euonymus'. Also while visiting the Buddhist temple of Fa Hua Ssu, he collected seeds from a 'Hung Hai Tung' Crabapple. One of those seeds was planted in 1933. The 'Hung Hai Tung' has the largest, most spectacular 2" white blossoms of all the crabapples here at the arboretum. There are many extremely rare, one-of-a-kind specimens with unknown origins still living at the arboretum. If these plants could talk, imagine the stories they could tell.



*USDA plant explorer P.H. Dorsett traveling through China, 1927*

## IRRIGATION DITCHES

## And Civilian Conservation Corps



*View, looking toward Roundtop Hill, of CCC crew constructing an irrigation canal.*

The High Plains Arboretum would not exist today without the efforts of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). All the roads, the two miles of hand-dug and poured concrete-lined irrigation canals, and the thousands of trees and shrubs seen throughout the arboretum are a result of the seven years of work that the CCC completed during the Great Depression. The irrigation canals are still used today to flood irrigate the arboretum utilizing hand-crafted valves which determine the direction and flow of the water from the man-made lake at Roundtop Hill. The CCC was created in 1933 as part of the Emergency Conservation Work Act signed by President Roosevelt, which created jobs for young men and promoted the conservation and development of natural resources

on public lands. President Roosevelt actually visited the Camp set up at the Cheyenne Field Station in 1936.

*The CCC digging and forming-up a canal east of the main inlet box.*

