

## It's Not Summer Without Summer Camp!

By Suzan Flamm

Summer officially arrived in Ancram on Tuesday July 5<sup>th</sup> with the opening of the town's six-week day camp program. If you hear squeals of fun between 9am and 3pm on weekdays, it's likely coming from the sports fields and swimming pool at Blass Memorial Field where 60 kids, ranging in age from four to twelve, are kicking soccer balls, swimming in the pool or making art. What they're not doing is texting or playing video games as Ancram's summer camp is a device-free zone.

The camp is the brainchild of its director, Ruth Van Wagner, an Ancram resident with four children of her own and a background in education. She was the director in the camp's initial years, beginning in 2011, and stepped in again this season to bring it back to the community after a two-year break because of Covid. "I do this because I love kids," Van Wagner says, "and I want them to have fun. And they do!"

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Campers Miley Ventura, Chase Busch, Sebastian Rodrigues, and Saoirse Maloney cool off in the Ancram town pool.

The favorite camp activity is anything in the pool, but the campers also love soccer and baseball, and on rainy days are engaged with board games and movies at town hall. Five field trips are scheduled, including one to the Funplex Fun Park in East Greenbush and another to a local farm – this is Ancram after all

– hayride included. Christine Mathers, a middle-school math teacher for Webutuck Central School District, volunteers her time to instruct campers in arts and crafts projects. And special programming in coordination with the RoeJan library and the Ancram Opera House are also anticipated. Ruth runs

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# SUMMER CAMP

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the camp with her Deputy Director, Betsy Manzi, six counselors and three counselors-in-training.

## A Pool for the Whole Town

“Everyone had to hustle to get the pool ready for camp,” says Jen Boice, the pool director, since it had not been used for two years because of the pandemic. The town highway department was particularly helpful in meeting the summer deadline. The biggest project was putting in a handicap lift and ramp. Seeing the device in use by an individual who could otherwise not access the pool, notes Boice, was especially rewarding. Boice also had to hire lifeguards, five in total, some of whom learned the free-style and backstroke at that very pool in Ancram’s swim program. That program had its inception in the early 1960s when the pool was built. This summer, lessons are offered to Ancram residents – including campers – on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings from 9am to 1pm until August 12<sup>th</sup>. The pool will remain open to the town until August 31<sup>st</sup>.

All Ancram residents are welcome to use the pool on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays from 1 to 6pm, but should be aware that on those days, from 1 to 3pm, they will be sharing the water with campers. Residents are also welcome to use the pool on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays from 10am to 6pm.

The day camp is overseen by the Camp and Swimming Pool Board, comprised of co-chairs Jane Plasman and Madeleine Israel, pool director Boice, Monica Cleveland, Paul Riccardi and Lynne Perrella. Thanks to Ancramdale Neighbors Helping Neighbors Association and the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York, campers receive a free nutritional bag lunch each camp day.



*Camper Iliaz Busch shows off the Ancram summer camp 2022 T-shirt.*



*Counselors Meghan Leslie and Willa Shimkin Spencer enjoy playground time with campers Laura Sandoval, Erika Sandoval, and Harper Harrison.*



# Ancram Participates in Columbia County's First Ever Climate Carnival

By Suzan Flamm

Columbia County's first climate carnival took place on July 16<sup>th</sup> at the fairgrounds in Chatham where Ancram was well-represented under Ancram's *Bright Idea* pop-up tent. Volunteers from the town's Climate Smart Communities Task Force spent the day explaining the energy-saving benefits of LED lighting, the environmental magic of composting, and the intricacies of New York State's Climate Smart Communities Program to a steady flow of carnival attendees. Climate Smart committees from other towns also had booths, including Claverack, Philmont, New Lebanon and Ghent.

