

## Transcript

Cissell:

OK, I started the recording. Hi, my name is Madison Cissell and today is Saturday, October 21st, 2023. And I'm here with Kevin Carter, who is the foodways director at Conner Prairie. And we're at Conner Prairie. So first.

Carter:

All right.

Cissell:

Kevin, do you want to tell me about? Where we are right now on the property and maybe some background on. Where we're at.

Carter:

Well, we're sitting behind the trading post, the Connor's trading post, or at least a representation of it. William Connor moved here from Saginaw, MI. Moved here in 1802 and established a trading post among the Delaware Indians or, as they prefer to be called the Lenape. And a small community developed around that trading post called the very oldest maps. You can find. It was called Conners Town. That area is located just about 1/4 of a mile north of us. Connor, let me give you a little context to Connor Prairie, and then I'll go back to William Connor. Connor Prairie is a unique place. It's. We've got over 1000 acres of land. Much of it is completely undeveloped and and. About 3 miles, if you count both banks of riverfront, I turn my phone off. Pardon me.

Cissell:

How do you feel?

Carter:

There we go. This this land has been occupied. Since prehistory. This was originally Miami land. The Lenape people came from the Delaware Valley, originally from the Delaware Valley. And as. Began to move westward. Along with all of their conflicts, the. The Delaware were kind of on the fringe of that. There was some involvement. In in the conflicts but. Delaware kept moving W because they didn't really didn't want to have much to do with it. It was in the late 1700s William Connor was was born in Ohio. They the counter family lived. In a Moravian community. Moravians were Christian missionaries who ministered to and preach the gospel to. Native tribes and. So William kind of grew up among the Lenape people, moved to to Michigan. He and his brother when they came of age. Moved to Saginaw. And learned the fur trade business there. You know this area was. Smack dab in the middle of of that fur trade industry. Where Europeans were bringing. Trade goods. Such as brass kettles and axes and tools and and and decorative items and trading for furs. And then they those. Most of those furs were then shipped to. Great Britain. Where they're being used in clothing and the manufacture of hats and things like that. It was a very, very lucrative business. Anyway, the the Lenape. In their effort again to. Move away from. European contact, they were granted permission by the Miami in the late mid to late 1790s. And then they located here along the White River. Anderson, Muncie. Down, you know, toward

Fall Creek. And it was there was kind of a Crescent that followed the Crescent of villages that followed the river and William Connor. Spoke a number of languages. One of them was Lenape. He knew the Lenape ways of life, having been raised among the Lenape people. And when? He moved to this area with his brother. His brother was located up the river away, just a few miles. When he moved to this area, Chief Anderson, which? Andersonville was named after him, which later became Anderson IN. He married Chief Anderson's daughter Mackin, Jess. And they. Raised their own family. Here on this property again 1/4 of a mile north of where. We sit down. When was that? The the date skips me. The Treaty of Greenville. Well, William Connor. He he was a a government agent. Translator he. Fought in the Battle of the River Thames in 1813 in 1813, and that's in Canada. And as the government began to negotiate for the land from the the native people in Indiana. He was a translator for the government. And for his services. He was. Congress issued a land grant for much of the the land that we're sitting on now. It got real messy after that. The Treaty of Greenville. An agreement was made where? So much money, horses and so forth was given to. A number of tribes, including the Lenape Bay. And then they had. A few years to move West, originally to Missouri, and eventually they moved to Oklahoma, where they are today. It created a huge dilemma. And and. There's a lot of controversy. Here, William Connor is he helped negotiate the contract translate on behalf of the native people. He's married to a Lenape woman as. Children from that marriage although. The marriage wasn't recognized by the state, and even the children were recognized as his because they were native. And as the the Lenape, they. Left in 1822. And and that's where. This decision, this the crux of this dilemma occurred was William Connor going to go with the Lennon Bay and? Leave behind what he had established or was Mackenzie is going to stay? One thing that we that few people understand is the culture within the Lenape. Women had great agency and. And power. And if a woman was tired of a man, all she had to do was move his stuff outside of of their wigwam, and he was done. And Mckenzie's was faced with the decision of do I stay here in Indiana and leave my people and stay here in Indiana where I will be looked down upon as an Indian woman and and. And children who aren't would not be accepted as well. Or do I stay with my people? And where I have agency and a voice and. William had to decide. Do I go with her, leave everything behind and there's some reports say that he he left and then came back. There's, I think one report of that. Then it gets even messier, and I just tell me if I'm getting too deep into this. But Congress issues a land grant. For all of the work that William Connor did and. Negotiating these treaties. But and this land grant is issued in 1823, a year after. Will not pay people leave. They issued this grant. To William Connor Mckenzie's and the children. Agendas and the children have already left.

Cissell:

OK.

