



THE APPLE CORE

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE JOHNNY APPLESEED SOCIETY



Volume 1, Issue 5

December 2020 – January 2021

The Johnny Appleseed Museum: Where Negotiations Stand

December 22, 2020. The Johnny Appleseed Foundation continues positive talks with Franklin University regarding the re-opening of the Johnny Appleseed Education Center & Museum in Urbana, Ohio.

To recap: The Museum, like all such facilities, closed to the public during the initial Covid-19 emergency back in March. When Franklin University decided to permanently close its Urbana University branch campus in May, the Museum collection, including the research library and the educational materials, were boxed for storage in Browne Hall, where the Museum had moved in 2018. After some false starts over the summer, the Appleseed Foundation opened negotiations with Franklin to see if it were possible to acquire Browne Hall, a historic building that had been donated to Urbana University in 1909 (originally, as a women's dormitory).



Browne Hall and Parking Lot

Franklin has not to date been willing to consider an outright donation of the building. While acknowledging the Foundation as the owner of the museum collection, Franklin's best offer to date has been the sale of the building at a price of \$200,000,

which the university claims is 9% below market value. They have given the Foundation a deadline of March 1 to accept the offer.

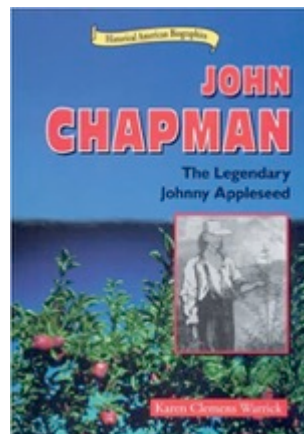
The Foundation in turn is working on multiple fronts. A GoFundMe page is being established (you can find it at [gf.me/u/za9vp7](https://www.gofundme.com/u/za9vp7)) with a goal of \$250,000, in order to raise the funds needed to either purchase Browne Hall, or to lease/purchase another suitable site in Urbana. An independent building inspection will provide more information on the viability of Browne Hall as a long-term investment. Contacts are being made with business and political groups and individuals who might help persuade Franklin to be more flexible on terms.

Even if all goes well, given the continuing pandemic and the huge task of vaccinating millions, it is unlikely that the museum can reopen before the third quarter of 2021, even if it remains in Browne Hall. In the mean time, the Johnny Appleseed Society will continue bimonthly publication of *The Apple Core*, and respond to requests for information on John Chapman and his work, via email at info@appleseedsociety.net. We hope to have more news in our next issue in February.

A Young Person's Johnny Appleseed

by Ann Corfman

*Educator, author and Society member Ann Corfman passed away suddenly this past September (see the October-November **Apple Core**). This was the last article she submitted to us, on her favorite subject: children's books.*



I am pleased to bring to your attention what, I think, is the finest children's book on John Chapman that I have found. ***John Chapman: The Legendary Johnny Appleseed***, by teacher and author Karen Clemens

Warrick, is a jewel! This book, now twenty years old, was a volume in Enslow Publishers' *Historical American Biographies* series.

Many types of illustrations are used, including photographs, wood cuts, sketches, and posters of modern Johnny Appleseed festivals.

Every so often, when appropriate, Warrick inserts historical notes to tell the reader what was going on in the country during Johnny's travels, or to explain a historical fact. Examples include a brief biography of General "Mad" Anthony Wayne, an explanation of "Taxation without Representation," a thumbnail sketch of the Church of the New Jerusalem (the Swedenborgian church so loved by Johnny), and an article about dried apples.

As you can tell, this is an important addition to the collection of Johnny Appleseed books for young people. In fact, I recommend it for adults (especially teachers!) as well as children. It is written to appeal to young readers in grades 4–9.

· ISBN-13 : 978-0766014435

Editor's Note: While still frequently available in public libraries, Warrick's book is out of print. It is still available from many used book sellers: a recent check on Amazon showed listings from a dozen, with price around \$7.

A Johnny Appleseed Christmas

We know that John Chapman was christened in the Congregational Church of his New England parents. And we know that some time near the dawn of the 19th century, he became a convinced Swedenborgian christian. But we know nothing of how, or whether, he ever "kept Christmas" during the half century he moved about as a nurseryman and missionary in the Old Northwest.

We can, however, make some educated guesses, based on what we know of the times, and of the people amongst whom Chapman moved. What follows is conjecture about what we cannot ever know, based on those facts we do know.

In John Chapman's native Massachusetts, Christmas was anything but a holiday. The Congregational Church—the state-supported church there until 1834—abhorred Christmas as "pagan popery," and outlawed it in the 17th century. In Chapman's time, celebrating it was legal again (for those who were not Congregationalists), but strictly private: it was a work and school day like any other.

