

# Small Town Celebrates With Apple And Cheese Festival

CAROLYN N. MOYER

Bradford Co. Correspondent

CANTON (Bradford Co.) —

Bright red apples, shown with brilliance under the clear, blue sky on the second day of the two-day Pennsylvania State Apple-Cheese Festival, striking a sharp contrast to the previous day's rainy conditions.

Even with the muddy fields, attendance totals reached 4,000 on Saturday, October 1 and skyrocketed to 12,000 on a clear-skyed Sunday, October 2.

In its sixth year, the Apple-Cheese Festival got its start when a group of community-minded citizens decided that their small town needed something to boost moral.

"It started with the Rekindle the Spirit Program back in the mid-eighties. We had some people in town interested in trying to increase the prosperity of Canton. We were getting very down and not very positive. A promotion committee was put together and out of that committee came this apple and cheese festival idea," said event chairman Beth Stiner. "We have an older lady in town who said she always thought it

would be good to have an apple and cheese festival because we have lots of apple orchards and then we have the dairy industry. And it fits...it's perfect...and we ran with it."

From its start in 1988, the event has grown steadily from showcasing about 30 craft and food vendors to hosting close to 175 vendors this year. In fact, vendors must apply to be admitted and each year, some are turned away.

As a special notation, this year, the event was designated the Pennsylvania State Apple-Cheese Festival thanks to efforts of State Representative Matthew Baker and some hard working committee members.

Unfortunately, tons of preparation and hard work can easily be complicated by unruly weather. Rain the week before and rain all day on the opening day did present some problems. However, Stiner stressed, the difficulties were overcome to the best of everyone's ability.

"We worked hard to get the field read for Saturday. We worked on it all day Friday and lo and behold, Saturday it rained all



Jim Armory, tight, of the LeRaysville Cheese Factory offers samples of his cheese to visitors at the Apple Cheese festival. While at the festival, Armory was demonstrating how to make cheddar cheese.

day. So we had to hustle again Sunday morning to get it ready. People literally sat in mud," said Stiner.

But everyone helped to get the field back in condition, taking turns shoveling sawdust into puddles to help make the area passable. And, judging from the reaction of the crowd, rain didn't dampen the spirit of the festival one bit.

Pat Height, a resident of Canton is one of the many volunteers who helped make the festival successful.

"I help work at the apple butter stand. I've helped with the festival for three years. I can remember when I was a kid, coming here to pick apples to make applesauce. It was a family outing," she said.

Besides celebrating the apple and dairy industries, the event also focuses on the history of the area.

Local historian Elwyn Kie guided a bus tour through the nearby apple orchards.

Sites visited included Landon's Orchards, owned by Allyn Landon; H&E Orchard, owned by Harold and Edna Landon; the Cedar Ledge Orchard, owned by Frank and Joyce Landon; and the Rockgirt Orchards, now known as the Davis Van Dyke Orchards, owned by Davis VanDyke.

"I like other people to know what we have here. I really think that we have an awful lot here," said Kie.

Each orchard has its own unique history which was explained by Kie as the tour bus wound its way through the many orchards.

According to Kie, the ground where Landon Orchards now stands has been in the Landon Family since 1845, but the orchard was not planted until about 1912 by Benjamin Landon, a grandson of the original owner. Benjamin's grandson, Allyn now maintains the orchard, which covers 75 acres. Annual yield of the orchard is about 25,000-30,000 bushels. Recently Landon has planted 5,700 dwarf and semi-dwarf apple trees. The semi-dwarf varieties mature faster, are easier to pick from and because they can be planted closer together, yield more apples per acre.

In addition to growing apples,



Bruce Cavanaugh of Gillett and Katrina Hoke of Lebanon savor their apple pie during the sixth annual Pennsylvania State Apple-Cheese Festival.

Landon maintains an apple sorting, packaging and storage facility and operates a stainless steel cider making press.

H&E orchard is a small orchard consisting of about 375 trees. Each year they harvest approximately 3,500 bushels total of Milton, Wealthy, Macintosh, Cortland, Macoun, Spies, Ida Reds and Red Delicious apples. The family has also started raising some antique varieties of apples in a new orchard.

Cedar Ledge Orchard has been in the Landon family since the 1930s. The location is also home to a store and service station where apples are stored and cider is pressed year-round. Their orchard consists of Cortlands, Ida Reds and a yellow-green semi-dwarfed variety known as Matsu or Crispin. Besides apples, the Cedar Ledge Orchard also has peach trees, and sweet and sour cherry trees.

The final tour stop, Rockgirt Orchards, was planted in 1909. At this site, located in the Minnequa Heights area of Canton the original owner manufactured and sold apple butter. In addition, the original owner, L.M. Marble, built two cold storage facilities which were the first refrigerated buildings built for the preserva-

tion of fruits and vegetables. Experiments on the effects of refrigeration on fruits and vegetables were conducted here by the Pennsylvania State University. The Rockgirt Orchard is no longer a working orchard.

Back on the festival grounds, visitors could browse through the many rows of craft vendors and sample just about any thing made with apples or cheese. Among the goodies were apple pie, apple butter, apple pancakes, applesauce, candy apples as well as many varieties of cheeses.

The event attracts people from all over. Stiner even noted that they have had visitors from overseas. With its growing popularity, more and more people are interested in coming to the area.

"Last week," said Stiner, "I had calls from Altoona and Philadelphia. These were people who wanted to come to the area and spend the night"

A visitor from the Wyalusing area came to learn more about the area and about apples. Joan O'Connor, who was traveling with her husband, Louie and children Jamie and Lindsey, noted that the festival was "muddy, but otherwise nice." She added that her daughter, Jamie, had to do a

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Setting up a display at the festival takes a lot of help. Here Harold Landon, his grandson Cotic Strong and son-in-law Greg Strong unload apples from their truck.



Eight-year-old Matthew Thurston takes a big bite of his candy apple while taking a break from the festivities.