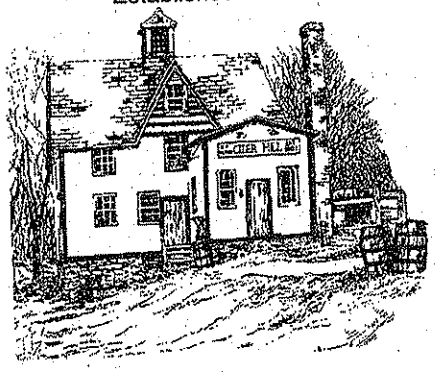
B.F. CLYDES CIDER MILL

Established 1881



"Last of the Steam Powered Cider Mills"

We are a small manufacturer of Hard Cider and Apple Wines. We are here today to ask for your support to help us continue to grow as a small business in the state of Connecticut.

By amending the existing Manufacturer of Cider Permit to allow the sale of our products over the internet would open another window of opportunity for the small business in Connecticut.

I ask you to please look favorably upon our request today so that we may continue to enjoy growth and prosperity in the state of Connecticut.

Please support bill number HB 5116.

Thank You,

Harold and Annette Miner
Owners

160 North Stonington Road • Mystic, Connecticut 06355 • 860-536-3354

Made in America

Juicing Apples for Generations

by MARTI ATTOUN
Contributing Editor

Fresh-pressed apples perfume the air at B.F. Clyde's Cider Mill in Old Mystic, Conn. (pop. 3,025), where the Clyde family has squeezed the fruit into a popular beverage each fall since 1898.

"We have four generations working here," says Amy Monk, 32, whose great-great-grandfather Benjamin Franklin Clyde started the cider business in 1881. "This mill is part of who we are."

Four generations operate the family-owned business in Old Mystic, Conn.

Before building his own mill, Clyde pressed apples at nearby mills to ferment into hard cider, a common alcoholic drink of the day. Clyde's is the oldest producer of hard cider in the United States and operates the nation's last steam-powered cider mill.

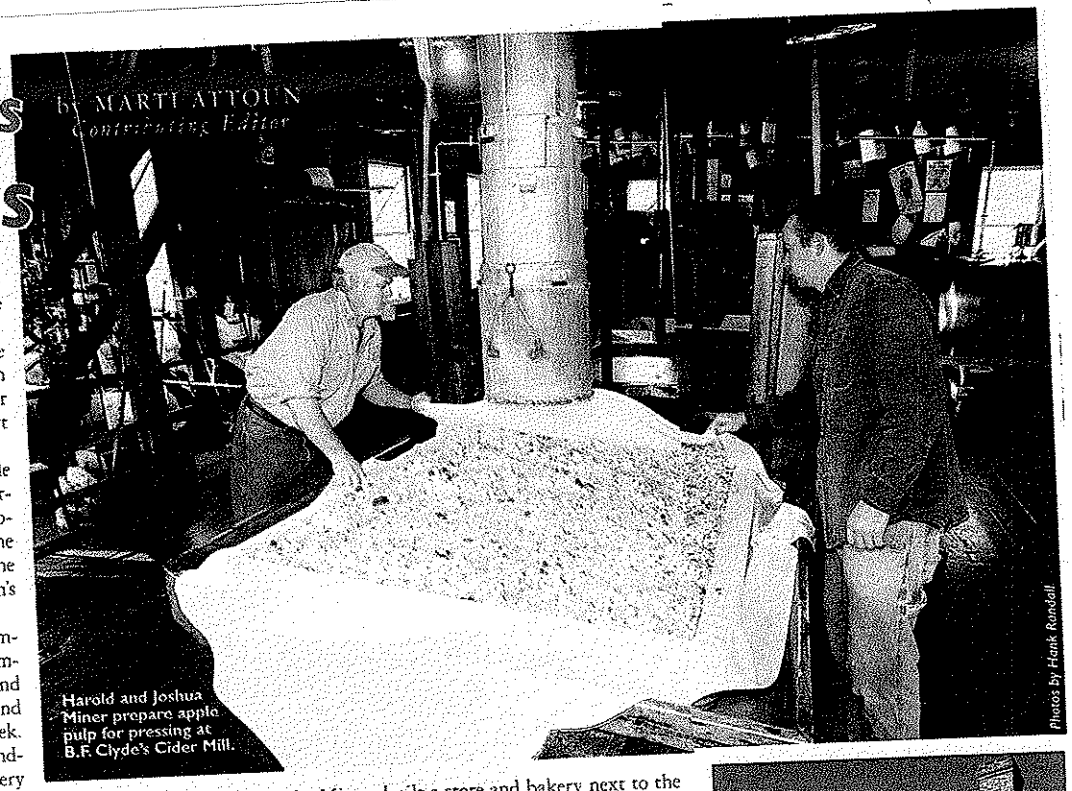
From September through December, the century-old machinery rumbles to life as John Bucklyn, 79, and his son-in-law, Harold Miner, 50, and grandson, Joshua Miner, 27, crush 50 tons of apples into cider each week. Customers linger inside the barn-like building and marvel at the surroundings: wooden plank floors, polished antique counter and dozens of crockery jugs hanging overhead. Farmers once swapped the jugs for cider.

