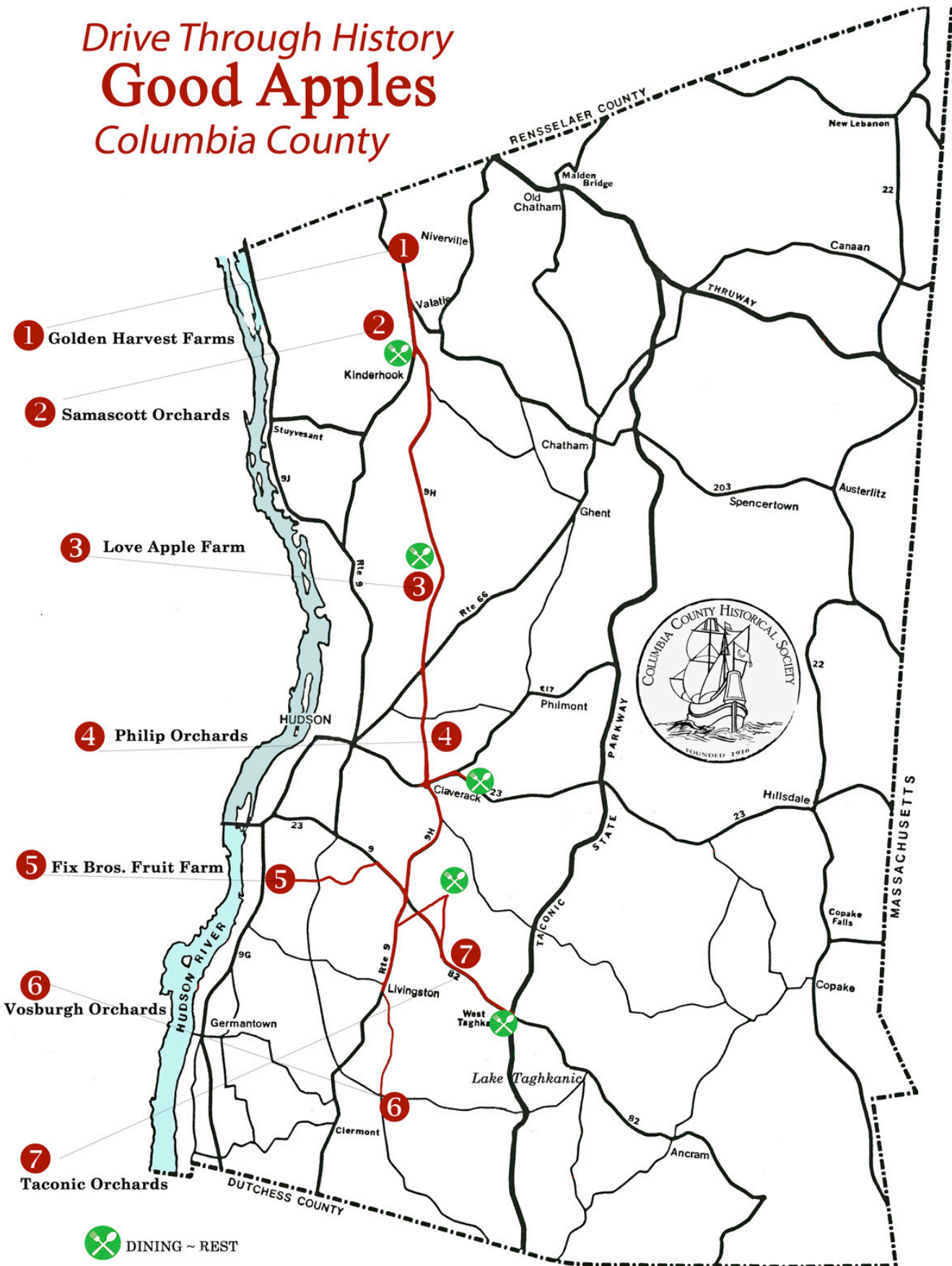


Drive Through History

Good Apples

Columbia County



Good Apples

Agriculture is, and has always been, the lifeblood of the Hudson Valley. For many years, Native Americans grew corn, beans and squash in the region's fertile soil. In the 17th century, the Dutch brought their own ingenious farming methods to the area that would become Columbia County. During the American Revolution, the region supplied much of the grain for the colonies; then, the opening of the Erie Canal shifted grain production westward and cleared the way for a new local cash crop: Apples.

While scanty native apples may have existed in the Hudson Valley before European settlement, it wasn't until recently arrived Dutch and English farmers began cultivating new varieties that the region became a fruit growing Mecca. Today, thousands of locals and visitors alike journey to our historic farms—many of which have been passed down in families for generations—to pick bushels of apples and bite into a tasty piece of Hudson Valley history. Just don't leave without trying another staple of the region, the apple cider donut; early Dutch settlers brought the recipe for donuts with them to America, so you can chalk that sweet treat up to historical research!