Carter:

And now, what does William do? In fact, he was not even wanting the grant. He was wanting to pay for the land. And so. And I think it's 1825, I believe at 1823, he remarries Elizabeth Chapman. They build the. They build the the brick house. They move into the house. So he's developing this land, but it's on land that is in his name and Mackenzie's name and she's. And so. He petitions Congress to rescind the grant. And and gets. Mackenzie's testimony that she has no interest in the land William Counter proposes. Let me pay for the land and then, if you would take that money and give it to Mackenzie's and her children, he was trying to resolve this issue and Congress then comes back and says that's a family court matter.

And and it's not resolved until after William Conner's death. And it just and you know when it comes to family court, no one is happy. So. Boy, that was a long story to give you context to this land.

Cissell:

Yeah, I think those things. Are important, you know, to know. The the story and. Who's been here?

Carter:

Yeah, yeah. And of course. You know this, this happens to be a multicultural site. It it it the history of human habitation here runs deep. So yeah. I'll tell you briefly a lot. A lot more briefly than that about myself. I'm the you said the food waste director. I wish I were director. No, it's it's fine. It's fine. It's flattering right now.

Cissell:

Oh, sorry.

Carter:

And the food food waste coordinator. I'm in charge of all of the historic cooking that occurs here in the trading post in Prairie town, out in civil war journey. I'm in charge of some programs such as Heartside suppers. It's a legacy program where we invite our guests pay. To the counter house and we prepare a meal and serve it in the counter house. It's it's quite spectacular and a lot of fun. And then value added programs. And public speaking and then. All that other stuff. I got into. Historical food ways through YouTube. I was a YouTube director and producer of channel that focused on 18th century cooking and I got my feet wet. There did a lot of research. Did that for. About 10 years. Hopefully there. We can move over there if we need to.

Speaker

OK.

Carter:

And and that's actually that's actually how I became connected to Connor Prairie. We did some videos here I I met the people. Here and when the position opened up. That's how I made the connection. We we focus on Lenape cooking methods here in the trading post experience area. Domestic cooking in in 1836, Prairie Town and then soldier cooking in civil War journey which is. An interesting yeah. With 1000 acres of land, much of it undeveloped, we have a strong connection to the land here. Now the land that we see today is not the same as it was. You know, prior to Indiana statehood. You know, we have these pencil trees here. The forest here in Indiana, you had massive trees. And that reached. 100 a 150 feet into the air, the canopy was so thick that that. The the sun seldom got to the ground. And in the historical records, it was said that, you know, a squirrel could travel from Ohio to Illinois without ever touching the ground. You know, the Indiana State seal, you know what's in the seal? No, that's fine. I don't mean to put you on the spot. Is a guy chopping down a tree? And a Buffalo running away.

Cissell:

OK.

Carter:

Which kind of epitomizes the settlement of Indiana when? People of European descent moved and started settling Indiana. The first thing they did was clear the land so they could farm. Whereas you know before we did have some Prairie, more Prairie up north. The native peoples would burn. The forest to create Prairie or then naturally there will be fires and they gave the bison herds a place to graze in a place for them to hunt. But the main objective during that settlement period was to clear the land and that's what we see today, the result of. There are a few places in Indiana where there remains virgin forest, but but very few places.

Speaker

Do or like let them know.

Carter:

The ecosystem that we have here is much different too. We struggle with invasive species like honeysuckle is. We're just constantly battling it. And garlic mustard is another one that I don't see any here, but that's just the the the flora. Of the Indiana Forest is much different than it was. UM. And they're all of these. Native fruits and. Berries and bushes. They used to be prevalent that are no longer. Now the the focus of. You know your project has been Persimmon and papaw. Pawpaws tend to do. Well, they're. Forest floor plant a small tree that loves shade. Persimmons have done well too. Now we are on the northern edge of of its natural habitat and I'm unaware of. There's Simmons on the property here.

Speaker

OK.

Carter:

You go to the. South side of Indianapolis and they're persimmons. But that's not to say that it wasn't here.

Cissell:

Right.

Carter:

And we know from that first European contact that the native people. They relished. Both proposals. For Simmons. UM. There were. Not only was it that not only did they eat it, consume it in the form of fruit Leathers or loaves of dried fruit, or, you know, they would mix it with their their corn to make. A bread like dish. But they also, but there were also other uses, medicinal uses and and practical uses as well. Paw paws are a little different. In that. They're so perishable.

Speaker

Right.

Carter:

And even you know, today if you want to go out and get paw paws, you have to know where they are and you have to keep an eye on them. It gets as soon as they turn.

Speaker

Right.

Carter:

Right. The animals get them. And they only last for a very little time, a very short time before. They are past their prime. I have found references. Early 19th century books where pawpaws actually early 20th century or pawpaws can be the the life of a paw paw the the shelf life of a paw paw can be extended to midwinter by storing them in oats. I haven't tried that. It's going to be an experiment sometime, hopefully next year. But generally they were intended to be eaten out of hand. You know there's there were and. And again I'm kind of picking up with with papaws after European contact but. You know, they were making puddings, which? When I say pudding, you know, we think of jello pudding, you know chocolate and vanilla and so forth. But a A pudding was.

Speaker

Right.

