



# THE APPLE CORE

## OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE JOHNNY APPLESEED SOCIETY



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### Brief Update on the Museum

February 27, 2021. Negotiations for the future location of the Johnny Appleseed Education Center and Museum continue. The Johnny Appleseed Foundation, which owns the museum collection, now has a web presence, and is actively fundraising. You can visit the Foundation's new website at:

<http://www.johnnyappleseedmuseum.org>

The fundraising page, a GoFundMe site that accepts secure donations via credit card or PayPal, is at:

<http://www.gofundme.com/f/save-the-johnny-appleseed-museum>

The Foundation's goal is to raise \$250,000, in order to acquire a permanent Urbana, Ohio location and to put funding on a solid basis as the Education Center and Museum reopens later this year.

You can find the Foundation's fund-raising press release later in this issue.

### New Source for Johnny's Biography

by Jeff Taylor

Jeff is president of the Society, and editor of *The Apple Core*. Society member Clark Echols of Cincinnati recently brought this book to our attention.

The book is Peggy Welch Mershon's *Johnny Appleseed in a Rich Land* (Corpus Christi, TX, 2019: Topas Publishing), though the authorship is actually more complex. Ms. Mershon, a journalist with a historical bent from Mansfield Ohio (county seat of Richland, thus the title's pun) took up the extensive but unfinished manuscript on Johnny Appleseed by Dwight Wesley Garber—a local amateur historian, who had collected materials for over a quarter century, and passed away in the early 1970s—by Garber's family.

But this is not amateur history. Noted Chapman biographer Robert Price had reviewed Garber's manuscript, and Mershon, an experienced

genealogist and museum curator, as well as an author, has supplemented Garber's research with her own critical examination of sources.

And essentially, that is what this brief book provides. Its thirteen chapters, plus an Afterword reviewing the book's history, focus on hard to come by documents that reveal aspects of Chapman's life and work in and around Richland County, which was the center of his activities from at least 1806 to the latter part of the 1820s, though he continued to visit annually until 1845.

Most of this material, while providing more color and depth, simply reinforces the story we know from Price's *Johnny Appleseed: Man & Myth* and William Kerrigan's *Johnny Appleseed and the American Orchard*, the two standard scholarly biographies.

From Chapter One, reviewing the documentation of Chapman's work as Swedenborgian missionary, to Chapter Twelve exploring the research background to McGaw's 1853 novel *Philip Seymour* (Chapman's first literary appearance), and Chapter Thirteen, dissecting what we know—and don't—about the earliest "Oberlin" portrait of Chapman, and the hats he did or didn't wear, the reader is on familiar ground.



Photo of Rosella Rice from Mershon's Book

But what makes this book truly worth the time for students of Chapman's life are four of the thirteen chapters. First, there are the two late chapters, collecting many of Rosella Rice's formal

and informal writings about Johnny Appleseed. Rice grew up in Perryville, just south of Mansfield, where she was neighbor to Chapman's half-sister Persis, and where she frequently saw Chapman when she was a child. Her father knew and respected Chapman, and Chapman boarded with them often. Her accounts—published in later life in a bewildering array of long-defunct magazines and newspapers—give us the closest thing to an intimate portrait of Chapman we are likely ever to have.

And most intriguing of all are Chapters Five and Six, containing stories that first appeared in a local Mansfield newspaper in 1839 and 1840. These concern two famous incidents—the "Seymour Massacre" and the "Copus Massacre"—that occurred just weeks apart in the early days of the War of 1812.

The author, Salathiel Coffinbury, grew up in Mansfield, though he was still a toddler at the time the incidents took place. Together, these newspaper pieces provide an earlier account of the events than those given in Henry Howe's *Historical Collections of Ohio* (1845) or McGaw's *Philip Seymour* (1853).

While the tale Coffinbury tells is pretty much the same as in those later accounts, one major detail is different: Coffinbury places Chapman—to whom he refers as "the Swedenberger"—among the defenders in the Copus cabin.

There seems to be no way of knowing what the truth of this story is, but it suggests that among Richland county residents who knew him, the idea of Chapman engaged in a battle was not a totally foreign idea.

Whatever you think of the possibility, Mershon has produced a collection well worth the time of anyone wanting to learn more about John Chapman's days in Richland county. Highly recommended!