NOTE: Due to the present circumstances, U-Pick hours, availability and protocols may have changed. Please contact the orchards for information.

1 Golden Harvest Farms

3074 U.S. 9, Valatie

Golden Harvest has been around since the 1950s, but historical documents show that apple growing was already taking place on this land by at least 1870. An 1881 map of Valatie depicts a large, mature apple orchard just north of the village at nearly the exact location of today's Golden Harvest.

The bustling farm store has been a mainstay of the community since 1957, and its fresh-baked apple cider donuts are consistently voted *Best in the Capital Region*.

Golden Harvest also owns a second orchard just east of the farm store that was previously owned by Dutch settlers; driving down State Farm Road, you can see a farmhouse, a red barn and an equipment shed that date to the early 20th century. The farm is now in its fourth generation of family ownership, and produces more than a dozen apple varieties.



Located on site, **Harvest Spirits Farm Distillery** is where “the lucky apples go to become immortal.” Pick up a bottle of Core Vodka or Cornelius Applejack (made from 100% homegrown apples), or just grab a jug of their very own hand sanitizer!

Directions to Next Stop: Head south on U.S. 9 S.; at the traffic circle, take the second exit toward NY-9H S. Turn right onto Old Post Road. In 1.2 miles, Old Post Road turns slightly left and becomes Albany Avenue. Turn right onto Sunset Avenue, and the destination will be on your left.

2 Samascott Orchards

5 Sunset Avenue, Kinderhook

As the largest Pick-Your-Own (PYO) farm in Columbia County, Samascott grows a whopping 72 varieties of apples as well as many other fruits and vegetables available for U-Pick.

The farm began in the early 1900s on 180 acres of farmland, primarily as a dairy operation. Between the 1940s and the 1960s, second-generation owner Oliver Samascott began acquiring new land and eventually grew the farm to the 1,000+ acres it spans today. Apple orchards were already established on much of that land, and the Samascotts went about expanding the crop; in the 1960s, PYO was introduced. When the branches are heavy with tree fruit in the fall, you can take home classic favorites like Cortland, Macoun and Jonamac, as well as historic, New York-originating varieties such as Newtown Pippin and Esopus Spitzenburg, which is rumored to have been Thomas Jefferson’s apple of preference. Wash it all down with a jug of Samascott Cider from the orchard store or **Samascott Garden Market** (65 Chatham Street, Kinderhook). Or, if you prefer more “bite” in your apple beverage, Albany-based **Nine Pin Cider** makes its hard ciders using Samascott apples. Find it in most grocery and liquor stores in Columbia County.



Bring your bike! Much of northwestern Columbia County encompasses the historic farms of Dutch settlers, which you can explore by bike on the newly opened **Albany-Hudson Electric Trail**. The trail skirts the edge of Samascott Orchards and opens up to stunning views of pastoral farmlands east of U.S. Route 9 S.

Directions to Next Stop: Turn right onto Albany Avenue; at the stoplight, Albany Avenue becomes Hudson Street. Continue straight. Turn left onto the ramp for NY-9H S. In 5.9 miles, the destination will be on your right.

3 Love Apple Farm

1421 NY-9H, Ghent

This 80-acre farm has been part of the Columbia County agricultural community for more than 50 years. In addition to numerous apple varieties, Love Apple Farm also grows peaches, plums and a multitude of berries. Fun fact: The name is a bit of a double entendre, as “love apple” is another term for tomato!

Visitors can U-Pick apples ranging from Paula Red to Ruby Mac. And with a playground and petting zoo on the property, Love Apple Farm is a great place to introduce kids to the art of apple-picking.



For your next pit stop, you don’t even need to leave the premises. **Love Apple Farm Market** sells a variety of local foods, while the Café serves up ready-made lunches ranging from salads to home-cooked Mexican fare.

Directions to Next Stop: Continue on NY-9H S for 5.4 miles and the destination will be on your left, about a mile south of Fish and Game Road (County Road 18).

4 Philip Orchards

270 NY-9H, Claverack

To experience Columbia County's rich agricultural history, you can't dig much deeper than this. Philip Orchards is one of the oldest continuously run family farms in New York State, and the land has been in the Philip/Van Ness family for around 300 years.

Coming up the gravel drive you'll be treated to views of **Talavera**, the Federal-era mansion that was built in for prominent New York State Judge William W. Van Ness in 1818. Philip Orchards has the distinction of having been owned by the first female fruit grower in Columbia County, Julia Philip. The farm is now owned and run by her children. It was also the first orchard in the County to introduce Pick-Your-Own—a notion that was scoffed at by many apple growers at the time. The farm has so much history, there's even a book about it: *A Family Place: A Hudson Valley Farm, Three Centuries, Five Wars, One Family*. Presently encompassing 125 acres, Philip Orchards grows around 18 varieties of apples, including Northern Spy, Mutsu and Empire.