An oil-fired steam engine powers the pulleys and belts that transport apples from a truck to the second story inside the mill, where they're dropped into a grinder and chopped to bits. The apple pulp falls into a wooden rack lined with a strainer cloth, where a 100-ton wooden press squeezes out the juice. The juice flows into a refrigeration tank, is pasteurized and bottled upon purchase.

With the exception of pasteurization, a heating process started 10 years ago to destroy potentially harmful bacteria, "we do everything just the way it was 110 years ago," Bucklyn says.

The family-owned mill is such an outstanding example of the cider mills that dotted rural New England in the 1800s that it was designated a National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers in 1994.

Bucklyn's grandmother, Abby Clyde, gave him the cider mill in 1946 when he graduated from high school. Likewise, Bucklyn and his wife, Barbara, passed the mill down to their daughter, Annette Miner, and her husband, Harold, in 1997. The next year, the Miners built a store and bakery next to the mill on the foundation of the Clydes' home, which burned in the 1930s.



Harold and Joshua Miner prepare apple pulp for pressing at B.F. Clyde's Cider Mill.

Photos by Hank Randall

Family history and stories—such as feisty Grandma Clyde being arrested, though never charged, for bootlegging in the 1920s and navigating the country roads in a horse-drawn wagon on buying trips for cider apples—are cherished. Today, the Miners buy apples from orchards in the Hudson Valley region in New York, and each variety—whether Honey Crisp or Ginger Gold—produces a distinct flavor of cider.

About 20,000 gallons of sweet cider and 7,000 gallons of hard cider, which is aged for a year in oak barrels, are made and sold each season. Hard cider is sold in plastic half-gallon jugs for $9 and gallon jugs for $18.

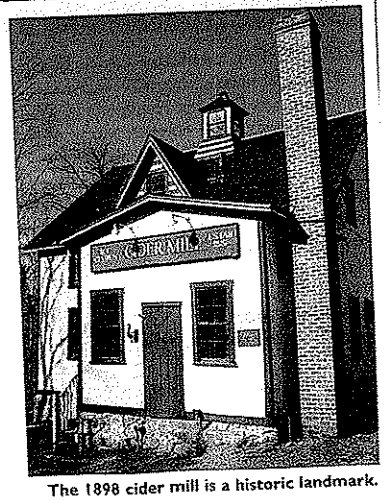
On weekends, customers stand in long lines to buy sweet cider by the cup for 80 cents and in larger sizes, such as a gallon jug, for $5.25. Some folks sip their fresh cider and eat hot cider doughnuts and apple turnovers at picnic tables beside the spring-fed brook meandering through the property.

"When you think 'fall,' you think of Clyde's," says customer Ada Elmer, 59, of Stonington, Conn. (pop. 1,032). For 35 years, she and her husband, Bob, have visited Clyde's after church on Sundays to buy fresh cider. "It's a part of life that hasn't changed."

Bob adds, "Clyde's is a hand-me-down family business, the epitome of that." He also admires the family's work ethic.

The youngest worker, Sarah Monk, 8, rings up sales at the cash register and counts back change. Her mother, Amy, once stood on paint cans to reach the register and perform those same duties.

Amy's mother, Annette, 51, gets misty-eyed when she talks about her pride in being the current owner and caretaker of the family business. "My great-grandpa went to work every day and put his hands on that press," she says while making a batch of doughnuts. "We'll never change anything."



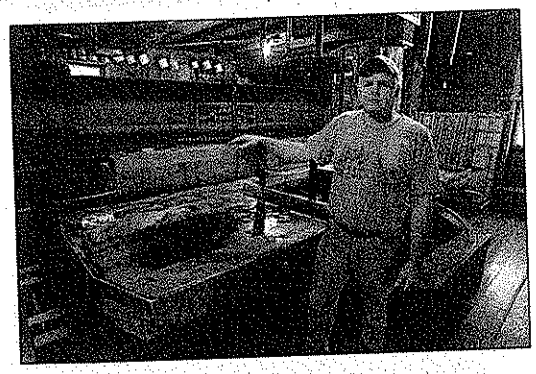
The 1898 cider mill is a historic landmark.

