

More History from Linda (Drechsler) Anderson

1935

Apples were planted at Hope Corner

1950s

Ralph Wentworth owned the orchard- he was Knox-Lincoln County Agent for blueberry production

1962

Ralph Wentworth sold to Ray Ludwig- Ray and Evelyn owned the outlet store (now Fresh Off the Farm) on Rte. 1. They marketed most of their apples there. Ludwig lived where Amy Wilton lives now. His daughters were Faith, who married Obed Hart and Anne, who was married to Artie Sprowl, then to Ron Ledbetter. Faith and Obed lived at 434 Camden Rd while Faith's parents lived where Amy lives.

1972

Ray Ludwig sold to James and Phyllis Wentworth. James Wentworth was son of Ralph Wentworth. There was a bit of debt and Farmers' Home Admin was motivated to see the place sold. There were several parts of the orchard:

- The **Mountain View Farm Stand** on Route 1 (where Fresh Off the Farm is now) – apples were pressed there.
- The **Quinn Orchard** and **Mark Orchard** bordering Church and Route 105 – 35 acres.
- The **Home Orchard** (where Hope Orchards is now) – 35 acres (half orchard, half cut woods)
- The **Moody Mountain Orchard** on Moody Mountain Road
- 50 acres of pine (where Ron Smith resides now)
- A packing house and storage across the road from the farmhouse at 434 Camden Road

1982

Karl and Linda Drechsler came at 26 years old. Karl was a 4th generation orchardist, from Stow, Mass. They looked first at the western part of the state but there was apple scab that particular year. When they came to Hope, the crop looked good. There were over 40 varieties, many named as

experimental varieties (from Cornell?). They were told that “we just called anything we didn’t know a Wentworth.”

Apples were 16 cents/pound. Karl and Linda put it up to 20 cents/pound. Nothing had been replanted since the early 1960s. They bought via the Farmer’s Home loan, assuming the previous mortgage with a low interest rate. They strip cut the woods of the Home Orchard in order to fund replanting of 3,500 trees for the Quinn Orchard.

Until 1986, they hired local women to help with harvest, sorting, retail. They worked during school hours at a piece rate, equivalent to about \$7/hour. They asked for more pay and that is when Karl and Linda moved to hire the migrant workers.

They replanted in 1987, and built the current red barn that year as well. In 1989 they hired 10 Mexican workers who lived in the back of that building. In 1986 or 1987 they sold the Moody Mountain Orchard to abutting landowners: Dwayne Doolittle and McClaughlin. The land was put into conservation easement. Red Delicious were unusually colored from that orchard, but most tasty. People would buy them if they came from the Moody Mountain Orchard.

Quinn Orchard had excellent Golden Delicious which sold for \$40/bushel wholesale back then. They changed the name of the combined orchards to Hope Orchards.

2001

Attempted to sell Quinn orchard, Home Orchard, house, and red building combined.

Linda and Karl did a great deal of planting. In the process, Spartans were mistakenly planted with the *Golden Delicious* in the Quinn Orchard. Adams County Nursery, out of PA, had sent the wrong stock. The Spartans were so popular that Linda and Karl planted three full rows in the home orchard, and these are a popular variety at Hope Orchards today.

Clapp’s Favorites were planted but *Flemish Beauty* resulted.

Russetts, Tolman Sweets, Baldwins were all budwood sent to Adam's nursery to be grafted.

When they moved here, the grange, store, and school shared a well. The septic went bad in 1986, the tank was under the school parking lot. That is when the lot across the town hall, owned by the Drechslers, was taken to build a common septic, shared by the town and the Drechslers.

The Drechslers employed moms during school hours to process apples at the red building. There was a chipmunk story: Two chipmunks were adopted by the women employees and some of their kids. Of course, they were affectionately named Mac and Tosh.

More History from the Hope Historical Society

At some fairly recent but unknown date, some family farms began to specialize in apples. Bill Hardy (1918-) thinks that the first such orchard may have been at the house where he and Anna (1918-) now live, the Thomas Bartlett house on Church Street near Beverage Road. The site is good for apple growing. The land is well-drained. Cold air can run off down gentle slopes in all directions. Anna Hardy thinks it might have been the Micah Hobbs (1777-1842) place, later the Payson apple farm, with its slopes running down from Hatchet Mountain to Hobbs Pond. There is evidence of old apple trees on both these sites, as on practically all old house sites in Hope.

