THE WISCONSIN HORTICULTURIST.

A SOUTH DAKOTA ORCHARD.

Oliver Gibbs, Jr., Prescott, Wis.

The orchard is situated in the town of Ramsey, the northeast town of McCook County, South Dakota, thirty-five miles northwest of Sioux Falls and about ten miles south of the line of the Southern Minnesota Division of the C., M. & St. P. railway. I settled there in the fall of 1885.

Going from Lake City, Minnesota, I carried with me a hundred apple trees, with an assortment of seedling apple trees, native plum, currant, gooseberry, rose bushes, etc., from my own garden there. Of the apples there were fifty Wealthy, twenty-five Duchess and twenty-five of my favorite crabs, and some others that Mr. Underwood wished to have me make a trial of. My object was to grow, as I had always grown elsewhere, a supply of fruits, flowers and vegetables for my own family and of such sorts and qualities that they would suit the market if there should be a surplus of anything.

I buried my trees and shrubs for the winter, and planted them out in the spring of 1886, with ninety more trees obtained from Prof. J. L. Budd, of the Iowa College of Agriculture, consisting of apple, pear, cherry and plum, all Russians.

In the spring of 1887 he sent me sixty more, and the same spring I got six more Russians from A. G. Tuttle, of Baraboo, Wisconsin, and the same number from E. Y. Teas, of Indiana. This has been all of my orchard planting except to fill out vacant places in the orchard with seedling apples and native plum trees of my own growing.

For an orchard site I selected a northeast slope. There was some timber near by on the east and a young grove on the upper side of the slope, southerly—west and north there was full exposure, the windiest place on my farm. This exactly suited me, for I had notions of my own about "protection" of orchards.

I was glad to find my orchard site already well subsoiled by the pocket gophers. This saved me several years’
time and a great deal of hard labor in getting the soil and subsoil into proper condition for orchard growth. I did not have to plow or subsoil at all, but just dug down holes about two feet in diameter and set my trees, placing them about four inches deeper than they had stood in the nursery, trampling the surface soil solid over their roots, filling up with the under soil, trampling again and covering with loose fine earth—the dust blanket so much talked of today. This dust blanket I preserved for six years by use of hoe and spade, gradually extending the circle around each tree, till on the average in 1891 the diameter of the clean space was six feet or more, meantime mowing the rank growth of weeds and grass in the intervening spaces twice each summer to avoid “Bre'er Rabbit” using the orchard for his “briar patch.”

I had helped to fight the Transcendent crab off the list of the Minnesota society, and often said I would not have this variety anywhere within half a mile of my orchard if I could prevent it. And I planted there in my South Dakota orchard neither this nor any other variety of apple or crab known to be an original blighter; that is to say, found by general observation to be inflicted with the summer blight, when standing in groups or single trees alone. To this opinion and practice I attribute the fact that from first to last, up through five years of the bearing period of my orchard I have had no blight whatever. My neighbors to whom I gave warning that the Transcendent would blight and give out the infection to other varieties, have had their orchards burnt up by this summer blight.

The growth of the trees was slow, for we were passing through a series of dry years that culminated in 1894, when the great crop failure occurred. But the gopher sub-soiling and the dust blanket carried my orchard through in a steady, healthy progress. Some of the trees made a weak growth their first season, but these I sawed off close to the ground the second spring, and in every case but one obtained a strong renewal from the graft. In that one case I had a shrub instead of a tree, which I presume is a French
paradise stock, and have preserved it for a curiosity. A number of the trees died out the first season and were replaced.

In planting I did not set the trees "leaning to the one o'clock sun." I could not remember having seen any trees during my boyhood or at any other time, forest or orchard tree, in its natural situation, enjoying its own way of growth, having any trouble to stand erect, and I did remember that the winds blew as stiff on the Vermont hills as over the Dakota prairies. I kept my jackknife in my pocket, and my trees came up spreading, stocky, sturdy, shading their roots and trunks, wide at the base, conifer-shaped and erect. Once in a while I would find a crotch forming with the threat of breakage, and this I would prune, but this was all.