Other highlights at the carnival included a *Repair Café*, where volunteers fixed over 100 items, returning them to grateful owners. Without the repairs, the items would likely have been tossed, ending up in landfills. Besides dozens of lamps,

lawn mowers and weed whackers, a fifty-year-old milkshake maker – picture the kind used at luncheonettes in the olden days – was also successfully repaired. The *Free Store* was another popular attraction. About 10,000 gently used items were collected by Carnival volunteers, and at least two-thirds were gone by the end of the day, claimed by treasure hunters seeking clothes, shoes and children's goods just waiting to be used again. Almost 45 vendors participated, representing a range of climate-friendly industries from energy-efficient HVAC contractors to community solar providers. For the kids, the biggest draw was the Birds of Prey exhibit, including live hawks, owls and falcons, presented by the Southern Vermont Natural History Museum.

At the *Ancram's Bright Idea* booth, lighting designer Derek Porter displayed

a deconstructed LED light bulb, the only way to see the circuit board inside and better understand its energy-saving properties. Visual aids were also used to illustrate composting, including a pile of brown leaves and a container of food scraps. Mixing them together and letting nature and time break it all down produces compost, a bucket of which was – of course – also available to see and touch and smell. All the Ancram volunteers at the booth – Porter, Cathy Redlich, Colleen Lutz and Suzan Flamm – chatted with visitors, climate education being the primary goal of the day.

The Carnival was a Columbia County event, organized by its Climate Smart Communities Task Force. A committee of volunteers from several towns across the county coordinated the details.



*Derek Porter, a member of Ancram's Climate Smart Communities Task Force, explains the mysteries of composting to an interested visitor at the Columbia County Climate Carnival.*

# A Helping Hand From One Farming Community to Another

By Marie-Claude Stockl

**H**earing what Ancramdale resident John Roccanova is doing in his retirement is not only wonderful, it's intriguing. Within minutes of meeting for coffee on a picture-perfect June morning, Roccanova flipped open his laptop, logged on, and was ready for an engaging conversation. The hour flew by as he shared his journey and his mission.

After teaching wood shop in the Bronx for 5 years, and in the Webutuck School District for 31 years, Roccanova retired in 2017. As he planned his retirement, he realized that his wife Jean "didn't need another jewelry box, pair of earrings, or cutting board," and his children had outgrown toys and didn't need any more furniture. Both John and Jean were touched by stories they had read about over-crowded schools in Africa. They decided to hold a crafts sale to sponsor one teacher in Kenya—and the rest is history.

Under the 501(c) (3) non-profit they created in 2010, Grow Against Poverty (GAP), they have supported a wide variety of community development projects in Kenya. None is closer to their hearts than Pedal Power for Kenyan Education, which loans bicycles to high school students for school transportation in the Nambale community in Busia County. In the last three years, the Roccanovas have raised enough money through the sale of John's woodcrafts to buy 175 heavy-duty Buffalo Bicycles, helmets, safety vests, and tool kits.

"A bicycle is something we take for granted, but it's changing these students' lives," Roccanova explains. Many students walk over 5 miles each way to and from high school, often needing to wake up at 4 a.m. to make the 6:30 a.m. start of morning classes. The trek can be unsafe, especially for female students. Providing bicycles to the students has measurably improved attendance, promptness and scores on national exams.

"By now it's probably 200,000 miles that the kids have put on these bicycles," says



*Roccanova gluing wood in preparation for making a salad bowl in his Ancramdale workshop.*

Roccanova. "Our goal is 250 [bicycles] by year's end at five high schools, and our long-term goal is to accept requests from two additional schools per year for bicycles and accessories for a total of 100 per year." (More information on the scope and impact of bicycle programs worldwide can be found at [worldbicyclerelief.org](http://worldbicyclerelief.org).)

The cost of a Buffalo Bicycle kit has gone from \$165 to over \$200. Since many families in the Nambale region are subsistence farmers who live on

less than \$1 a day, most cannot afford to buy bicycles for their children to use for school transportation. This is where the Ancram community can lend a helping hand by purchasing Roccanova's wood crafts, which range from \$10 to \$150.

