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The Real Johnny Appleseed | Heinz History Center

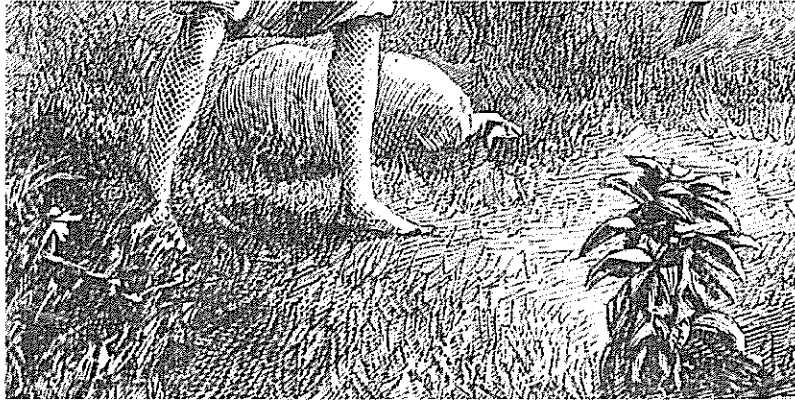
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Through centuries of American storytelling, the name Johnny Appleseed has become synonymous with the fortitude and bravery attributed to early American pioneers.

While there are many conflicting versions of the legendary story, the real Johnny Appleseed was a man named John Chapman who frequented Western Pa.

Chapman, who was born in Massachusetts in 1774, left home and settled in this region by the 1790s, originally in Warren, Pa. In fact, records show that his first nursery was planted there.





By the mid-1790s, around the height of the Whiskey Rebellion, Chapman lived in a cabin on Grant's Hill in Pittsburgh where he tended an orchard. Inspiration struck after noticing the German cider mills south of the city. He gathered left over apple seeds from the cider mills' pumice stones and sold them to settlers. This idea quickly led to Chapman's nickname of "Johnny Appleseed."

Chapman set out in 1802 with a canoe full of seeds to sell to pioneers trying to settle the Wild West. Although it seemed like a great way to make money, he didn't profit much from the sales. Chapman often traded for the seeds, and when he did take money, it was typically a small amount. It's said that he planted saplings along his routes for settlers to start their own orchards.

Stories tell of Chapman's eccentric attire, traditionally consisting of a tin can hat, coffee-sack cloak, and no shoes. It's said that he would accept cast-off clothing in exchange for apple seeds and would frequently give the seeds away to those that needed them more than he did.

Chapman was described in diaries and letters as small and wiry, with hollow cheeks from walking so much and eating so little.

Although he never stayed in one place very long, Chapman

returned to Pittsburgh each fall to spend the winter and replenish his seeds.

During his travels, he was introduced to the Church of the New Jerusalem, a Christian group based on the Biblical interpretations of Swedish scientist and theologian Emanuel Swedenborg. He was so inspired by the religion that he became a missionary, spreading the word and often reading Bible verses to settlers he came across.

Chapman died of pneumonia at a friend's house in Indiana in 1845. His unmarked grave is believed to be located in a town just north of Fort Wayne.

Learn more about Johnny Appleseed and other Pittsburgh folk legends in the [*Pittsburgh: A Tradition of Innovation*](#) exhibition.

Brady Smith is the Director of Marketing and Communications at the History Center.