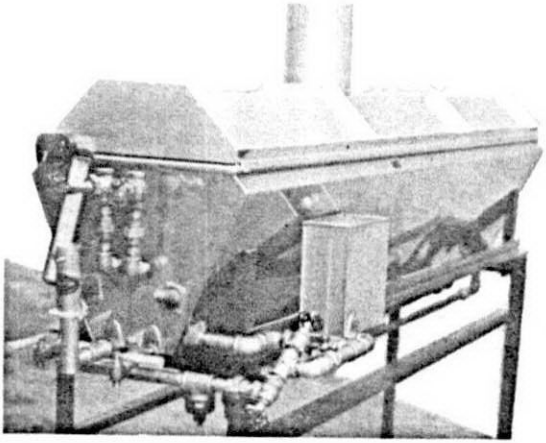
NATIONAL MAPLE SYRUP DIGEST

Vol. 9, No. 3 October, 1970

G. H. GRIMM



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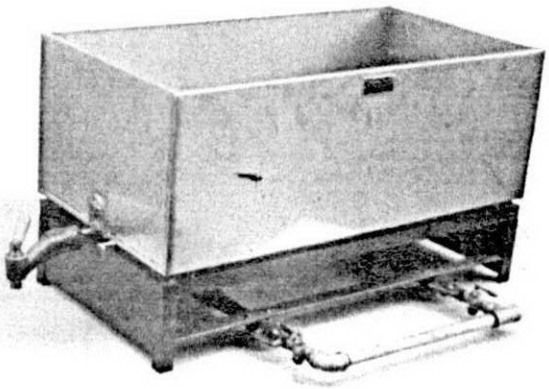

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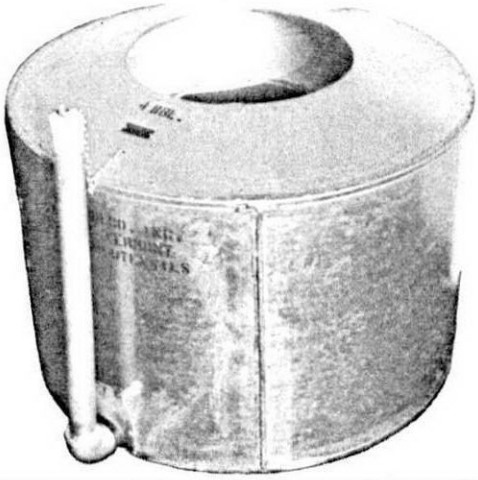

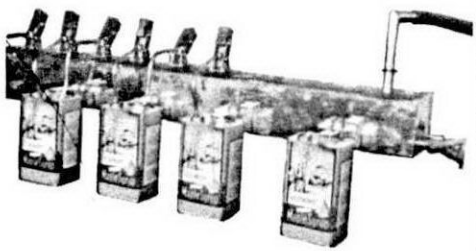

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COVER PICTURE

This month's cover picture came from Clifford Ardsley, photographer at the Philadelphia Laboratory of the U.S.D.A. It is a very picturesque view of Leon Wright's Sugar house in Franklinville, N. Y.

NOTICE-BACK ISSUES

The following issues of the Digest have been printed to date;

Vol. 1, No. 1,2,3,4
Vol. 2, No. 1,2,3
Vol. 3, No. 1,2,3,4
Vol. 4, No. 1,2,3,4
Vol. 5, No. 1,2,3,4
Vol. 6, No. 1,2,3,4
Vol. 7, No. 1,2,3,4
Vol. 8, No. 1,2,3,4

We still have a supply of most of them but they are getting scarce. If you lack any, drop us a card stating which copies you would like, with your check, money order or cash for 25¢ per copy, and we'll send them if available.

Editorial

The New York State Fair has come and gone once more. This means another summer is about over. Either it was awfully short or I'm getting older - the latter is probably more nearly correct.

Anyway, it was about an average summer. We had wet weather and dry weather, hot spells and cold. No late spring or early fall frosts should have made it a long summer. I guess it just seemed short.

All in all, it's been a pretty good year. We had plenty of snow early last winter for the ski and snow traveler enthusiasts to run around on and for the tree tappers to wallow in when spring came. There was a little under normal syrup production in the States which is quite an improvement over the past few years. Most producers report sales better than ever, which has quickly used up any supply of bulk syrup there may have been. Canada came up with a very poor crop this year which pretty well eliminates any possibility of importing any. Put all these facts together and I think I can safely say there is less syrup in both the United States and Canada right now than there has ever been. Why?