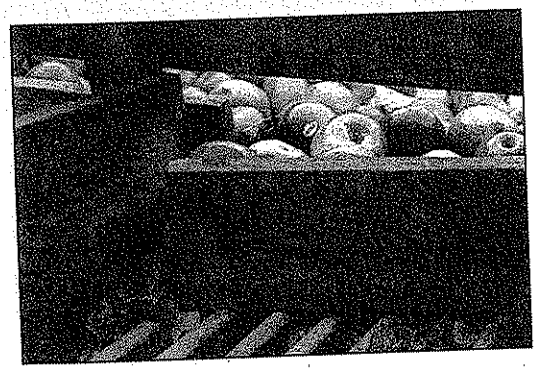
Apples produce sweet and hard cider.

To view more photos, click on this story at *americanprofile.com*.

All gussied up

Clyde's Cider Mill bottles a variety of apple wines





By **DAVID COLLINS**
Day Staff Writer

THIS IS THE TIME OF YEAR, when most of the region's seasonal food businesses, from hot dog stands to clam shacks, are winding down or already closed.

Not so at Clyde's Cider Mill in Old Mystic, where high season is fall, not summer, and things are just getting busy.

The bakery trays in the mill's store are filled now every day with cider doughnuts and apple pies and pumpkin breads. And of course, there's plenty of sweet cider on tap.

For this early part of the cider season, though, the family that has run Clyde's for generations concentrates not so much on the fresh sweet cider that visitors will carry home in plastic gallon jugs, but rather on the hard ciders and wines that won't be sold until next year.

Wine making is an increasingly important part of Clyde's business, and in recent years its bottled wines have matured and become much more popular, says Harold Miner, the cider mill's official winemaker.

Clyde's has always made hard cider, and sold it the same plastic jugs as the seasonal sweet cider. But they began bottling it about seven years ago, and have been honing their skills at making apple wines ever since.

The cider mill now offers a variety of its own wines, with flavors like apple raspberry, apple peach, apple blueberry, spiced apple or a special dark concoction, made with raisins, called Blackout.

The wines are sold only on the premises, at $9.98 a bottle. There are free tastings from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on fall weekends.

Miner says he is amazed how far Clyde's has come from its first attempts at wine making.

"That first batch was just terrible. We are not really big drinkers," he says. "But we kept learning and changing things, and then I hired a wine consultant to keep teaching us and tweaking things and showing us what we should be doing differently."

See **BOTTLES** *page* **D2**

Above, Clyde's Cider Mill in Old Mystic, famous for its steam-powered cider press, has branched out into the wine-making business, now offering several varieties.

***Top left,** Harold Miner, the cider mill's official winemaker, stands near the old wooden press as, **below left,** apples wait to be let down the chute into the press.*

