

Campton Historical Society

Maple Sugarin' submitted by: Skip Evans

For most New Englanders, the rite of passage from winter to spring is associated with the appearance of crocuses, daffodils, and robins. Personally, I know spring is on its way when on a cool March evening I go out to the garage to get an armful of wood from the dwindling pile and I smell the sweet smell of maple sap boiling from my neighbor Bill Cheney's sugar house.



Nobody knows who first discovered maple sugar. Native Americans of the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence River used the product as a bartering tool. And in 1663, English chemist Robert Boyle reported that sugary syrup was being produced from maple trees in New England.

What causes this phenomenon requires a minimal understanding of tree physiology. In late summer and fall, the trees stop growing and store excess starches in the 'sapwood' of the tree. This excess stays here as long as the wood is below 40° F. At just above 40°, enzymes in the ray cells of the sapwood change the starches to sugars, largely sucrose, and pass it into the *sap* of the tree (the life blood of a tree, that carries nutrients throughout it). This mild temperature increase causes pressure inside the tree, causing the sap to flow. When a hole is drilled into the tree, water-carrying vessels within the tree are severed through which the sap exits. These sugars, while used to produce the tasty syrup we enjoy on pancakes, are in fact, of no use to the tree; therefore, as the temperature of the tree approaches 45° F, the sugar changes back to starch to be used as necessary food for the tree.

Most healthy sugar maple trees can withstand one tap for every ten inches in diameter. This tap can produce five to fifteen gallons of sap, but some have been known to produce as much as forty gallons. On average, it takes approximately forty gallons of sap to make a gallon of syrup. Sugar content of the sap averages 2 to 3% varying with the health of the tree, time of day gathered, and the crown width (the width of the tree and its branches at its top). Bigger manufacturers use tubing to gather sap

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5th Annual Music in the Spring - Saturday, June 5, 2010 Bow Junction with special guest Seth Austen

Bow Junction delivers a diverse blend of hard driving bluegrass with gospel, folk, country, and even a little bit of Celtic. Combining a respect for tradition with an ear for innovation, this seasoned New Hampshire band has been entertaining audiences for many years.

Russ Aubertin plays rock-solid rhythm and lead guitar. Linda Magoon provides spark and drive on the mandolin AND the banjo. Randy Hencke's smooth and subtle bass keeps Bow Junction in time, on time and in tune. Special guest Seth Austen. Listen to samples of their music at www.bowjunction.com

Ham and Bean Supper from 6:00-7:00 p.m. \$6 per person, children under 12 free

Concert at 7:30 p.m. Admission \$10 per person

The supper and concert are limited seating events.

Advance purchase is recommended by calling Paul Yelle 536-5995



The area around the Campton Pond and dam has been an important part of the history of the town. The first dam at this site was built in the early 1890's by the Winnepiseogee Paper Co.. It was used to hold the 16' logs that came down the Mad River in the spring from the logging operations in Waterville Valley. The sawmill here cut the logs into 4' length for the area pulp mills, and used the best quality wood in the making of pianos. In 1892, a railroad spur was built from the main B & M line 1 mile south, up along what is now route 49. At the pond, it was loaded onto flat cars for shipping to mills in Franklin and Lincoln.



The present concrete dam is 20' downstream from the original. This dam was built in 1935 by the Civilian Conservation Corps that also worked on extending Tripoli Road into Waterville Valley. CCC Camp #1101 was located at the northern end of the pond, and this crew also built a beach and bathhouse that was washed away by a flood in 1959.

The area surrounding the pond and northward is now owned by the U.S. Forest Service, as part of the White Mountain National Forest. The original purchase was in 1928 from the Woodstock Lumber Co. It was done under the Weeks Act of 1911, which allowed the government to acquire forests to protect the headwaters of navigable rivers. An additional purchase was made in 1937, and a donation of land from the lumber company completed the area.

The first bridge here was a covered one, and known as the Grist Mill Bridge. It was destroyed by fire and not re-built. The replacement bridge was also destroyed in 1867 when a team of horses, pulling a load of supplies, collapsed the structure. All four horses died, but the driver, George Wyatt, and his crew survived. The third bridge was made of iron, and lasted until 1926. At that time, a "Lombard" tractor hauling a load of logs caused a collapse, resulting in the loss of one life. The present bridge is an 86- foot clear span concrete arch bridge. This was designed by the N.H. D.O.T., and built in 1927 by Robie Construction Co. at a cost of \$18,929. It is one of the highest scoring bridges in the state, and has unusual architectural and engineering details and proportions.

