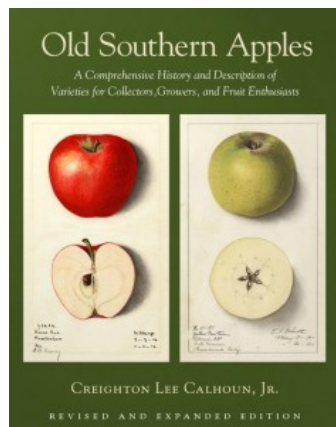


'Old Southern Apples': a Carolina keeper

Posted on February 7, 2011 by didaniel



Lee Calhoun – who you can hear speak on Feb. 10 – has done it again. The Chatham County resident and [heirloom apple expert](#) has updated his classic “[Old Southern Apples](#),” which includes lists of heirloom apples available and those that have gone extinct. Among apples available is the [North Carolina Keeper](#) (hence my headline!). The Keeper was sold by two NC nurseries from 1886 to 1902, and was introduced in Davidson County.

The book first came out in 1995, but has been out of print for several years, much to the dismay of many folks. The revised and expanded edition, published by [Chelsea Green](#), features descriptions of some 1,800 apple varieties that either originated in the South or were widely grown here before 1928. Though the handsome reference book is largely encyclopedic, each apple has a story, the Keeper included. And in the center of the 331-page book are historic botanical illustrations of each variety supplied by the [National Agricultural Library's](#) collection of watercolor paintings. Gorgeous! (The Keeper is red and squat.)

A [free public event](#) – Apple Heirloom Seminar and Book Signing – celebrates the book and its author on Thursday, Feb. 10. Lee will read excerpts from the book and answer questions from the audience. Sponsored by the [Chatham County Center of North Carolina Cooperative Extension](#), it will be held from 6:30 to 8:30 at the Agriculture Building Auditorium, 45 South St., in Pittsboro. Extension agent extraordinaire Debbie Roos requests that folks please RSVP for the event by calling 919-542-8202.



Author Lee Calhoun

Lee and his wife, Edith, have retired from the nursery business, but they passed along their knowledge – and apples – to two key spots in North Carolina – [Century Farms Orchards](#) in Caswell County outside of Reidville, and [Horne Creek Living Historical Farm](#), south of Pilot Mountain State Park in Stokes County.

At Century Farms, owner David Vernon has grafted some 500 varieties of heirloom apple trees under the tutelage of Lee. And at Horne, which is a North Carolina Historic Site, the Southern Heritage Apple Orchard was established in 1997 with a gift of by Lee of 400 varieties of heritage apples he grafted and grew. What a wonderful legacy!

Century Farms is open by appointment except Saturdays in November, while the Heritage Orchard is open to the public during Horne Creek's visiting hours. Also at this lovely 104-acre site, which offers an outstanding look at the state's rural and agricultural heritage from about 1900 to 1910, are a farmhouse, a well house, fruit house, smokehouse, tobacco barn, and corncrib, ringed by a walking trail.



Apple blossom at Century Farms
(yes, working on fixing photo placement!)

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3 Responses to 'Old Southern Apples': a Carolina keeper



[dave graham](#) says:

April 3, 2011 at 10:11 pm

Mr. Calhoun is himself an 'old southern heirloom'...one of the grandest books ever written about apples and one of the most approachable people ever. i hope both are around for years to come. Dave Graham Henry Hollow Heirlooms

[Reply](#)



Joy Bowers says:

February 28, 2012 at 12:29 pm

I have looked for an apple my grandfather had when I was a child (I'm now 73 yrs old) that I can't seem to find. It was kinda squatty – not tall like a red delicious – and had very pale yellow skin. It was extremely sweet and almost mushy when bitten into and the juice would run down your chin it was so juicy. It had a flavor I've never found in another apple and I would love to find one since I really don't like apples – only this one. I recall him doing lots of grafting so who knows whether this was obtained from a graft or not. Many thanks if you know what I'm talking about.

[Reply](#)



[didaniel](#) says:

February 28, 2012 at 2:19 pm

Hi Joy. With hundreds of apple varieties out there, it's hard to say. I'd suggest looking at Lee Calhoun's book and also going to David Vernon's farm in November, when he has an open house. You might find that you enjoy *many* heirloom varieties, which will taste vastly different from types found at the grocery store. Good luck!

[Reply](#)

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