TIM MARTIN
The Day

Bottles classier than plastic jugs

From **D1**

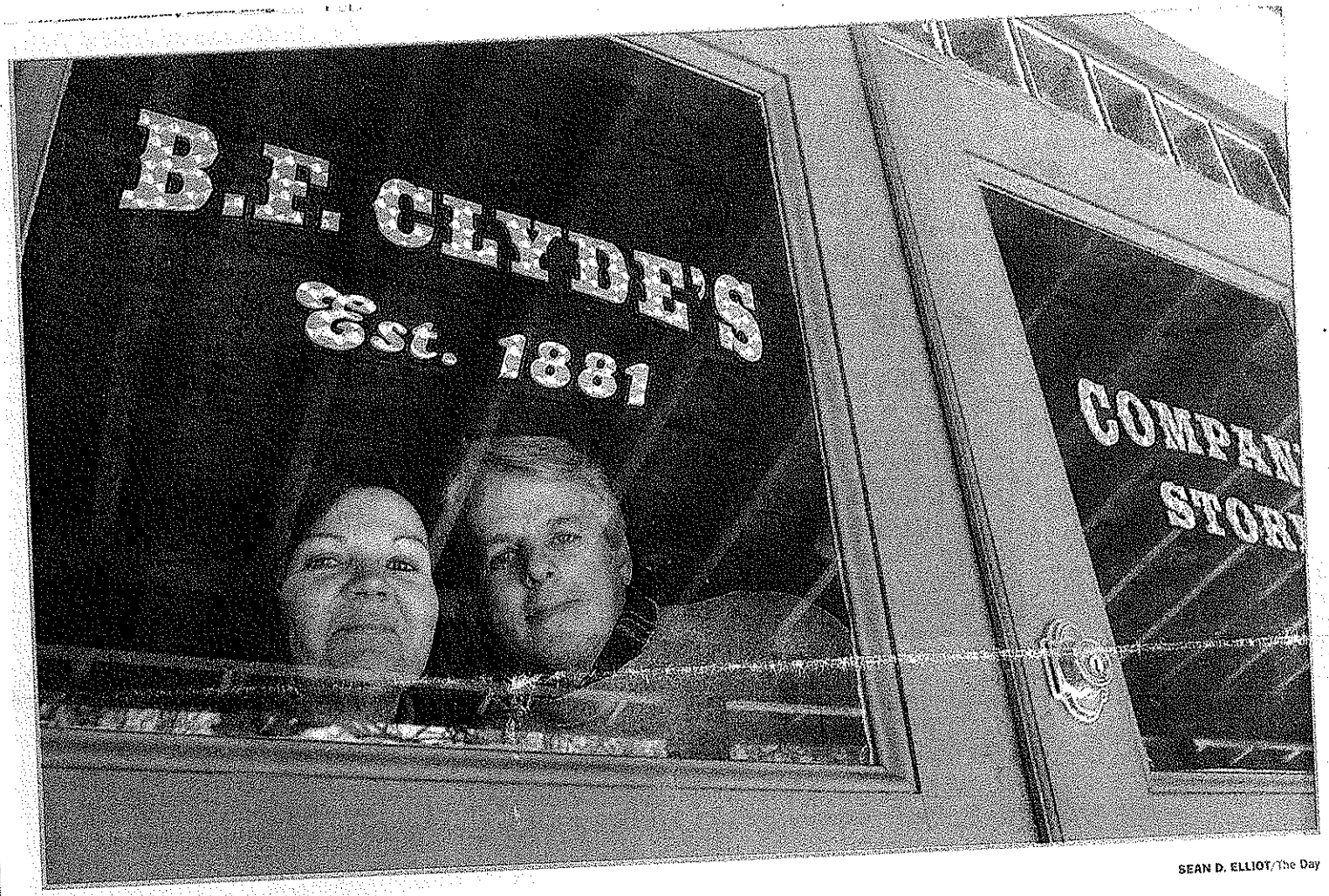
Miner begins the process at this time of year, starting fermentation in 1,000-gallon containers. Eventually it is moved again to containers on racks, to lose the sediment. Then it is aged in 50-gallon oak barrels. The barrels are bought from bourbon makers, after they've been used once, and they lend some vanilla and charcoal flavor. Clyde's uses them only once.

Eventually, after it has aged for a year, the hard cider can be sold in half-gallon gallon plastic containers. For the bottles, it is all filtered again and then each bottle is individually corked and labeled.

The bottles have been popular with tourists, because they are easier to take home if you're traveling, Miner says.

"It's also just a little nicer," he says. "You wouldn't bring a plastic (jug) to someone's house for dinner, but you can bring this."

theday.com **Food** > Go online to the Special Reports section for an archive of recipes that have appeared in The Day.



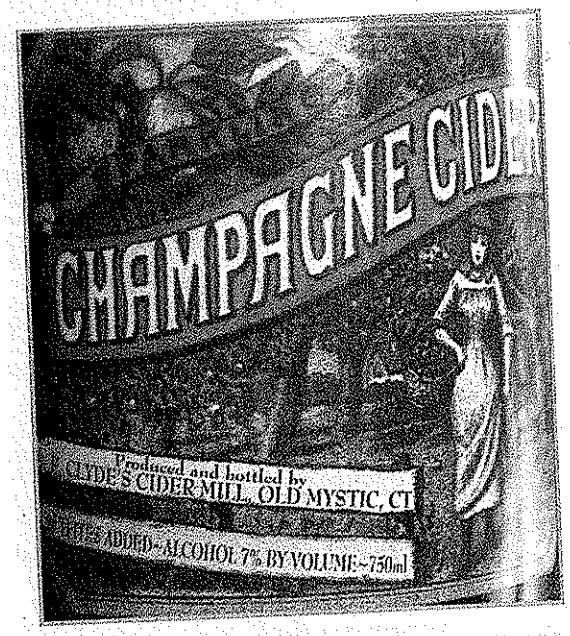
SEAN D. ELLIOT/The Day

Above, Annette and Harold Miner, owners of Clyde's Cider Mill in Old Mystic, at the window of their store.

Below, the label from a bottle of sparkling champagne cider produced at Clyde's.

