



# Klyne Esopus Museum

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[www.KlyneEsopusMuseum.us](http://www.KlyneEsopusMuseum.us)

## Apple Growing in the Town of Esopus (Hudson Valley)

In early winter of 2014, three board members were treated to a wonderful and illuminating experience. We had arranged to meet with Leonard Clarke in his home, which is surrounded by orchards, in Milton. This 96 year old 3<sup>rd</sup> generation "Apple Man" entertained us with stories of the history of apples not just in Ulster County but around the world. His recollections inspired this article. In 1835, the Clarke family came from Cornwall, England and began growing apples and other fruit on their property in Milton, joining the Hallock and Young families. These family names are still active today along with other former Esopus orchard farmers: Polhemus, Herring, Mott, Cameron, DuMond, VanWagenen, Vanderveer, VanAken, Hildebrandt, Hathaway, Schoonmaker, Elmendorf, Poon, Jahn and many others.

Apples first appeared in Central Asia, and then spread west and east throughout Europe and Asia. On the east coast of the American continent, wild apples grew, but they were small and sour, resembling crab apples, and were used by the native people for cider only. When the Spanish arrived in the South West in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, they brought rootstock from Spain. Apple cultivation spread to many native tribes on the East Coast. By the time the Dutch and English arrived, many native villages had their own orchards.

Coming to the Hudson Valley, Dutch farmers brought with them root stock and seeds of apples from the Old World. Soon, apple trees appeared near the new settlements. Varieties mainly originated from the Netherlands, then later from England, Germany and France. As settlements grew, so did the dissemination of apples, carried by Indians, traders and missionaries far into the interior of the country.

For decades, farmers grew apples, berries and stoned fruit mostly for their own use. Apples became the fruit of choice for many farmers because of its long storage life. It was difficult and expensive to ship apples to distant markets. Surplus apples were used to make cider, vinegar, apple brandy, and dried fruit. In 1730 a Huguenot, Robert Prince, opened a nursery on Long Island. Prince devoted his nursery to developing fruit trees to stock the farms in the new land. By 1845, their catalogue contained 350 varieties of apples.

In 1741 trade was begun to export apples to Europe and the West Indies. Transportation rapidly improved after the Revolutionary War as canals and railways developed and the number of commercial orchards grew. At the same time, common and cold storage came into use and the export trade in better grades of fresh fruit increased. With the arrival of the steam ship it was possible to ship large quantities of fruit down state and the industry took off. The remains of several docks can still be seen along the west shore of the Hudson.

### 2015 Schedule of Meetings & Events

**September 19:** Speaker Tony Musso, 4 PM at the museum. First in the **Roger Mabie Speaker's Series.** "Hidden Hudson Valley"

**October 11:** A Taste of History

**October 12:** Museum closes for the season.

**October 24:** Turkey Dinner to be held at the Reformed church of Port Ewen

**November 21:** Speaker Andy Angstrom, 4 PM at the Esopus Town Hall Community Room, final in the **Roger Mabie Speaker's Series.** "Backyard Archeology"

Watch your email for details on the speakers and other programs or email us at:

[KlyneEsopusMuseumHistorical@gmail.com](mailto:KlyneEsopusMuseumHistorical@gmail.com) for more information.

A.J. Downing (1815-1852) a prominent landscape designer and horticulturalist, listed all the varieties of apples in the US – 1,856 are named, including the 3 apples which originated in the Hudson valley – the Esopus Spitzenberg, the Jonathan & the Swaar. The Esopus Spitzenberg is a late season apple, good for eating out of hand, as well as for all kinds of culinary purposes. It was discovered in the early 1700's in Esopus, but nothing is known of its origin. It was reputed to have been the favorite



Leonard Clarke

apple of Thomas Jefferson who included it in his Monticello orchards along with 3 other varieties. Few Spitzenberg apples remain in Esopus today but thanks to some resourceful newer orchard managers it is being cultivated again. Look for it in late summer and when you see them grab them because the output is still small.

In Esopus, Robert Livingston Pell was one of the first to acquire land to begin commercial apple production. His farm of 235 acres in Esopus was said to have 25,000 apple trees. Twenty acres were set aside to grow the Newtown Pippin, a very popular variety. It had been developed on Long Island in the early 1700's. It kept well for at least 9 months, which made it good for shipping. Robert Pell was famous for his contributions to the commercial fruit business. In 1861, the Confederate blockade of shipping almost ruined his business, but after the war he was able to regain his place in the fruit market. In 1904 his heirs sold the land to the Redemptorist Fathers, who built their House of Studies, later known as Mount St. Alphonsus and today as the Mount Academy.

The "Red Book", *The Town of Esopus Story*, contains a great deal of information about local farms and their produce. The hamlets on the eastern side of town contained land which was ideal for fruit growing, getting the eastern sun, and sheltered on the west by the Schaupeneake Hills. Almost every farm in the town had a roadside fruit stand. See the chapter on "Earning a Living Farming" for more information. Apple growing continues today to be an important part of agriculture here in the Hudson Valley. The farm-to table movement and the popularity of pick-your-own has made the new agro-tourism business popular and profitable. ~ Anne Gordon & Rosane Balistreri

### *Musician Vince Fisher*

We could say Vince Fisher is our resident musician, since he lives within walking distance of the museum. For many years Vince has graced our Annual Strawberry Festival using his guitar and voice to serenade us with popular folk songs.