This subject could produce a pretty long editorial if I tried to explain all the angles, especially when I probably don't know what I'm talking about. I'll just cut it short by saying it's a matter of supply and demand. There's less syrup made every year and more people on the earth to buy it. Maple syrup is about the only farm product that doesn't have some kind of surplus.

I can't understand why farmers insist on raising crops that are in surplus, gripe about the low price they're getting, and then stop making syrup. They say they aren't making anything at it. I won't argue this point except that I'll bet they would if they charged the price they should. Another reason for quitting is the old evaporator is worn out and a new one costs too much when it's only used for a month out of the year. Just how many days do they use that $1000 grain drill or that $3000 baler or that $5000 combine?

Labor, of course, is always a problem, but have you ever thought that with a few improvements like getting up out of the mud and snow by replacing buckets with tubing, a better sap collecting rig and a ventilating system in the sugarhouse so you can at least find the evaporator - maybe the hired help wouldn't be so reluctant to work for you. A pay scale starting at $1.25 an hour isn't too attractive anymore, either.

And have you ever thought about selling your sap to your neighbor? Some say "I'm not going to let him make a fortune off my sap." That's just being stupid - like cutting off your nose to spite your face. Sure, he's going to make a profit on your sap or he won't be buying it very long, but you're going to make a buck too, without having to worry about sell-

ing the syrup, or making the payments on that new evaporator, or keeping a roof on the old sugar house, or hiring so much help, or - - - .

I didn't figure on answering any questions when I started this editorial and I think I have accomplished just that. I do think there's room for a lot more people to make a lot more syrup. I can make one statement that is an absolute fact: There's money in the maple industry! I ought to know, I put plenty of it there, and I think fellows like Adin Reynolds, Bob Coombs, Paul Richards and about a hundred more I can think of will agree with me. Of course, getting some of it out is a different problem. Maybe I'll write an editorial on that for a future issue.

STATUS OF THE DIGEST

Last spring the outlook was pretty black. While we're not out of the woods yet, the picture is somewhat brighter. I have hopes the National Council will come up with some solutions when they meet in Honesdale, Pa., on October 19 and 20.

I want to thank everyone who sent in their contributions and also those who voluntarily took their name off our mailing list if they were no longer interested in maple. At least we found out two things: The majority of producers really want the Digest to continue and the industry needs a means of communication.

Your contributions are still urgently needed and we will endeavor to do everything we can on this end not only to survive but to make the Digest as interesting and informative as possible.

VERMONT MAPLE MEMO

RAYMOND T. FOULDS, JR.
EXTENSION FORESTER
BURLINGTON, VT.

June, 1970

IMPROVING SUGAR BUSHES

Several persons, usually with the help of County Foresters, have tested sugar trees during the spring sap season and have determined which were the sweetest. Then, with other considerations also in mind, such as tree size and general tree health, they have marked trees to be cut and improved the sweetness of the bush by thinning. Others have tested trees during warm spells in the fall and have found that trees could be selected for cutting in the same way at that time, because "a sweet tree is always a sweet tree", even though sweetness varies from time to time. The technique was definitely proved to be workable in an experiment conducted in a controlled manner in the Fall of 1965 and Spring of 1966 by M.M. Koelling, B.M. Blum, and C.B. Gibbs of the Northeastern Forest Experiment Station. Thirty-four trees were tapped the same way and on the same side at the two different times of year. It was found that the relative sweetness rankings among the trees was consistent, although the spring sweetness was generally higher than that in the fall.

If your sugar bush needs thinning we hope you call on your County Forester or a consulting forester to do some testing this coming fall. A refractometer is necessary (it measures sweetness in a drop of sap).

MAPLE MARKETING RESEARCH

The Burlington Unit, Northeastern Forest Experiment Station, U.S. Forest Service has contributed much to our knowledge of sap production methods during its more than five years of research work conducted in Vermont and neighboring states. Headed by Albert G. Snow, Jr. of Burlington, the Unit has now added an additional phase to its operations. A forest economist has been employed who will study markets and marketing methods and come up with answers as to what consumers prefer as to flavor, package, market outlet, appearance, etc. The new man is David Garratt, who formerly worked at the Forest Service Marketing Laboratory in Parsons, West Virginia. David expects to work closely with representatives of the maple industry so as to develop a plan of work which will make his efforts most effective.