Two of the common early varieties were Baldwin and Ben Davis. We know that Miller Hobbs (1872-1954) and some other Hope farmers, perhaps including Frank Messer Payson (1887-1966), grew Ben Davis apples for export to England. The Crabtrees, at the south end of town on Crabtree Road, grew apples and shipped them to South America; material on this farm and an old labeling stencil are in the Hope Historical Home. William Pearse's grandfather had a 300-400 tree orchard on the Barnestown Road. Pickers were hired locally. Merton Johnson and Ralph Hunt were among

those who picked for the Barrett farm. The apples were hauled to Camden and put on the Boston boat.

Like Baldwins, Ben Davises were hard and shipped well; otherwise, they were not particularly desirable because they were dry and didn't taste good. We simply don't know much about the size of these pre-1934 orchards, their organization and techniques, and the dimensions of their commercial activity.

1933-1934 | THE BIG FREEZE

A big event for Hope apple farming was the big freeze of 1933-34. It wiped out most of Hope's apple trees. Our knowledge of just what was wiped out is sketchy, but while Baldwins and Ben Davises were destroyed, McIntosh's survived. It was the Great Depression and the New Deal US Department of Agriculture swung into action. USDA sent a crawler tractor to Hope — the first one ever seen here — to clear the dead apple trees. Today's older apple trees in Hope were part of this replanting in 1935 and thereafter.

1935-1941 | APPLE PLANTING YEARS

Ralph ("Pop") Wentworth (1895-1970), from Denmark, Maine, was the USDA county extension agent. He graduated from Orono in 1917 and initially worked out of Rockland, traveling to farm meetings by train. Right after the 1933-34 big freeze, the Wentworths moved to Hope Corner. In 1935, Pop started setting out the orchard that is now Karl Drechsler (1957- -) and Linda Anderson's (1956- -) Hope Orchards. The young Bill Hardy worked for him in this task. The land around Hope Corner is a low pocket without good air or soil drainage — not what an expert would normally pick for an apple orchard. Nevertheless, there were some apple trees already there that were worked into the new rows, including one ancient Tolman Sweet that Karl Drechsler remembers cutting down in 1995 which was the last of these oldest trees. Pop, being an extension expert, tried lots of varieties in the 12 acres of apples on the home piece. When the Drechslers took it over, the Wentworth home orchard contained a very large number of varieties. And, surprisingly, in 65 years, apples have done extremely well on the site; late frost has rarely been a problem.

Starting in about 1940, Pop Wentworth and Harold Allen (1894-1954) planted another orchard on Church Street on the Ten Acre Field behind the Quinn place, one of Hope's older frame houses. Bill Hardy, then a college student at Orono, worked with Wentworth and planted eight trees at the Thomas Bartlett place on Church Street at this time.

The cluster of small apple orchards at the Corner, along the beginning of Hatchet Mountain Road, also owe their existence partly to Pop Wentworth's energy. The extension agent worked with Howard Coose (1872-1949) to plant a couple of acres behind what is now Dr. Laurita's (1958- -) house. Uncle Howard planted mostly McIntosh and some Northern Spies. Audrey Grassow Gross used to help Uncle Howard with picking and other chores. Across the street, Ralph Brown (1881-ca. 1965), originally a summer person from Massachusetts, employed Lee Weaver to set out a couple of acres of apples, mostly Northern Spies, under Wentworth's supervision.

Probably Pop Wentworth also worked with Everett Hobbs (1878-ca. 1962), who planted apples and some peaches on the slope between the Barnestown Road and Hobbs Pond, the site where the last Indian attack is supposed to have taken place on a settler's cabin. Wentworth worked with Bert Brown to plant an acre or two at the S. Gilmore place where Barnestown Road meets Hatchet Mountain Road. This house and orchard were bought by Guilford (1919-1998) and Ruth Payson (1922- -) at the end of World War II and is now the home to Dave Rich's (1964- -) Apple Squeeze cider press.

Further up Hatchet Mountain Road, on the side of Hatchet Mountain, Frank Messer Payson was replanting what may have been Hope's oldest apple orchard. The site has excellent air drainage. Like all of these post-freeze plantings, Payson's orchard was dominated by McIntosh and Cortlands, originally from upstate New York, and Northern Spies, a late apple. The Payson apple farm, typical of its day, had no cold or controlled-atmosphere storage, so apples had to be sold within a few months after harvest. It had no cider press. Like his neighbors, Frank Messer hauled his cider apples to Thomas's cider press on Route 3 in North Searsmont. Until after World War II, the Paysons

sorted apples by hand and sold a lot wholesale Agents for Shawcross, Niagara, and possibly other agents came to Hope to do the buying.

