

ARTS & VARIETY

Afton Apple Orchard Review

BY RICHARD MAHLE



Photo Credits: Richard Mahle

ARE YOU LOOKING for a great place to grab some fall treats before winter hits? If so, I recommend Afton Apple Orchard over at 14421 90th St S, Hastings, MN 55033. Afton Apples is a family-owned business that welcomes all ages and markets accessible ways to get their product around Minnesota. Admission to the orchard costs seven dollars for someone five years or older and five dollars for anyone under four years old. The drive from CSP to the orchard is about 30 minutes depending on the day and time.

Afton Apple Orchard features amusing fall activities from August to the end of October. The orchard has multiple activities scattered around the grounds such as a hayride, a petting zoo, apple picking, raspberry picking, a children's play area, a corn maze, and a gift shop. On my visit to the orchard, I partook in many of the fall activities offered. The hayride goes around the premises with stops where guests can hop on or off to pick apples or raspberries. Despite the grounds being built on a hill, the ride was smooth and ran through the grounds every 15 or so minutes. The children's play area was pretty

large, it's a great location if anyone wants to burn off some stress or have younger family members that love the outdoors. I was unable to get to the petting zoo, corn maze, and the raspberry picking, but there were people who expressed how fun and relaxing it was. However, I was able to go and pick apples. The orchard places trees in different sections. I grabbed some Honey Gold and Haralson apples to make a pie.

The shop is full of great products and even has a small restaurant; the shop is open through November. Visitors can purchase full sacks of apples, cooking ware, fall trinkets and decorations, frozen fruits, gourds, jams, jellies, sauces, and more. The restaurant has a limited menu, but you can get a small meal or dessert for less than \$10. I picked up a half gallon of apple cider and some apple cider donuts. Both were fantastic and are great snacks to munch on in October.

I was able to get an interview with Sarah Femling, daughter of Afton Apple Orchard owner, Cindy Femling. When asked about her thoughts on the orchard, she responded, "We never take for granted that people choose to come to this farm. We try to strive to make it the best experience for any age." Sarah also spoke about how, "It's cool that people choose to be here." This really shows how the Femlings value customers that choose Afton Apples over all the other Minnesota apple orchards.

The final words of advice she left me with was that anyone who comes through the shop should pick up their Regent apples because those are the best options. Ultimately, if you're looking for a place to pick up some great products from a family-owned business at a reasonable price, you should head over to Afton Apple Orchard.

151st Anniversary of Fredrick Melius Christiansen

BY RICHARD MAHLE

FREDRIK MELIUS Christiansen was a Norwegian-born choral conductor in the Lutheran choral tradition. When he arrived in New York, Christiansen did not speak any English. Regardless, he hopped onto a train all the way to Oakland, Minnesota. Once he arrived in Oakland, he found his uncle and began looking for work as a musician. He arrived in Minneapolis and went church hopping in hopes for work. Christiansen failed to find work as a church musician, but he received a letter from his brother which led him to Washburn. In 1892, a male quartet from Augsburg College in Minneapolis performed at the church in Marinette. One of the performers encouraged all of the young men to enroll as students at Augsburg. This impressed F. Melius and he enrolled in college at 21 years old.

An excerpt from St Olaf's website on F. Melius Christiansen stated that "During his first year in Minneapolis he finished the prescribed freshman courses at Augsburg [University], directed a male chorus there and taught classes in choral singing. Then [Christiansen] entered Northwestern Conservatory of Music where for two years he studied theory and counterpoint,

graduating with highest honors. At various times he also directed a number of choruses in the city, one of which was 'Nordlyset,' — and served as organist in several Lutheran churches [...] He was kept busy though his work was varied and scattered [...] in July 1897 he returned to Marinette, a girl whom he had met there when he directed the church choir. After the wedding, with his young wife he left America for a two years' stay at the Conservatory in Leipzig, Germany."

Throughout his life he went around and taught many students while composing music himself. Another excerpt from St. Olaf's website states how "He began composing as a boy in Larvik- These include six or seven volumes of Song Service, a number of volumes of Easy Lyric Songs and the well-known St. Olaf Choir Series, all of which have been published by Augsburg Publishing House. Some of his latest compositions have been published by the Neil Kjos Music Co. of Chicago. A cantata, Wondrous Things the Lord Hath Done, words by President J. N. Kildahl, was written by Dr. Christiansen on the occasion of the church merger in 1917."

Christiansen was a brilliant composer and teacher. He earned many achievements in his career, one of these was when he received the opportunity to be the first college music ensemble to conduct a tour for King Haakon VII of Norway in 1906. He also had a lifetime achievement award named after him at St. Olaf College, and the American Choral Directors Association of Minnesota created an endowment fund in his name.

This concert is happening at the Minnesota Orchestra Hall. Tickets can be found on Concordia's website, Googling the 151st Anniversary Concert, or on the Minnesota Orchestra website. Choirs from Augsburg, Concordia-Moorhead, Concordia University, St. Paul, Gustavus, National Lutheran, and St. Olaf will combine and perform a newly commissioned work "Home" by Rene Clausen, Emeritus Conductor of The Concordia Choir. If you want to support members of the Concordia choir, take the time to come out and see them perform on November 20, at 2:00 PM and 6:30 PM.