The Unit has recently published a revised list of booklets and bulletins on sap production research which it has produced. If you wish a copy, send to the Extension Forester, Forestry Dept., University of Vermont, Burlington, Vt.; or directly to Albert Snow at the N.E.F.E.S., U.S. Forest Service, Federal Bldg., Burlington, Vt. 05401.

SUGARBUSH MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

by Carter B. Gibbs and H. Clay Smith
USDA Forest Service,
Northeastern Forest
Experiment Station, Burlington, Vt.

Most of the sugarbushes being tapped today developed from natural forest stands years before their present owners were born. Trees were plentiful then, and land could be purchased at low cost. Wood was the primary fuel for both homes and sugaring operations, and unwanted trees in the sugarbush were removed as part of the annual wood-cutting process. The development of sugarbushes from natural stands was a "hit or miss" proposition.

Today land is expensive, labor costs are high, and few people use wood as a major fuel. The need for planned development of new sugarbushes is evident, but effective management guides are practically nonexistent. This has led us to begin research on factors important in the development of sugarbushes from forest stands and plantations. Our current program involves tree spacing, fertilization, and the effects of conifer understory on sap and sugar yields.

Tree Spacing

Most maple producers believe that a tree with a wide, fully developed crown gives the most and the sweetest sap. If full-crowned trees are the best, then we would like to have a sugarbush containing only open-grown trees, but with enough of them to completely utilize the area. With this in mind we made a region-wide survey of open-grown sugar maple trees to determine the relationship between crown diameter and tree diameter. From this information we calculated the num-

Figure 1. - - A 30 year-old sugarbush plantation near Hartland, Vermont. A total of 25 acres were planted on a 36-foot spacing, and the trees now average about 10 inches in diameter and are 36 feet tall. This bush was fertilized with hen manure for 8 years (1956-64) and has never been tapped.

ber of trees of a given size that would use all the growing space on an acre but still would allow all trees to develop maximum crowns.

There is some evidence that we may not need completely open-grown trees for maximum production. Therefore we are also making an intensive study to determine if trees that have been slightly crowded will give us greater total sugar yields per acre. Slight crowding may reduce yields per tree, but the additional trees resulting from closer spacing may increase total production per acre.

Information from these spacing studies will serve as a guide to the number of trees per acre for sugarbush stands. We have located a few sugar maple plantations that illustrate the development of open-grown trees from wide spacing (fig. 1). The potential yields from this type of sugarbush are not known; and unfortunately we will have to wait several years for the answer.

Fertilization

The use of fertilization to increase sap and sugar yields has received considerable interest; and some research has been done in Vermont, New York, and Ohio. Two years ago we established a large-scale study to determine the effects of lime and fertilizer on sap volumes, sugar contents, and tree growth. We do not have any definite results yet, but there are essentially three potential improvements that may result from fertilization.

- Increased sap-sugar content. Fertilization may increase sugar reserves and improve sap-sugar concentrations.
- Increased sap volume. The increased efficiency in plant life functions that may result from a greater supply of nutrients to the tree could increase sap volumes.
- Increased tree growth. If tree growth rate is increased, it would substantially reduce the time necessary to bring small sugarbush stands into production.

Fertilization may be one of the most important factors in the rapid and efficient development of sugarbushes of the future. The impact may be particularly beneficial when fertilization is used in combination with genetically superior seedlings.

Effects of Conifers

Conifers have long been considered undesirable in sugarbushes because it is believed that they reduce sap production by lowering temperatures in the sugarbush and causing a shorter sap-flow period. Sugarmakers may also have difficulty in collecting sap if the sugarbush contains many conifers.

Two years ago we began a study to find out how removing conifers from a sugarbush would affect sap and sugar yields. In general, we found that, after the conifers were removed, sap volume went up but sugar content went down. We will continue this study until the trends stabilize so that we can suggest what the producer may expect if he removes conifers from his sugarbush.

The Future

The need for future work in sugarbush management is great.

