

# Wagener Apple

by Lynne Belluscio

The kindergartens are visiting LeRoy House this week for “A Is For Apple” and before they make the apple head doll and the pomander with cloves and use the apple peeler and taste the apple jelly, apple butter and cider, we talk briefly about all the kinds of apples ... the 20 ounce, the Deee-licious, the crispy Crispin, and the yellow and red JonaGold.

They talked about how apple trees grow in an orchard and apples are used for apple pie, apple crisp, applesauce, candy apples and cider. Finally, they hear the story “Apple Pie for Lewis” – about a boy who visits his grandmother and has to wait for the apples to grow and ripen before his grandmother can make him an apple pie. He gets the colly wobbles because he eats green apples, but finally after his grandmother tells him he has to get 20 more freckles before the apples are ripe, he has his own special apple pie, marked with a big “L” on top.

At one time there were a lot of apple orchards in LeRoy. Many of the farmers sent barrels of apples to the Rogerson Cold Storage. Recently when going through photographs from the Keeney collection I came across black and white images taken on the Chase Farm in Pavilion.



According to the 1904 Genesee County Atlas, the Chase Farm was located on the East side of Linwood Road, just south of the LeRoy Town line.

The spray rig shows Ralph Whitbeck on the right and Hurst driving the horse. The photo was taken in May 1911. The photograph of the Chase Farm Orchard was taken on October 13, 1920. It shows three trees of Wagener apples. According to the “*Apples of New York*” The Wagener was considered an apple of superior excellence. It was considered best for “culinary uses, but especially esteemed for dessert.”

The first published reference to the Wagener was in the 1847 report of the New York State Agricultural Society. But the history of the apple can be traced into the 1700s. In the spring of 1791, George Wheeler came from Dutchess County to Penn Yan. He brought apple seeds with him and planted an orchard. Five years later, in 1796, Abraham Wagener, a member of the pioneer family of Penn Yan, bought Wheeler’s orchard and transplanted trees to his farm. One of those trees was still producing fruit in 1848. It continued to bear fruit

until 1865. About this time, the Wagener apple gained quite a bit of notoriety and soon was popular throughout the country, especially in Virginia.

By 1892, it was grown in most places except in the North

Mississippi valley, the Rocky Mountains and the Plains from Nebraska to Texas. Today a dwarf variety of the Wagener apple is still available through Miller’s Nursery in Canandaigua.