When asked how he can donate 100% of sales to the Pedal Power for Kenyan Education program, Roccanova credits the generosity of local businesses who give woods such as oak, cherry, walnut, mahogany, teak and Brazilian ebony. A local hardware store has supplied glue



and finishes. Online businesses have donated finishes, veneer and inlays. "I supply whatever else is needed as well as pleasurable time in the shop with a hobby that has the extra benefit of helping others," says Roccanova.

### Other Programs GAP Supports

**Fields for Greens:** Half-acre organic gardens are planted by students twice a year at 8 schools, and instructors are hired to teach agriculture. Produce enhances the schools' meal programs. This is important in a rural area where malnutrition affects 30% of the population. For these students who often leave their home on an empty stomach, the school lunch of ugali (corn flour porridge) is often the main meal of the day. Fields for Greens adds fresh, healthy produce to their diet. GAP's goal is to add two additional schools per year. \$2,000 covers the cost of this program for one school.

**Farmer Relief:** This year, 75 families received assistance because of drought in the form of seeds, fertilizer, tools, grain storage bags and food (rice, mung beans). Similar relief was provided last year to 103 families (over 700 people) during the COVID pandemic. It included masks and sanitizer.

The Roccanovas have been asked to help fund future programs, including the Information and Communications Technology (ICT) training center at the Grow Against Poverty Community Center. It will offer classes and training for teens and adults for ICT jobs. It will also make computers available for schoolwork, adult education, research such as farming practices, and much-needed charging sessions for cell phones.

### Where to Find Roccanova's Woodcrafts in Ancram

John and Jean generously open their home on Over Mountain Road in Ancramdale to shoppers by appointment. "Last year," John says, "a Connecticut resident bought six salad bowls as wedding gifts." The building, which was a church from 1845 through the 1930s (one of Ancramdale's historic cemeteries



*Students at St. Mary's School with Buffalo Bicycles, designed and built to handle the rough roads while making commuting to school safer and less time-consuming.*



*One of Roccanova's tea boxes made of oak with a mahogany lid, Brazilian ebony handle and splines.*

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## HELPING HANDS

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is located on the property) and then used as a cow barn, was on the brink of collapsing when the Roccanovas purchased it and painstakingly renovated it. To browse and shop by appointment, email John at [growagainstopoverty@gmail.com](mailto:growagainstopoverty@gmail.com).

Locally, John's woodcrafts also may be purchased at the Chaseholm Farm Store, 115 Chase Road, Pine Plains, NY; the annual holiday sale in Millerton at the Irondale Schoolhouse (Friday after Thanksgiving, and weekends until Christmas); and Random Harvest in Craryville.

### Other Ways to Help

In order to fund additional schools for Pedal Power for Kenyan Education and Fields for Greens, continue Farmer Relief, and implement the new ICT programs, GAP has joined the nonprofit crowd funding site GlobalGiving. Donations may also be made through the Grow Against Poverty website. To learn more about Grow Against Poverty's programs and to donate online, please go to:

[www.globalgiving.org/projects/pedal-power-for-kenyan-education/](http://www.globalgiving.org/projects/pedal-power-for-kenyan-education/)

[www.globalgiving.org/projects/fields-for-greens/](http://www.globalgiving.org/projects/fields-for-greens/)

[www.growagainstopoverty.wixsite.com/kenya](http://www.growagainstopoverty.wixsite.com/kenya)



## Ancram Awarded Bronze Certification as a Climate Smart Community

By Suzan Flamm

New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation announced on July 8<sup>th</sup> that Ancram has been certified as a bronze-level Climate Smart Community. The Climate Smart Communities program supports local efforts to meet the economic and environmental challenges posed by climate change. The six local governments selected in this round of certifications all successfully met the criteria to be recognized as leaders in this program.

Bronze-level certification is achieved by completing actions that mitigate or adapt to climate change or lead to a more resilient community in the face of a warming planet. In a six-year process beginning in 2016, when Ancram's town board resolved to become a Climate Smart Community and created a volunteer task force to get the job done, a small group of local residents have been addressing climate change and earning points towards certification. You can read more about the task force on its webpage at [www.ancramny.org/climate-smart-community-task-force/](http://www.ancramny.org/climate-smart-community-task-force/).

