

The trees were tapped by boring a small hole into the hard maple tree and inserting a spile in the hole thus made. The first spiles were wooden - they were actually tiny troughs which allowed the sap to drip through them into buckets which were hung on the trees. The first buckets were also wooden. The gathering of the sap was a hard task, as it was often carried by pails hung from a yoke across the man's shoulders as he waded through the snow from tree to tree and to a central place until enough had been collected to start boiling. As trees were removed it later became possible to drive horse and sleigh from tree to tree to gather the sap.

The sap was boiled in a huge iron kettle hung over a fire which was built in a cleared spot. Stumps and dead branches were used for the fire. The sap was boiled until a syrup of a satisfactory thickness was produced. The testing was done by holding the utensil (which was used for stirring) high enough to allow the syrup to drip from it back into the kettle. If the drop was large and slow to drip off and maybe "haired" somewhat it was considered finished. Later a shanty was built and the syrup maker was given some protection from the elements. When the shanty was built a sap pan replaced the iron kettle. Vents were made in the roof of the shanty to allow for the escape of the steam.

There were several methods of cleaning the syrup of the dust and leaves or other impurities that had accumulated in the open sap buckets. After the cleaning process and straining the hot syrup a few times the product was ready to put away for enjoyment on pancakes, Johnny cake and hot biscuits.

When we consider 40 gallons of sap is required to make 1 gallon of good syrup we can realize the work involved in "putting down" a few gallons for the months ahead. However many "sugar parties" offset the labour required.

After the sap buckets were stored away until another season there was always fences to repair or build. Some of the first fences were stumps pushed back to enclose a field and leave the land clear to sow grain. Stones were also used to divide fields. Large stones required extra work to remove as did the stumps. From then on the men were busy with seeding, haying and harvest operations. The pictures which follow will pretty well tell the story of the progress made in the process of farming.

When the steam engine replaced all the earlier pioneer methods of threshing the "black monster" made its arrival known by a shrill whistle. Again the men of the community assisted with the threshing. The thresherman, his fireman and tank man always remained overnight. The housewife and one or two neighbour women prepared meals for the 12-13 men who assisted. Regular banquets were