

Edward Colburn writes about apples
Reminiscences of Edward Newell Colburn (1890-1977)
Text and photos courtesy of Bonnie Champagne



The cider mill at the Colburn Homestead where both sweet and boiled cider were made every fall. Boiled apple sauce and jelly were also made.

The earliest recollections of the farm where I was born in 1890, dates back to probably to 1895 or so. My father, Charles S. Colburn, kept a herd of cows numbering perhaps around 20, quite a flock of hens, a number of brood sows, from which he would sell perhaps 100 five-week old pigs in a year, a boar which was used by neighbors from a wide radius, an apple orchard bearing in a good year some 200 barrels of apples, mostly Baldwins, and a cider mill which, in the months of October and November, did a large business in both sweet and boiled cider.

People used to bring cider apples, mostly in burlap bags, but sometimes in dump-cart bodies, to be ground and pressed. As I remember, 10 bushels of apples would make about 30 gallons of cider and it would take about 10 gallons of sweet cider to make one, when it was boiled down. By boiling it more it would make cider jelly when it cooled.

Through the first part of the winter a large amount of boiled cider applesauce was made and sold, largely through a commission firm in Manchester. This would be made from sweet apples, bought mostly from neighboring farms, peeled with a paring machine, then quartered, the cores taken out by an apparatus my father made himself. They were then gone over by hand to make sure they were all right. Then they were cooked in boiled cider until they were soft. After it had cooled, it was put up in 2 and 4 qt. wooden buckets, packed into crates holding 6 or 8 buckets and shipped away. Much of it went to a commission firm in Manchester by the name of Dodge and Loring.

For many years a large business was done in both this and the boiled cider which was sold in 5 and 10 gallon kegs to grocers in Manchester and other places. The Whipple hotels in Boston would take a 50 gallon barrel almost every year, and great numbers of people came to the farm with small kegs and jugs and usually with apples to make it from. This business gradually grew less and less as methods of commercial canning of all kinds of food was perfected, and was finally dropped altogether, as I remember, somewhere from 1910-15.

With the help of Charles Todd, who lived on the hill a mile or two south of us, he [Charles S. Colburn] built sometime before my memory, an addition to the old cider mill, in

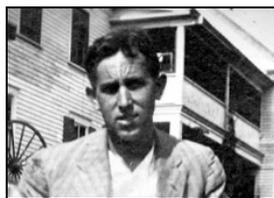
which the power was furnished by two horses walking around in a circular path, one opposite the other, and each one hitched to the end of a heavy beam which fashioned to an upright post in the center. By the turning of this post, as the horses traveled the circle, power was transmitted to the grater up in the grater up in the old part of the mill through an ingenious system of gears, pulley wheels, and belts.

This grater ran at a high speed, and the apples poured onto it through a wooden box on the top, were ground into a fine pulp dripping with juice which fell down into the press box below. This pulp was wrapped in a large sheet of burlap, ten bushels to a cheese as it was called. A wooden rack was put over it, and another cheese built, and this process continued until 5 or 6 cheeses were laid on top of the other. Then it was covered with strong hardwood plank and timber, and two jack screws set in the beam above were turned down on it, and the cider squeezed out through the burlap, running into a wooden tank under the floor. From this tank it was pumped by an old wooden hand pump into a covered wooden spout running from near the top of the building down to the old sauce house, going into a large tub 7 or 8 feet above the ground. From this it was run as needed into the evaporator inside the building, or into kegs or barrels on the outside when sweet cider itself was wanted.

For many years a large business was done every fall, in both sweet and boiled cider until freezing weather set in, and from then until spring boiled cider applesauce was made. The apple pomace, after the cider was squeezed out of it, was fed to cattle and hogs. At one time, my grandmother Hannah did some business in dried apples. I can just remember two large galvanized iron evaporators set up in the backyard. They were 4 or 5 feet square and 8 feet high, and filled with removable screens on which the apples, peeled and sliced, were placed. A small firebox on the bottom furnished heat to dry them.

Edward and his New Boston ancestors:

1. David Colburn 1747–1820 (b. Dedham MA) m. Rebecca Richards Colburn 1751–1820
2. Ephraim Colburn 1777–1855 m. Rachel Newell Colburn 1786–1866
3. Luther Colburn 1811–1867 m. Hannah Eastman Story Colburn 1820–1911
4. Charles Story Colburn 1860–1920 m. Susan Maria Dodge Colburn 1862–1913
5. Edward Newell Colburn 1890–1977 m. Nina Elizabeth Turner Colburn 1899–1945



Edward Colburn

Edward's siblings:

- a. Luther Dodge Colburn 1888–1970 m. Alice Maude Mansfield Colburn 1897–1979
- b. Margaret Hadley Colburn 1892–1982
- c. George Adams Colburn 1898–1977 m. Ada Marguerite Tower Colburn 1907–1989



Edward's brother Luther Dodge Colburn pruning apple tree and picking apples.



Edward's sister Margaret; his father Charles and brother George c.1912.