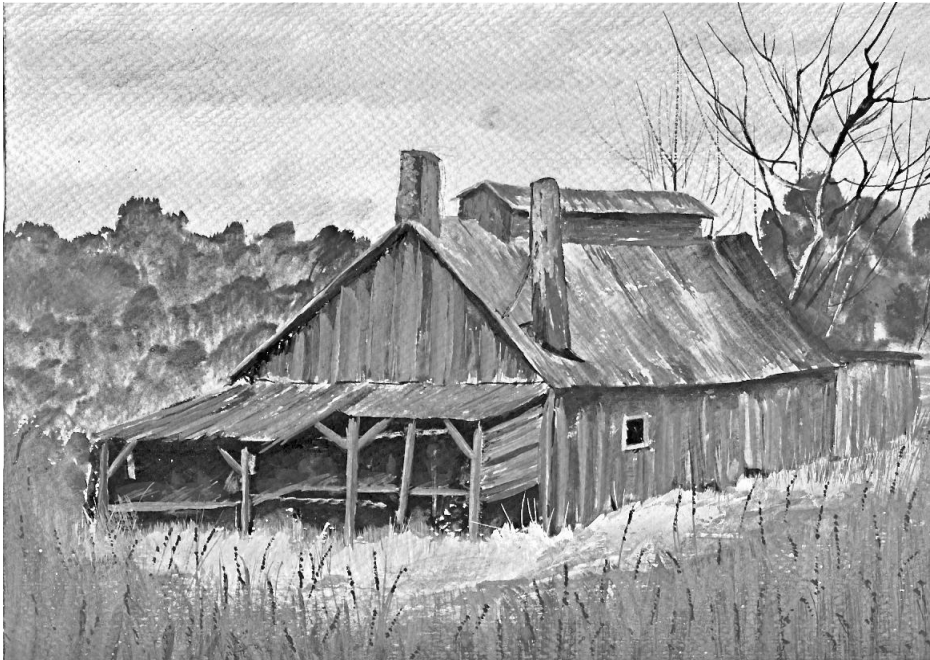


Bainbridge Township Historical Society Newsletter

Volume 5, Issue 1

Bainbridge Township, Ohio, 44023

Winter 2009/2010



Growing Up Country

Sugaring Time

Story by
Marilyn Yaxley Bartholomew

Yaxley Sugar house on left.
Painting by Harlan Helmuth

GROWING UP COUNTRY Sugaring Time

To farmers in northeastern Ohio, "Sugaring Time" meant making maple syrup. It was our big cash crop of the year and helped pay the farm taxes. Geauga County, in northeastern Ohio, held a Maple Festival every spring in Chardon. In a taste contest with Vermont syrup, our syrup always won--enabling us to brag that our syrup was the best--of course, the judges were all from Ohio.

Maple syrup was our liquid gold--but it was a cold, wet, tedious job to collect the sap and often required over night vigilance to keep the fire under the evaporators going in order to keep the sap simmering.

The process started during the winter when my father and his son-in-law, Virgil Taylor, used a cross-

cut saw and axes to harvest fallen trees. When we "kids" were old enough, we helped to collect and stack the fire wood in our big weathered, wooden sugar house to be used for fuel for making maple syrup. Some was also stored in our woodshed to be used in our kitchen stove for cooking and heat. About February, we were recruited for the job of washing the sap buckets, metal spouts and cane spiles. Even though it was a cold and wet job, we accepted it without complaint as part of the farm team.

In late February or early March, depending on the weather, the men used a drill to tap the hard (never soft) maple trees. Larger trees might support 2 to 4 tap holes; young trees might support only 1. A metal spout with an opening was then "tapped" into the hole. The other open end that protruded from the tree had an upward extension to hold a sap bucket, and a lower lip to allow the tree sap to smoothly drip into the bucket. In later years, we also added covers to keep rain, wild life, and other

debris from contaminating the sap. The next step required patience as we waited for a hard freeze, followed by a quick thaw—so that we could encourage the sap meant to create maple leaf buds to start flowing into our buckets. Keeping track of the weather was crucial to the process.

Sugaring meant double duty for all of us—the cows still needed to be milked, Virgil still needed to drive the school bus, and we still had to go to school. During a “good run” sap buckets might overflow if we didn’t gather into the evening. If all our storage tanks were full, we had to keep the fires in both evaporators going all night. Frank Spaeth, our seasonal hired man, had the grueling, lonely job of night duty. In case of an emergency, we had two self installed wooden box telephones that we had to crank in order to connect the sugar house and our house.