## The Apple as Match-Maker: New England Romantic Lore

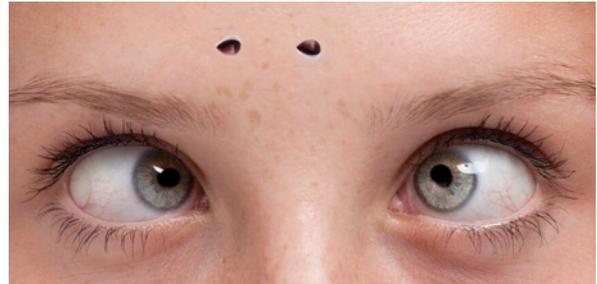
Apples are a key component in a lot of nineteenth century New England love magic. Most

of it is focused on determining who your true love is. For example, here's a simple charm from Peter Muise's New England Folklore blog at

<http://newenglandfolklore.blogspot.com/2017/10/apple-lore-death-love-and-magic.html>

that involves apple seeds:

If you have several potential lovers in mind, take some apple seeds and name each seed after one of the potential mates. Wet the seeds and then stick them to your forehead. The last seed to fall off is the person you are meant to be with.



## Teacher's Corner

by Judith Maule

### What Are the Apple Trees Doing Now?

Let's find out! Do you have an apple tree in your yard, or does your neighbor have one that you can observe? Start by observing the tree's shape, the way the wood grows on the branches. What do you notice?

If you want to go further with your nature investigation, take a drawing pad, a pencil and, if you have one, a magnifying glass with you when you set out to observe. Be sure to put a date on each day's drawing!



The trees are waking up now from their winter dormant period and you can draw a record of their progress as often as you like. This month you'll notice the brown buds swelling on the spurs growing from the larger branches. The buds have closed *plackets* along their sides, each one rounded on the bottom and ending in a small pointed top.

The inside of each bud contains the leaves of the apple and the blossoms. Over the next few weeks, the leaves will push out from the top of the bud and spread out to form a kind of nest for the blossoms. These will appear as pink or white sweet smelling flowers. You can see a table of stages for bud opening at:

[www.pinterest.com/pin/156922368252297330/](http://www.pinterest.com/pin/156922368252297330/)

Watching and recording one apple tree as it cycles from bud to apples makes a very satisfying investigation!

## Apples & People: A New UK Web Experience for Apple Lovers

*We are used to people from around the country getting in touch with us to find out more about John Chapman and his love of apples. So we were not completely surprised to be contacted recently by David Marshall, of the **Apples & People** project in the United Kingdom. Here are excerpts from the press release he sent us. You can view the new site—a beautiful tour through the international world of apples—at <https://applesandpeople.org.uk/>*

***'It is remarkable how closely the history of the apple tree is connected with that of man'***  
***-Henry David Thoreau, 'Wild Apples' (1862)***

*Apples & People* is a digital response in a time of great uncertainty, bringing the astonishing and international story of the humble apple to all. Symbolising global connectedness, individual achievement, happenchance, and people and nature working closely together, the apple eaten today offers hope as well as nourishment.

Over the next eighteen months, this online exhibition programme will release over forty short stories illustrated with art works from internationally significant collections. Each story explores different aspects of humanity's relationship with the apple through history, science, and culture.

*Apples & People* reveals just how significant and iconic this humble fruit found in everyone's fruit bowl has become. From the garden of Eden to the Isle of Avalon, the fruit forests of Kazakhstan to the walled gardens of Ancient Greece, the apple tree rooted itself

around the globe and the apple has become the symbolic fruit, embedding itself across cultures within folklore, art, and literature.

David Marshall, Associate of the Brightspace Foundation said: "Ignited by research published on the genetic geography of the apple, the idea for an art-based exhibition to explore the apple world, and provide context for England's orchards, transformed in response to the pandemic. The digital approach of Apples & People has enabled distance relationships with apple experts and access to fascinating cultural collections around the world."

The exhibition programme is the result of a partnership between the Brightspace Foundation, Hereford Cider Museum, and the National Trust in Herefordshire, where more apples grow than anywhere else in the UK.



USDA lithograph of the Roxbury Russet

## Apple of the Month: Roxbury Russet

*In earlier issues, we have explored the three apple varieties—the Rambo, the Baldwin, and the Grimes Golden—with known connections to John Chapman. It is likely that there are many others, as few apple varieties self-pollinate. Planting apples from seed, as Chapman did all his life, guarantees a wide range of hybrid varieties: that is one reason the apple is so adaptable, and so widespread. But which of the many hybrids that blossomed from Chapman's seeds may*

have become cultivated as new varieties, is now lost to history.

So we turn this issue to what is universally celebrated as the very first apple variety to arise in the United States: an apple once celebrated for its flavor, its cider, and its quality as a “keeper;” an apple which reached Ohio orchards even before John Chapman; an apple which has now fallen from commercial favor, living on only as an “heirloom”: the Roxbury Russet.

The claim that the Roxbury Russet is the first apple variety native to our country is virtually universal, but the specifics are murky. Beach, Booth and Taylor’s *Apples of New York* (1905) says only that “it is generally supposed that this variety originated in Roxbury, Massachusetts, early in the seventeenth century,” while the New England Apple Association on its blog (<https://newenglandapples.org/apples/roxbury-russet/>) claims flatly that it “was first grown in Roxbury, Massachusetts in 1635.”