The section of the Mad River below the dam was also the site of several mills. The most visible is the now inactive red Dole Mill, founded in 1820 by Moses Cook. It was one of the oldest woolen mills in the country. Some of its products included Campton Pants, which "never wear out", woolen socks made during WW2, and carpet yarns made until 1965. Other mills along the Mad River made shutters and blinds, caskets, furniture, and excelsior.

Water was an early source of power for these mills, and was also used to generate electricity for the village. A privately owned hydro electric plant was completed here in 1983, and the Mad River Power Company is still using the flow of water for generation of electricity through a permit with the U.S. Forest Service.

In recent years, the Campton Garden Club has completed several beautification projects at this site, starting with the flower boxes on the bridge. Next was the rewiring and restoration of the period light fixtures. The welcome sign and plantings were completed in 2007. The club also maintains these plantings through the service of many dedicated volunteers.

This is one of our 20 historic sites. For similar articles about each one, go to camptonhistorical.org. There you will also find links to many other historic sites and places.

One year's supply, seven million feet of spruce lumber.

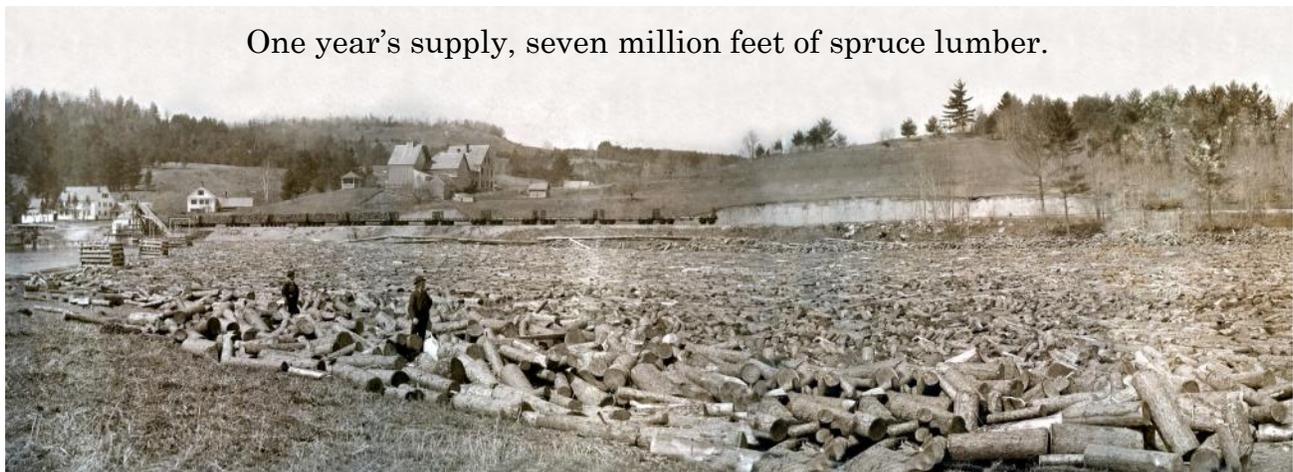


Photo Contest - to help preserve Campton's history through photography

The Campton Historical Society is pleased to announce its second annual photo contest in conjunction with Old Home Day. The purpose of the contest is to showcase the Town of Campton as the greatest town in New Hampshire, and to preserve its history through photography. The goal this year is to document Campton and what it is like now. As a result we are looking for pictures taken over the past couple of years. ENTRY DEADLINE: July 22, 2010

For more information - check out our web site, stop by the building or call Paul Yelle at 536-5995.

New Mugs for Sale

The original Blair Bridge coffee mugs were so popular - they sold out! So we now have a mug with a different view of Blair Bridge and a mug showing Bump Bridge.

\$8 each or 2 for \$15

flagman13@roadrunner.com



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into a large tank. Some even draw the sap from the trees with a pumping system. From there, sap is transported to a sugar house and poured into an evaporator; after boiling the sap, the sugar content is concentrated and becomes maple syrup.

Historically, almost every farm in New England that had access to sugar maple trees (*Acer saccharum*) made syrup either for home consumption or as a cash crop. Sugar season comes during mud season when there was not an overwhelming amount to do around these farms, so tapping the trees fit in well.

