

JOHN CHAPMAN.

A monument to the memory of John Chapman—who was commonly called Johnny Appleseed—was unveiled at the Sherman-Heineman Park, Mansfield, Ohio, November 8, 1900. It was the gift of the Hon. M. B. Bushnell. The ceremonies of the occasion were held under the auspices of the Richland County Historical Society, and the historical address was made by its secretary, A. J. Baughman.

“Johnny” was the pioneer nurseryman of Richland county, and his real name was John Chapman,—not Jonathan, as some have claimed. The monuments of his estate show that his name was John. He had a half-brother named Jonathan, who was a deaf-mute. “Johnny” was born at Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1775, and came west in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Little was known of his early life, but there were traditions among the pioneers of Ohio of a romance in which a woman scorned the young man’s love. He began his apple mission in Pennsylvania in 1802 or 1803, but soon transferred his field to Ohio. He made frequent visits to

the Keystone state for apple seeds, and on his return selected favorable spots for his pioneer nurseries. He sought fertile soil and sheltered places, and often made clearings to give his tender shoots protection from wind and blizzard. As one section of the state became supplied with trees he moved to another. The early settlers were too busy in wrestling a livelihood from nature and in fighting Indians to engage in the slow process of raising apple-trees from seed, and Chapman, full of faith in the virtue of the fruit, took upon himself the duty of supplying the need. Usually a man of few words, he became eloquent when speaking of apples, and his fine flow of language gave the impression that he had been well educated.

Living upon the bounty of field and forest, eating fruits and nuts like the beasts and birds, never harming an animal for fur or food, Johnny Appleseed led a life of supreme simplicity. Sometimes he replenished his scanty wardrobe by bartering young trees for old clothes or cast-off boots. More often he gave freely of his trees, and thus started many a pioneer orchard. He carried on this work in Ohio for twenty years or more. For the greater part of this time he made his home in Richland county, and then he followed the star of empire westward to continue his mission in the newer field of Indiana, where he died in 1845.

For his tramps in the woods he carried a saucepan on his head and cooked such vegetable foods as he could find. Living much in the forests, he became an adept in woodcraft and wandered at will. He never carried a weapon and was never molested, even the wild animals appearing to understand that he was their friend. The Indians respected him, and regarded him as a great "medicine man."

"Johnny" regarded all animals as God's creatures, and he would suffer himself rather than harm one of the least of them. One chilly night in the woods he built a fire to warm himself, but when he saw the insects attracted to his blaze fall into the flames he extinguished the fire rather than have the death of a bug on his conscience! On another occasion he crawled into a log to sleep, but finding it already occupied by a squirrel and her little ones he was worried by the chattering of the frightened mother and backed out to sleep in the snow!

"Appleseed Johnny" was a hero, too. During the war of 1812 Mansfield was frightened by rumors of a hostile attack. The nearest soldiers were at Mount Vernon, thirty miles away, where Captain Douglass had a troop. When a call was made for a volunteer to carry a message to Mount Vernon "Johnny" stepped forward and said "I'll go." He was bareheaded, barefooted and unarmed. The journey had to be made at night over a new

road that was but little better than a trail and through a country swarming with bloodthirsty Indians. The unarmed apostle of apples sped through the woods like a runner and came back in the morning with a squad of soldiers. It was an incident worthy of a poem, but has been almost forgotten.

The death of this strange missionary was in keeping with his life work. The latter years of his life were spent near Fort Wayne, where, although seventy years old, he continued to grow and scatter apple trees. He learned that some cattle had broken down the brushwood fence of a nursery he had planted. It was winter and the nursery was twenty miles away, but the brave old crusader started out on foot to save his beloved trees. He worked for hours in cold and snow, repairing the fence, and started to walk back home, but became ill and sought refuge in the cabin of a Mr. Worth, who had lived in Richland county when a boy, and, when he learned his caller was "Johnny Appleseed" gave him a friendly welcome. In the morning it was discovered that pneumonia had developed during the night. The physician who was called stated that "Johnny" was beyond medical aid, and inquired particularly about his religious belief, remarking that he had never seen a dying man so perfectly calm, for upon his wan face there was an expression of happiness, and upon his pale lips there was a smile of joy, as though he was communing with loved ones who had come to meet and comfort him in his dying moments.

John Chapman was buried in David Archer's graveyard, two and one-half miles north of Fort Wayne, Indiana, and the monument now erected at his grave is well deserved. The monument erected to his memory is a fitting memorial to the man in whom there dwelt a comprehensive love that reaches downward to the lowest form of life, and upward to the Divine.

"Johnny Appleseed" believed in the doctrine taught by Emanuel Swedenborg and took pleasure in distributing Swedenborgian tracts among the settlers. He led a blameless Christian life, and at the age of seventy-two years he passed into death as beautifully as the apple-seeds of his planting had grown into trees, had budded into blossoms and ripened into fruit.