

Victor Apple Orchard

The Apple Farm in Victor is becoming an international showplace for the latest techniques in growing high quality apples.

Recently 35 independent apple growers from the Styria region in Austria visited the Farm. The tour was led by Dr. Roger Way, research pomologist at the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, Geneva, a division of the College of Agriculture, at Cornell University. Dr. Way is an internationally acclaimed authority on apple trees and has written extensively on innovative growing practices and improved apple varieties.

The Austrian growers were interested in the trellising or "espalier" system of tying the branches of the dwarf trees to wire to improve the quality of the fruit and to protect the trees. And they were interested in the Empire, an important new variety of apple that is a cross between Red Delicious and McIntosh. Dr. Way, who helped develop the Empire at Cornell, told the group that although Empire was introduced commercially in 1966, last year more Empire was planted in New York State than any other variety including its parents, Red Delicious and McIntosh. He feels that it is a substantial improvement over both, for it combines some of the best qualities of each: color, taste, texture, shape, storage life and growing characteristics.

The group was intrigued with the pick-your-own service with the free wagon ride that the Farm offers during harvest season from mid-August thru mid-October and studied the roadside market at the Farm which sells fresh cider, donuts, honey and maple syrup from August thru mid-March or until supplies of seasonal produce are sold out.

The Austrian growers were led by Mr. Johann Gobec of the Austrian agricultural extension service, and by Mr. Rudolf Novak, an agricultural engineer. Mr. Novak and Miss Andrea Teschl translated for the group, most of whom spoke only German, as Dr. Way and Munir Baha'i, orchard manager of The Apple Farm, explained methods used here for producing excellent eating apples.

The maple syrup at the stand caused some excitement because many of the group had never heard of it and some found it difficult to believe that it came from the sap of trees. But they took several jugs of it with them to share this unique delicacy with friends in Austria.

Mr. Gobec said that the size of typical fruit-grower farms in Austria is from 2 to 50 hectares. A hectare is a metric measure of area and is equal to 2.471 acres. Their region has 3,000 hectares of apples, most of which are Golden Delicious, 200 hectares of pears, 400 hectares of black currants, 100 hectares of peaches and 150 hectares of elderberry. The Styria region of Austria, of which Graz, near Vienna, is the capital, grows 80 per cent of the apples in Austria. Although most of their apples are consumed in Austria, they have just begun to export some to Germany and Italy.

The Apple Farm was their first stop after landing in New York direct from Austria, and

the only farm to visit in the Rochester area. They were scheduled to visit the Cornell Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, then on for sightseeing at Niagara Falls and Toronto before

visiting farms in Michigan and then returning home from Chicago.

The members of the Farm staff were impressed with the warmth and friendliness of the Austrian guests.

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