Bubbling Over *with* Pride

Local businesses helping sell the region to travel writers



By **KAREN KAPLAN**
Day Staff Writer

Annette and Harold Miner, owners of B.F. Clyde's Cider Mill in Old Mystic, think it's great that locals adore their tart, crisp apple champagne, one of the old-timey mill's newest products.

But they're also hoping to get people from Vermont, New Hampshire, New York, New Jersey, Maryland and beyond to hanker after the sparkling stuff, not to mention their regular fruit and apple wines and hard and sweet ciders.

That's why the Miners grabbed a dozen or so bottles of their special bubbly — which again will be available to the public this fall — and joined up with a couple dozen other owners and managers of area attractions for a recent trip to New York City.

There, at the tony Oceana Restaurant & Bar, a couple blocks off Fifth Avenue, the group hyped the region and their own offerings to about 20 travel and feature writers from national magazines such as Fodor's Publications, Chocolatier, Woman's Day, AAA Car & Travel and Modern Bride.

The Miners, whose cider mill was one of two operations chosen to represent southeastern Connecticut wineries, set up shop just outside the restaurant's second-floor banquet room, offering slender flutes of the sparkling wine to the writers.

Also part of the wine-tasting venture was Stonington Vineyards, whose classics and varietals have pleased regional palates for years.

See **SOUTHEASTERN** *page* **E8**

Southeastern Connecticut attractions touted to travel writers

From **E1**

The jaunt, organized by the region's public tourism office, Mystic & More, was the agency's fifth tourism press luncheon and is one of its largest annual efforts to generate PR, or print and media coverage of southeastern Connecticut.

This year, even in just a matter of weeks since the press event, the outcome is better than ever, said Deborah Donovan, Mystic & More's marketing director.

"We're seeing more immediate results," she said of the press luncheon, which cost less than $8,000, coming in significantly under budget, as well as under last year's $10,000 expenditure.

Donovan said Ladies Home Journal wants general information while the Car and Travel writer wants information on Norwich theaters and the Lyme arts scene, and writers from Modern Bride and Fodor's will be arriving soon for a "fam" tour, or familiarization visit.

"The Fodor's writer (William Travis) said he had no idea that there was anything up this way except for Mystic Seaport," Donovan said. "He wasn't even clear that it was different from the town (of Stonington). He's excited."

Travis visited southeastern Connecticut Monday and Tuesday, Donovan said. And another writer is now working on a piece for Off Shore magazine about New London's waterfront park.

'An acceleration of interest'

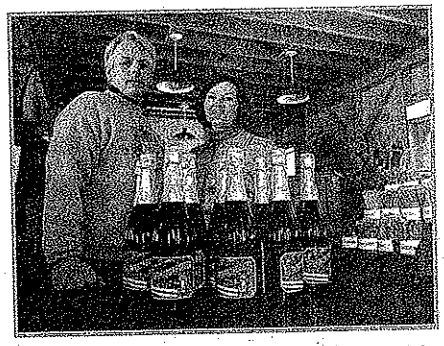
"There's an acceleration of interest," said Donovan. She said because the agency has given the press luncheon for five years now, it's becoming a known quantity among New York-based travel and feature writers, more of whom are deciding to attend and like what they hear and see.

Mystic & More also is more particular about its invitation list for the event, Donovan said. Rather than sending 40 or 50 invitations to a bunch of magazines that may or may not cover travel and leisure, this year the agency carefully researched potential recipients of an invitation and then spoke with them on the phone before sending the invitation.

"We found out if they were the right person," Donovan said. "We did some heavy-duty qualifying."

She also believes that 9/11 has at least in part prompted the surge of interest in southeastern Connecticut as a travel destination.

"People want to travel closer to home," she said. "People who were writing about places further afield are now writing about places nearby. And we have a lot to offer."



Harold and Annette Miner, owner of Clyde's Cider Mill in Old Mystic, with bottles of their champagne cider.

SEAN D. ELLIOT
The Day

Travis, of Fodor's, agreed with Donovan that 9/11 has caused people from the New York area to want to travel closer to home.

"We're looking at what your area has to offer," he said. "We're thinking about doing a Connecticut pocket guide next year. We want to expand our coverage. New England — and Connecticut — has a lot to offer."

In between handing out champagne flutes, the Miners said they were delighted for the opportunity to show off their product to a new audience. The couple, who took over Clyde's from Annette's father, Jack Bucklyn, is the fourth generation to run the mill.

"For the price of the alcohol and a meal, we have this chance," said Harold Miner. "We feel it's important to promote our area. We don't expect big results, we just want to try to make people aware it's not just wines and hard liquor" in southeastern Connecticut.