Carter:

Took took on. Several different forms. There were pumpkin pie is a pudding. Historically, as a putting there were boiled puddings that were very staunchly and you know, you'd have to boil them for 5-6 hours, depending on the size. Baked puddings. But you know it's kind of a custardy pie. Ready dish arrange and they could be sweet. They could be savory. And so. You know, pop houses were used in puddings and this broad range of dishes they they were fermented into beer. And they were eating out of hand. They're they're they're nicknamed the Hoosier banana. And and we're not. We're not the only ones who claim the. Pop high and. Did some research and let's see some other names. Indiana Banana Hoosier banana. Poor man's banana. The custard apple the banana. Oh. Venango yeah, which is if you've, if you've never tried a fall fog. And that's what it reminds me of. Is this cross between a banana and a mango? Arkansas Banana, Michigan, banana, Ozark, banana, Midwest banana.

Cissell:

Like banana and mango?

Carter:

You know, we have 1836 Prairie town, the folks of 1836 Prairie town. Which is a fictitious town. They would have heard of a banana. Likely they had never seen one. It wasn't until the 1880s the bananas became commercialized. I'm sitting here and I noticed there's a banana peel over there that August through on the ground and. And and that had to do with advances in transportation and. You know the railroad and. And so that term, Hoosier, Banana or Indiana banana that originated in 1904. No, no, I'm sorry the first time it was, I found it in print was in 1901. It was nicknamed the the Hoosier Banana in Let's see, it was the annual report of the Indiana Horticultural Society. I think it was in 1903, can't remember the name of the hurricane. There was a a major hurricane that wiped out Galveston, TX, huge hurricane. And it actually affected the weather here in Indiana too. It swept up through the Midwest and

it decimated the Indiana app. And in in 19, oh, I think that happened in 1903. So they have the Saint Louis World's fair. In 1904, in the Indiana Horticulture Horticultural Societies, you know they're looking sitting there, looking at each other saying what are we going to take because our apples have been destroyed. And someone came up with the idea of let's take papaws. And we'll call them the the Indiana banana, the Hoosier banana. All right. And it was a smash hit. The 1904 World's fair. So much so that they had to higher security guards to protect the table of pawpaws. From people who were stealing them. OK. And that's where that name's Hoosier. Banana, Indiana. That's where it's stuck. It became known as that from from the the World's Fair in in 1904.

Cissell:

Yeah, yeah, that's a great story.

Carter:

Yeah, yeah. Have you ever seen a pop up tree? OK, yeah, they're not. They're not difficult spot. They're very long, long. Gated leaves, yeah. You usually find them in low lying areas, shaded areas in the forest.

Cissell:

And you said you you have papaw trees on the property, but not any Persimmon trees that you know.

Carter:

That I know. Yeah, I'm. I'm sure the. We would find those on the South end of the property, which is. Always out there. Yeah, very, very important fruit both to the native cultures, also to European settlers. But I've found a lot of research done regarding pop paws and especially at the beginning around the the. World's fair? Around that time period. There's a lot of discussion about. Commercialization of pawpaws. But the the problem again. Was the perishability of of the fruit. There, there just wasn't. A practical way of producing them in mass and getting them to market before they rotted. And so even to this day, you can find them at at farmers markets when they're in season, the season is very short and but there's no commercialization. Persimmons, on the other hand, have been commercialized. Through hybridization and so forth. There are three. Species of of persimmons. Primarily they're they're actually like. I think the numbers up to 700 reliable species, but but there are three main and and that is the common persimmons or the American Persimmon. Which we have here in Indiana and the Texas persimmons. And then? The oriental person. The persimmons that you find in the grocery store are usually. Almost always the oriental persimmons. And there has been some hybridization. To reduce the astringency of the unripe fruit within the oriental persimmons, it's got a little longer shelf life. I'm. I'm gonna read you a story. Yeah, I'm going to get, I'll give you. A copy of this this. Is actually an article that. I wrote on the sentence. This is my introduction to persimmons. Alright. When I was young, my family would load up station wagon to visit my grandma and Grandpa in Wheatland IN. Leeland was a sleepy southern town, while their house lacked the familiar playtime amenities of home, there were always plenty of new adventures for a young boy. There were eggs to collect and goats to scratch behind the ears. I placed pennies on the railroad tracks and then spent hours searching for their flattened remains among the ballast. After the next freight freight train plowed through, it was a a different time, different place, and a different pace. My my grandparents had the blessing of running water in the kitchen sink, but that was the extent of of their plumbing luxuries. The old hand pump was still out back near the house and after rigorous priming it still gurgled its sulphurous water. And the outhouse was A2 seater, something. To

