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Hi Hilbert,

Talk about Halloween Spooky! We were just talking about the Hubbells of Kelly Corners and the present Bob Hubbell. Well just received my Catskill Mountain News today and there is was; the story about Bob Hubbell and his Cider Press. Here is what was written in the weekly article - Catskill Catalog Oct. 27, 2020 by Bill Birns:

## catskill mountain news com

A Catskill Catalog: Oct. 27, 2010

in A Catskill Catalog by Bill Birns

Cider season is October 7 to November 7. **Bob Hubbell** told me that. I never realized cider-making time had such particular boundaries, a generally agreed-upon beginning and end: not the 6th but the 7th. We learn.

They've been making cider at Bob's place since 1863. Maybe 1864. The old diaries at the **Hubbell Farm in Kelly Corners** stop mentioning the every-autumn phrase, "took the apples to have cider made" in 1862. Must have gotten their own cider press; no longer needed to truck the farm apples out for pressing.

That's 148 years of cider making by my reckoning. And it's all been done on the same press. Gary Mead, master woodworker, rebuilt the heavy wooden base of the press in 2008, giving the old mechanical wonder years of extended life.

White pine makes the best cider press. The wood leaves no taste to mar the cider's flavor. Bob cut down a white pine on the farm. Gary sawed it, kiln-dried it, and replaced the press's wooden components piece by piece.

When my grown sons were small, school trips to the Hubbell Farm were an autumn staple. Bob would give the kids a memorable demonstration of the cider-making process; his wife, Carolyn, would set out Dixie cups of fresh sweet cider and platters of donuts for the kids. It was the very taste of fall.

A gallon of Hubbells' sweet cider in the fridge was such a common autumn staple that even local refrigerators started expecting it. Drivers on Route 30 regularly thought, "I think I'll stop and pick up a gallon of cider." The place was happening.

Then, about 10 years ago, modernity stuck its ugly nose in. E. coli outbreaks in California. Anxious concern for food safety. New government regulations to protect the public health.

E. coli can be found in deer droppings. Deer droppings can, and do, get on dropped apples. Cider is traditionally made from dropped apples. Freshly-ripe, picked apples are kept for cooking and the table. Nineteenth-century cider presses must be updated to modern antiseptic standards. Wooden bins for holding apples before pressing must be replaced with stainless steel. Plastic pipe must be installed. Fiberglass tanks must replace wooden ones. Antiseptic is the key.

I'm happy, today, not to have E. coli. But haven't we lost something? Something important. It was cost-prohibitive for Hubbell Farm to make those changes. They couldn't continue their fall retail cider operation. They shut down to the public. Bob can still do custom pressing, if you supply your own apples, and he can still press for himself. This year, so far, he's pressed about 300 gallons.

That's a far cry from the 10,000 gallons of cider **the Hubbell Brothers** pressed back in the day. Hard cider was the drink of choice among 19th-century American farmers. A fermented beverage that would keep through many winters, hard cider was an alternative to water, which could often be fouled by manure run-off in the stream, dead animals in the springhouse, and other country hazards.

Vinegar was a household necessity in the days when much of the food supply was canned at home. Cider vinegar was a staple. Bob tells of rainy fall days when farmers, their fields too wet to work, would have their apple-filled trucks and wagons lined-up a quarter-mile down the road, waiting their turn at the press. Every farm had an orchard, and every farmer had apples to be turned into cider and vinegar.

The fact that a crock of beesy cider was available, by the door, for a hardworking farmer to take a snort or two was often an added attraction of a rainy day. Beesy cider was of the current year's pressing, just old enough to start to turn, its trace of alcohol offering a kick. Anyone who's tasted sweet cider kept too long in the refrigerator will recognize the crisp accuracy of terming that slightly off-taste beesy.

Hubbells' 1860s vintage press was installed **by brothers Will and Burr Hubbell**, who purchased it from a manufacturer in Syracuse. The press was one of several profit-centers on the farm, where the brothers, **those two and brother John D**, also operated a threshing mill and sawmill, as well as a thriving crop-growing, livestock-raising farm. Always careful with money – no enterprise lasts in the same family 200 years without being careful with money – apple-pressing profits were used each year to pay the property taxes.

Originally a steam engine powered all these operations. In 1918, **Burr Hubbell** purchased and installed a Fairbanks-Morse 15 HP one-cylinder engine that, still today, powers the cider mill. That engine also powered the sawmill, threshing mill and planer.

**Bob Hubbell** remembers, as a child, his father and uncles operating the cider mill. Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays were apple-pressing days. Pressing was a three-man operation. A hired man was on the third floor taking in the apples and loading them in the drawers for drop-delivery to the press below. **Uncle John Hubbell** ran the midfloor press room, while Bob's father, Ralph, saw to the filling of the barrels on the first floor. Bob remembers, his uncle, **Harry Hubbell**, master machinist, roaming the building, monitoring the machinery.

And a lot of our grown sons and daughters remember magical autumn days at Hubbells' cider press.

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