Beyond Paysons on Hatchet Mountain Road, Miller Hobbs replanted his freeze-destroyed Ben Davis and others. His orchards stretched the Ike lot, just beyond Paysons, down along Hatchet Mountain Road in small clusters almost to the Mansfield Pond flat. The Ike lot is now Bill Hardy's blueberry field, but that it was once an apple orchard can be readily seen from aerial photographs and from ground inspection.

APPLES AFTER THE WAR

This great flourish of Hope apple planting was halted by World War II when many young men were away and labor was scarce. When Guilford Payson returned from World War II (he had been a belly gunner in at B-17 — a position that takes extreme courage) he and wife Ruth took over the S. Gilmore place at the foot of Hatchet Mountain where the Bert Browns had lived during the war. It had a smaller orchard. Guilford and Ruth managed that, plus helping Gil's parents on the old farm. They converted the old barn, which had been used as a hen house, to apples.

Guilford and Ruth had a lot of energy and were soon managing not only Gil's father's orchard up Hatchet Mountain and the Gilmore place where they lived, but also the Coose Orchard, the Ralph Brown Orchard, and the orchard Bill Hardy was starting to plant up on Church Street.

The Bartlett apple-sorting machine from Beamsville, Ontario, which sorts by size, was added in 1957. The Paysons had a farm stand where they sold graded and ungraded apples, and some pears and peaches. The orchard is now principally McIntosh and Cortlands, so these were probably the original varieties. In the Payson orchard, other surviving varieties are Northern Spy, King, Fletcher Sweet, Tolman Sweet, Gravenstein, and Yellow Delicious.

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2000 | HOPE'S COMMERCIAL ORCHARDS

There are three remaining commercial orchards in Hope, all recently planted, though based on earlier orchards.

The Wentworth Orchard at the Corner was sold to and operated by Raymond Ludwig (1907-) in 1962, then bought back and operated by "Pop's" son, Jimmy Wentworth (1923-), in 1972. The Ludwigs started retailing as many apples as they could from a farm stand built by Raymond on Route One that has become Fresh-off-the-Farm. Jimmy Wentworth continued this policy when he bought the farm back; he also bought in local produce and sold it through the stand, as well as blueberries from his small freshpack operation in the barn at the Corner. The Jimmy Wentworths were enthusiastic Jehovah's Witnesses and, increasingly, they found that the demands of commercial apple growing, which is a highly technical, year-round operation like dairying, and apple selling, impinged on time for proselytization. So, in 1982, the Wentworth orchard was again sold, this time to out-of-staters. The farm stand was sold separately.

The young buyers, Karl and Linda Drechsler were eminently qualified. Karl, from Stow MA, had grown up on and worked on apple farms there, and on the Hampton Falls NH farm on which the story Ciderhouse Rules was based. Linda was from Gloucester on Cape Ann. Both were University of Massachusetts trained. The Drechslers came with little cash but extensive knowledge and willingness to work hard. With loans from USDA, they replaced almost all of the aging trees in the Wentworth and Quinn orchards with semi-dwarf trees that can be picked from the ground, not from ladders. They expanded the orchard area by having additional woods cleared and chipped until the

home orchard plus the Quinn orchard covered 50 of the 90 acres of the property. In 1990, the Drechslers sold the Moody Orchard in Lincolnville which had always been included in and operated with the Hope property. They negotiated an agreement with the buyers that removed it as a source of competition. They constructed a new, metal apple barn across the street from the old barn. The new barn has retail areas, adequate cold storage, and a cider press. Without a retailing outlet on Route One, they concentrated on getting customers to the Apple Barn in Hope. They added a kitchen and dormitory for ten migrant workers to the back of the new Apple Barn. School groups trooped to the refurbished Wentworth Orchard, now called Hope Orchards, to see how farming worked.

In the 1950s, William and Anna Hardy, at their home in Church Street embracing the old Thomas Bartlett and Boardman homesteads, began to plant an orchard on what may have been the site of Hope's first orchard. While it has continued to grow over the years, this orchard was not intended as the full family livelihood. However, the Hardy orchard is large enough to be definitely commercial. The Hardys advertise and have a lively retail business.

In 1999, next to the Hope Grove cemetery, Everett Smith (1962- -), the great grandson of Everett Hobbs, began planting a peach and plum orchard where the Hobbs orchard had once been. Everett and his mother, Lorraine Merrifield Smith (1944- -), started a large greenhouse operation on the old Everett Hobbs farm in 1998 to complement Wayne Smith's (1942- -) Yamaha snowmobile, jet-ski and ATV dealership. The new orchard has the first drip irrigation in Hope, probably the first irrigation of any kind. It should start coming into production in 2001 or 2002.