

# Maple Syrup Festival

West Oxford Women's Institute in Oxford County have had plenty of practice, this was their sixth Festival in the Sweaburg area involving the whole community. Mrs. Henry Van Dorp, President, was general convener.

George Jakeman's sugar bush was the centre for the maple syrup boiling. The sugar shanty wasn't away back in the bush, miles from the house and inconvenient to get to; neither was the fire stoked with wood which always seemed to take a master mind to have just enough, and not too much fuel, to finish off the syrup.

This modern sugar shanty was near the house. Across the lane on the front lawn were lovely old maples, these were the very trees that George's grandfather first tapped over 100 years ago. With the bush across the road many of the trees were tapped into blue plastic tubing and with the aid of a pumping device the sap flowed without having to be gathered by hand. This insures, as well, no debris or foreign objects falling into the sap.

However, depending on the layout of the bush, this newest method does not always work, so about 1,500 trees are still tapped with the spiles and the sap drips into the pails.

The cylindrical evaporator has a capacity of 24 gallons of furnace oil an hour and approximately 10 gallons of syrup can be taken off in the hour. Amazingly enough, in this changing world, it still takes 40 gallons of sap for a gallon of syrup.



With its built-in thermometers, at the correct temperature the partially cooked syrup flows out and is strained through felt and two layers of special paper, then placed in another pan run by propane, for easy manoeuvrability. When the proper consistency is reached the burner can be turned down or off and the syrup poured into the containers. Free samples were handed out which only encouraged all to buy the lovely calorie laden stuff.

The Jakeman's carry on a large mixed farming operation, dairy, hogs, seed barley and corn, so it is easy to see that at the end of the maple syrup season the Jakeman's will be on the land.

A ride on the tractor-drawn wagon to the Keith Hammerton Farm for the pancake festival. Mrs. Leonard Caffyn and all the W.I. members were busy at this particular stop. As we drove in this lane the maples were also tapped, and the sap carried by plastic tubing. The huge drive shed had been cleared out and long rows of plastic covered tables awaited the 1,800 visitors. This area was manned by Women's Institute members, but the husbands were doing more than their share to make the whole effort a success. The pancake making area was well organized, and the responsibility of Lloyd Almas and committee, certainly not a first time effort. Huge pancakes and jugs of maple syrup, all you could eat, was a treat for everybody.

We sat beside a tobacco farmer and his family from Delhi and he told us it was important to him that his children see the maple syrup operation. He said, "It was time we got here to see this, when our youngest expressed his opinion that maple syrup came from a bottle."

Beyond the Hammerton barn were many grain storage tanks, elevators and a dryer, towering symbols on the skyline, representing another phase of agriculture.

The visitors were transported in style. The wagons, with the bales of hay to sit on, were pulled by newly washed and shiny tractors. At each stop-point young men helped all off and on the wagons. An enjoyable way to travel for all. James Brown convened the transportation.

Back in the Sweaburg school the craft show was in full swing and about 1,100 people viewed the eighteen exhibits. The displays in the majority of cases were the results of the accomplishments of individuals who took a course. The hobby grew, and eventually when they had made more things than they needed, had given away articles to everyone they knew, they decided to sell their wares.

The displays included beautiful hand work, rugs, wall hangings, ceramics, leather craft, bottle cutting, mobiles, copper enamel jewellery, batik, and other interesting crafts. Those in charge of the Craft exhibits, Convener, Mrs. Howard Budd and Mrs. Fred Shelton, Mrs. Carl Reeves, Mrs. Wilbert Cuthbert.

West Oxford Women's Institute advertised the event as a money making project. What will they do with their money? Women's Institute projects will benefit by: Sponsoring five 4-H Homemaking Clubs, donating to Institutes in the North West Territories, and to Save Sight for ACWW. Two hospitals will receive assistance, Alexandra in Ingersoll for a Fatal Heart Monitor; Woodstock General for an Oxygen Monitor for the newborn with an alarm system. Funds will continue for the adopted child in Greece, and the ball teams in Foldens' and Sweaburg will receive assistance.