

Party Like a Pioneer

By Mary Ann Koontz, *Fort Wayne, Indiana*

There's nothing quite like fall in the Midwest – watching the leaves change color, breathing in the crisp air and sampling different varieties of apples. Every year, on the third week of September, I savor all of these delights at the Johnny Appleseed Festival here in Fort Wayne.

The event celebrates the era when folk hero John Chapman sowed apple seeds throughout large parts of the East and Midwest. A shrewd businessman, Chapman planted the trees to demonstrate an interest in previously unclaimed land, then sold the land with the orchards to settlers wanting to make the area their home. Born in Massachusetts in 1774, he died on the Archer farm in Fort Wayne in 1845.

Festival crafts must be ones the early settlers would have made. Crafters use wood, cloth, glass and metal for the items they sell. You'll also want to browse the antiques and primitives available for sale, as well as the farmers market.

Kids can burn off energy running in the straw maze and playing pioneer games. If you like history, check out camps from the Civil War, the War of 1812 and the American Revolution.

Prepare to be tempted by the aroma of food cooked over open fires, including ham and bean soup, corn bread, corn on the cob, chicken and noodles, and apple dumplings.

If you need a break, watch entertainers on five stages: cloggers, musicians, storytellers and more. Or follow a fife and drum corps as they march and play. Admission is free, so grab some apple cider and come visit us in Fort Wayne.