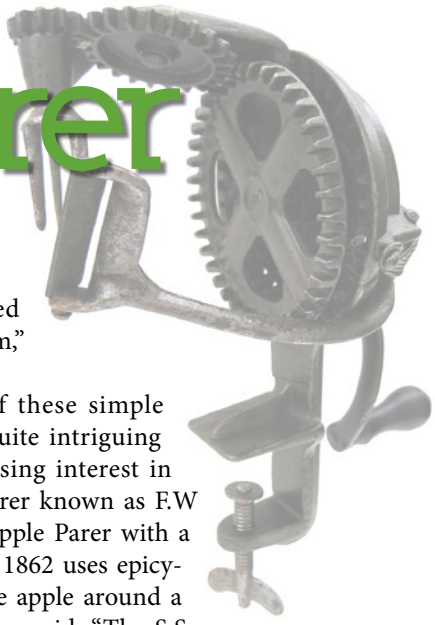
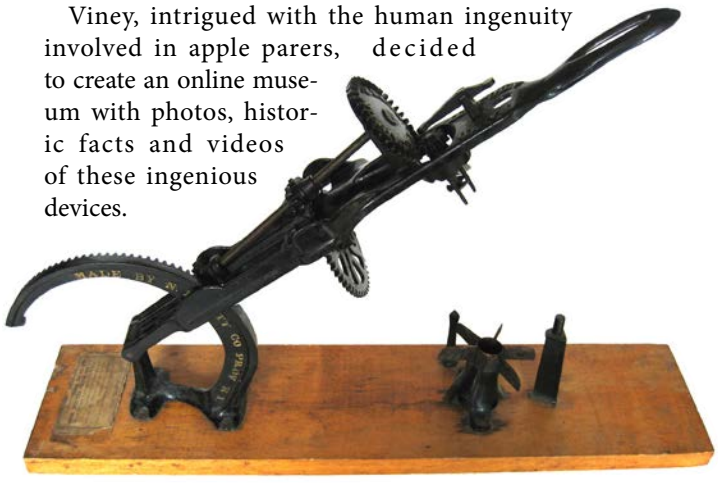
The Ever-Evolving Apple Parer



Mike Viney's curiosity about the evolving designs of apple parers began after reading the article, "There's a Fascination in Apple Parers" by Marion Levy, which appeared in the second edition of Linda Campbell's *300 Years of Kitchen Collectibles*.

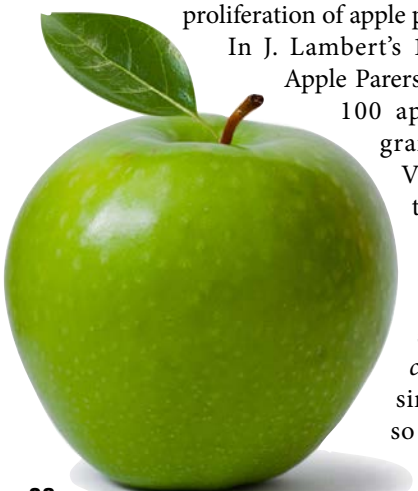
"I also have an early memory of seeing Levy on a PBS news program that highlighted early apple parer designs he had collected and categorized," Viney said. "My wife and I bought and sold antiques during college and this experience sparked my interest in collecting."

Viney, intrigued with the human ingenuity involved in apple parers, decided to create an online museum with photos, historic facts and videos of these ingenious devices.



"During the 18th and 19th centuries, apples were a critical winter staple in the United States. The apple was also a major U.S. export. During the fall season communities gathered in social get-togethers called apple bees to prepare large quantities of apples for winter storage. Preparing enough apples was a monumental task. Farmers created homemade apple paring devices made of wood and sometimes iron to make the job easier. Some of these early designs employed gears made of wood."

Viney continued, "As America underwent industrialization during the 19th century, the use of iron to produce manufactured interchangeable parts acted as a catalyst for the proliferation of apple parer designs."



In J. Lambert's 1991 article, "Some Rare Apple Parers," he notes that more than 100 apple parer patents were granted from 1850 to 1890. Viney, a secondary science teacher for the past 27 years, has collected much of this information for the general public at his website, *appleparermuseum.com*. "Apple paring was a singular problem solved in so many different ways and undoubtedly catalyzed by a free market system," Viney added.

And the history of these simple machine designs is quite intriguing to anyone with a passing interest in gears. "A turntable parer known as F.W Hudson's Improved Apple Parer with a patent date of Dec. 2, 1862 uses epicyclic gears to rotate the apple around a stationary blade," Viney said. "The S.S. Hersey with patent dates of June 18, 1861 and Aug. 30, 1864 has a gear mechanism that allows the paring arm to switch between two bevel gears rotating in opposite directions. Thus, apples can be pared in two directions. The Bergner lathe apple parer with a patent date of Jan. 9, 1872, utilizes a rack and pinion gear to move the paring arm over the rotating apple (George Bergner was a gunsmith who served as a Union soldier in the Civil War)."

Viney receives many inquiries from his website, particularly from collectors seeking the estimated value of certain apple parers. It also attracts the interest of websites, magazines and publishers seeking apple parer photographs.

With so much information on the website dedicated to gears, it came as a bit of a shock to hear that his current science curriculum *doesn't* include a section on gearing mechanisms. "During my entire career, I have not helped students explore gears," Viney said. "My current curriculum does include simple machines, but I have to add information about gears."

We won't hold it against him, since Viney has put together a website that celebrates science, engineering *and* includes plenty of gears.

"It is my personal belief that those of us in industrialized nations live in a world of prepared immediacy. Everything from fine fitting clothes to food to technology is served to us on demand," Viney said. "How do companies know what sizes to make for clothing, what processes were involved in making my cheeseburger, how does my car engine work? For many technological devices, gears are a part of this mystery."