It's the first time Clyde's has been promoted outside of the region, Annette said. It was time to paint the mill and its products on a broader canvas.

"We have two kids," said Harold. "We want to keep them involved, and to expand is the only way to do that."

Besides the product, the couple said, the mill itself is a fun place to visit on a short autumn jaunt to the region.

"A lot of travel writers do stories on day trips, and we're a wonderful place for a day trip," Annette said. "We're just hoping for some press."

A few feet away, Matthew Carney, wholesale sales manager for Stonington Vineyards, was also setting up rows of wineglasses on a table and filling them with different types of wine. It was also the vineyard's first time at the Mystic & More press luncheon, he said, but he agreed with the Miners that it was a great opportunity to publicize the region's offerings.

"Yes, you can make high quality wines in Connecticut, and yes, the soil and growing situation is just like Europe," he said with a grin.

Carney said the vineyard isn't seeking press from New York writers telling New Yorkers to buy the wine in New York, because it's impossible — under its current license, the vineyard is not allowed to distribute outside of Connecticut. Like Clyde's, the vineyard wants people who might visit southeastern Connecticut to come by for a visit and maybe buy a bottle or two of a great vintage.

"We want to show the diversity that Mystic has to offer," Carney said. "We're positioning the vineyard as a place for readers to go when they're in southeastern Connecticut."

Donovan said the agency is considering arranging for another wine-tasting for next year's press luncheon, thanks to this year's success with it.

"It really added something to the event and gave people something else that they might not have known about this area," she said.

Saverio Mancini, a public relations manager for Mohegan Sun, said he's talking up the casino to the writers as a well-equipped meetings facility.

"Southeastern Connecticut is becoming a meetings destination," he said. "We're not pitching our entertainment value, we're really focusing on the meetings aspect."

Prior to last fall, Mancini said, when the casino's $1.1 billion Sunburst expansion opened, Mohegan Sun didn't have as much to offer for corporate meetings.

"But now we do," he said. "People want to hear about this, and we're close to home, too. You don't have to go cross-country for a meeting or a business retreat."

A few area tourism business representatives gave brief presentations to the group during dessert. There were representatives from Foxwoods Resort Casino, Olde Mistick Village, the Mystic Chamber of Commerce, the Cross Sound Ferry, the Old Lyme Inn, Mystic Seaport, the Mystic Aquarium & Institute for Exploration, the Norwich Navigators and the U.S. Coast Guard Museum.

Penny Parsekian, executive director of New London Main Street, a group whose mission is to promote the city, told the group that few visitors know about the seaside city's charms and are shocked when they first experience them.

"'I cant believe this is here,' is the quote of the day in New London," she said. "We don't have T-shirt or shell shops or shipwreck bars. What we do have is authentic coastal New England, the childhood home of Eugene O'Neill, wonderful historic buildings and a burgeoning arts community. And many festivals."

Paul Connor, a partner in the Steamboat Inn and the Whaler Inn in Mystic and the Valiant, a charter yacht on the Mystic River, told the group that the Whaler is rebuilding the former Hoxie House hotel. The new construction on the south side of East Main Street is on the site of the former Bravo Café and replaces the building that was destroyed in a long-ago fire.

Connor said the new hotel will have eight upscale rooms.

Jeannie Ingram, assistant curator for the Slater Memorial Museum in Norwich, said this was the first time a museum representative has traveled out of town to promote Slater. People who aren't from Norwich, she said, probably don't know that displays at Slater, which is on the Norwich Free Academy campus, include full-size plaster casts of ancient sculpture; art from around the world and ever-changing feature exhibits.

"We're trying to break out and get more exposure," Ingram said. "We've been so insular. People don't know about us or think they can't come in. We need to make people aware that we are another tourism destination. People think Mystic is amazing. They think the Florence Griswold Museum (in Old Lyme) is amazing. We want people to know we're amazing, too."

TRAVEL

Tradition lives on at Old Cider Mill

By Jackie Finch
Hoosier Times

OLD MYSTIC, Conn. — Autumn leaves crunch underfoot. The smell of apple cider fills the air. Folks laden with boxes of freshly baked doughnuts, apple pie and pumpkin bread bustle to their cars.

At Clyde's Cider Mill, the tradition of the season means a visit to the oldest steam-powered cider mill in the United States. Many of these shoppers can remember coming here as children. Now they are bringing their own young ones.

For Amy Monk, the cider mill in Old Mystic, Conn., has been a part of her life for as long as she can remember. It was her great-great grandfather, Benjamin Franklin Clyde, who established the business in 1881.

