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## The Evolution of Sugar Making

L. C. McConnell, Elgin Co., Ont.

**M**ANY years ago when the writer of this article was a small boy on the old homestead on the lake shore of Elgin County, Ont., he began to help in the making of maple sugar—the real article. This product can only be appreciated to the full by following it through all the details of manufacture from the time it leaves the tree until it reaches the consumer.

The first season that I took an active part in the sugar bush my father tapped the trees with the axe. He made a gash about four inches across by about an inch in width in each tree, the bottom stroke of the axe being slanted downward so as to cause the sap to flow to the lower end of the cut. At this point an insertion was made with an iron gouge that would accommodate in its place a wooden spile concave so as to conduct the sap to the lower end where it was delivered into a wooden trough. This trough was about two feet long and was made by splitting a log (usually basswood), about one foot in diameter and digging out the inside to the desired capacity.

The sap was gathered into pails and carried on yokes by the men to the boiling place where it was emptied into kettles. These kettles were hung by various devices to a long pole braced up against two convenient trees. A large log on either side of the row of kettles helped to conserve the heat. Here the sap was boiled, exposed to all the things, such as bugs, ashes, cinders and smoke, that were very apt to get into it. Is it any wonder that we hear some people say that they can't get maple syrup to-day with the same flavor it used to have? I should hope not!

### PERIODS OF TRANSITION

I just had one year of such experience, then we took a step forward, buying wooden pails, tapping with an auger, about a three-quarter inch hole, and using a spile made of sheet iron which was driven into the bark of the tree. The next forward move was to get a gathering tank placed on a sleigh. After this came the arch made out of brick laid up in clay mortar and a boiler made from two-inch planks, 10 inches wide, with sheet iron nailed on the bottom edges. This equipment brought about a great improvement in the quality of the product and we made some really good sugar and syrup. (I may digress just here to state that at this time the market was almost entirely confined to sugar and that the product could be disposed of only in ex-

change for groceries. We used to exchange one pound of maple syrup for two of yellow sugar.)

Other changes might be mentioned, did space permit. I am now starting on my third year with a Champion Evaporator. This equipment is far ahead of anything else I have ever seen for this work. There is just one other system that under proper conditions, might be superior, and I have never seen it tried, viz., boiling by steam heat. It seems to me this latter should make beautiful goods. However the Champion is within the reach of any man who has a bush of any size from 100 trees up.

The time has come when every man who has a maple bush should take as good care of it, as he would of his orchard of Baldwins and Spys. I am tapping 600 trees and am covering not more than 15 or 17 acres of land; in a few years if given proper care the suitable trees on this area will increase to 1,000.

### DOES IT PAY?

Some may ask, does it pay? This might be an-



The First Harvest of the Season is full swing on an Ontario Farm

No one would expect to make a fortune out of maple syrup manufacture, but where the sugar maple trees are available it can be made a most profitable branch of the farm. The evaporator and a shanty are now recognized as being essential. Evaporators are made in various sizes and are thus adapted to handle the sap from few or many trees. Photo taken on Mr. L. C. McConnell's farm, Elgin Co., Ont. Mr. McConnell, the writer of one of the articles adjoining, may be seen nearest the shanty doorway.

sured in various ways. I don't expect to get rich at the business, but it comes at a season when, for the most of the time at least, the average farmer is not very busy. The annual product of a sugar bush will run from one to two and sometimes three quarts to the tree, the higher yield being when a tree is tapped in more than one place which practice I very frequently follow. Then the market for goods that are absolutely pure maple is practically unlimited at from \$1.25 to \$1.50 a gallon and the more customers get of this class of goods, the more they want the next year.

By using the Grimm spouts the injury to the tree is reduced to a minimum. In two or three

years after you could hardly tell where the tree had been tapped; in fact, I saw a tree yesterday that the hole bored last year had almost completely grown over. I trust that my experience as stated may lead someone to give a little more thought to the care of his maple orchard and that Farm and Dairy may have every success.

## The Maple Industry Up-to-date

A. Waller, Chateauguy Co., Que.

Sugar making with the up-to-date utensils now in vogue, has lost much of the slavishness of former days. So much progress has been made of late years both as regards the color and quality of syrup and sugar, that those who would make a profit out of the business have discarded the old pans and heaters and have installed evaporators, large or small, according to their needs.

In sugar making as in all other kinds of work on the farm where help is scarce and hard to get it is to the advantage of everyone to use whatever labor saving machinery may be available for the purpose. Even when the Lush is small such equipment has proved to be the best and most profitable. In this section of Quebec where the industry is largely carried on one might travel for miles and not find any of the old-time methods employed.

### FOR THE SMALL BUSH

Five years ago when we decided to do away with the old pans and heater we were only able to tap about 500 trees. We bought a 3 ft. x 12 ft. Champion Evaporator. Last year we were able to tap 900 or 1,000 trees and exchanged it for one 5 ft. x 16 ft. Such a practice I would not have one think to be always the best plan. Those whose trees have reached their full growth would do best to buy an evaporator that would meet the present and future need.

Some claim that a 3 ft. x 12 ft. evaporator is large enough to boil the sap from 900 or 1,000 trees, and of course you can do it, but the quicker the sap is gathered and boiled after it has run from the trees the better the quality of the syrup and that is what counts in these days of keen competition. A larger evaporator also requires less storage room for sap, less time, and less wood when all things are considered.

Many contend that because they have only 400 or 500 trees it would not pay them to invest in an evaporator. From my experience I know that it does pay when rightly handled and a thing is better left undone than not done properly.

It is a good idea to have everything in readiness before the season commences so that no time may