- We need to know more about the characteristics of high-producing trees—their crown shape, bole size, and how much competition they can withstand from their neighbors.
- The potential economic benefits of combined sap and timber production need to be evaluated. Maple is a highly desirable furniture wood; and if management for sap and timber can be combined, the sap producer may be able to make more money from his land.
- In this era of high land and labor costs, we need to determine the size and number of trees per acre necessary to give the sugarmaker maximum sap production.
- The long-term effects of fertilization and the potential benefits of irrigation need to be investigated.

Research in sugarbush management will have to be intensified to meet the potential expansion of the maple industry made possible by the recent improvements in sap-production techniques. The time when we can depend on hit-or-miss development of sugarbushes from natural forest stands has passed. With technical advances in management and tree breeding, we should be able to establish sugarbushes with trees that will produce 50 or even 75 percent more than unmanaged sugarbushes.

Maple 'Leaf Scorch' Traced to Drought

From the Sunday Press
Binghamton, N. Y., Sept 13, 1970

If that maple tree in your side yard is looking a little the worse for wear these days blame it on the dry spell.

Not the August dry spell-the dry spell that spanned the summers of 1961-67.

That is the word from the New York State College of Forestry at Syracuse, according to James Briggs of the Broome County Argicultural Extension Service.

Maples whose leaves are prematurely shedding or turning brown around the edges are suffering from something called leaf scorch, Mr. Briggs said.

The trouble for the maples began early in the protracted drought that gripped most of the Northeast starting in 1961 and continuing until 1967, according to the foresters.

During that seven-year dry spell, they say, the trees' crowns, that is their leaved branches, grew at a nearly normal pace while the trees' roots struggled for sustenance in the parched soil.

The result, after seven years, was countless thousands of trees with retarded root development incapable of feeding trunk and crown adequately during even brief dry spells such as the Broome County area experienced during the first two thirds of August.

Leaf scorch begins as a rust or brown discoloration around the outside edges of the leaves and works inward, Mr. Briggs said.

He said it eventually will cause the leaves to fall if the dry spell lasts long enough.

In some cases watering of trees by homeowners will arrest the scorch problem or even prevent it, he added.

Leaf scorch apparently has no long-range harmful effect on the trees, Mr. Briggs said the foresters told him.

It can, however, if it becomes widespread enough, have an effect on the color show nature makes of the Northeast's hardwood forests each fall.

It takes cold weather to paint the leaves, and foresters fear if the dry spell continues leaves will continue to fall long before the first frost arrives.

NEW YORK-PENNA. MAPLE TOUR

By: Van C. Travis, Jr.
Delaware Co. Extension Service
Walton, N. Y.

August 3, 1970 marked the 26th year of the New York State Maple Tour, sponsored jointly by New York State Cooperative Extension and the New York Maple Producers Assoc. Originated in 1945 by Prof. Fred Winch of the New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell, the tour has grown to huge proportions with people attending from throughout the eastern United States and Canada.

The 1970 tour started under fair skies and balmy temperatures at the Walter Hoyt farm located in the hills of Delaware County outside Walton. Walter and Ethel, lifelong maple producers, rely upon maple for their livelihood and therefore operate in a businesslike manner. A trip to the woods with Walter gave the men a chance to discuss Walter's attempts to speed up the growth of selected trees by means of fertilization. Meanwhile, the women discussed sugar and cream production in the candy kitchen with Mrs. Hoyt.

Sixty-five cars meandered through the Delaware Hills to the August Andersen farm at Long Eddy. Here, the 150 assembled tourists partook of refreshments, courtesy of the Central New York Maple Producers Assoc., and then viewed Auggie's unique tree coding system for erection of his plastic tubing. Mrs. Andersen gave the ladies a tour of her candy kitchen and pottery shop where she makes specially designed containers for maple syrup sales in gift shops and roadside stands.

Interior of Mrs. Hoyt's Sugar kitchen.

Part of the group in Walter Hoyt's sugarbush.

The evening program started with a chicken barbecue at Hancock, followed by a tour of the Mallory Lumber Company and an educational meeting chaired by Fred Winch. Ed Farrand, Penn State Extension Forester, told the Pennsylvania Maple Story and Dick Howard summarized a Cornell study of sap and syrup costs and returns.

All in all, it was an excellent tour and enjoyable day. A brief shower laid the dust on the dirt roads and kept the temperature in the comfortable range. The food was delicious, the tour stops enlightening and the fellowship unexcelled.