"I grew up here," Monk said. "So did my two brothers. We have many happy memories of being here."

As toddlers, Monk and her two brothers, Joshua and John, were safely ensconced in a playpen in the corner while their parents worked at the cider mill. "We just had a ball playing here," Monk said. "And we ate a lot of apples."

A wooden post in the cider mill traces the growth of the three children.

"They would measure and mark us on here," Monk said, pointing out her height as a 6-year-old. "They measured me every year from 1974 to 1992, when I got in high school. Then I guess they thought I quit growing."

At age 7, Monk was making change for customers. Before that, she did whatever chores she could around the old mill. "I would label the jugs, put stuff on shelves, just whatever I was big enough to do," she said.

Now Monk's 8-year-old daughter, Sarah, runs the cash register after school and 7-year-old Brian is the shelf stocker. "It's a family thing," Monk said.

JACKIE FINCH | HOOSIER TIMES

Amy Monk offers tastings at Clyde's Cider Mill in Old Mystic, Conn. The mill is the oldest steam-powered cider mill in the United States.

Listed as a National Historic Landmark, the mill uses an 1897 screw press to produce its cider. Apples roll down a long wooden chute and are then crushed to extract the liquid. The juice that's produced is either sold immediately as sweet apple cider or preserved in wooden barrels where it ferments, transforming into what's called hard cider — a tangy alcoholic drink that was once as popular as beer.

At one time, Monk says, most farmers had a small cider mill. "The first settlers that came here had them. Just about everybody made cider in those days."

But as small farms decreased, so did the cider mills. Clyde's is a rare survivor and continues to produce its cider the same way it has for more than a century.

"We use fresh apples and we press every couple of days so we know that our cider is fresh," Monks said. "Cider only lasts seven to 14 days, so we want people to drink it right away."

Open from Sept. 1 to Dec. 31, Clyde's Cider Mill carries other locally produced products, such as Johnny Cake Corn Meal, fudge, jams, jellies, honey and maple syrup. Around this time of year, the mill is busy with people placing orders for doughnuts and pies for Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners.

"My mom makes the apple cider doughnuts and has been doing it for years," Monk said. "People really love those and they like the pies — apple pie, apple crumb pie, raspberry and strawberry rhubarb pie."

With a pile of pumpkins out front, a wagonload of apples in the yard and the counter set for free apple wine tasting, Clyde's is a popular stop.

"Sometimes we have a line that goes clear out the door and all the way to the parking lot," Monk said.

Hanging from the mill rafters is a collection of old jugs that was started by her grandmother, Monk said. "She always liked the jugs, and the word got out that if you brought in a jug for her collection, she would give you a free jug of hard cider."

Seeing her children working at the mill — along with her parents, grandparents, brother, aunt and uncle — is a wonderful feeling, Monk said. "I think that having the cider mill has made our family closer."

HOOSIER TIMES

If you go

WHERE: Clyde's Cider Mill in Old Mystic, Conn.

WHEN: Open Sept. 1 to Dec. 31.

MORE INFORMATION: Call Clyde's Cider Mill at 860-536-3354.

