

Donation of the Month

Apple Cider Press, early 1900s



Donated by Tom and Becky McCoy
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Few people today realize that Benton County, Arkansas used to be the largest apple producing county in America. In 1915, an exhibit of Benton County apples won 308 prizes at the Panama and Pacific Exposition in San Francisco. With thousands of trees and more than 40 species of apples, Benton County became known as the Land of the Big Red Apple. Apples were the main cash crop during the early 1900s and local farms produced their own apple cider, vinegar, and other apple cider products with the help of a cider press.

Many early cider presses were large, taking up a whole room or small building. These presses were operated by people and/or horses and produced many barrels of juice from the crushed fruit. Smaller presses were later sold or made by farm owners that were geared for orchards.

A cider press was operated by placing whole apples in the hopper at the top of the machine and cranking the handle. The fruit was ground into pieces between two cylinders with large teeth and fell into a barrel lined with cloth at the bottom of the press. When enough apple pieces collected in the barrel, the operator cranked on the corkscrew handle and pressed the juice out of the crushed apples. The juice collected in a

tub and was used to make apple cider. Today it takes about 36 apples to create one gallon of apple cider. Technically, the press produces unfiltered apple juice which is then aged into cider.

Apple vinegar was also made from cider and was one of several large apple processing industries in Rogers. Apple vinegar was made from hard apple cider that was exposed to the air for a length of time. When combined with natural yeasts, the cider could produce apple vinegar in three to six months.

This cider press was bought at an auction in the Rogers/Bentonville area and was donated to the Rogers Historical Museum in 1998. For more information on the apple industry in Rogers, please see The Apple Industry under Businesses in our Photo of the Month section.

Source Information:

Hothem, Lar. Collecting Farm Antiques. Books Americana, Inc., Florence, AL, 1982.

Emerick Cider Press, Somerset Historical Society, featured on http://www.somersethistoricalcenter.org/cider_press.htm

Rogers Historical Museum Research Library, donor file, and program "Land of the Big Red Apple"