this day I can't understand. It was always stocked with a half bag of quick lime in the remnants of an old Sears catalog hung on a nail reading material. I figured my grandpa was a hard man. Who had lived a hard life, being a heavy smoker, drinker and rabble rouser in his younger years. He later became an itinerant 10th, 10th meeting fire and brimstone preacher. Following the death bed bargain with God. My grandmother was a noble woman in her backwoods sort of way. She was the sweet to the bitter, A gentle spirit. She doted over us, kids. She never made an appearance without an apron, tied about her waist. Unless, of course, she was a church her long. Gray hair was always pulled back, face lift tight into a proper little bun, as neat and tidy as the little house. Paul, she said to my father one day. Why don't you and the boys be useful by gathering some percent? You remember that old tree? I'll make some pudding for supper. I had never heard of persimmons before, but my grandma assured me they were delicious and so off. We went on a new adventure with bucket in hand. I didn't understand why my father was picking up only the squishy rotten fruit on the ground, especially when there were plenty of firm, bright orange ones still hanging. On the tree within reach, that's a pretty one. That's a pretty one. Go ahead and take a bite, he says with what I now know, with his sadistic grin. And that was my introduction to to diospyros virginiana the American persimmons. I'll give you this then. The story picks up in the end. I did not eat her pudding that night.

Cissell:

Ohh cause you were.

Carter:

Traumatized by. Yeah. Yeah. Well, in fact, let's see it is. Thomas Thomas am Amber's 1789 journal travels through the interior parts of America. He writes. Many of us were deceived by this fruit when ripe and hanging on the trees and having the appearance of an orlean plum, but which we found possessed of such. Powerful astringent qualities as to contract the mouth to such a degree that it was several hours before we regain the sense of taste, and I I write. I'm comforted to know that my 7 year old self was not alone in making this mistake.

Cissell:

Thank you. Yeah, that's beautiful.

Carter:

But that was my introduction to the American Persimmon. I still remember my mouth drying up. And if you've never experienced an unripe Persimmon? Get the greenest banana you can, peel it and eat the peel. And it's the same effect. The Persimmon was used to stop bleeding during the war during the American Civil War and. It's very high in tannins. It was it was preferred over oak leaves for tanning leather. UM. I've got more. I've got it all outlined in that article. Let's see. The inner bark was used medicinally to treat intermittent fever and diarrhea was turned into a gargle for ulcerated sore throats and the unripe fruit was used to treat dysentery and uterine hemorrhaging. I mean, you got to cut, you would take a percent and then. It would stop. The bleeding. There's so it's so high in tannins. It ripens very much like a banana and that it it releases ethylene gas and and and that that removes the tannins. Doesn't remove them completely. But it allows the sugars to. The flavor of the sugars to overtake the the effects of the tannins. Persimmons. They're they're one of the highest. They have one of the highest percentages of sugar, natural sugars up to 34% when right. The persimmons that you find in the grocery

store, they're they're called non astringent and they've been hybridized to reduce the tannins, but they're not. Eliminated completely. And even if you're, if you go and buy some of these non astringent persimmons, I would recommend you stick them in a brown paper bag and let them set for. A few days. To to disseminate more of that, to get rid of more of that of that tanning content. Yeah, there have been a lot of medical studies regarding persimmons. Modern persimmons. There's. There's one. Let's see. It's. Study by George Redpath, Health and medicinal benefits of Persimmon of Persimmon fruit. From 2008 and he outlines all these things. Got antioxidants, carotenoids, polyphenols. Reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease. The reduction of blood pressure. It's effective in treating LDL cholesterol. Diabetes. Cancer, stroke, strokes, aging, dermatitis, and body odor. And and it's been that there was one Japanese study that showed that if you eat a persimmons before consuming alcohol, it will actually reduce the amount of alcohol your body absorbs, and it will help alleviate hangovers. Because their their harvest season was. Was longer. And because. You don't eat the fruit until it is ripe. It was a lot easier. And there were more things you could do with. A lot easier to to keep and preserve as a food source. As as I said native. Cultures, indigenous cultures. Dry the fruit. Into either a fruit leather. Or into loaves. It's recorded when DeSoto came up. The Mississippi in the 1500s, fifteen 40s, I think. He was greeted by an indigenous group of people bearing gifts of fish and dried Persimmon loaves. So we know it was a a very. Valuable food source. And and. Treasured because of its sweetness. Persimmons played an important part in in the African American diaspora. And culture. There are historic records of what they called the Persimmon dance. Where enslaved? African American people would gather in the fall when the first someones were right. And they would make beer. And they had a. There was a celebration. Generally, Persimmon beer is very low alcohol. Unless you do some things with the fermentation process or you add things like honey or. You know, molasses or whatever. The way that Persimmon beer was was food, especially within the enslaved. You know, if they had or they would start with a keg. If they had a spigot. They would put straw on the bottom. Clean straw 3-4 inches in the bottom. Fill it up with with Persimmon you know mashed persimmons and then they just let it set. Cover it over so the.

Cissell:

OK.