A Family Business for Nearly 125 Years

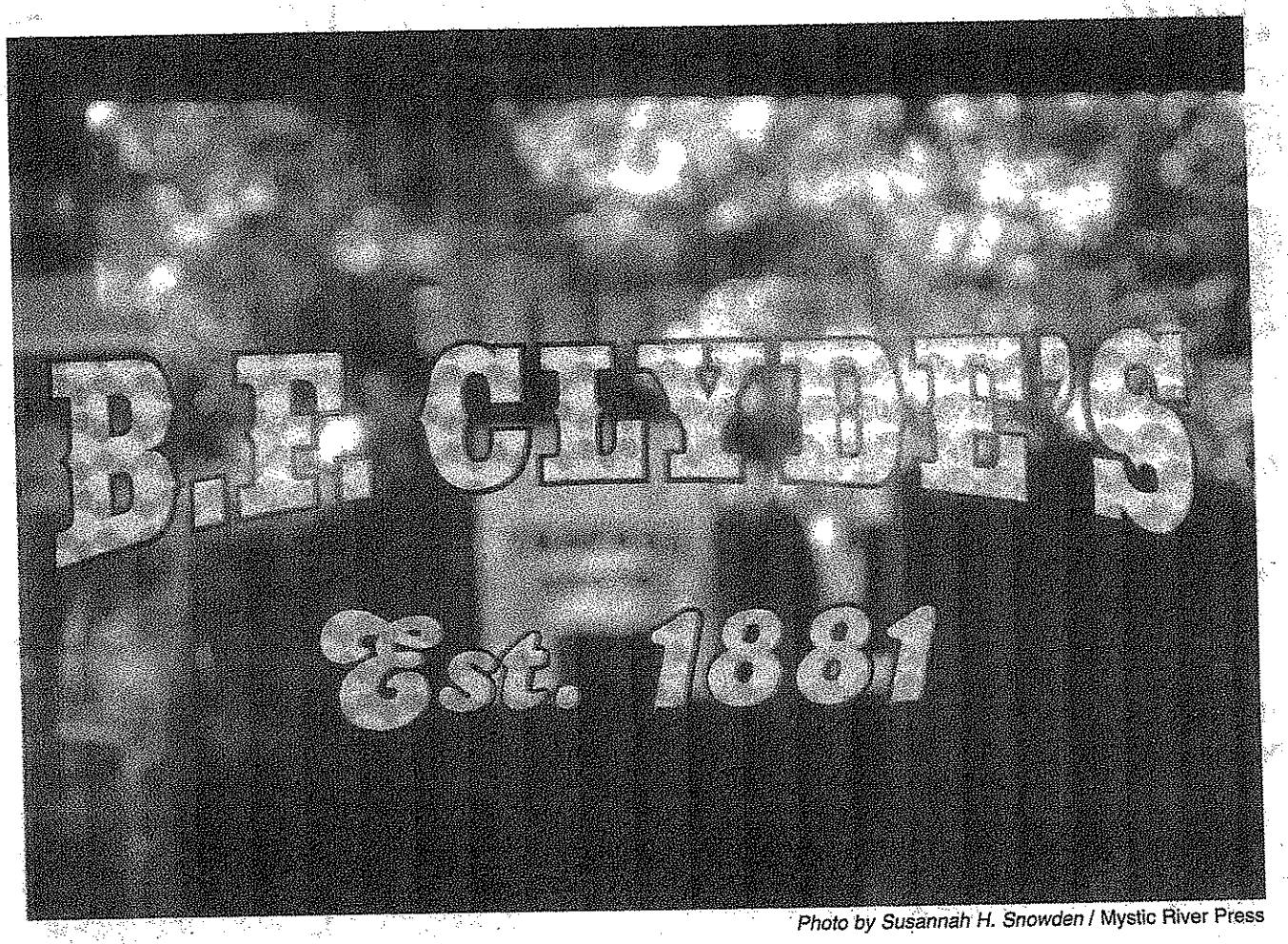


Photo by Susannah H. Snowden / Mystic River Press

B.F. Clyde's is a local institution

Mom & Pop
SHOP LOCALLY

By Alexa Strunk
Mystic River Press

B.F. Clyde's Cider Mill is a Mystic staple, locals know all about their fresh sweet and hard cider as well as the plethora of baked goods, jams and jellies. It's a part of Mystic history; the mill has been in working order since 1881, when Benjamin Franklin Clyde began making and selling hard cider and vinegar.

Today's cider is produced the same way, and the mill is owned by the same family.

See **B.F. Clyde's**, page B17

Photo by Alexa Strunk / Mystic River Press

The B.F. Clyde family today, from left: **Joshua Miner, Amy Monk, Annette Miner, Harold Miner.**

B.F. Clyde's

Continued from page B1

hard cider enjoyed record sales this year and the plastic jugs have already sold out, although the wine is still available.

The mill is the part of the business that has changed the least over the 124 years that Benjamin Clyde's family has been making cider. The actual building began a little way down the road, but in 1898 B.F. Clyde purchased plans and built a steam powered cider press on the current site.

The founder produced mostly hard cider and vinegar when he began. Sweet cider was not a possibility, because the cider would continue to ferment and become vinegar without refrigeration. Fortunately for all of their local patrons, the Bucklyns added sweet cider in the 1970s.

In order to produce the vast amounts of cider, B.F. Clyde's Cider Mill uses a lot of apples—more than 70,000 tons a week during their prime season. They used to purchase all of their apples locally, but when the real estate boom hit ten years ago most of the orchards sold out to developments. As a result, Clyde's now ships its apples in from Hudson Valley, New York.

The apples are stored on site, and are hand sorted twice before being washed and finally pureed into a type of apple sauce. The sauce is put into nylon bags and pressed for juice.

The press runs almost identically to B.F. Clyde's business 124 years ago, the only differences being newer pumps and the steam power running on oil instead of coal or wood.

B.F. Clyde's Cider Mill will be closing up for the season at the end of December, so be sure to head over and treat yourself to some hot mulled cider and caring customer service from the whole family.