Why were the Congregationalists so curmudgeonly? It was not our modern Christmas they had in mind, though they likely would have had their objections to that as well. It was the traditional English way of celebrating Christmas that troubled them. According to the New England Historical Society, at Christmas,



Governor Bradford chiding Christmas revelers

towns would appoint a 'lord of misrule.' . . . Generally the towns appointed someone of lower standing to this role to serve as master of ceremonies of the Christmas celebration either up to or including the Twelfth Night festivities. . . In addition to the feasting and drunkenness, the more outgoing celebrants used the holiday as an excuse for wassailing. Wassailing involved barging into houses of the



Christmas Wassailing (David Teniers)

*wealthier citizens, singing a song or two or putting on a short skit, and demanding food, drink and money. Perhaps you've sung the Christmas carol, **We Wish You a Merry Christmas**, with its chorus of "Oh, bring us a figgy pudding...we won't go until we get some." They meant it! The more obliging citizens would fork over the goods. Others, however, declined—resulting in fights, rock-throwing and hard feelings. . . .*

One of the more colorful New England colonial Christmas traditions was mumming, in which men dressed like women (and vice

versa) or simply disguised themselves in a range of costumes.

[You'll find the whole fascinating article at www.newenglandhistoricalsociety.com/wont-go-get-new-england-colonial-christmas-traditions/]

In the new United States, the Congregationalists were not alone in thinking Christmas unchristian. Most of the English protestant sects, other than the old Church of England (now the Episcopalians), were suspicious of Christmas. The Baptists, the Presbyterians, the Quakers, the Mennonites and the Amish did not recognize Christmas as a "holy day" at all. The Methodists held a Christmas church service, but discouraged any out-of-chapel observation of the day—in all the volumes of John Wesley's preaching, there is no Christmas sermon, though his brother Charles did compose the hymn *Hark the Herald Angels Sing*. In New England, where these sects predominated, Christmas was not officially observed, and in many communities was not celebrated by anyone. It is unlikely, then, that it was celebrated by the Chapmans of Longmeadow.



Frontier Cabin (Collot)

At some point between his teen years and 1797, when he turned 23, John Chapman relocated to Pennsylvania. We know he was clearing land (some say, trying to purchase it) and planting his earliest known seedling nurseries on the upper Allegheny River, near what later became the towns of Warren and Franklin. But during the few years he lived there, neighbors were few and far between, there were no churches, and it is likely that all holidays, Christmas included, would have passed unobserved.

However, there is some reason to believe that at least a part of his Pennsylvania period was spent further south, near Bedford and Greensburg, along the well-traveled Forbes Road used by pioneers heading

west to Pittsburg and the Ohio River. It is here, biographer Robert Price conjectures, that Chapman was first exposed to Emanuel Swedenborg's writings, through the agency of lawyer John Young.

From Swedenborg, Chapman appears to have taken two main lessons. The first was Swedenborg's doctrine of usefulness in the world: "The life that leads to heaven is not a life withdrawn from the world, but a life in the world . . . a life of piety separated from a life of charity, which is possible only in the world, does not lead to heaven; but a life of charity does; and a life of charity consists in acting honestly and justly in every employment, in every business, and in every work, from . . . a heavenly motive" (Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*, 347; § 535). The second was the doctrine of correspondences: that every object in the natural world is a representation of a spiritual reality. Thus the sun's light lets us understand the illumination of Truth; its heat, the warmth of spiritual Love.



Holly, not balsam, was most often used in wreaths

Together, these doctrines lend themselves to a generous view of the many traditions of Christmas. The divine Nativity, according to Swedenborg, is a spiritual event to be remembered and celebrated, but the mode of celebration is not seen as ritual, but as representing the spiritual meaning of the event. This understanding would have left Chapman open to an appreciation of many Christmas traditions.

And we know that variety was on display in the Ohio of his middle and late years. The Moravian Brethren of Tuscarawas county, whom he would have encountered in his earliest Ohio years, were the first to introduce the Christmas tree into the American holiday tradition, along with the Christmas *putz*—the display of miniature buildings, animals and people around the tree: an evergreen promise of eternal life, in the midst of a redeemed world.