A visit to **Cooper's Daughter Spirits at Olde York Farm** (284

NY-23, Claverack) is a must for anyone interested in Columbia

County's farming heritage. This woman-owned, small-batch distillery is located on the property of a c.1805 cooepage and distillery. Nuts and flowers foraged around the property flavor many of the spirits, including Black Walnut Bourbon and Lilac Liqueur. Just across the street, you can't miss **Van Rensselaer's Red Mills (c.1799)**, which is one of the oldest surviving mill buildings in the County.

Directions to Next Stop: From Claverack, head south on NY-9H S toward NY-23 E. In 3.9 miles, sharp right onto U.S. 9 N. In 1 mile, turn left onto Church Road, then continue onto Greendale Road in 2.2 miles. In .9 mile, turn left onto Howe Road. Continue onto White Birch Road, and the destination will be on your left.

5 Fix Bros. Fruit Farm

215 White Birch Road, Hudson

The Fix Farm was founded in 1899 by John Henry Fix, a German immigrant. Fix began his journey in America running a coal and wood business in New York City, but grew weary of the conditions in the city and bought a farm in the Hudson Valley. Over the years, Fix and his family have gradually added acreage to the farm.



Pick a variety of apples, from sweet Fuji and Koru to tangy Honeycrisp, but don't miss the M^cIntosh. The Fix Bros. website tells the story of the farm's oldest tree, a century-old M^cIntosh that grew from one of the first seeds planted at the farm. One of the Fix brothers cut wood from the tree and sent it to a nursery to have 150 new trees made. It's called the Fix M^cIntosh, and according to the family, its taste is superior to younger M^cIntosh strains.

In the immediate area are other apple farms with their own interesting histories: **Smith Farms** (200 White Birch Road, Hudson), **Don Baker Farms** (183 Route 14, Hudson) and **Hopedale Farm** (82 Klibar Road, Hudson).

Directions to Next Stop: Head southwest on White Birch Road, then turn left onto Woodchuck Road. In 1.2 miles, turn right onto Blue Hill Road, then continue south for 4.7 miles. Continue onto County Route 8. In 1.5 miles, turn right onto County Route 19. The destination will be on your left.

6 Vosburgh Orchards

1065 County Route 19, Elizaville

Vosburgh Orchards has been in the Vosburgh family for seven generations. Gilbert J. Vosburgh purchased the property in 1839, and the agricultural stewardship continues today with Arnie Vosburgh. Through the years, the Vosburgh land has produced grain, poultry and vegetables, but tree fruit has always been a staple of the farm. You can still see the 1800s Dutch post-and-beam barn (pictured at right)—formerly occupied by Sloop Brewing—which the Vosburghs have plans to reopen in 2021. The farm recently entered into a partnership with Scenic Hudson and the Columbia Land Conservancy for the permanent preservation of the farm, ensuring it will forever remain farmland. Comprising 134 acres, the farm grows many varieties of apples, flowers, vegetables, pumpkins and hops.



Directions to Next Stop: Head north on County Route 19 until you reach U.S. 9 N, then turn right. In 2.6 miles, turn right onto Proper Road. Turn right onto NY-82, then make an immediate left onto Bells Pond Road and continue for 1.5 miles. Slight left onto Water Street Road, then turn right onto County Road 12 and the destination will be on your left.



Make a detour to see a different aspect of Columbia County agriculture at **Churchtown Dairy** (375 County Road 12). This 250-acre sustainable, biodynamic farm produces and sells cheeses and raw milk in its farm store, but the beautiful architecture and surroundings is reason enough to visit. Founder Abby Rockefeller commissioned the circular barn in 2012 with beauty in mind, employing everything from stone arches to traversing vaults to house the milking facility for the dairy's 28-cow flock. Check the schedule in advance for community events like cheese tastings and garden tours.

Directions to Next Stop: From County Road 12, turn left onto Water Street Road and continue straight for 2.3 miles. Turn left onto NY-82 S, and the destination will be on your left in .5 miles.

7 Taconic Orchards

591 NY-82, Hudson

If you've got room in your belly (or your car) for more apples, pay a visit to this century-old farm and roadside destination located just off the Taconic State Parkway. Here you'll find an abundance of apples, local produce, flowers, honey, jams and jellies, apple cider, ice cream and more. Another 100-year-old family farm, **Green Acres Farm** (226 NY-82) is located less than two miles northwest of Taconic Orchards, if your apple appetite knows no bounds.



End your farm adventure at the **West Taghkanic Diner** (1016 NY-82). This classic 1950s diner got a modern facelift and a new chef in 2019, and was recently called “America’s most exciting diner” by *New York* magazine. Feast on locally sourced foods in their beautiful garden, or take it with you to-go.

Explore more history, and consider becoming a member of the Columbia County Historical Society at www.cchsny.org

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