"Ancram is now one of only 94 certified Climate Smart Communities in New York State out of a total of 1,590 eligible municipalities," said Town Supervisor Art Bassin. "This is something we should all be very proud of. Congratulations and thanks go to Suzan Flamm, Colleen Lutz, Jamie Purinton and the members of the Climate Smart Communities Task Force for leading the way to Ancram's bronze certification as a Climate Smart Community AND to the members of the Conservation Advisory Council for their leadership and hard work over the years to protect Ancram's environment."

Town Councilwoman Bonnie Hundt, the task force's liaison to the town board, added that "we are extremely proud of our Climate Smart Task

Force and the tremendous, dedicated work they have done. The town and community are excited to be at the forefront, moving ahead with tackling the climate change crisis."

### The Path to Bronze

Among the points-earning steps completed by Ancram were the installation of an electric vehicle charging station at town hall, the streamlining of the permitting process for rooftop solar, and running a community solar campaign with Solstice. That campaign resulted in close to 80 households signing up to support renewable energy. Additionally, in its 2019 *Ancram's Bright Idea* initiative, the task force gave away hundreds of energy efficient LED light bulbs – and related educational materials – to residents. It also brought about the conversion of the town's streetlights to LEDs, as well as the light fixtures in town hall and the town garage.

To achieve bronze certification a local government must earn at least 120 points. The other towns meeting that bar in this cycle of DEC certifications were North East, Wawarsing and Yorktown. The town of New Castle was awarded silver, having achieved at least 300 points. Each of the newly awarded communities also participates in the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority's (NYSERDA) Clean Energy Communities program, which helps local governments take clean energy actions and save on energy costs.

Ancram has more climate smart actions, either completed or in the pipeline, to boost its point total. The furnace at town hall was replaced with air source heat pumps, powered by electricity instead of propane. These pumps are highly efficient devices, and their environmental benefits will increase as the New York State electrical grid





*A few members of Ancram's Climate Smart Task Force are all smiles as they display the plaque honoring Ancram's achievement of bronze-level status. Pictured here are Derek Porter, chair Suzan Flamm, Colleen Lutz, and Cathy Redlich.*

moves further towards sustainable energy sources. This project, which includes an electrical upgrade to town hall and is partially financed by a NYSERDA grant, should be concluded by the fall of this year.

The task force is also researching the possibility of solar panels on the town's salt shed. Along with the panels already in place at town hall, the production of solar energy at the salt shed would cover almost all the town's electrical needs. Additionally, the town is in the process of completing a greenhouse gas inventory to help it better understand and then reduce its fossil-

fuel use. And, the culverts that the town's Highway Department constructed on Pats Road and Hall Hill Road are eligible for points. That's because correctly sizing culverts can reduce flooding impacts and restore natural stream conditions.

Established in 2009, the interagency Climate Smart Communities program provides guidance and technical support to governments to take locally driven climate action. The first step to becoming a Climate Smart Community is to pledge to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change, as Ancram pledged in 2016. To date, 356

local governments representing more than 9.4 million New Yorkers have adopted the Climate Smart Communities pledge.

The certification program was launched in 2014 to document and celebrate the accomplishments of communities taking climate action. There are now 94 total certified Climate Smart Communities in New York State, nine silver and 85 bronze. Most certified communities complete greenhouse gas inventories that calculate emissions at the local level and help local leaders identify how best to help New York State meet its ambitious greenhouse gas reductions mandates.