---

by Richard Plotts
Associate County Agent
Honesdale, Pa.

Nearly 150 people toured into Northern Pennsylvania to participate in the second day of the combined New York Pennsylvania Maple Tour on August 4, 1970. Three maple operations were visited and the tour ended with a lunch and summarization at the Beach Lake Fire Hall. At this time Edward Curtis, Honesdale, R.D. No. 3, National Maple Council - President invited all maple producers to attend the National Maple Council meeting in October on the 19th and 20th at Lukin's Farm Resort, near Honesdale.

Brief description of the stops in Pennsylvania are as follows: Maple Hill Farms - Everett and Donald Stone - Thompson, Pa. - with over 30 years of experience in producing maple syrup the Stone Brothers set about 1500 taps in 1970, - 300 on plastic pipelines and 1200 on buckets. This farm has more maple trees for possible maple business but they are in rough topography and would be difficult to tap.

1970 production was 544 gallons of syrup. One 5' x 12' oil fired evaporator with hood is used plus a gas finishing pan. The oil burner consumed 1589 gallons of oil in 1970 to produce the 544 gallons of syrup. The Stone's maple sap average 2.8% sugar for the 1970 season.

The second stop was at the farm of Dwight Hauenstein, Pleasant Mount where the family maple operation as well as an active dairy farm was viewed. Dwight sets from 500 to 700 taps and normally produces around 150 gallons of syrup. A wood fired evaporator is used and high quality products are the goal of the Hauensteins. All maple products are sold from home mostly self-service from the porch. At this stop refreshments were served by the Northeastern Penna. Maple Syrup Producers Association.

The last stop of the Pa. maple tour was at the farm of Jerry Hiller, Honesdale, R. D. No. 1. The Hiller operation consists of 1200 taps all on plastic and the complete system is under vacuum produced by a surge vacuum pump.

The Hiller's feel the vacuum pump increases sap production and are convinced that it is an excellent labor saver.

A 3½' x 12' oil fired evaporator is used plus a gas stove to finish the syrup. About 350 gallons of syrup is produced annually.

The young sugar bush is now being thinned and managed for future expansion of the maple industry. The Hiller's also operate a dairy farm.

ARE PELLETS

By
H. Clay Smith
and
Carter B. Gibbs

Northeastern Forest Experiment Station
Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agr.
Burlington, Vermont

Within the last few years, researchers and producers have found that using vacuum pumps on unvented tubing lines to collect sap can double or even triple the sap yields. However, vacuum-pumping does cause some problems. One of them is that the paraformaldehyde pellets placed in the tapholes are sometimes sucked out into the tubing lines. Pellet remains in tubing lines near the taphole have been observed by a number of producers and researchers. If the pellet does not stay in the taphole for its original

Yankee Ingenuity?

This picture was sent to us by Harlan Spink, Attica, N. Y. It isn't his, it belongs to a neighbor who wanted to make a little syrup for his own use but couldn't find a pan or kettle.

A cast iron bathtub pinch-hit and worked very well. A long handled plug in the drain hole could be pulled and the syrup drawn out when it was time to "sugar off".

NECESSARY WITH VACUUM-PUMPING ?

The sap yield from each taphole was collected in a 55-gallon drum.

purpose of prolonging sap flow, is it necessary?

Results of a recent study indicated that the pellet is not needed when sap yields are collected from tapholes by using a vacuum pump.

We made a study during the 1969 sap season in northwestern Vermont to find if the amount of sap collected from tapholes with pellets was different from the amount collected from tapholes without pellets. All sap yields were collected with a closed tubing installation and artificial vacuum.

We used 16 sugar maple trees, 20 to 30 inches in diameter. Two 3-inch-deep tapholes were drilled in each tree. Both tapholes on each tree were vacuum-pumped; one had a 250-milligram paraformaldehyde pellet, and the other did not. The yields from each taphole were collected in individual containers.

A venturi jet-type vacuum pump was used to provide approximately 12 inches of vacuum at each taphole. This may not seem like a very high vacuum, but the air was pumped from 32 drums (55 gallons each), so the space we pumped was equivalent to approximately 65 miles of 5/16-inch tubing.

We collected 17 percent more sap from the trees without pellets than from the trees with pellets. These results indicate that, when a 12-inch vacuum is used, the paraformaldehyde pellet is not necessary.

