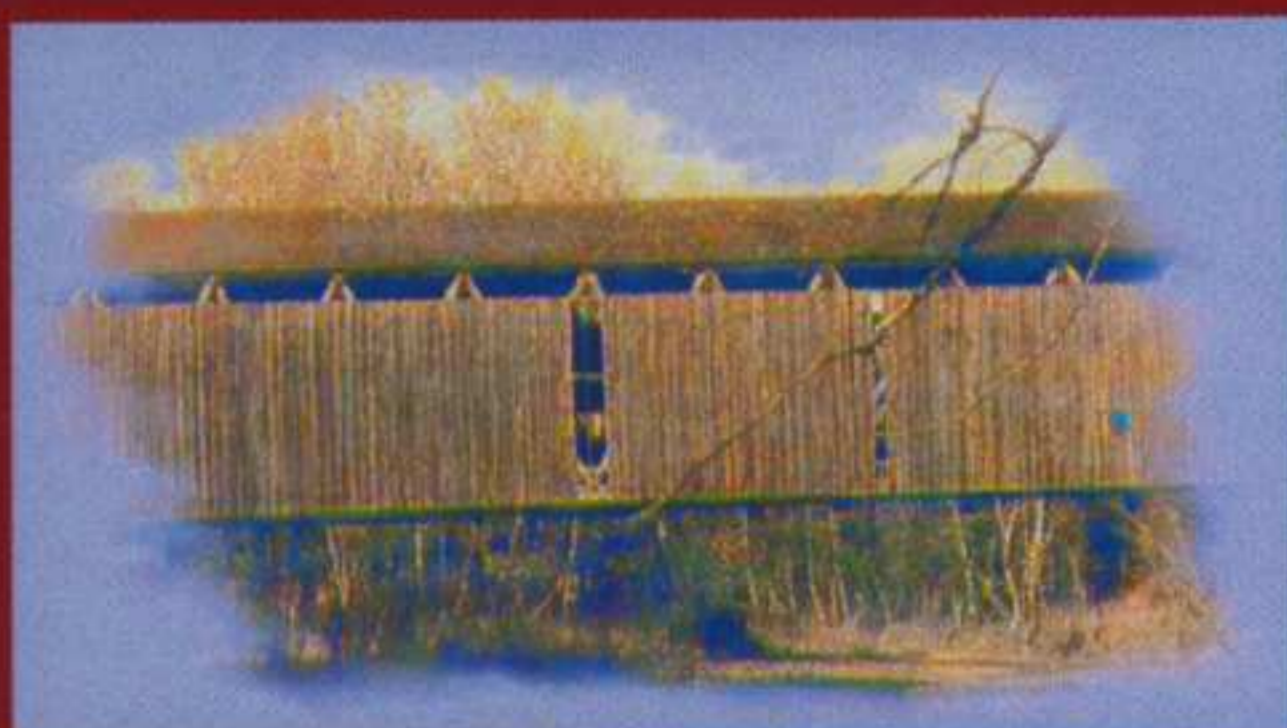


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Tribute to Johnny Appleseed— The Tree Planter (Part I)



From a drawing made in 1850 by an Oberlin College student who had seen Johnny Appleseed.

As early as 1810, according to pioneers who lived along or near the Olentangy and Scioto Rivers, a thin, oddly dressed stranger named “Appleseed John” Chapman was selling or trading apple tree seedlings. All were grown in orchards and nurseries he had planted with seeds collected from cider presses in Western Pennsylvania and Eastern Ohio.

Very little was known about this strange looking man who some say was exploring Ohio as early as 1797. In later years, those who knew him spoke of John’s love of nature in all its forms—love for his fellow man and, above all, his passion for planting and growing apple trees.

Born in Leominster, Massachusetts on September 26, 1774, John had one sister born four years earlier. His mother, Elizabeth, passed away in 1776 at 28 years of age. The father, Nathaniel, was a member of Washington’s army during the Revolution and spent little time with his two children until he returned home to stay in 1780. Nathaniel remarried. By the time the family moved to Ohio in early 1800, John had ten more siblings—five brothers and five more sisters.

Leaving wife, Lucy, and seven of the youngest children in Marietta, Nathaniel with his four older sons including John, the oldest, poled, pushed and pulled a flat bottom boat filled with their belongings up Duck Creek to a fertile valley fifteen miles north of Marietta. The family soon reunited in their newly built log cabin overlooking the beautiful Duck Creek Valley.

After his family settled in, John loaded a canoe with supplies including a sack full of apple seeds, headed west, and thus began the Legend of Johnny Appleseed.

Johnny Appleseed’s father, Captain Nathaniel Chapman, died in 1807 and was laid to rest near his home on Duck Creek (burial location unknown). In 1810 a census was taken and his widow, Lucy, was still living at the homestead with her two youngest children. At least four of the others were married and raising families in the same valley, near their mother.

Jim is co-chair of the Linworth UMC Historical Society.

Joy is a Noble County Historian. She also manages the Noble County Historical Jail (built 1882) that houses the Noble County Historical Society and Chamber of Commerce.

Joy accompanied Jim and his wife, Janet, to the Chapman family cemetery on a hilltop eight miles south of Caldwell on Route 821. She spent the afternoon with the Thompsons providing much of the information used in this *Newsletter*.



Left to right—Jim Thompson and Joy Flood



The valley where the Chapman's chose to live has not changed much in 200 years. Duck Creek is located in the above picture behind a row of trees. The picture to the right is of Duck Creek. Pictures taken October, 2007.



L-R Janet Thompson and Joy Flood are standing next to the tombstone of Parley Chapman, one of Johnny Appleseed's half brothers. It reads: "Parley Chapman, a native of Mass. —died April 28, 1852—aged 68 years, 1 month, 22 days."



(L-R Shirley Stritz, Janet Thompson) Janet Thompson and her sister Shirley Stritz of Caldwell, are viewing the historical marker dedicated September 27, 1942, to the memory of the legendary figure, Johnny Appleseed. It is in Noble County located on the same hillside where the Chapman's built their cabin in 1805. Carl Ogle, a descendant of Parley Chapman, Johnny's half brother, donated the plot of ground. The family cemetery is several hundred feet uphill.

Historical Musings by Jim Thompson

Johnny spent forty years traveling throughout Ohio and neighboring states spinning tales, sharing his faith, buying plats of land to develop his nurseries, and occasionally returning to Duck Creek to visit his family.

As historian and author, Gary S. Williams, wrote in his excellent book, *Johnny Appleseed in the Duck Creek Valley*, "There are few written records of Johnny Appleseed, and we cannot be absolutely certain it happened this way, although it seems likely that it did. The problem with legendary people is that they become larger than life and we can never be sure exactly what they really did do. Or, as the author Louis Bromfield observed, 'truth is, of course, that Johnny Appleseed has attained that legendary status where the facts are no longer of importance.'"

Coming in the next *Newsletter* there will be reproductions of pictures taken in 1910 of the old Indian trading post on Olentangy River Road showing apple trees, according to oral history, grown by Johnny Appleseed. Also included will be Dick Hokes' painting of Johnny Appleseed at the trading post in 1840.

Thanks to Joy Flood and Gary S. Williams for their contributions to this *Newsletter*.

Merry Christmas and a Blessed New Year to all of You.