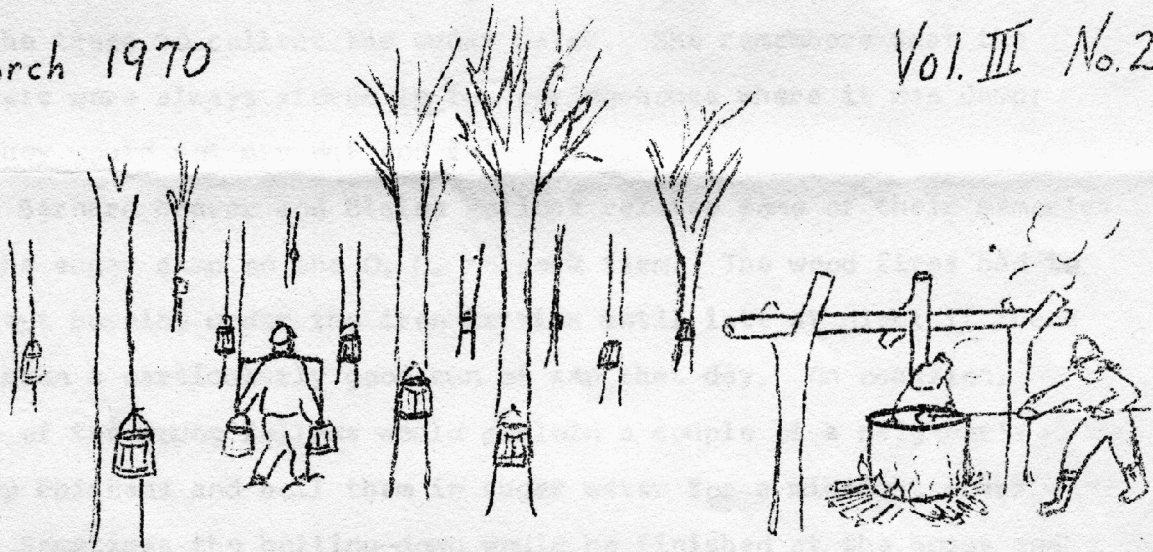


Jefferson College Historical Society

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SUGARING TIME

It used to be, in the rural areas, that the year was divided into seasons not by the calendar, but by the work that was done at a particular time of the year. Plowing and seeding, haying, harvesting, threshing, corn husking, butchering, and wood cutting all denoted a specific time of the year to the farmer.

In early spring, when snow might still be on the ground, when the sun had some warmth by day, but the nights were still below freezing, it was sugaring time in Washington County just as in New York or Vermont.

There were many stands of sugar maple trees in this vicinity. Sugar Tree Grove, Sugar Land, Sugar Tree Hill, Sugar Tree Bottom and Sugar Tree Flats were all names of original land patents in North Strabane and Cecil Townships. In Peters Township, Sugar Camp Road

still bears the name it was given because it went through an old-time sugar camp on the hill.

Several sugar camps within walking distance of Canonsburg were still being used as late as 1900: Tannehill's, Neill's, Boyle's, Herman Haines' and Pollock's, to name a few.

Miss Mary Neill recalls that she would help scrub and scald the wooden buckets before they were taken to the woods to be hung on the trees to collect the sugar water. She remembers that the buckets were always stored in the spring-house where it was damp; so they would not dry out and fall apart.

Bernard Weaver and Blaine Pollock related some of their memories of the sugar camp on the O. C. Pollock farm. The wood fires had to be kept burning under the iron kettles until late at night if there had been a particularly good run of sap that day. On occasion, some of the young fellows would purloin a couple of a neighbor's plump chickens and boil them in sugar water for a midnight snack.

Sometimes the boiling-down would be finished at the house and there would be a "sugaring-off" party. The syrup was boiled until it would ball when dropped into cold water; then they would pour it onto snow where it would cool rapidly into thin sheets that could be eaten as maple candy.

Some of the big sugar maples being tapped were three to four hundred years old and could have first been tapped by the Indians with whom the procedure originated.

The huge old sugar trees are about all gone around here, but there are still many large sugar camps in Somerset County. If you have not seen a sugar camp in operation, you might enjoy a visit to Somerset County at sugaring time.

AN OLD ALMANAC

In 1813, Patterson & Hopkins published an almanac, the title page of which reads as follows:

The Honest Man's Extra Almanac # 1 for the City of Pittsburgh and the Surrounding Country. Calendar pages calculated by the Rev. John Taylor and the rest filled up by R. Patterson. This Almanac being a new one, contains nothing to encourage the evil practice of liars, drunkards, rogues, lazy fellows, infidels, Tories, cowards, bad husbands and old bachelors.....it gives some account of Pittsburgh with a Directory.

.....a rather unusual recital of the contents of an almanac, but the interesting part lies in the fact that this same R. Patterson, when 18 years old, read the first Latin lesson at the opening of the Canonsburg Academy, the predecessor of Jefferson College.

Robert Patterson (1773-1854) was the first student of the Canonsburg Academy in 1791. After studying for three years at Canonsburg, Mr. Patterson entered the senior class of the University of Pennsylvania, where he graduated in 1795.

He served as a tutor at the University for five years and then came back to Canonsburg to study theology under Dr. John McMillan. In 1801, he married Jane, a daughter of Col. John Canon, and the following year was ordained a Presbyterian minister. In 1807 he took charge of the Pittsburgh Academy, now the University of Pittsburgh, and served as its principal until 1810.

From 1810 to 1836, Mr. Patterson was engaged in publishing and book-selling and was a proprietor of one of the first paper mills in the West. It was during the latter part of this period that he rejected for publication THE MANUSCRIPT FOUND, by Rev. Solomon Spaulding of Amity, Pa. Spaulding's manuscript, it is both stated and denied, was the basis of THE BOOK OF MORMON published by Joseph Smith, Jr. in 1830 - but that is another story for another time.

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NEXT MEETING

A TOUR THROUGH OLD ECONOMY , an illustrated narration with materials supplied by the Pennsylvania Museum and Historical Commission, will be the program at the meeting to be held at 8 PM Wednesday, April 1st. in the Canonsburg Municipal Building.

Economy (Ambridge, Pa.) was the third and last home of the Harmony Society. It was laid out in 1827 on a 3000 acre tract. The town was an entity, fulfilling the mental, moral and physical needs of the society. Agriculture, industry, and the exploitation of natural resources provided amply for their needs. It is said that at one time the Harmony Society owned property worth two million dollars. (from A TRAVELER'S GUIDE TO HISTORIC WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA by Mulkearn & Pugh)

A REMINDER...

Dues are due; if you haven't, please do.

It will make our Membership Chairman, Joe Solobay, so happy!

AN 1859 ADVERTISEMENT - A variety store - Could you doubt it?

DOJDS & RUSSELL, CANONSBURG, PA
Dealers In

BOOKS AND STATIONERY, HARDWARE,

A General Assortment of
GROCERIES, DRUGS, PATENT MEDICINES,
CHEMICALS, PAINTS, OILS and DYE-STUFFS,

Fine Toilet Soaps, Tooth and Hair Brushes,

TRUSSES AND SHOULDER BRACES,
FANCY AND TOILET ARTICLES, PERFUMERY,

Pure Wines and Liquors for Medicinal Uses

AND most Articles usually kept in a Variety Store.