Carter:

Critters stay out. If they didn't have a spigot, then they would just reverse the contents. They put their persimmons in their mash persimmons and put straw on top. And and the straw wasn't there for flavor. It was there for filtering. If they just had a keg, then they'd have that straw on top, and when it came time to drink it, they would take a ladle and push down the straw and let the juices flow in. I made a Persimmon beer here for our history on TAP festival and serve it to the public. I used modern equipment. In sterile environments. It was. It was interesting. And people thought it was a cider, but then they would stop and say. Wait a second. That's not cider. And when I told him it was Persimmon beer, half of them were surprised. The other half didn't know what a persimmons was. Persimmon was. But Persimmon Beer was a very low alcoholic drink AVP. KKB ABV. Uh. In fact, it was. It was. There's one recipe or a few recipes I found for it, and they called it temperance beer. And the the beer that I made, I'm guessing was about two to 3% alcohol which.

Cissell:

OK.



Carter:

May have been. One reason why. The enslavers allowed the enslaved to make it. I found one account where one historic account where and I think it's in that article. It's like a man can drink a gallon of this and not be affected. You know, just have the satisfaction of enjoying it.

Cissell:

OK.

Carter:

Yeah, and. The the Persimmon was a lot more versatile than the paw paw in terms of other uses. The the tree is. It's a larger tree than the paw paw Papa tree there's. There's just not enough wood there for it to be useful. But persimmons. The Persimmon tree. It's a member of the Ebony. It's called white Ebony the the dark wood that. Is most often associated with Ebony. That's the heartwood and and the Persimmon tree only has a very small amount of of heartwood. Which is dark and the rest of it is SAP wood. But it's still very hard. The wood was used for making Carpenter plane stocks, gun stocks, bedposts canes, cones, musical instruments, and in more recent history, Golf Club drivers. You know I. When I when I play golf in my younger years, we call the the. Driver a woody. Alright, it had a wooden head on it and and that was for some of what? Because of its crush resistance, it's a very heavy and dense wood. It was also used for making things like the spokes in in the large Gears of. From grist mills. There's a very strong. I I was as I was driving in today, I was wishing that I had talked to my cooks in Prairie Town and had them cook something with persimmons. Today for you.

Cissell:

Oh, that's OK thank you.

Carter:

Yeah, I've rambled, I've rambled on and on.

Cissell:

No, you just. Kind of hit on a lot of the things I was going to ask. So if anything, you're making my job easier.

Carter:

OK. Do you have any other questions or?

Cissell:

Well, I'm just curious, you know, you have your binder and I, you know, if there are things in there or I guess.

Carter:

Oh yeah.

Cissell:

Is it more like a? You know a Book of Records and things. Research you've done what's in there.

Carter:

Let's see. I can I can review this. Oh, by the way, I have. I do have some Persimmon recipes for you.

Cissell:

Ohh great.

Carter:

There's one for Persimmon pudding, which is from. That's a later 1 Persimmon recipe started showing up in the cookbooks. Oh, shortly after the Civil War. This is one for Persimmon beer. It's much earlier.

Cissell:

OK. Well, thank you.

Carter:

Yeah, I'm just reminding myself that I was kind of going off memory with all that other stuff, you know, back to the paw paw. The the the range, the natural range of the pop on the persimmons are relatively similar. It's kind of the. Great Lakes. On down South, pawpaw range stops through Georgia, Mid Georgia and Mississippi, and Arkansas and and does not extend down into Florida. You know, just West of of Missouri and that's the range of the pawpaw, the range of the persimmons, the northern edge slips down a little South, as I mentioned, Indianapolis is on the very northern edge of the natural range. You do find persimmons up north, but they're. An exception and you'll find the range of the persimmons clear into Texas, the Texas persimmons, Persimmon, all the way down in Florida. Let's see. Oh, they don't know how papaws are propagated. They don't know if it's bees or if it's flies and beetles, but they suspect it is flies and beetles because the flower smells terrible. It's kind of an interesting. Evolutionary take on that. And the paw paw is host to the zebra swallow tail. If you knew that or not, and also the pawpaw, sphinx moth and whereas. The Persimmon is. It's it's host as well. Let's see. It's another swallowtail. I thought I had it. I don't anyway. Yeah, we talked about. Desoto's expedition. Oh, they were also given pawpaws as well. DeSoto. So it's not just persimmons, but it was pawpaws. And some historians suggest that the papaw was given its name. It's common name. From that, during that expedition where they confused it with the papaya.

Cissell:

OK.

Carter:

The scientific name for pawpaws *Asimina*, which is actually. An indigenous word for the fruit. Those were planted by George Washington and Mount Vernon. Thomas Jefferson had Papa Seeds sent to his friends in Europe. Lewis and Clark expedition.

Speaker

I was going.

Cissell:

To ask a few knew that, yeah.

Carter:

It was like the last 150 miles of their expedition. They lived on hardtack, and we're quite satisfied, the records say so. Let's see, 1890 sold in small quantities in the Eastern Cities food markets. They're primarily among the African American communities and and but they were also Popeyes were also purchased by others just as kind of a curiosity. And this is just a summary of the information that can flip through some of these other pages. Oh, the Persimmon. During first European contact, they were thought to be plums. Or meddlers. But it is let me see. I want to be accurate when I say here. It up here. Here it is. One historian to suggest the name for the Persimmon was came from an Algonquin word word meaning choke fruit. When you think about that, you know it's as stringent as they are. But it's obvious the Persimmon, there are several indigenous words for the fruit that are. That are very similar. And so it's obvious that we get our our word Persimmon from. Let's see. It's going to flip through some of these. There's some things highlighted here. In terms of propagating persimmons. It's very, very difficult to grow them from seed. And and not actually not reliable because you know you could harvest a 1000 seeds from a single tree and you'll end up with 1000 varieties. They're much like apples, where and grafting can be difficult to.