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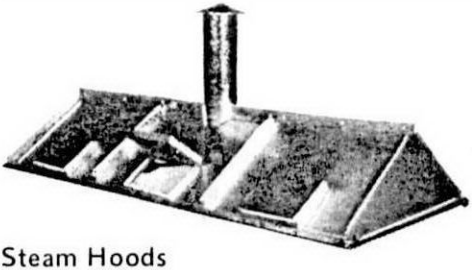

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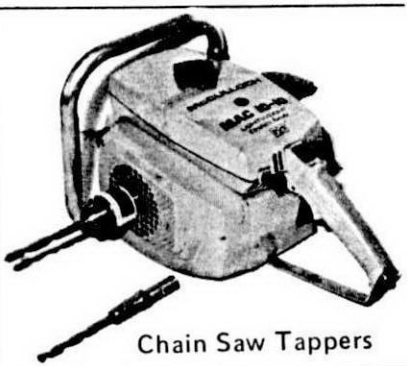

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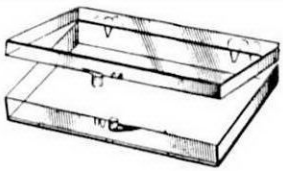

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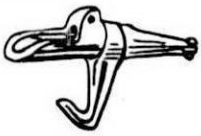

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Sugaring for a Lincoln-Type Farmer

by Edward W. Wild

From

THE VERMONTER

White River Junction, Vt.

February 1913

The impelling call of the sugar-bush invariably began to take hold of me with the waning of January, when I was a boy in my 'teens, attending one of the good old academies in Northern Vermont, and it was all in vain that the principal and my much tried mother fumed and cajoled and protested. Nothing could be discovered that would hold me to the dreary Latin and the dryer English grammar, and there was no peace at home until I was "hired out" for the spring and summer to some near-by farmer. And then how agonizingly dragged the perfunctory school days until the weather became suitable for tapping! It always seemed to me that each particular season was far later than the average, and that the particular farmer who had been fortunate enough to preempt my services was a little slower than any other in town—in fact, as I characterized it, "slower than cold molasses in zero weather!" How I watched the church vane and all the weather signs, and how I was cheered by the revival of activity on the part of the crow congresses of the neighboring woods! At last arrived the fateful day, and I was bundled off in the farmer's sleigh, once more at peace with myself and the world!

It must not be supposed that I was one of those rare, uncanny creatures, a *boy greedy* for *work*. Nothing at all of the kind. It was the call of the woods and its wild life, the atmosphere of the sugar-camp, the romance and the inspiration of the life in the open that moved me. There was something about it all that got into my veins and made my blood run quicker, that seemed to vitalize the life of the out-of-doors, and, by contrast, to make all other living seem tame, sombre and almost unbearable. There was little recking of the long, toilsome days to come in the ploughed fields and the hay fields under a scorching sun. It was simply the fatuous near-sighted, perfectly normal concept of an average young Vermont barbarian—of the type of thirty-five years ago—obsessed, perhaps, with a little more than average appreciation of the inherent charms of Nature. And, so, my "sugaring" became a habit, almost a vice, and the career of the student grew so little alluring that the wonder was that I ever got moderately well fitted for college.

But, oh! how different most of the realities from the dreams! How the fond pre-sugaring imaginings were shattered by Miss Actuality! Yet the dreaming went on unabated with each new spring-time, all the fond anticipations of previous springs were revived, and never was India rubber more resilient than my battered young

heart. But the first experience, a noteworthy exception to all the others, probably, was a prime cause of all the later insistent longings for the life of the sugar-bush. Being then quite young and wholly inexperienced, I was not expected to be capable of much real farm work, and the good old farmer required but little of me, except the tending of the fire in the big brick arch and the watching of the sap, boiling in the pans and the big "heater," with its coil pipes.

