

History of Crawford
County and Ohio,
William Henry Perrin,
J. H. Battle,
and Weston Arthur
Goodspeed, compilers,
Baskin & Battey, 1881.

In bringing this chapter to a close, the name of Johnny Appleseed, whose kindly charity and generous philanthropy wrought so much for every frontier community in Central Ohio, should not be forgotten. The scene of his early activity in this State was in Richland County, and Crawford, which profited so largely by its close neighborhood to this section, certainly owes him the tribute of a good word. He was frequently seen here by the earliest settlers, and nine out of ten of the early orchards here are said to have originated from his nurseries. "He was born in the State of Massachusetts. As early as 1780, he was seen in the autumn, for two or three successive years, along the banks of the Potomac River in Eastern Virginia. He attended the cider-mills when the farmers made their cider, and picked the seeds from the pomace after the juice had been expressed. This occupation procured for him the sobriquet of Johnny Appleseed. After he had procured a sufficient quantity of seeds for his purpose, amounting to about a half bushel at one visit, he started westward with his sack of seeds upon his back, on foot and alone, to cross the Alleghanies, and to penetrate the wilderness west

of the mountains, embracing what was then known as the 'New Purchase,' and which is now a part of the State of Ohio.

"Years afterward, when the hardy pioneers from Western Virginia and Pennsylvania, scaled the Alleghany Mountains and sought homes in the valleys of the Ohio, they found the little nurseries of seedling apple trees on Braddock's Field, at Wheeling Creek, the Flats of Grave Creek, Holiday's Cove, and at other places along the Ohio Valley.

"The eccentric, but ever amiable Chapman,* was also found here, ready to sell his seedlings to the settlers at a 'fippennybit' apiece. His habits of life were then as they remained until his decease. He would spend a week or ten days among the white settlers, or borderers, then penetrate to his nurseries on the banks of the Tuscarawas, or, as that river was then called in the language of the aborigines, Ne-tusta-raws. At length the fertile soil of Richland County invited this enterprise and industry farther west. Here were traced the foot-prints of Johnny Appleseed. On the banks of the Mohican Creek, at Mansfield, near the present site of the depot of the Pittsburgh & Chicago Railroad, was found one of his seedling nurseries. For years he remained in the vicinity of Mansfield, as his home or headquarters, whence he would make trips of two or three months length, farther west into the wilderness, to attend to his nurseries.

"Near his plantations, which were remote from any habitation, he provided comfortable shelters from the inclemency of the weather. Hollow trees and hollow logs, provided with a deep nest of dry leaves served this purpose in some cases. At his nursery in Sandusky Township, near the present location of Leesville in Crawford County, he erected a shelter by rearing large sections of the bark of an elm tree against a log. Under this he had a home. From this nursery was obtained many of the

*His real name was John Chapman.

orchards of Springfield Township, Richland County. The father of the writer, Mordecai Bartley, Joseph Welch, Richard Congdon, Matthew Curran and Jonathan Beach, went to this nursery in company, spent the night with Johnny and packed their trees home the next day on horses. They supped and broke their fast in the morning with the recluse, both meals consisting of mush made of Indian meal. The culinary utensils of the household consisted of a camp kettle, a plate, and a spoon.

"The residence of Chapman at Mansfield covered the period of the war of 1812 and several years following it. During the dangers and alarms of this period, Johnny Appleseed was regarded in the light of a protecting angel. On the night of the massacre of Seymour's family on the Black Fork, within a few miles of Mansfield, he left the house of Seymour on foot and entered Clinton, one mile north of Mount Vernon, by sunrise, pausing everywhere on his way to give the alarm. Although I was then but a mere child, I can remember, as if it were yesterday, the warning cry of Johnny Appleseed, as he stood before my father's log cabin door on that night. I remember the precise language, the clear, loud voice, the deliberate exclamation, and the fearful thrill it awakened in my bosom. 'Fly! fly for your lives! the Indians are murdering and scalping Seymours and Copuses.' My father sprang to the door, but the messenger was gone, and midnight, silence reigned without. Many other circumstances incident to the exposed frontier settlements in days of danger which tried men's souls, manifested the cool courage, the discreet foresight, and the mature and deliberate judgment, as well as the fidelity, patience and abnegation of this frontier philanthropist.

"John Chapman was a small man, wiry and thin in habit. His cheeks were hollow, and his face and neck dark and skinny from exposure to the weather. His mouth was small; his nose small, and turned up so much as apparently

to raise his upper lip. His eye was dark and deeply set in his head, but searching and penetrating. His hair, black and straight, was parted in the middle and permitted to fall about his neck. His hair withal, was thin, fine and glossy. He never wore a full beard, but shaved all clean, except a thin roach at the bottom of his throat. His beard was lightly set, and very black. This was his appearance in 1840, when the writer last saw him in Mansfield, and at that time he had changed but little, if any, in general appearance during the twenty-five years preceding. The dress of the man was unique. The writer assumes to say that he never wore a coffee sack as a part of his apparel. He may have worn the off-cast clothing of others; he probably did so. Although often in rags and tatters, and at best in the most plain and simple wardrobe, he was always clean, and, in his most desolate rags, comfortable, and never repulsive. He generally, when the weather would permit, wore no clothing on his feet, which were consequently dark, hard and horny. He was frequently seen with shirt, pantaloons, and a long-tailed coat of the tow-linen then much worn by the farmers. This coat was a device of his own ingenuity, and in itself was a curiosity. It consisted of one width of the coarse fabric, which descended from his neck to his heels. It was without collar. In this robe were cut two arm-holes, into which were placed two straight sleeves. The mother of the writer made it up for him under his immediate direction and supervision.