# Climate Smart Communities

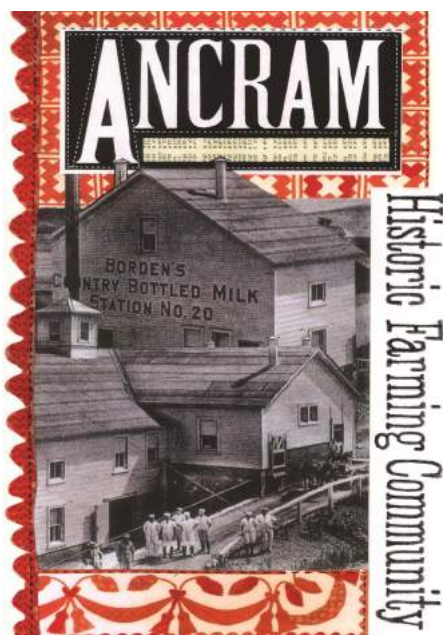
## Certified Bronze



# Ancram Historic Banner Project

By Lynne Perrella

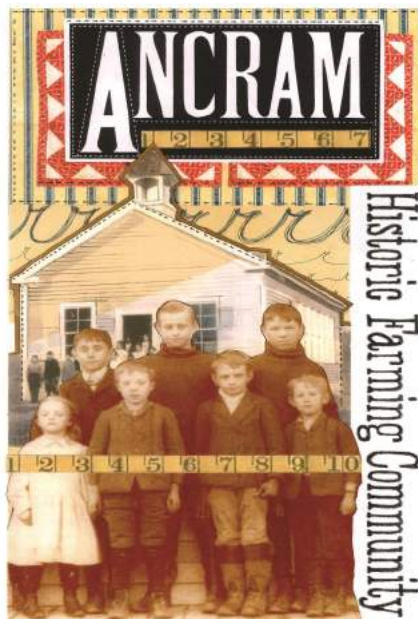
Nothing matches the narrative power of a vintage photo if we take time to notice the expressions on each face, the telling details of wardrobe, bits of architecture, arcane automobiles, or farm equipment and distant fields. Sometimes a bit of typography or signage is visible in the background, providing a hint or clue. Some photos depict significant occasions, such as a Memorial Dedication at the end of World War One. And some photos capture a momentary pause, as a farmer or storekeeper looks up from his chores and glances towards the camera. Thanks to our town historians, Robin Massa and Clara Van Tassel, Ancram has a rich archive of vintage photographs and documents; and these artifacts provide



vibrant glimpses into the past of our historic farming community.

The goal of the Historic Banner Project is to make Ancram's shared legacy visible and tangible. I began the project by gathering images from our historians, and every meeting with them deepened my appreciation for the history of our rural community.

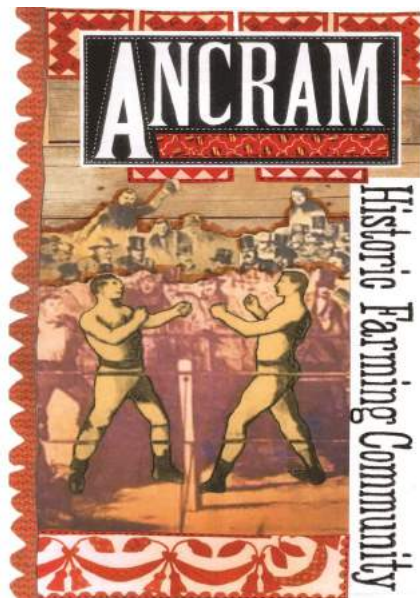
The array of banners depicts men, women, children, activities, churches, farms, veterans, the fire company, notable occasions, schoolhouses, and more. Included in the design of each banner are visual elements from our



distinctive red/white album quilt from 1856.

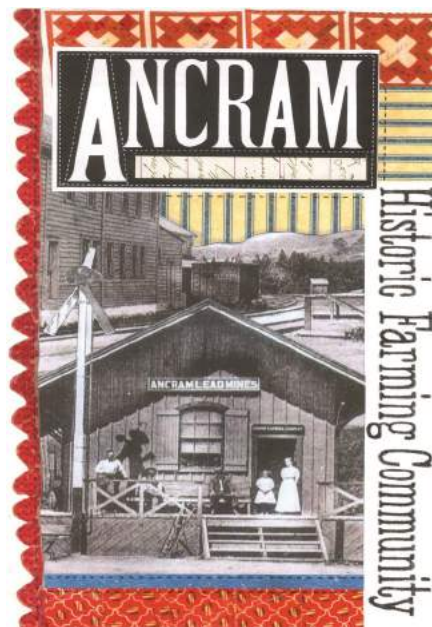
This vivid historic textile (preserved and displayed at Ancram Town Hall) added color and significance to each of the banner designs, making the outcome uniquely "Ancram".