Speaker

OK.

Carter:

Oftentimes, the the way persimmons proper. Primarily is through sheets from the roots of a tree. Many times, that's how they will be. You know you have this, you have this tree that produces excellent fruit. You can get a start from one of the offshoots, or you can you can graft it onto another rootstock. But. Yeah, I've I've tried propagating some seed and you can get them to grow. You can get them to sprout, but then when it goes to planting survival rates very, very low. They do. There are rare instances when Persimmon trees are self pollinating, but most often it takes a male and female tree. About uses.

Cissell:

So how long did it take you to compile this binder?

Carter:

This is this has been an ongoing project. I'm always adding things to it.

Cissell:

When did you start, would you say?

Carter:

Oh my goodness, I'm not sure. I've always been fascinated by papaws and persimmons. My father was a biology teacher and he would always take my brother and I out into the woods and well.

Speaker

Right.

Carter:

Biology and math. But anyway, he he introduced us to nature, an appreciation for nature, and I remember him taking us out. I remember the first time, you know, was a little kid. He he shows me a paw paw and I had never seen one before. You know, it's like, what is this strange fruit? And you know, I read you the story of when he introduced me to the persimmons which. I'm not bitter. Although I did lose a few decades of enjoying the fruit. And my interest in historical food ways. Has just kind of. No, that's what this is from.

Cissell:

Yeah, yeah.

Carter:

You know, I probably. I I don't know how long it took me to gather this information, but there there's a, you know, a lifelong interest represented here. Here, here's I want to share this with you this. Let's see. This is in an article. The common Persimmon, the history of underutilized of an under utilized fruit tree. By Ch brand Bri, Brian BRIAND. And I think you can find. This on Jay store.

Cissell:

OK.

Speaker

We need.

Carter:

Page 75. Millie Evans, a former slave born circa 1849 and living in Arkansas when she was interviewed in a 1930 in 1936 for the Federal Writers project, gave a. Recipe for Persimmon cornbread. Right. So the. Mid 30s, mid to late 30s as part of Roosevelt's plan to pull the country out of the out of the depression, he establishes the federal riding Project Writers project and they send out teams all over the country to gather stories and culture and and get it on paper. And I keep running into this. There were two ladies sent to Vincennes, and they're collecting these stories about the lugaru, the, the, the French werewolf from the, you know, the descendants of the French trappers living in Vincennes. So anyway.

Cissell:

OK.

Speaker

OK.

Cissell:

OK.

Carter:

This team interviews Millie Evans. She is a former slave. She she was enslaved and and. All right. Sift meal and add your ingredients. Then your persimmons that have been washed and the seeds taken out and mashed them and put and put in and stir well together. Grease pan well and pour and bake. Pour in and bake. Eat with fresh meat. That was her recipe. She also gave her recipe for Persimmon pie. Make a crust like you would any other pie crust and take your persimmons and wash them. Let them be good and ripe and get the seed out of them. Don't cook them, mash them and put and put in cinnamon and. And spice and butter, sugar to taste. Then roll your dough and put in. Cut in custard pan and then add the filling. Then put a a top crust on it. Sprinkle a little sugar and bake. So these are oral recipes.

Cissell:

That she's giving in an interview yet and they're.

Carter:

Yeah, yeah. The that she has learned, you know. From from her parents and yeah, yeah, that's just a fantastic.

Cissell:

Right.

Carter:

A fantastic little anecdote, and in that article I. Don't know if you. You can get a picture of that or you know, yeah. But I got.

Cissell:

Yeah, I'll definitely.

Carter:

That from Jay score so. Let's see. You know regarding the. Let me see if I can find it here. There we go. It's also in that article I I did it myself. Persimmon seeds, Persimmon seeds were said to make buttons that were stronger than Pearl and bone or well, was that. Something like that. I've got a quote in that article. But if you take a Persimmon seed. Which we could do. I think I've still got percent pull and you cut it in half and you look at the embryo it's supposed to.

Cissell:

Oh, OK.

Carter:

Give you a. Forecast of the winter.

Cissell:

Right. So my grandma told me about that, and then I spoke with a farmer down in Paley and he said that he had heard that that was like some indigenous knowledge that had been.

Carter:

MHM, MHM. Knives and spoons. Cutting winter. With lots of snow, that's the forecast for this winter. Yeah. So those are from the South side of Indy. So just get ready, alright?

Cissell:

That was this year or ohh OK, so this article that you wrote is new.

Carter:

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. And it hasn't been published yet. OK, I just, I I just submitted it yesterday, so.