My Russian trees from Prof. Budd were mostly of his own importation and of varieties whose fruit I had not seen anywhere in orchard or at fruit exhibitions. I had made a plat and a list for further identification, both of which were destroyed by fire in 1893. Up to that time only the Cross Apple No. 413 and the Titovka (Titus apple), of this Russian list, had come into bearing; the other fruit of '91 and '92 had been Duchess and Wealthy. The Cross proves to be a true all winter keeper, of good grain and good quality, mild sub-acid, and of extra nice external finish and color, and it is a heavy cropper, but I am not quite sure of its adaptation to our climate in hardiness and would like to see it top-worked on some congenial stock known to be of the first degree of hardiness, perhaps on the Hibernal. By no means would I discard it. Titovka (which must not be confounded with the old Russian Tetovski, with which it has no similarity in the tree or fruit) took my fancy at the start. It is very large, slightly oblong, brilliantly striped, waxy in finish, of good, sprightly, sub-acid flavor, a little coarse in grain, but tender, a better street apple every way than the best Ben Davis, an annual abundant bearer, and the trees, according to their showing in my orchard, perfectly hardy; season of its fruit two weeks later than the Duchess;
a good variety to come between the Duchess and the Wealthy. It is one of the Russian "smelling apples," so fragrant that, as Uncle Remus says of the musk melon, it "hollers at you when you go down de road by de gardin."

Of the succeeding Russians I have been able as yet to identify only the Yellow Transparent and the Antonovka. The Yellow Transparent is ready for use in July and has no fault in tree and fruit, is every way desirable for home use and fits our market for a profitable early apple exactly. Size medium to large, form slightly conical, color a rich light yellow, almost white until ripe, sub-acid, tender, juicy, good skin and finish to bear handling; a good cropper. There are complaints of this variety blighting elsewhere in Iowa and Minnesota. All I can say of this is what the Frenchman said of his gun: "It no kick me, may be it kick stranger." If I found it blighting elsewhere, I should want to observe its neighbors and surroundings before condemning it. The Antonovka sustains all the recommendations of Prof. Budd, only in the soil and location I have given it it ripens too early and seems to be a misfit as compared to others we have of the same season. Possibly on heavier soils and higher elevations it may mature slower and later and be a late fall or early winter apple. In that case I should mark it high in the list.

Of the other Russians fruiting in this orchard, it is no use to say much till I can identify their names with certainty. One of them is a long keeping winter apple, large, showy, good for cooking and a heavy bearer. Several others range through fall and winter, are apparently valuable, all sizes and colors, none of poor quality. One of these seems to be Repka Malenka. The trees of this variety happened to be planted on a bleak point of the orchard with full exposure to the north and stand as upright as a fence post—but, as I said in a former letter, I have never touched them with my pruning knife, but left them to locate and form their limbs to suit themselves. They make their obeisance to all points of the compass in courtesy to sun or storm,
Orchard of Oliver Gibbs, Jr., and Grandson, each ten years of age at the time photograph was taken.—Courtesy of Minnesota Horticulturist.
and when the interview is over come up erect, as a tree ought to be. One of them, standing only seven feet high (soil dry and growth slow) had 255 perfect apples on it in 1896 and showed no weakness the following year.

The Russian pears sent me by Prof. Budd have done as well as the apples. There are several varieties, of which I can identify only the Bessemianka. They have been in bearing three years. The older members of the Minnesota State Horticultural Society will remember that I took stock in Prof. Budd as soon as his Russian fruit work became known to us—also A. G. Tuttle, of Baraboo, in the same line—and did everything possible to give them encouragement in the transaction and annual reports of the society; and all these years of observation and experience since 1882-3 have strengthened my belief that the Russian-American foundation is the right one for our orchards.—Minnesota Horticulturist.

**NOTES ON STRAWBERRIES.**

Arrow.—This variety was introduced by Edw. W. Cone, Wisconsin. Its foliage and general habits are much like Haverland, and it is said to be a seedling of that well-known variety. Its color is fully as dark as Warfield, but does not put on that black appearance with age; and, too, they color the most uniform of any berry we ever saw. Every berry in the case is of one color, as though they had been dipped in paint. Their shape resembles the old flint arrow head. It ripens mid-season; medium size; quality very high. Not quite productive enough to be grown on a large scale, which is lamentable, considering all of its other good qualities.

Beder Wood.—All things considered, this has been a very satisfactory berry with me. Although it is never "fancy," it runs even in size, has a bright, fresh appearance, and holds up well, so we never have to worry about selling them; but the greatest reason we have for liking it