Assuredly, those were delectable days—days to be lived but once, yet always to leap to the fore in every reminiscent mood of later years! What more perfect setting for the reading of that inspiriting book, "The Green Mountain Boys," by an imaginative youth, seated on an overturned sap bucket, with his back to the warm arch, the deliciously odoriferous sap boiling and bubbling and singing in his ears, a great pile of dry, soft wood convenient for the renewal of the fire, and the comfortable sugar-house open on one side to the stately woods, where one might easily imagine Indians to be lurking behind the larger maple boles! And what daily fun with crudely made bow and arrow, even though the squirrels laughed and chattered, and the bluejays mocked, and the crows scornfully cawed at the amateurish archery! Then those "sugarings-off," with expectancy at its height and anticipation on the qui vive, from the pouring into the pans of the half-syrup until the real syrup was ready for the pouring into the cans, or the thick sugar into the immaculate new tubs! And how we feasted and feasted on sugar on snow and stirred sugar and hot syrup, and then ate a few wholesome, home-made pickles—the farmer's girls and I—and then feasted again, until we almost felt as though we were nothing but mammoth lumps of sugar, ourselves! And what sport the whittling of the paddles to be used in the feasting from the soft pine sticks that abounded! Then, too, the zestfulness of the sap gathering on crisp mornings on the

crust, the girls joining in the fun, and all of us vying in the effort to "cover" the most trees as the farmer guided the steady old horse among the labryrinths of the woods, while the sap splashed higher and higher in the big, tightly closed wooden holder on the sled—its sliding cover opened only as one or another of the gatherers arrived with a full pail for the emptying!

I wish I might truly sketch that farmer, long since gone to a land where all is bright and sweet and clean and true, like his own old sugar-bush and sugar-house, and more essentially, even like his own calm, true and noble life—a typical Yankee husbandman, careful and canny, and long-headed and deft of hand, yet, withal, big-hearted and kind, a nobleman of Nature in his natural environment. Tall, and somewhat ungainly, and rather stooping, with a long and sober cast of countenance, he did not at first sight reveal his true character. Yet no kindlier spirit ever lived; his heart was the heart of a *man*; the light that shone from his eyes was an all-human, benignant light; and knowledge of him bred respect and intimacy the highest regard. In not a few ways, like the great Lincoln, this hard-handed, hard-headed, Vermont farmer was a splendid exemplar of practical righteousness. There was a dignity in his mien, a strength of fibre in character as rare as they were fine. Child-like in his tenderness of spirit, so that it was genuine torture for him to kill any innocent creature, a chicken, a veal-calf or what not, he could hold his own with the shrewdest in a trade—and the selling of the season's woolclip usually meant many hours of argumentative whittling back of the big barn. Not very often permitting himself to smile, almost never really to

laugh—only once or twice can I recall an instance of the latter, and then it was like the rush and roar of a Niagara—he was yet a man of much quaint, dry humor, which lost no whit in effect by reason of external gravity in the expression. A good man, and a true, who had faith in his God, in his fellow-man and in himself, and to whom all taint of hypocritical cant was as foreign as is poison to the dew.

So, he made my first sugaring days a delight and a perpetual reminiscent joy—and, unconsciously, set an example the following of which by Vermont farmers of today would go far toward holding the boys on the farm and discounting the persistent lure of the city.

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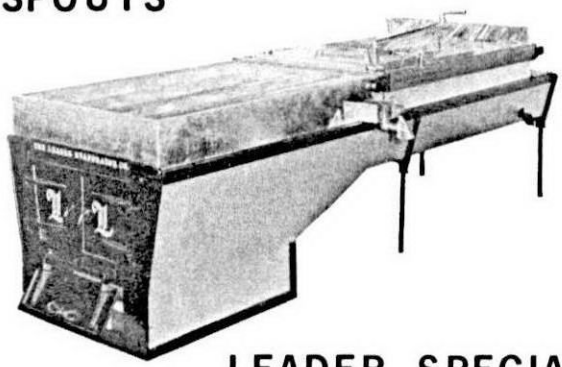

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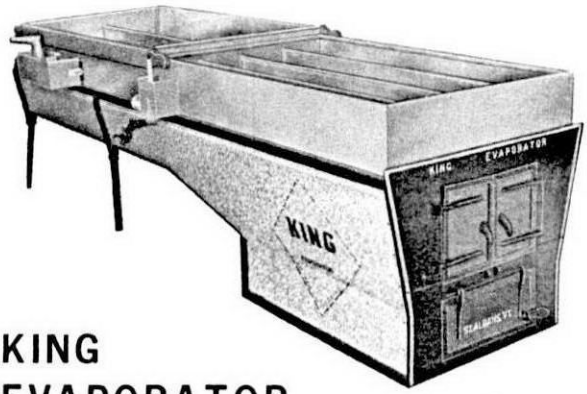

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