Cissell:

Oh, wow. Well, congratulations and good luck.

Carter:

Well, thank you. Thank you.

Cissell:

Where did?

Carter:

MO MCC. It's an organization for outdoor museums.

Cissell:

OK.

Carter:

And I. Yeah, that's what that's about. But I'm I may have back in the welcome center. Some raw Persimmon pulp and we can actually.

Speaker

OK.

Cissell:

Yeah, that'd be cool. Yeah.

Carter:

Just for the fun. Of it, yeah. Yeah, there's. Propagation and grafting. I've had people bring in Persimmon seeds. Here's a. Let's see, this is. It's a little booklet produced in. 1899. Knoxville, TN. I think there's one in here too, from blue. There are some very early. I wouldn't call it hybridization. They were they were establishing varieties, recognized varieties. Indiana played a very important role. In the development of recognized varieties of American persimmons. The Shoto, which you can still buy today like in nurseries and so forth that was developed in Hendricks County. The early bearing was also from Hendricks County. The goldens in these are all common varieties that you can buy today. The Golden Gym was from Clark

County. The Hicks was from Washington County. Yeah. And those are and I and I say those are. Those are where you can find today. Those are common ones that you can find today in nurseries. Early Golden Hicks choteau. Yeah, the Japanese persimmons, they started importing them into the United States.

Speaker

Which you are saying.

Carter:

In 1863. Getting this backward here. Got these two sessions reversed. None. Here is the. Here is the article from the annual report of the Indiana Horticultural Society. Well, this one's from 1919. It's a little later, but but the tribute to the paw paw, and I think they've got another one in here. Let's see 1912. I found the the exact the 1904 World Trade fair. You know the correspondence that was that was going on. This written report of the pawpaw was made in 1541 by a Portuguese officer who was a member of the Desoto's expedition. Here's something too. This is. Foods indigenous to the Western Hemisphere. American Indian health. The Cherokee used the bark of the pump. How to make ropes and string which were used to string fish. Tribes have used the seeds as powder to deter head lice. If I remember correctly. Danny tittman. She talked about how the children would use. The seeds in their in their games and the men and their gambling games, yeah.

Cissell:

And she brought. I remember the dried persimmons which you were talking about earlier. Yeah.

Carter:

Persimmon fruit used to to dye fabric that is something we're going to be experimenting here in our in our historical textiles area, you can get a very rich black fabric. From it. Scaring my memory. That I think that probably sums up the amount of information I have. There may be more of that comes to mind, so it will be so.

Cissell:

Yeah, well, let me know. Thank you so much for taking me through that binder. It's just like a beautiful collection. I think of things that you found and I really appreciate you sharing those resources with me. I know I said in like an e-mail that like, maybe you would bring some objects. I would love to photograph the like, the binder to be in the digital collection, but I didn't know if you also like, had things that spoke to your identity as foodways coordinator pop on for some an enthusiast.

Carter:

Probably the best things to photograph would be what we do. And I can take you and introduce you to our historical cooks and. You know we we we use original artifacts in our cooking and so forth and. UM. I don't think anyone in collections is here today and and they're actually pretty stringent about strict about letting people into collections and rightfully so. They do a very good job of of conserving and protecting our artifacts that we've got. 27,000 artifacts in collections. They've got a big vault. They keep it in. I think one of the coolest things they have so wish I could take you in there. Is back in the 60s. They found a dugout canoe along the river.

Cissell:

Ohh wow.

Carter:

And it was. It was filled with stones, which makes sense because. These dugout canoes, if you pulled them up on land and store them on land, they would check, they would crack split so they stored them underwater. And the way you would do that is you put rocks in them.

Cissell:

OK.

Carter:

Sink them. And then when you wanted to use your canoe, all you had to do was take one or two stones out and it would become neutral, buoyant and you could bring it to shore, pull the rest of the rocks out, and they found it filled with rocks. And we had the canal and it's.

Cissell:

OK.

Speaker

Yeah, yeah.

Carter:

It's cool, it's meets conservation preservation, but. Is there something specific that ohh this here? I have a daughter in Bloomington. I'll loan this to you.

Cissell:

Oh my gosh, that's I I don't.

Carter:

If, if if you want. If you want to take it. I I trust you. OK? And I don't have any immediate. Need for it. There, there is a lot of information in here.

Cissell:

Yeah. I think I'll take some scans, but I I shouldn't need to.

Carter:

OK.

Cissell:

Take it from you. Thank you though.

Carter:



I'm just saying I'm I'm willing to. Yeah.

Cissell:

Yeah, I appreciate it. I'm wondering maybe a wrap up question could be you know, I feel like you spoke a lot to things that most people don't know about Papas and persimmons, and I feel. Like most people. Might not even know that they exist, and then you know there's even more underneath all that. But what is something that you think most people don't realize there's something. Really interesting that you feel like you've come across that maybe you haven't shared or maybe you have shared.

Speaker

OK, let's do this.

