

135 Miles of Farms, Food and Fun on Routes 5 & 20 in New York State

By Marjory Allen Perez - March 2007

Farming is and has been a mainstay of the economy of New York and no where is that more evident than along the Routes 5 and 20 corridor from central New York, through the Finger Lakes Region and on into western New York. Farm markets, wineries, festivals, county fairs, farm tours, corn mazes, u-pick operations and museums – it's all about agriculture on Routes 5 & 20 in New York State.

Apples and Much More on Routes 5 & 20

Everyone has heard the story about Johnny Appleseed and his obsession with apples. But did you know that the Northern Spy apple – the apple of choice for that all-American Apple Pie – was first grown right here on Routes 5 & 20? That's right! In 1800 Heman Chapin of Bloomfield, New York, developed the famous apple from wild apples seeds he had carried with him from Connecticut. And apples have been an important part of farming on Routes 5 & 20 ever since.

The **Beak & Skiff Apple Farms**, located on Route 20 in **Lafayette, New York**, grows lots of apples and has become famous for its apple wine – that's hard cider with a bit of class. The farm market is located in a restored 19th century barn, featuring a cider mill, an apple pie bakery, a variety of apples, specialty foods, gifts and crafts. If you want to pick your own apples, this is the place for you. Take a wagon ride into the orchards to cap off your visit. The Beak & Skiff Apple Farm Market is open daily from August through November. (www.beakandskiff.com)

Apples, more apples and then some is the only way to describe **Red Jacket Orchards Farm Market**, located on Routes 5 and 20 just west of **Geneva, New York**. The Nicholson family, which has over 500 acres of prime farmland in production, grows a lot more than apples. There are also strawberries, raspberries, apricots, plums, peaches, and cherries. You name the fruit and if it can be grown in this climate, the Nicholson family will have it at their Farm Market. Red Jacket is also known for its line of Summer Harvest Juice Blends – 100% juice ingredients to delight the palette. The market is open year round. (www.redjacketorchards.com)

Farming History on Display along Routes 5 & 20

Agriculture has undergone many changes since the pioneer settlers planted their first crops in the region along Routes 5 & 20. Inventions like the gasoline engine transformed farm equipment. Scientific discoveries have led to increased production, plants resistant to pests and even brand new fruits and vegetables.

There are not many farmers that would willingly go back to the days before tractors, but it is still interesting to try to imagine what life was like on a farm of the 1800s. Visitors to the **Genesee Country Village & Museum** in **Mumford, New York** have an opportunity to see several stages of farm history and architecture. The focus of the Pioneer Farmstead is the 1806 one-room log cabin. Just down the path is the Martin Kieffer Farm with a two-story log house built in 1814. The Jones Farmhouse, built in the 1820s, has one of the four working kitchens in the village where daily demonstrations by the cook help to tell the story of the role farm women played in the family's economic endeavors. An heirloom garden at the Jones Farm contains hardy crops commonly grown in the 19th century kitchen garden. Special events throughout the year at the Genesee Country Village & Museum also highlight the history of agriculture of the region. (www.gcv.org)

Old farm equipment takes center stage at three unusual museums in the Routes 5 and 20 corridor. In the 1950s Ward O'Hara took up the hobby of collecting antique farm equipment. Today that collection is housed in the **Ward W. O'Hara Agricultural Museum of Cayuga County**, located on Rt. 38A in Auburn, New York. The O'Hara Agricultural Museum tells the story of the life of farm families in upstate New York between 1850 and 1940. The museum is open 11 am to 4 pm daily from mid May through mid September. Annual special events provide opportunities to see the antique equipment in operation. Spend a day at the annual Draft Horse & Hay Day, held the third Saturday in July. (www.cayuganet.org/agmuseum)

Jeff and Eileen Huff of **Bloomfield, New York** are the collectors behind **The Vintage Tracks Museum**. No it is not a railroad museum. It is a museum that tells the story of equipment that travels on “tracks”, like a tank. These “crawlers of yesteryear” include tractors, bull dozers, graders, and antique construction machinery. The Vintage Track Museum is open May to November on Saturdays and Sundays from 12 to 4 pm. (www.huffequipment.com/vintage.htm) The **Tired Iron Tractor Museum**, located on Rt. 20A in **Cuylerville**, features over 110 antique tractors, trucks and farm toys. Open Sundays. 1 to 5 pm from May through October.