The Town Board generously approved funding for the project, and with the help of two local businesses (Moore & More Printing in Millerton, and Pro Printers in Hudson) the completed banners were installed on utility poles throughout Ancram, Ancramdale, and Boston Corners (installation by Kyle Loughheed, and Ginocchio Electric). The banners are adjacent to American flags, sponsored by



the Ladies Auxiliary of the Fire Company. (It is anticipated that, in the near future, the banners will be repositioned lower on the poles to make them easier to see.)

A new exhibit at Ancram Town Hall Historic Vestibule gives a closer look at all of the banners, and provides captions and further details about each photograph. Additional photos from the Ancram archives are featured, including glimpses of past local store keepers and merchants; and their places of business. A tableau in the glass display case provides a look back at long-ago dry goods stores; with artifacts generously donated by historian Robin Massa. A daily store ledger from 1890 lists the purchases of each customer who visited the



Barton & Hoysradt General Store in Ancramdale; including "handkerchief - 10 cents" and "2 yards of muslin - 22 cents".

Photographer B Docktor has produced a brief video that illuminates the banner images, and affirms the connection between Ancram, past and present. The video will soon be available on the Ancram town website. As summer in Ancram unfolds, enjoy the historic content on display both at Town Hall and on our local roadways.

*Editor's Note: Lynne Perrella, a mixed media artist and resident of Ancram, is the moving force and artist behind the banner project.*



# Ancram Orchards Produce Apples with Flavor, Crunch and History

By Susan Arterian

If the supermarket produce aisles leave you depressed, cheer up! You are fortunate to live in Ancram where two apple orchards sell distinctive, great-tasting apples directly to customers. Two Arrows Farm and the Hudson Valley Apple Project cultivate a wide variety of delicious apples that recall a time when apples had not only crunch but actual flavor.

## Two Arrows Farm

Two Arrows' farm cart is a familiar sight to those biking or driving at a leisurely pace along Route 3 between early September and late October. You will surely be enticed by a small farm cart on the left side of the road sporting rows of baskets filled with just-picked apples. They represent the bounty of Two Arrows Farm, an Ancram orchard cultivating a range of historic of apples— from Honey Crisp to MacIntosh, and from Haral Red to MacCoun.

The owner of Two Arrows, Joanna Bree, purchased what is now the orchard property with her late husband, Pete, in October 2000. Two Arrows covers about 27 acres that the Brees purchased as a subdivision of the Middleburg Farm, which had its beginnings in the 1700s. "Our plot had been used as a hayfield," recalls Bree. "There was nothing there when we purchased it but a dirt road and an open field."

"Pete and I shared a dream to create a paradise in the countryside," she says. "We commuted back and forth from Boston throughout the construction and development of Two Arrows Farm and we decided to make the farm our primary residence in 2018."

Prior to purchasing Two Arrows, the Brees had little experience raising fruit trees and selected varieties at the recommendation of a nursery. "Once the orchard was planted I did extensive research and aspired to raise the best produce possible," explains Bree. "All of the varieties grown at Two Arrows Farm are cultivars from the past 100 years. Honey gold is an incredibly crispy and juicy, late-blooming apple. It makes for a



*Two Arrows Farm offers a glorious array of fresh-picked apples when its farm cart opens on Route 3 in Ancramdale in early September. Remember to bring your own bag and change for the honor box.*

wonderful eating apple. Northwest Greening is a very large apple that is great for baking as it holds its shape and flavor very well."