Vince has been a member of the Klyne Esopus Museum ever since founding member Mary Polhemus sent him a letter asking him to join the museum when it first opened. Vince first met Mary Polhemus when he was a student and she was Principal of the #3 School in Kingston. That school was later destroyed by urban renewal.

For 34 years Vince was a Special Education teacher in the Rondout Valley School District. For many years he has enjoyed singing and playing his guitar and considers himself a songwriter who collaborates with a writing partner. Vince's main goal when he retired was to work to improve his musical presentation enough to be paid for a gig. He has succeeded in doing that - playing in numerous clubs, cafes, bistros, and picnics up and down the Hudson Valley from Albany to NYC. He has a band that plays in larger venues. We are very fortunate to have had Vince volunteer to perform at our Strawberry Festivals.

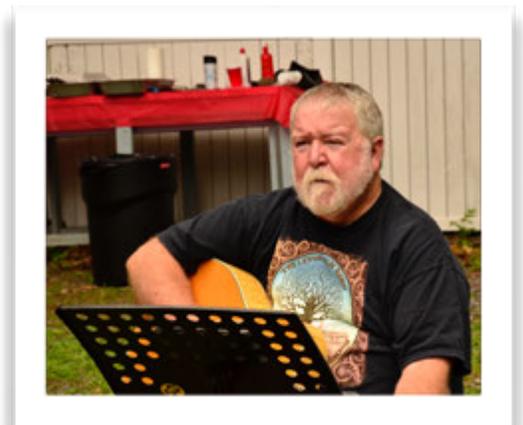


Photo by Anita DeFina Hadley

If you have a need for some live music, contact Vince at [bvdfish@aol.com](mailto:bvdfish@aol.com) or 845 -331- 6957. ~ Kathie Quick

Here is an easy recipe for **Apple Cake** from the 1983 cookbook published by the Klyne Esopus Museum:

- 4 c. peeled chopped apples
- 1 tsp. cinnamon
- 2 c. sugar
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 c. chopped nuts
- ½ tsp salt
- 3 c. all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp nutmeg
- 2 c. vegetable oil
- 2 eggs beaten

Mix apples and sugar and let stand for one hour. Mix dry ingredients and add oil and eggs. Combine with apple mixture. Pour into greased pan and bake for 1 hour and 15 minutes at 350 degrees. Cool in pan. ~ Joan Wells



Dear Members and Friends,

I intend to keep this short but with all that has been happening in and around the museum since the last newsletter it will be a challenge.

We had a very satisfying Recognition Dinner in May. The staff of the Esopus Meadow Lighthouse was well honored and very pleased. Attendance was great and both the silent auction and program were profitable.

We have had two very interesting Ed & Ruth Ford Speaker's Programs this year. The first, at the Town Hall in April, was the award winning producer/director **Jonathan Fein** speaking on **Objects & Memory**. *What are the things in your homes and museums that mean the most to us? How do you preserve the past and speak to the future? What would you save if your house were on fire?* The second was in July at the Museum with journalist/author **Vernon Benjamin** speaking on **The Native Americans in Pre-History** and his book, **History of the Hudson Valley: From Wilderness to the Civil War**. The museum was filled to over capacity for this highly regarded writer.

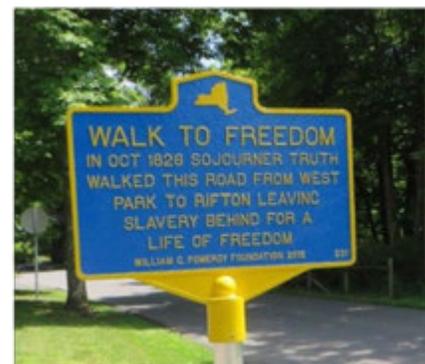
The museum opened for the season on June 6 featuring the very popular, held over, Bohan/Datum collection. We have had special visits by archeologists, Native American representatives and writers interested in this exhibit as well as our permanent collections. It seems we are getting the word out about our little museum. We are also members of the Mid Hudson Historical Destinations group that has been keeping us busy with networking events on both sides of the river. One of these was a history day at Locust Grove which afforded us an opportunity to mingle with and exchange ideas with the staff of other museums and historical societies.

On August 3, Klyne board members Anne Gordon, Kathie Quick, Steve Sickler, Dan Terpening and myself were joined by others for the unveiling of the new Sojourner Truth historical marker placed on Floyd Ackert Rd. and Park Place. The museum was instrumental, with Anne Gordon spearheading the effort, in getting the Pomeroy Foundation to provide this plaque. It commemorates the route taken by Sojourner Truth which began her walk from a life of slavery to freedom. We were covered by the Time Warner Cable Network News the next day.

Upcoming events to look forward to are the two Roger Mabie Speakers Series lectures to be held this Fall. On October 11 we will again be participating in "A Taste of History", this time with the cooperation of other MHHD members at their institutions.

Other big news: The featured exhibit opening next season will be "Hunting and Fishing in Esopus". If anyone has photos or other memorabilia they would like to share with the museum, we would be happy to consider including them in the exhibit.

Wishing you all a good end of summer and happy autumn. ~ RMB



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John K. Coutant, our friend, museum supporter and Town Supervisor, passed away June 19, 2015. He is missed.

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