Probably one of the most unique agricultural exhibits you will find in the Routes 5 & 20 Corridor is the **Mike Weaver Drain Tile Museum**, located on Route 96A in **Geneva, New York**. The collection of over 500 drain tiles, ranging in date from 500 B.C. to modern times, is displayed (very appropriately) in the home build by **John Johnston**, known as the “father of drain tile drainage in the United States”. The Johnston house was built in the 1820s and is a “museum” all by itself. The Johnston Farm is just down the road from the **Rose Hill Mansion**, another house worthy of a visit. Both sites are managed by the Geneva Historical Society. (www.genevahistoricalsociety.com)

The story of farming in the Routes 5 & 20 corridor is also part of many exhibits at the local historical museums located along the route. The **Skaneateles Historical Society’s** museum is housed in a building which once functioned as a creamery, serving dairy farmers in the region. The **Granger Homestead and Carriage Museum** in Canandaigua displays over 70 horse-drawn vehicles, many used on the farm. The **JELL-O Museum** in LeRoy tells the story of a popular product familiar to folks since the early 1900s. (www.grangerhomestead.org; www.jellomuseum.com)

Farm Markets, Farm Stands, U-Pick and Farmers’ Markets on Routes 5 & 20

The bounty of the harvest is found all along the Routes 5 & 20 corridor from Lafayette to Darien, New York. There’s everything from vegetables to fruit to flowers to Christmas trees to crafts to special seasonal events. Since not all farmers are exactly alike, neither are their farm markets so the visitor can not say “seen one, you’ve seen them all”! A stop at **Flower Hill Farm Stand** in **Darien Center, New York** is proof of that. The farm stand is situated among beautiful gardens and has fresh produce, cut flowers and bird seed as well as seasonal decorative items for sale. **Herbly Wonderful,**

located on Rt. 33 just west of Batavia is a farm stand extraordinaire! Open from May through December this market features fresh culinary herbs, cut flowers and heirloom vegetables. The nearby lavender fields are a site to behold.

www.herblywonderful.com

If sweet corn is your weakness, think of **Bodine Farm Market** in **Seneca Falls, New York**. Sweet corn may be the specialty of the Bodine Farm Market, but it is by no means the only great produce you will find on its shelves. Organic produce and foods produced with certified organic products draw many visitors to the **Elderberry Pond Country Store** just outside of **Auburn, New York**. The store features organic vegetables as well as heirloom fruits, smoked meats and cheeses. In addition there are an assortment of organic soups, salads, baked goods and gourmet preserves made with their own fresh produce. Or you can sit down and enjoy a meal in their restaurant.

www.elderberrypond.com

Another way to get the flavor of farming in the region along Routes 5 and 20 in New York State is to visit one of the many Farmers' Markets. The **Genesee County Farmers' Market** is held on Tuesdays and Fridays July through October in **Batavia**. On Saturdays you can visit the **Canandaigua Farmers' Market**. Thursdays is another popular day for farmers to bring their produce to market. Farmers' Markets are held on Thursdays in **Geneva** and **Skaneateles**. The **Farmers Co-op Market of Cayuga County** meets in **Auburn** on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. Farmers gather at **Saunders' Farmers Market** on Fridays. to 6 pm in **Seneca Falls**.

For those of you that feel that the only way to get the freshest of the freshest is to pick it yourself, there are plenty of farms that welcome you to do just that. Starting with strawberries in June and ending with Christmas trees in December there is a u-pick operation just for you.

Agricultural Fairs and Festivals

Agricultural fairs have been on the agendas of farmers in the Routes 5 and 20 corridor since the early 1800s. The tradition of getting together to discuss farming methods and to boast about crops and livestock is alive and well. **County Agricultural Fairs** are held in July of each year in the communities of **Waterloo, Batavia, Canandaigua and**

Caledonia – all located on Routes 5 & 20 in New York State. And then there is the “Mother of all” agricultural fairs – the **New York State Fair**, held in Syracuse over a 10-day period ending on Labor Day.

One of the largest agricultural events in the Northeast United States takes place each August just outside of **Seneca Falls, New York**. The **Empire Farm Days** is a three-day outdoor extravaganza that brings together 600 exhibitors and 75,000 farmers from all over the U.S. and Canada. This is truly the ultimate in the “county fair” genre. The Empire Farm Days has something for every type of agriculture – dairy, livestock, crops, equine, fruit, vegetable, forestry, specialty crops. This event may be aimed at farmers, but there is much the non-farmer can learn from this “day on the farm”.

(www.empirefarmdays.com)

The folks who sponsor the annual **Pageant of Steam** in Canandaigua in August and the annual **Western New York Gas & Steam Engine Rally** in Alexander in September put on a show with machinery that used to be the “state-of-the-art” in farm technology. The real attraction here is that the machinery works and you get a chance to see how it actually worked on the farms of the region.

The list of agricultural-themed festivals held in communities along Routes 5 & 20 is a long one. Almost every community can boast an old fashioned Strawberry Social held sometime in late June. Come August there’s the **Avon Corn Festival**. In September there is **TomatoFest** in Auburn and in October the **Lafayette Apple Festival** always draws a big crowd.

Tastes of Routes 5 & 20 – Great Wine and Food!