In the Campton/Thornton area, we are blessed with a high concentration of sugar maple trees. The Faddens and Kimballs were large producers in Mill Brook Valley; the Mitchells and

Pulsifers in Campton. Royal Burnham is a small sugaring operator around the old Fadden Farm in Mill Brook, consisting of approximately 350 taps. Here, they do it the old fashioned way with buckets and wood heat to boil the sap.

Today, Bentons' Sugar Shack is a large business in Thornton with the highest annual production of maple syrup in the area. Doubling as a breakfast restaurant and production site, you can watch the syrup being made as you put it on your pancakes. There are approximately 430 commercial sugar houses in this state, with five in both Campton and Thornton. The smallest in the state is around 200 taps and the largest 55,000. New Hampshire is the third largest produce of maple sugar in New England.

So whether you see tap buckets on a roadside maple tree as you're driving down the frost heave ridden roads, or buying maple sugar for Sunday morning brunch, think about the economic *and* historical significance of this tasty treat. Think also, however, of the temporal boundaries of this phenomenon: there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven, and this is no less true for maple sugarin'. As an old friend and fellow maple sugar expert, Libby Small, once told me "when the Millers [an early spring moth] come out, it's time to pull the taps out."



Campton Historical Society

2010 Calendar of Events

Jan. 15, Friday	Dinner 6:00 Movie 7:00	Potluck and movie night - "Steep"
April, 19 Monday	7:30	Betsy Bolan - Surviving "Survivor"- What it is like being on the TV show "Survivor"
May 17, Monday	7:30	Allen Koop - The White Mountain Huts: Past & Future
June 5, Saturday	Dinner 6-7 Concert 7:30	Ham and bean supper and Spring Concert. Concert by Bow Junction - Folk, Rhythm & Bluegrass in the American style
June 21, Monday	7:30	Russ Cohen - Edible Wild Plants and Mushrooms of New England
July 19, Monday	7:30	Jeff Warner - Songs of Old New Hampshire
July 31, Saturday	11:00 - 3:00	Old Home Day events including antique cars, photo contest, demonstrations, ice cream social, tours
Aug 16, Monday	7:30	Glenn Knoblock - New Hampshire Cemeteries and Gravestones
Aug 21, Saturday	9:00 am	Tour of local cemeteries. Meet at the Campton Historical Society building at 9:00.
Sept 20, Monday	7:30	Bryon Middlekauf - The Geology of Campton
Oct 18, Monday	7:30	Ross Deachman - local historical topic
Nov 15, Monday	7:30	Gary Crooker - NH Old Home Day Celebrations

All events will be held at the Campton Historical Society building on Rt. 175. If you have any questions please contact Judy Landry 726-3081.

CHECK OUT the Events page of the CHS web site for the latest information.

Old Home Day - July 31st.

Fun race/walk, parade, carnival, softball, dinner/dance and of course special happenings at CHS. Check out the Old Home Day web site by clicking on the link on our web site!

*See this newsletter and more
in full color at CamptonHistorical.org*

Contest - Can you identify these people? (Hint: It is labeled 1904) Prize - One of the new bridge mugs.

Whomever names the most people correctly wins. If there is a tie, we will have a random drawing. Any additional information would be greatly appreciated. See the results in the fall newsletter. GOOD LUCK!

Email: paulyelle@gmail.com or snail mail CHS - PO Box 160 - Campton NH 03223



IT'S MEMBERSHIP TIME!!!

It is time, once again, to become a member of the Campton Historical Society.

We have had another great year with good programs and fellowship. With your help, we will have another outstanding year.

Membership dues help with the cost of programs, newsletters and maintaining the building, which has increased with the expansion of use.

We are looking forward to your support; send your check today. Mary E. Durgin,
Treasurer

Campton Historical Society

www.CamptonHistorical.org

P.O. Box 160, Campton, NH 03223

Single Membership — \$12.00 Family Membership — \$20.00

Yearly membership is from October 1 through September 30.

Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

Make checks payable to Campton Historical Society and mail to PO Box 160, Campton, NH 03223

Members

Enclosed is my check for dues.

This check also includes a donation to support projects to be done in the Old Town Hall, headquarters of the Society.

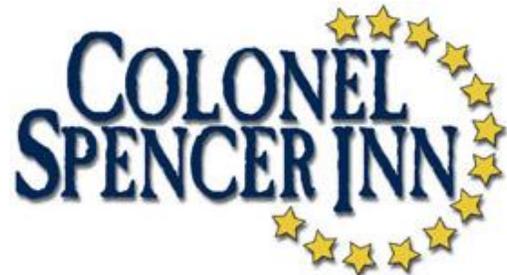
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