Gathering the sap was another cold and wet task. I usually drove the team of work horses pulling a low to the ground four wheel, wooden, sap wagon. Snow or rain, the same muddy ruts were well marked and the horses knew the way. The men gathered the sap in 5 gallon buckets, dumping the sweet sap into a very large round gathering tank on the sap wagon. With a full tank, the team was driven up a man made dirt incline so that the sap could be gravity fed through a trough into the large storage tanks under a roof attached to the sugar house.



Helper/Visitor & Virgil Taylor on the Sap gathering wagon.

When enough sap had been gathered, the sap valve was opened to allow it to be gravity fed by a long pipe from a storage tank into the first evaporator pan. The heat from the fire under that first pan kept the sap in the other pans simmering as the heat passed under them on its journey to go up the chimney. The fire had to be stoked 24 hours a day until the sugaring season was over. Other evapora-

tors varied, but our 2 evaporators were a series of about 5 or 7 approximately 2’ by 5’ shallow metal evaporator pans. All of the pans were connected by short hand maneuvered piping that controlled the flow. During the carefully watched process, the sap that started in the first pan was gradually simmered--pan to pan--into maple syrup in the last pan. When the syrup hung in sheets from the edge of a skimmer, a pulley system was used to raise the far end of the last pan as the hot maple syrup was strained and drained into 10 gallon milk cans. The process continued night and day until the trees started to bud, producing inferior, darker and stronger “buddy syrup” and the sugaring season was over. This inferior quality is sometimes labeled “dark amber” in our grocery stores.

At the current price of 40+ dollars a gallon, the syrup should have made us rich, but the middle men who canned it, transported and marketed it, fared better. During the depression, we were relieved that it paid the taxes for another year.

When younger, we children used to bundle up with warm jackets, scarves, mittens, stocking hats and rubber goulashes with buckles for the long trek through mud or snow to the sugar house. Our start and arrival was always communicated by the old crank phone hookup. We all carried our own small glass jugs to be filled with warm maple syrup. (I usually drank mine on the way home). We might also carry bread/biscuits, butter, bacon and eggs.

Upon arrival, we washed our bowls and spoons in our improvised kitchen, using a 5 gallon bucket of water dipped from an outdoor man-made pond close to the sugar house. Spanned by an old weathered railroad tie, it was just wide enough to cross over or wash our hands. We country kids knew never to cross if covered with ice-but used to taunt arrogant city kids to give it a try-to depress their egos.

Sitting on round tree trunk sections in front of the open evaporator doors, we toasted ourselves along with the bread/biscuits using an old hinged, foot square wire toaster while our eggs boiled in the sap, home cured bacon sizzled on a piece of tin strategically placed on the hot coals. With lots of warm maple syrup in our bowls, we ravished our gourmet meal. We had bowls and spoons, but

used our fingers to eat our bacon and eggs--wiping our hands on our well seasoned clothing. Water and/or tea was provided by the "sugar house."

My father lived to age 85, and because we lived close to our farm, my daughters, Nancy, Pat, and Becky Greaves enjoyed the simple pleasures and experiences that helped to mold me. They also treasure the memories.



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Thanks to—Marilyn Yaxley Bartholomew is a graduate of Bainbridge High School and Kent State University and now lives in Florida.



Marilyn's parents, Francis & Daisy Yaxley

BAINBRIDGE TRACK OPENS MAY 25

Cleveland, Ohio. With Stalls allotted to 800 horses for the Bainbridge Park stables and an overflow that will nearly fill the accommodations at Thistledown, everything is all set for the racing session at the Geauga County track. The opening day is Saturday, May 25, and the meet will continue for 25 days, winding up with the Ohio State Derby, \$12,000 added, on Saturday, June 22.

Naturally a lot of good horses will be found in that collection of 1,000 or more. Some of them have paraded before the Cleveland public, while many others will be making their first appearance at a local track.



Jacob's Hall in Chesterland was one of Mr. Yaxley's favorite dancing spots. Jacob's hall had dancing upstairs on Saturday nights. Many of the Bainbridge crowd came here for the orchestra that played here.

Jacob's Hall was on the northwest corner of Mayfield and Chillicothe road. Picture from book, "Chester Township History".

Picture and article on left is from "Gauga Republican, Chardon, Ohio, May 29, 1929. Interesting? This was the start of the first big Depression. The Great Depression began on "Black Tuesday" with the Wall Street Crash of October, 1929 and rapidly spread worldwide

Does the picture on the left bring back memories?

How about the Orkets and the dances at the Bainbridge Town Hall?

Wonder how many met there spouse here?

Dancing in Bainbridge 40's—50's

Dancing was a very big part of growing up in Bainbridge. The way everyone learned how to dance... was just getting out on the dance floor with a partner. Dancing took place in the Bainbridge Gym (Now the Town Hall) on Friday evenings. On the stage were the Orkettes, from Chagrin Falls, with leader Mr. Sargent, I believe. It was live music...waltzes to jitterbugging! Despite a rainy or snowy evening, the dance floor was crowded. All ages, young and old, were welcome, and, of course, especially, high school students attended.