Visitors are invited to uncork New York State wines and there is no place like Routes 5 & 20 when it comes to wineries. Chris and Jan Scholomiti of **CJS Vineyards & Aurelius Winery**, located just to the west of **Auburn, New York** have developed a unique micro winery utilizing vinifera and French-American hybrid grapes from their fine vineyards. The **Montezuma Winery** in Seneca Falls, New York features some the area’s most unique award-winning wines from dry reds to a sweet apricot dessert wine. **Ventosa Vineyards & Bistro**, located at north end of Seneca Lake, is one of the newest wineries

in the Routes 5 & 20 corridor and is already making a name for itself. **Amberg Wine Cellars**, located directly on Routes 5 and 20 in **Stanley, New York** halfway between Geneva and Canandaigua, welcomes visitors to sample from the broad range of award winning wines in their Tasting Room. **Deer Run Winery** in Geneseo opened its doors in 2003. All told there are over 70 wineries located within 30 miles of the Routes 5 and 20 corridor as it traverses central New York State

New York's wine, food and culinary industries are showcased at the **New York Wine & Culinary Center**, located in Canandaigua. The Center offers visitors an opportunity to learn about the diversity of New York's agriculture while enjoying the bounty produced by the industry through wine and beer tastings, cooking classes and demonstrations and fine dining. Restaurants all along Routes 5 & 20 take pride in using the agricultural products grown and made in the region, providing only the very best for their customers. (www.nywcc.com)

Wine goes great with cheese so be sure to stop at **Kutter's Cheese Factory in Corfu, New York**, where you can find many varieties of fine cheeses as well as a wine shop featuring 12 varieties of New York State wine. Enjoy a wine and cheese tasting! (www.kuttercheese.com)

Not Your Ordinary Farms

The diversity of farm operations in the Routes 5 & 20 corridor is very evident, but there are also some not-so-traditional “crops” that flourish here. At **Willow Pond Aqua Farms**, located at 3581 Swamp Road, Canandaigua, the crops include fish and aquatic plants suitable for water gardens and ponds. **Carpenters Brook Fish Hatchery** in Elbridge is one of only four county-run hatcheries in the state, producing over 70,000 Brook, Brown and Rainbow trout annually. **RT Solutions-The Worm Farm** of Avon grow earthworms which in turn produce vermicompost, known for its ability to increase soil fertility! (www.willowpondaquafarms.com); www.onondagacountyparks.com/parks/carpenters; www.wormpower.net)

Alpacas have also found home on farms in the area. These exotic animals from South America produce a fine and highly-prized fiber. Get a look at these interesting animals

at **Alpaca Play Pen** in Attica; **Enchanted Forest Alpacas** in LeRoy; **Hemlock Hills Alpaca Farm** in Livonia; and **Lazy Acre Alpacas Farm** in Bloomfield.

It is fair to say that the agrarian roots of American society are on full display along Routes 5 & 20, making it a truly authentic American Road. For a complete list farm related activities and events on Routes 5 & 20 visit our website at www.routes5and20.com.

SIDE BAR: AGRICULTURAL EVENTS ALONG ROUTES 5 & 20 CORRIDOR

JUNE

2	Old Ways Day@ Ward O'Hara Ag Museum	Auburn
17	Sycamore Hill Gardens Tour	Marcellus

JULY

5-8	Cayuga County Fair	Weedsport
17-22	Seneca County Fair	Waterloo
17-21	Genesee County Fair	Batavia
19-22	Stuart Horse Trials	Victor
21	Draft Horse/Hay Day@ Ward O'Hara Ag Museum	Auburn
24-29	Ontario County Fair	Canandaigua
31-Aug. 4	Livingston County Fair	Caledonia

AUGUST

7-9	Empire Farm Days	Seneca Falls
8-11	Pageant of Steam	Canandaigua
23-Sep. 3	New York State Fair	Syracuse

SEPTEMBER

8-9	TomatoFest	Auburn
8-9	WNY Gas & Steam Engine Rally	Alexander
11	Avon Corn Festival	Avon

OCTOBER

6-7	Lafayette Apple Festival	Lafayette
6-7	Genesee Country Village Ag Society Fair	Mumford

RESOURCE SHEET – AGRICULTURE ON ROUTES 5 & 20 IN NYS

General Tourist Services

Routes 5 and 20 Promotion Group		www.routes5and20.com
Skaneateles Chamber of Commerce	1-315-685-0552	www.skaneateles.com
Cayuga County Office of Tourism	1-800-499-9615	www.TourCayuga.com
Seneca County Office of Tourism	1-800-732-1848	www.visitsenecany.net
A Finger Lakes Visitors Connection/Ontario Co.	1-877-FUN-IN-NY	www.VisitFingerLakes.com
Livingston County Chamber of Commerce	1-800-538-7365	www.FingerLakesWest.com
Genesee County Chamber of Commerce	1-800-622-2686	www.geneseeny.com