"John Chapman was a regularly constituted minister of the Church of the New Jerusalem, according to the revelations of Emanuel Swedenborg. He was also a constituted missionary of that faith, under the authority of the regular association of that faith in the city of Boston, Mass. The writer has seen and examined his credentials as to the latter of these. This strange man was a beautiful reader, and never traveled without several of the Swedenborgian

pamphlets with him, which he generally carried in his bosom, and which he was ever ready to produce and read upon request. He never attempted to preach or to address public audiences. In private consultations, he often became enthusiastic, when he would frequently arise to expound the philosophy of his faith. On such occasions, his eyes would flash, his wiry little form would swell, his voice expand, and his clear thought would burst into a startling inspiration of eloquence, complete and consummate, exalted, beautiful, forcible and replete with chaste figures and argumentative deductions. His diction was pure and chaste, and his language simple but grammatical.

"The year of the erection of the old court house in Mansfield, while the blocks of foundation stone and the timber lay scattered upon the public square, a wandering street preacher, of the name of Paine, a man with a long, white beard, who called himself 'The Pilgrim,' entered the town. After blowing a long tin horn which he carried with him, he assembled an audience on the stone and timbers of the court house. In the course of his sermon, he pointed to where Johnny Appleseed lay upon the ground, with his feet resting upon the top of one of the stones, and exclaimed: 'See yon ragged, old, barefooted sinner, and be warned of the paths of sin by his example.' Johnny arose to his feet, folded his hands behind him, under his tow-linen coat, and slowly approached the speaker. As the speaker paused a space, Johnny commenced in this wise: 'I presume you thank God that you are not as other men?' 'I thank God that I am not as you are,' returned Paine. 'I am not a hypocrite, nor am I of the generation of vipers. I am a regularly appointed minister, whether you are or not.' 'Lord be merciful unto me a sinner,' said Chapman, and walked away.

"In the character of John Chapman there was nothing light or frivolous. He was free from all affectation. He never affected the style

or language of the sacred Scriptures. His language was plain, simple and graphic—his manner earnest and impressive. His utterances always commanded respect, and awakened deep and thoughtful consideration from those who heard him. His deportment was uniformly chaste and respectable, and marked by a passive dignity. In his method of thought, he was analytical, and in his line of argument, varying between the inductive and logical. He spoke apparently without effort, in a natural and simple, yet elegant flow of language, to express a deep current of metaphysical reasoning and ethical thought. He penetrated his auditors, apparently without intending to do so, and moved them without knowing it.

"Physically, he was indolent and fond of ease. The writer once watched him, undiscovered, as he was working in his nursery, near the Big Bend in the creek near Mansfield. He lay in the shade of a spreading thorn tree in the center of his nursery, and there, lying on his side, he reached out with his hoe and extirpated only such weeds as were within his reach. He preferred sleeping upon the floors of the farmers, as, he said that the indulgence in the luxury of soft beds would soon beget a bad habit which he could not hope to indulge in his varied method of living.

"This man cherished the kindest feelings toward all living things. His every act and step in life manifested this attribute as the pervading trait of his nature. He was as tender and innocent as a child, and as easily moved to tears by the sorrows of others, or even the sufferings of animals. He has been known to pay the full value of horses, take them from the harness, and, with a blessing, turn them loose to the luxurious pastures of the wilderness, to become their own masters. He was never without money, and frequently furnished the housewives with a pound or two of tea, a great expense at that time, although he held that the indulgence in that aromatic luxury was a dissi-

pation. At one time he bought six breakfast plates at a Mansfield store, and, upon being asked what use he had for them, he replied that he would save dishwashing by having so many; that by eating his meats upon a fresh plate each day he need not wash dishes more than once a week. The truth was, he carried the plates to a poor family near Spring Mills, Richland County, who had a few days before had the misfortune of losing the most of their table furniture by an accident.

"In 1838—thirty-seven years after his appearance on Licking Creek—Johnny noticed that civilization, wealth and population were pressing into the wilderness of Ohio. Hitherto he had easily kept just in advance of the wave of settlement; but now towns and churches were making their appearance, and, at long intervals, the stage-driver's horn broke the silence of the grand old forest, and he felt that his work was done in the region in which he had labored so long. In 1840, he resided near Fort Wayne, in the State of Indiana, where he had a sister living, and probably made that his headquarters during the nine years that he pursued his eccentric avocation on the western border of Ohio and in Indiana. In the summer of 1847, when his labors had literally borne fruit over a hundred thousand miles of territory, at the close of a warm day after traveling twenty miles, he entered the house of a settler in Allen County, Ind., and was warmly welcomed. He declined to eat

with the family, but accepted some bread and milk, which he partook of sitting on the doorstep and gazing on the setting sun. Later, he delivered his 'news right fresh from heaven' by reading the Beatitudes. Declining other accommodations, he slept as usual on the floor, and in the early morning he was found with his features all aglow with a supernal light and his body so near death that his tongue refused its office. The physician, who was hastily summoned, pronounced him dying, but added that he had never seen a man in so placid a state at the approach of death. At seventy-two years of age, forty-six of which had been devoted to his self-imposed mission, he ripened into death as naturally and beautifully as the seeds of his own planting had grown into fiber and bud and blossom and the matured fruit."*

"He had full many a story to tell,
And goodly hymns that he sung right well;
He tossed up the babies, and joined the boys
In many a game full of fun and noise.

"And he seemed so hearty, in work or play,
Men, women and boys all urged him to stay."

Thus passed from earth one of the memorable characters of pioneer days, but his memory will linger in the hearts of succeeding generations for years to come, and their children will learn to revere the decaying monuments of his industry and benevolence, as the memorials of one whose character, though unbalanced, swayed to the brighter side of human nature.

* Bartley, in the *Mansfield Shield and Banner*.