Clement Moore's "Jolly Old Elf"

Emigrants from New York and New Jersey moving in to central Ohio brought traditions tinged by the Dutch Reformed Church of the Hudson Valley: children's stockings hung by the fire, and Santa Claus (Sint Niklaas) to fill them. Clement Moore's *A Visit from St. Nicholas* helped spread this tradition more widely after its appearance in 1822. Settlers from Episcopalian Virginia as well as Pennsylvania, whom Chapman would encounter in Logan and Champaign counties, gathered holly and mistletoe to decorate first their churches, and later their homes. By the 1830s, as he migrated westward, he would encounter the German Lutherans who came to build the canals, and whose decorated Christmas trees were beginning to spread to other faith traditions.

We know that Chapman often boarded in the winter, but never too long in one household. How many Christmas traditions did he see in those nearly 50 years? No one can say, but it seems likely that to those he did witness, he brought an eye trained to see the spirit behind each: to see not the holly wreath, but the circle of eternal love it represented.

And what could be a richer Christmas than that?

Apple of the Month: Grimes' Golden

There are only three apple varieties associated with John Chapman. We have told the stories of the Rambo and the Baldwin in earlier issues: now it is the turn of the Grimes Golden.

The Grimes Golden, unlike its older peers, is a true American apple: it was first found in the early 1830s, a

half-century after independence. Its fame spread slowly: it does not appear in the 1845 original edition of A. J. Downing's *Fruits and Fruit Trees of America*, the first encyclopedic survey of orchard fruits undertaken in this country. But by Downing's 1881 third edition, it gets a favorable mention:

This valuable Apple originated many years since, on the farm of Thomas Grimes, Brooke Co., Va. In its native locality it is highly prized for the peculiar hardihood of the tree, withstanding uninjured the most severe winters, and never breaking in its limbs. Also for its uniform regular annual productiveness.

Tree vigorous, hardy, upright spreading, very productive, branches with peculiar knobs at the base of each, connecting it with the main limbs. Young wood dark dull red brown, grayish.

Fruit medium, roundish oblate, slightly conical. Skin uneven. Color rich golden yellow, sprinkled moderately with small gray and light dots. Stalk rather short and slender. Cavity rather deep, sometimes slightly russeted. Calyx closed, or partially open. Basin abrupt, uneven. Flesh yellow, compact, crisp, tender, juicy, rich, sprightly, spicy subacid, peculiar aroma. Core rather small. Very good to best. December to March.

Notice the word "valuable": between Downing's first and third editions, commercial production of fruit for wide distribution had taken off in the country, thanks to the ever expanding railroad network. Apples could by 1881 readily be grown in Ohio or Michigan and shipped to New York or San Francisco. The Grimes Golden, which grew in warmer climates, ripened much later than apples grown in New England or upstate New York—then the centers of commercial apple production—were able to.



In addition, that adjective "rich" underscores the Grimes' relatively high sugar content, making it a preferred cider apple, especially if apple brandy was the contemplated end product.

The Grimes Golden was discovered, as many varieties were in mid-19th century America, rather than being bred. The tree was estimated to be about 40 years old when Thomas Grimes plucked one of its

apples and recognized its difference from other local fruit. A legend has grown since, that the tree was the remains of one of John Chapman's seedling nurseries, planted in the late 1790s (the West Virginia Encyclopedia is online at:

<https://www.wvencyclopedia.org/articles/64>)

This is quite possible, but there are no records or contemporaneous accounts to support the claim, and Creighton Calhoun, in his survey **Old Southern Apples** (2nd ed., 2011), cites a contrary claim that the tree is the remains of an orchard planted in 1790 by Edward Cranford, six years before Chapman is supposed to have briefly passed through Brooks county. Calhoun adds that

the original tree bore fruit for over a hundred years, and there are photographs [see below] of the old tree taken in 1895. It finally blew down in 1905, carrying nearly ripe apples as it met its end. Gavels were made from the wood of the old tree and given to prominent men in the area.



Grimes knew a good apple when he bit into one: He produced a whole orchard by taking grafts from the original tree. The Grimes Golden became one of the more popular commercial apples in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Eventually, though, it lost its place to its own descendant: the Golden Delicious apple, the only other variety known to have originated in West Virginia, is a hybrid from the Grimes Golden.

About the Apple Core

The Apple Core is the official newsletter of the Johnny Appleseed Society, published bimonthly in February, April, June, August, October, and December, to members of the Johnny Appleseed Society.

About the Johnny Appleseed Society

The *Johnny Appleseed Society* is a nonprofit educational organization which seeks "to preserve and promote the legacy of John 'Johnny Appleseed' Chapman (1774 - 1845) through both educational activities, and the wide dissemination of educational materials that relate John Chapman's work and values to the world in which we live."

Membership is open to all who share our purpose. Annual dues are \$25 for voting members, \$10 for student members, and \$250 for Life membership. For more information, visit:

www.appleseedsociety.net