Roxbury, for those not familiar with Massachusetts geography, is now a neighborhood in Boston. But in the 17th century, it was a two-hour walk (about 5 miles) from the old downtown, clustered about the harbor.

We do know that a William Blackstone (sometimes spelled Blaxton) already had a small orchard, near where the Massachusetts capital now sits on Beacon Hill, when Sir Richard Saltonstall’s party of Puritans first arrived in the area in 1630.



*Diorama of Blackstone's Roxbury cabin [New England Life Insurance building, Boston MA]*

Blackstone grew a variety then called the Yellow Sweeting. According to historian (and John Chapman biographer) William Kerrigan’s *American Orchard* blog, Blackstone didn’t take to

the newcomers, and moved to Rhode Island, taking his apples with him (presumably as grafts), where they became known as Rhode Island Greenings:

<https://americanorchard.wordpress.com/2013/01/27/americas-first-cultivated-apple-variety/>.

Kerrigan argues that this makes the Greening the first apple variety cultivated in America, but acknowledges that Blackstone may have brought the variety with him from England. The Roxbury Russet, on the other hand, was clearly a new variety, with a history roughly as old, so it wins the prize as the first to arise on our soil.

The Roxbury was among the most popular of early New England apples, not only because it has a complex, sweet-tart taste, good fresh and able to stand up to cooking, but because it ripens late and has exceptional storage properties. In the days before refrigeration, that was important!



*Roxbury Russets at Monticello [National Park Service]*

And so, as apples do, it spread from orchard to orchard by grafting. By 1778 it had reached all the way to Virginia, where Thomas Jefferson, always the experimenting farmer, planted them in his South Orchard:

<http://explorer.monticello.org/text/index.php?id=165&type=13>

Fatefully, the Russet also found its way to the Pomfret, Connecticut orchard of General Israel Putnam. The general’s son, Colonel Israel Putnam, was among the leaders of the Ohio Company, the band of Revolutionary War veterans from New England who settled Marietta, Ohio in 1788. In 1795, about the time Chapman is

supposed to have arrived in western Pennsylvania, *scions* (twigs for grafting) were sent out to the Marietta settlement from the Putnam orchard back in Connecticut, including several for the Roxbury Russett.

These proved as popular in the West as they had been in New England, and once again spread rapidly, this time south along the Ohio and north up the Muskingum rivers, where they soon picked up the new name of Putnam Russet. A detailed account is at:

[https://projects.sare.org/sare\\_project/fnc12-865/](https://projects.sare.org/sare_project/fnc12-865/)

By the time A. J. Downing published his *Fruits & Fruit Trees of America* (1845), the Putnam Russet and its Roxbury parent were differentiated enough to be treated as separate varieties, despite identical genes:

#### 148. RUSSSET, PUTNAM. §

For a knowledge of this celebrated western apple, we are indebted to that zealous pomologist, our friend, Professor Kirtland, of Cleveland. It is considered decidedly the most valuable late keeping apple in the West, not inferior to the Newtown Pippin, and the growth of the tree very luxuriant. It originated at Marietta, Ohio, and is largely grown for the New-Orleans and West India markets. Fruit medium, or large, form rather flat. Skin yellow, blotched with russet, and at times tinged with a dull red cheek. Flesh firm, yet tender, deep yellow, juicy, sub-acid, rich, and very high flavoured. March and April.\*

*A. J. Coxe's 1845 description of the "Putnam Russet," Ohio's name for the Roxbury Russet*

Russets differ from other varieties in having a thicker, brownish skin, sometimes with wart-like bumps, along part or all of the surface—thus their nick-name, “leather jackets.” Because of this appearance, they gradually fell out of favor as apple production became more oriented to mass markets. George Dana, writing in the *Transactions of the Ohio Pomological Society* (1859), noted the change:

*Among all the apples brought out from New England, or introduced here, the Putnam Russet soon became the prominent one. In 1810 or 11, whole orchards were planted of it, and perhaps the nurseries cultivated nearly as many Russets as of all other kinds. It has continued to be the prominent apple till within a few years. Now the Rome Beauty is most in demand.*

The Rome Beauty—which became the first commercially successful Ohio variety—is said

to have originated from a Roxbury “sport”: a sprout cut from a Roxbury Russet graft in Putnam's Marietta orchard by Joel Gillette, who trans-planted it to Rome township in Lawrence county. See details in the report of the Lawrence county Sustainable Agriculture project at:

[projects.sare.org/sare\\_projects/fnc12-865](https://projects.sare.org/sare_projects/fnc12-865)

But more on the Rome Beauty next issue!

Today, although the Roxbury Russet maintains a certain popularity as an eating apple among those “in the know,” it is more likely to be pressed for cider than to appear on a market shelf.