There was a small admissions fee. Immediate entrance to the Gym was a hallway, for hanging up coats, snow boots, etc. There was a window opening from the Gym which connected to the Home Economics Room. Refreshments (nominal fee) were served thru this window, including hot dogs, hamburgers, etc. I know my Dad, Cleon Taylor, spent many hours making hamburgers. No alcohol was served.

The Chesterland Dances were on Saturday evenings. It was up-stairs. Live country music, with a fiddler. As it was World War II, everyone "car-pooled" when possible. Lots of square dancing, promenades, waltzes with lights dimmed! No alcohol was served. Refreshments were served at intermission. The very young and the very old were welcome to join in the dancing. Mr. Francis Yaxley, a farmer in Bainbridge, had a



The ORKETTS L to R—Ernie Finch, Norma Meeks, Clarence Hunt, Red Parker, Carroll Sargent & Ev Blair

love for dancing. His wife, Daisy, was not especially (arthritic problems) interested in dancing. So, on a Saturday evening, Mr. Yaxley would pick up "someone's...kids" in Bainbridge to go to these dances in Chesterland. Many a time he would call the Taylor girls. It was a treat. Likewise, some of the Bainbridge High School kids would "car-pool" and attend the Chesterland dances. I recall Dorothy (Miner) Batchelor, Bud Gardiner, Dorothy (Taylor) Clarke, Eunice (Eames) Hein, Dick Taylor,and so on & on. Mr. Yaxley loved the Chesterland Dances. He would, occasionally, drive his pick-up truck...and pick-up the "cooky boys" at the YMCA Camp, then pick-up some of the gals in Bainbridge. We'd ride in the open back. It was great fun.

Story by—Jean (Taylor) Dew. 1944 graduate of Bainbridge High School. Jean now lives in Arizona

**Please—We are looking for more pictures and articles on Bainbridge Township History.
Bill Takacs— 440-543-4991**

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&
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440-543-4991

Meetings of the Bainbridge Township Historical Society are held the second Wednesday of the month (September through June) at 7:30 p.m. in the Burns-Lindow Building at the corner of Route 306 and Bainbridge-Solon Road.

**Bainbridge Township
Historical Society
P.O.Box 23363
Bainbridge Township
OH 44023-0363**



Town Hall—Circa 1914
Now—Burns Lindow Bldg

A big **“Thank You”** to Marion Howard and Marion Horvath for providing refreshments at our October meeting, Dottie Batchelor and Vera Kuckelheim for the November meeting and Norma Green and Jerri Chittock for co-hosting the January meeting.

Everyone enjoys the refreshments at our meetings so remember when the refreshment sheet gets passed around to be sure to pick a convenient date and add your name to the list. It will make the job of our Refreshment Committee much easier. Janet Novak and Lois Little are our chairmen and will save them time calling around to find volunteers.

Welcome new members: Tom Batchelor

Jean Taylor Dew

Marylyn & Harry Stone



Appreciation and Thanks to Tom Eakin

Our honorary lifetime member and long-time benefactor, Thomas Eakin, is shown above presenting a very generous gift of \$200.00. As you know, Tom has provided the Kenston Sports Calendar for many years, and he kindly included mention of the historical society in the latest issue. Members appreciated his generosity and thoughtfulness at the January meeting as well as for the many previous years he has helped us.

**
** **Just a Reminder— Annual dues are Payable in September but no later than December-\$10.00 for singles, \$20.00 for family. Life Membership-\$100.00. Make checks payable to *Bainbridge Township Historical Society*. Pay Marge Cook at the meeting or mail to her at 116 Leaview Ln., Chagrin Falls, OH 44022.** **
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P.O.Box 23363
Bainbridge Twp.OH 44023-0363

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

DATED MATERIAL – PLEASE DELIVER PROMPTLY

Winter/Spring 2010 Meeting Schedule

January 13th, 2010: Terri Worthington will be our speaker on "Who gets Grandmas Yellow Pie Plate" which explains how to transfer non-title items, etc. 3

February 10th, 2010: Bill and Sue Berger will speak on their trip to Borneo.....Pictures will be shown

March 10th, 2010: Our guest speaker is Sandra Zikursh. She will speak of "Life in the Western Reserve". It is a glimpse into the pioneer woman's life presented with humor and facts.

April 14th, 2010: A time line of "Geauga Lake History" by Bill Takacs and intercepts from the audience.

May 12th, 2010: Nancy Hammel & Linda Barnard will present to us "The History of Twilea Park".

June 9th, 2010: Picnic—Time and place to be announced later.

Check out our web page www.bainbridgemory.org