

Drop By Drop The Golden Sap Is Gathered and Processed for the Saint John's Table

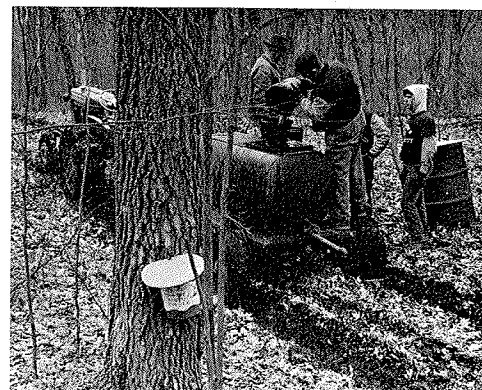
(See Story Page 22)



The Off-Campus Record ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGEVILLE, MINNESOTA

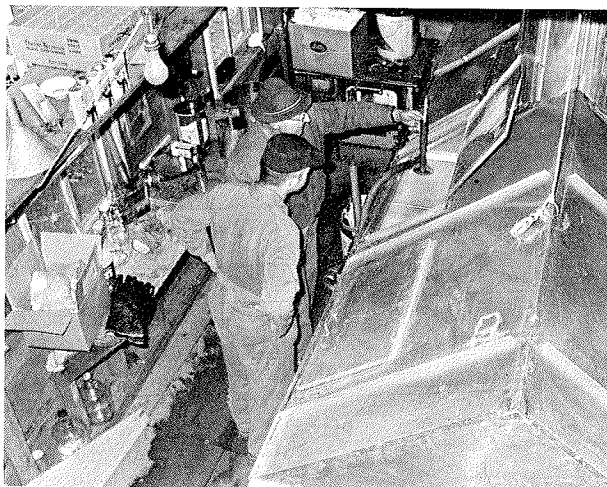
VOL. 6, NO. 1 SPRING, 1966

The Off-Campus Record is published four times annually (Winter, Spring, Summer and Fall) by the Public Relations Office of St. John's University. Entered as second class matter at the post office in Collegeville, Minn., under Act of March 3, 1879.



OFFICERS OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

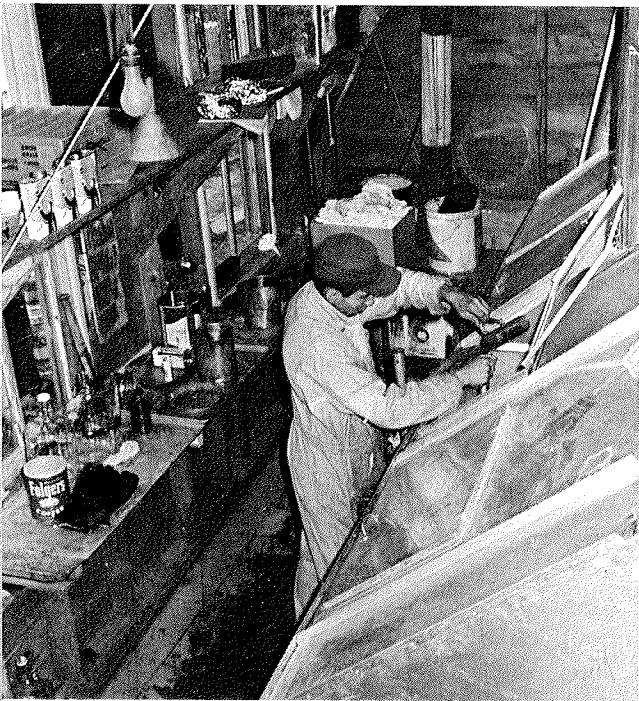
- Honorary President
Rt. Rev. Baldwin Dworschak, OSB '33
- President
Francis W. Miller '48
- Vice-President
Thomas W. McKeown '52
- Spiritual Director
Rev. Vincent Santo '45
- Secretary-Treasurer
Rev. Walter Reger, OSB '21
- Executive Secretary
George G. Durenberger '28



A Labor of Love!

On nearly any day from mid-March to mid-April, as one drives up the familiar road to Saint John's and stops by the small, green evaporating house with its large wood pile in front, a flurry of activity can be seen about that area. Men attach pails to trees, others empty buckets into larger ones, some lug wood to the fire-eating stove in the evaporating house. For it's maple syrup time, which conjures up an image of a stack of steaming flap-jacks covered with butter - and that golden fluid!

To the few men who gather and process maple tree sap in Saint John's bountiful woodlands, it is a science. It takes a practiced eye and hand to know when the mixture's ready - and won't crystalize or mold.



Brother Marcellus tests sap with hydrometer for sugar level. A sample is taken directly from the evaporating stove.

Ralph Myer and Brother Marcellus Handorgan, O.S.B., assisted ably by Brother Mark, know the ropes and consequently have harvested a record yield of some 350 gallons of pure Minnesota maple syrup this spring. Ralph has been at the art for some 15 years. You might say that he's an expert! Brother Marcellus, a relative newcomer (two years), already is planning for a bigger yield next year.

Let's follow, in our imaginations, the process of gathering and preparing the syrup. First, hard maple trees are sought and marked with a touch of paint for tapping. Hard maple is picked over soft because of its higher sugar concentration and yield (35 gallons of sap to 1 of syrup). Saint John's has selected acres of hard maples which are referred to collectively as a "sugar bush." Brother Marcellus points out that maples with bigger crowns (foliated tops) produce more sap. Some 1,200 hard maples were tapped this spring.

Next, maples with a diameter of 10 inches or over are drilled to a depth of 3 inches and a spout is inserted. A rule of thumb is that for every 5 inches increase in diameter above the minimum of 10, a tap is added. No

tree receives more than 4 taps. Trees with multiple taps have hoses which empty the sap into a common collecting bucket.

"I usually tap a tree on its south side," says Brother Marcellus, "but it really makes no difference," he admits.

Some 2,200 taps in the Saint John's "sugar bushes" produced over 13,000 gallons of raw sap this spring. (This was later refined to yield the 350 gallons of maple syrup.)

During the sap gathering period, students, clerics and novices pitch in at least twice a day to keep up with bucket toting chores. A hard maple will usually produce a gallon of sap per day. The sap is then emptied into 50 gallon drums nearby, waiting for a tractor, hauling a 175 gallon drum on wheels, to come bumping down the many logging trails to pick it up.

The sap gets its first screening when it is dumped into the tank truck. From the sugar bush, the tractor hauls the tank to the evaporating house where the sap is transferred to outside stock tanks. From here the sap is fed into the evaporating pans in the stove. The pans can hold 200 gallons at one time.

During the "cooking" of the sap, periodic checks with a hydrometer indicate the percentage of sugar in it. When the desired level of 65% sugar is reached, the maple syrup is drained off, filtered several times, and bottled. Overcooking the sap will result in crystallization of the sugar. Not cooking it enough (i.e., not concentrating the sugar sufficiently) results often times in spoilage.

When all of this golden elixir has been finally collected in gallon jugs, it's ready for the Saint John's table - well worth the patience and care in preparing it!

Although refined principally for the monks, a lot of it makes its way to the college and prep refectories.



Notice!

Beginning June 1, lovers of Saint John's Bread (Fresh, frozen or brown 'n serve) should check all large supermarkets in the following areas:

Arizona	North Dakota
California	Oregon
Colorado	South Dakota
Minnesota	Washington
Nebraska	Wisconsin

Check SAFEWAY STORES everywhere including the Washington, D.C. area and RALPH'S in Los Angeles. KROGERS also has a franchise under consideration.