

Museum on Main Street, Smithsonian Institution
Stories: Yes | Student Digital Storytelling Project
Jonamac Apple Orchard, Dekalb County, Illinois

Speaker 1: Farmer should always hold a special place in our hearts. They are stewards of the earth, and help to feed our world. They work hard from sunup to sundown. Spartan TV Junior, visited a specialized farm, in Multan Illinois. Jonamac Orchard is a three generation family farm, that specializes in producing top quality apples for people to buy. They also have diversified their farm by, finding creative ways to encourage tourists, to visit and learn about producing

Speaker 1: [0:32] Besides picking apples, they give tours to groups and many schools come here to take field trips. They have many different activities for people to do, including playgrounds, petting zoo, bonfires, corn mazes, gift shops, and they say a house for adults. These different types of activities are called AGRA-TAINMENT, and help to encourage tourists and people within the community to visit, and learn about agriculture all while being entertained.

Speaker 2: [1:20] I started farming in about, 1974. I was always interested in farming when I was a kid growing up, because I had several sides of our family farm. And so I used to spend a lot of time at the farm when I was a little kid. And as I grew up, I kept very interested in farming.

Speaker 3: [1:48] The original trees here were planted by, Stan and Katie Johnson. They're a local, Stan grew up here locally. He returned after his retirement from the military, returned to the area. He'd always wanted to have an orchard. He planted what 10 acres planted? Planted 1,700 trees, and they converted the old 1930s barn over here into their home. And they started Johnson's Orchard. And then 10 years later, when they wish to retire and contacted mom and dad, they decided to take the name Johnson and McCarter and come up with Jonamac. And it's also the name of an apple that we have here at the Orchard, so Jonamac Orchard.

Speaker 4: [2:31] So in our Apple orchard, we have about 30 different varieties of apples, ranging from varieties you know very well like, Honeycrisp to varieties you may not have ever heard of like, pazazz. We also have some standard varieties that have been around for a very long time. We recently started planting some antique varieties as well or heirloom varieties, and we plant all of our apple trees on high density. So we plant all of our apple trees very close together, and try to have as many trees as we can in the land that we have available. So we have about or over 20,000 trees, on 26 acres and we estimate that, we produce probably around half a million apples a year.

Speaker 4: [3:26] To me, Jonamac Orchard is very special because it's where I grew up. It has a very big part of my heart, being that I got to grow up here alongside my grandfather and learn not only about apples, but also how to work and about being on a farm.

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Speaker 4: [3:46] We try to help the County and the community in as many ways as possible. We're very active in supporting local organizations such as the Farm Bureau, the Local Boy and Girl Scout Organizations, and other educational aspects for both kids and agriculture.

Speaker 4: [4:07] We hope that kids have a great experience here and are able to not only have fun, but also learn a little something about agriculture while they're here, whether it's about apples or just being on a farm in general.

Speaker 5: [4:20] We host a lot of schools that come during the week.

Speaker 4: [4:25] Yeah, we do host a lot of school tours as well.

Speaker 4: [4:32] So as far as the future goes, we have some goals we would like to achieve as far as improving our operations. We want to continue to make our farm as efficient as possible, while also making sure that everything stays really clean and up to date. But also, we want to make sure that we're always offering something new for families to keep coming back each fall. So, we hope to add some little surprises for your families for when you come back next fall.

Speaker 2: [5:09] We started making our first Apple donuts, back in about 1976, 77. And when we started to do it down here, when we first decided to make donuts, then we decided to use cider and chopped apple actually. So we still have that recipe today.