Maple History Time Line

1540 First written observation of North American maple trees, by Jacques Cartier, French explorer traveling up St. Lawrence River.

1557 First written record of maples in North America yielding a sweet sap, by French scribe Andre Thevet.

1606 Marc Lescarbot describes collection and 'distillation' of maple sap by Micmac Indians of eastern Canada. (Histoire de la Nouvelle France)

1788 Quakers promote manufacture and use of maple sugar as an alternative to West Indian cane sugar production with slave labour.

1790 "Maple Sugar Bubble" grows, with high hopes among national leaders that a home grown alternative to slave-produced cane sugar from the British Caribbean had been found. Key advocates include Thomas Jefferson, Dr. Benjamin Rush and Judge James Fenimore Cooper.

1791 Dutch company buys 23,000 acres of Vermont land and attempts to hire local workers to make sugar to compete cane from West Indies. Project fails; Vermonters prefer to work their own land.

1791 Thomas Jefferson and George Washington discuss plans to start "maple orchards" on their Virginia plantations. Most trees die or fail to thrive; Jefferson remains a maple booster.

1810 Augers coming into popular use to drill holes for wooden spouts or sap spiles. Crude gashings or "boxing" techniques becoming obsolete.

1818 Maple sugar selling for half the price of imported cane sugar.

1858 Early patent for evaporating pan to D.M. Cook of Ohio.

1859 Eli Mosher patents first metal sap spouts.

1860 Peak maple production year for U.S.: 40 million pounds of sugar and 1.6 million gallons of syrup, from 23 states reporting to USDA.

1861 Maine Board of Agriculture report says flat-bottomed pans are better than kettles for boiling sap.

1872 Early evaporator design work described by Vermont inventor H. Allen Soule.

1875 Introduction of metal sap buckets.

1880 Cane sugar and maple sugar approximately equal in price.

1884 Early patent for sugar evaporator, G.H. Grimm, Hudson, Ohio.

1888 Leader Evaporator Co. founded, Enosburg Falls, Vermont. Will later popularize "drop-flue" design and become dominant U.S. maple-equipment supplier.

1889 Small Brothers of Dunham, Quebec, begin producing evaporator with crimp-bottom pans invented by David Ingalls. Precursor design to modern Lightning evaporator.

1890 G.H. Grimm Company, major supplier of evaporators, buckets and spouts, moves from Hudson, Ohio, to Rutland, Vermont.

1891 McKinley Bill attempts to promote maple sugar manufacture by offering two- cent-per-pound bounty to producers. Bureaucrats and small farmers wrangle, and the effort fails.

1893 Vermont Maple Sugar Makers' Association formed; instrumental in setting industry-wide standards.

1904 Cary Maple Sugar Company incorporated in St. Johnsbury, Vermont. Became largest wholesale sugar company in North America.

1905 U.S. Pure Food and Drug Act makes adulteration of maple syrup with glucose illegal.

1916 Metal sap-gathering tubing invented by W.C. Brower, Mayfield, New York. Proves impractical-prone to freezing at night, leakage and vulnerable to damage by deer.

1935 Vermont institutes spring Maple Festivals; 134 towns stage events; 1,200 maple frosted cakes are submitted for judging.

1940-1945 Maple prices frozen at $3.39 per gallon during World War II. Production suffers.

1946 First commercial power-tapping machine marketed. 1946 1946 Proctor Maple Research Centre near Underhill, Vermont, founded by University of Vermont.

1959 Plastic sap-gathering pipeline system patented by Nelson Griggs, Montpelier, Vermont.

1965 Maple leaf, a unifying symbol for both English and French Canada since 1800, becomes central image on new national flag of Canada.

Late 1970s Reverse-osmosis technology introduced to concentrate sugar content of sap before boiling.

1982 Severe local dieback or decline of sugar maples noted in Quebec. Provincial scientists begin searching for causes.

1985 Sugarmaker Gordon Richardson's Piggy-Back unit introduced by Small Brothers Company as the first of a new-generation of evaporator attachments to enhance performance "naturally".

1988 North American Maple Project begins studying health of maple trees to determine progression, if any, of maple decline.

1997 Changes in sap tubing technology offer "permanent" tubing which can be left in the woods year-round without stretching.

1999 Introduction of the "health spout", using a smaller hole in the tree, which can be drilled by cordless drills. A smaller hole heals faster