Like many of our local farm stands, customers pay cash into an honor box at Two Arrows and weigh their own apples on a scale provided. For the most part, Bree reports, people have been honest and trustworthy. However, she says, "there have been a few 'bad apples' who have robbed the apple cart in the past. This year I am upgrading my moneybox so that it is more secure. I simply do not have the availability to manage the apple cart full time and the profit margins do not justify hiring a seasonal employee. With that being said, the honor system has been the ideal solution for me."

In the past, Two Arrows had supplied apples to local restaurants. Bree now sells only from the farm cart. "I am delighted to be able to provide fresh, locally grown apples to my community," she says, and she enjoys the personalized notes of gratitude sometimes tucked into the moneybox.

Bree shares some thoughts about the recent resurgence of interest in apple varieties in America. "I believe advancements in apple growing techniques have produced apples that are sweeter, crisper and more attractive than apples from the past. The new varieties cultivated by small orchardists are more in demand simply because they are a better product than the tasteless, textureless apples sold in grocery store chains today."

What is Bree's favorite eating apple? The Cosmic Crisp, developed two years ago and sister to the Honey Crisp. "Cosmic Crisp is a dark red apple with white specks," Bree explains. "The white specks contrasting with the dark red skin are what inspired the name. It is sweet, dense, and not as juicy as a Honey Crisp."

In addition to apples, Bree also grows pears, peaches, concord grapes, blueberries, and raspberries at Two Arrows. She sells Gourmet and Bartlett pears on the apple cart through September, while the

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# APPLE PROJECT

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other fruit is reserved for personal consumption.

## The Hudson Valley Apple Project

The Golden Age of American Pomology came to a close in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the Hudson Valley Apple Project in Ancram provides ample evidence that a rebirth of interest in apple diversity is occurring in our region. “A small edible museum of apples,” as proprietor Gidon Coll describes it, the Apple Project is located on two acres of a 68-acre former dairy farm on Route 27A. There Gidon cultivates over 150 varieties of heirloom, cider, and modern-day apple varieties, as well as his own contagious enthusiasm for all things apple. It’s a passion he shares every year with visitors to the Copake Hillsdale Farmers Market and on tours of the Apple Project orchard.

Gidon spent the summers of his youth in Ancram working on what was then his family’s working dairy farm. He went on to earn a degree in Animal Science from Cornell University expecting to embark on a career in the dairy business. Instead, in 1996, after the family dairy ceased operations, Gidon founded the



*The Razor Russet, a good cider apple, is one of the heirloom varieties grown by the Apple Project.*



*The Hudson Valley Apple Project cultivates over 150 heirloom and modern-day apple varieties on its two-acre orchard in Ancram. Tours of the orchard will be available during New York Cider Week in late September.*

Original Sin Cider Company. “Through cider industry activities, I had the privilege of meeting orchardists around the country and to attend a variety of apple-centric events,” he recalls. “These activities were impactful to my appreciation of the diversity of apples and the great history of apples in our country.”

In 2011, Gidon toured for the third time the USDA apple genetic repository in Geneva, New York, and loaded up his car with apple samples. Inspired by these visits to Geneva, NY the following year, he set out to plant a small orchard of his own. “I planted 57 trees that first year,” he reports, “and quickly learned the hard way that growing apples is a science.” He persevered and each year added more varieties. “I tried to be selective in planting what was intriguing from various vantage points,” he explains, “either because it was historically significant or it would challenge what people think about how apples should look or taste.”

Gidon is always testing new varieties. “We run the gamut from those that are important to the history of our country—apples that Jefferson or Washington grew— to the first variety to survive the Minnesota winter, which changed the economic landscape of that region,” he says. “Apples have stories that tie back

to a time in our country when we were an agrarian nation and what was grown in a particular location was a matter of great civic pride.”

One intriguing variety grown at The Apple Project is the Pitmaston Pineapple apple, an old English variety that tastes like a pineapple and is more sugary and richer in flavor than store bought. “It’s not sold in stores because it is small and looks like a potato,” Gidon says. Another is the father of all red flesh apples — Niedzwetzkyana. “It dates back to 1897,” he explains, “when a South Dakota researcher went to Russia and brought it back to the States. Almost all red flesh apple varieties date back to the Neidzwetzkyana. In this sense, this apple is genetically very significant.”