Carter:

How are you today? If you haven't had the opportunity. See, I'm a food nerd. Historically, culturally. You know, if I go to a strange city city, I've never been to, I look to where the locals are going to eat, you know, because I want to experience. If you've not had the opportunity to experience. A ripe paw paw. It's such an odd looking fruit. And you slice it open and it's. Got these large. Seeds a line of large dark seeds. You take a spoon. And a ripe one. Is just like custard is just, this is like a thick custard. And the flavor. You know, you get the banana and then the mango, you know, and it's somewhere in between. This this fruit. That's so tropical. The grows here in Indiana. And and and if and. I'd have to say regarding paw paws, if if anyone has the opportunity, the opportunity to try and Papa take it. Because the. The harvest season is such a narrow window. If someone offers. You a a right paw paw. Take it and try it. Because you won't have another opportunity, probably for at least another year and you got to be at. The right place at the right time. Persimmons. You know, go to a local orchard and you could probably find Persimmon pulp. UM. You know you've got the Mitchell Persimmon Festival in Indiana. It was the 76th year for the festival. This year I almost went to it and I got too busy. Again, it's this tropical fruit that grows here in Indiana. And and. You know, so many people, they they stick with what they're familiar with. And and they they don't want to go beyond those familiar boundaries. You know, I I would recommend anyone finding a an orchard in. You know. Again the. We're on the northern edge. You go north of here and unless they're getting the Persimmon pulp shipped in, you're not going to find it up there. But we're in this, like, ideal spot, you know. If you can't find. American persimmons go with the pulp, and in fact go with the pulp anyway, because processing persimmons is a very arduous task. If they're just difficult to deal with. But go get some pulp. And look up on the Internet Persimmon pudding. You know, find a recipe for Persimmon pudding. And make some whipped cream for it, you know. And and try it. Because it's it's so unique. And so. It's it's a. It is a taste of history. You know both persimmons and paw paws. We're we're we're so important. For for so many years, millennia, you know, forever. There is such important food sources. Yeah, you know. That would be my message. You know, I've shared. Most of the. The oddities and things like that regarding the food. But you know, you got to. Try it.

Cissell:

And yeah, thank you. I guess I should have said I'll have one last question. I'm wanting to kind of get a grasp of. The networks that people have as they relate to persimmons and papaws did you say you're

more isolated and it's more this individual research you've been doing, or do you feel like you have, like, peers or colleagues that? You've exchanged information with.

Carter:

Yeah, yeah, I I definitely have. I belong. This museum belongs to an organization. It's acronym. It's alfam. Association of. I have to look it up. It's AH. No ALHFAN.

Cissell:

OK.

Carter:

It's a museum organization, living history, farm agriculture, and I have a lot of colleagues within that organization. Alfam is an international organization, and so those that are most interested in popos and persimmons are the ones who live within the native range simply because of availability. Ohh and I will say this. One of my advice would be if you have the opportunity to take it because the the harvest seasons are are especially for paw paws so short. That touches upon another subject. That we have lost sight of. As modern consumers. You know, in 1850s the first refrigerated railroad car was developed in Chicago and they started. Shipping meat to. The East Coast and that revolutionized the food in.

Speaker

To where?

Carter:

Food advances in transportation, refrigeration kind of go hand in hand, and it made food more widely available. Alright. We have lost sight to the seasonality of food. And it's something that. The indigenous people peoples would have. Lived by. The European settlers would have lived by. He saw you. Know has has the fable of the of the Ant and the grasshopper. The grasshoppers off plane is fiddle while the Ant is laboring away, storing away food for winter. Depending on which version you read. It does not end well for the grass. You know people. For instance, 8 our 1836 Prairie town, you know, had that been a real? Grew their gardens. And enjoyed this fresh produce. But we're also putting it. Away for winter. Come November, starting in November, they started butchering their animals and they were packing it in salt, put it away or smoking it and put it. To keep it. Winter was the lean time. You know there's. They're digging potatoes and carrots and so forth, digging holes and grounds for a root hole so that so that and. You know all. These stores that they had put up as they were getting down to the bottom of the barrel. They could dig up the root hole in their vegetables, you know, and if they ran out, then they'd have to start foraging. So we have completely lost sight of of the seasonality of food. We see it occasionally with some fruit or something. Fresh Peaches. I think of you know our seasonal.

Cissell:

Yeah, yeah.

Carter:

But back then, everything was. Like that. And and we touched upon it, you know Papaws had this narrow window of harvest. Persimmons. You can preserve them so that you know I I know where to get

Persimmon pulp year around. You know. But it's just, it's an interesting aspect of of. Food was history that that we, as modern consumers, have just lost sight of.

Cissell:

I think that's really true. Thank you for sharing.

Carter:

Yeah, yeah.

Cissell:

Anything else that you feel like you wanted to speak about or I haven't captured?

Carter:

I I think I've regurgitated a lot. I can't. Nothing comes to mind right now.

Cissell:

OK. Well, thank you so much. I'm going to stop the recording now.

Carter:

Yeah, yeah. All right, every good.