If you have never sampled one, consider giving it a try: while excellent when harvested (generally in late fall or early winter), Roxburies are among those rare apples that actually improve in flavor as they age. They are also excellent for kitchen use: Try, for example, the recipe below adapted from *Fratelli ai Fornelli* at:

[fratelliaifornelli.it/en/pork-roast-with-apples/](http://fratelliaifornelli.it/en/pork-roast-with-apples/)

### **Pork Roast with Russet Apples**

#### **Ingredients**

1.5 - 1.75 lb of pork loin (24 to 28 oz)  
1 large onion  
2 Roxbury Russet apples  
2 tablespoons of honey  
1 stick cinnamon (or 1/2 tsp powdered)  
2 whole cloves  
salt  
black pepper in a shaker  
nutmeg in a shaker

1. Rub the meat with salt; Sprinkle the outside generously with the ground pepper and nutmeg.
2. Lightly brown over high heat on all sides; then place in a baking pan.
3. Cut the apples and onion into quarters, and add them to the pan; also add 2 cloves and a cinnamon stick.
4. Finally, pour 2 tablespoons of honey on the loin.
5. Cover the pan with aluminum foil and bake at 350 °F for 60 minutes.



## Appleseed Foundation Press Release

### JOHNNY APPLESEED SURVIVES COVID-19

*Urbana, Ohio February, 2021* – A small band of individuals, including some genetic descendants of John Chapman, aka Johnny Appleseed, continues to preserve and teach Chapman's values.

The legendary American, who was born in Massachusetts, planted apple trees near Urbana, Ohio in the mid-1820s. Johnny "Appleseed" Chapman professed and lived by a set of values that includes generosity, humility, stewardship, thrift, entrepreneurship, and caring for one's fellow man—values relevant in every era.

For over a quarter-century, The Johnny Appleseed Education Center and Museum has taught these values to scholars, children, travelers and community groups from its location on the campus of Urbana University, in Urbana, Ohio.

This summer, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Franklin University permanently closed its Urbana University branch campus. This closure shuttered The Johnny Appleseed Education Center and Museum and sealed off its collection from the public.

The Education Center and Museum housed the world's most significant and complete collection of information about Johnny Appleseed. This extensive research collection was used by historians and scholars.

The Education Center trained teachers, provided educational materials for classrooms, and published books for children.

Now, the search is on for a new home for the collection, the education center and the museum.

A small amount of funding for this work has been raised. More is needed.

The fundraising is a combined effort of The Johnny Appleseed Foundation, online at

<http://www.johnnyappleseedmuseum.org>

which owns the collection, and The Johnny Appleseed Society, whose members have provided volunteer work at the Education Center and Museum.

As part of its fundraising effort, The Johnny Appleseed Foundation has created a GoFundMe page:

(<https://gf.me/u/za9vp7>)

#### ***The Johnny Appleseed Foundation***

Around 1992, The Johnny Appleseed Foundation, for many years based at the Dawes Arboretum in Newark, Ohio, was re-incorporated in Urbana, Ohio in order to raise the public and private funds with which to create the first museum wholly devoted to Chapman's legacy: The Johnny Appleseed Education

Center and Museum. The museum collection, originally displayed in Bailey Hall on the Urbana University campus, was relocated to the campus gateway at Browne Hall in 2018.

Urbana University's connection to John "Johnny Appleseed" Chapman went back to the middle decades of the 19th century, when Chapman—woodsman, orchardist, entrepreneur, and Swedenborgian missionary—encouraged the founding of a college to prepare young men and women to spread the "good news straight from Heaven" he found in Swedenborg's writings. Urbana College (later Urbana University) was the fruit of that encouragement, as the apple was the fruit of his orchards.

In 2014 Urbana University, then in dire financial straits, was acquired by Franklin University as a branch campus. Franklin invested roughly thirty million dollars in new or improved programs and facilities at Urbana over the next six years; but when the Covid-19 pandemic struck in the Spring of 2020, and the State of Ohio closed all college campuses, Franklin, fearing further losses, permanently closed the institution.

The Johnny Appleseed Foundation is a 501c(3) non-for-profit organization.

#### ***The Johnny Appleseed Society***

Nearly three decades ago, Urbana faculty and friends came together, in what would become the Johnny Appleseed Society, to spark interest in creating a museum dedicated to the life and work of John Chapman. For information on The Johnny Appleseed Society, a 501c(3) membership organization, or to subscribe to its bimonthly e-newsletter, **The Apple Core**, visit

<https://www.appleseedsociety.net>

To learn more about how Johnny Appleseed survived COVID-19, please contact Drew McLandrich, at [info@johnnyappleseedmuseum.org](mailto:info@johnnyappleseedmuseum.org) or by phone at 513-706-2942

#### **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](http://www.appleseedsociety.net)