Gidon reports that during The Golden age of Pomology, between 1805 and 1905, as many as 20,000 named varieties of apples were under cultivation, and each was associated with a distinct terroir (the complete natural environment in which a particular apple is grown). Climate, soil and topography all contributed to each variety’s unique flavor and texture. “One great example of a historically important New York apple is the Northern Spy,” he says. “East Bloomfield, New York, has a sign welcoming visitors to the town and



proudly stating that East Bloomfield is the home of the Northern Spy apple. There is even a plaque marking the original location of this much celebrated variety."

Gidon reports the first Golden Age of Pomology ended for a number of reasons, among them a decline both in interest in fruit growing and in the number of small nurseries that propagated unique regional apples. Professional growers came in to fill the void and they selected varieties based on their disease resistance with the Red and Golden Delicious varieties proving the easiest and most profitable to grow. At the same time cold storage and improved means of transportation such as rail, meant that apples could be shipped anywhere in the country and sold through regional grocery chains.

Sadly, today only 7500 varieties of apples are grown in the country, Gidon says. "Many acclaimed varieties have been lost to history. In fact today 12 apple varieties represent 88 percent of what is sold in the market." Still, he is optimistic about the future of the apple and cider industry in the US. He reports that in the last 15 years interest in

apple culture has rekindled. More and more orchardists and home enthusiasts are working to bring lost varieties back into cultivation. "Go to a farmers' market in an apple growing region and there will likely be much more diversity than there used to be," he notes.

What advice does Gidon offer to anyone thinking about growing apples in Ancram? "We are in the colder part of Columbia County and thus spring freeze can be an issue," he counsels. "If temperatures fall below 27 degrees it kills the bloom so it is more tricky to have a commercial orchard in our area. But when it comes to planting trees you can absolutely experience success. You should first test your soil and pick a location with good wind current, sun exposure and soil drainage. There are cold-hearty varieties that are easier to grow. You learn from planting and you must understand that soil and terroir are influential. The soil can change in our region from one hill to the next."

Was there ever an Ancram apple, we asked Gidon. He is not ruling it out. "There is not one I know about but that is not to say there isn't one."

This year, Gidon is also experimenting

with some exotic fruit trials on a small portion of the orchard, growing pluots, plueries and nectaplums. "Fruit diversity absolutely extends beyond apples," he says.

The Apple Project enjoys a loyal following at the Copake Hillsdale Farmers Market, and when there is a bountiful harvest, Project apples can also be found at the Copake General Store and Random Harvest in Craryville starting in late August. "We only have a few trees of each variety so each week we offer a new variety of selections," Gidon reports. "We grow at least 30 or 40 apples that are much more interesting than what is found in stores." About 20 percent of the varieties grown at The Apple Project are cider apples sold directly to the cider makers of the burgeoning Hudson Valley cider industry.

Although Gidon hopes to be selling at the Copake Hillsdale Farmers Market this fall he notes that his crop is lighter than last year's. The Hudson Valley Apple Project will also be offering tours this harvest season during New York Cider Week in late-September. Check the Apple Project website for the latest information. [www.hudsonvalleyappleproject.com](http://www.hudsonvalleyappleproject.com)



*Ancram's local fruit orchards are part of a resurgent interest in bringing back the many varieties of apples lost to history when professional growers prioritized profit over taste and diversity. Here, bushels of fresh-picked apples are readied for sale at Two Arrows Farm roadside stand.*



**Town of  
Ancram**  
1416 County Route 7  
Ancram NY 12502



*Historic Farming Community Moving Forward*

**Neighbors Helping  
Neighbors—  
If You Live Here,  
Please Pitch In**



*The Ancram town pool provides a refreshing oasis for town residents during steamy summer months. It is open Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays from 1 pm to 6 pm, and Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays from 10 am to 6 pm.*