

**Where the Forest Meets The Farm:
A Comparison of Spatial and Historical Change in the
Euro-American and American Indian Maple Production Landscape**

by

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**WHERE THE FOREST MEETS THE FARM:
A COMPARISON OF SPATIAL AND HISTORICAL CHANGE
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This research examines the cultural landscape history of American Indian and Euro-American maple sugar and syrup production in the Western Great Lakes region between 1850 and today. Fourteen case studies from contemporary and abandoned American Indian and Euro-American sugarbushes in Minnesota, Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, were used to trace the evolution of spatial, historical, and cultural change in the industry of maple production. Historical, archaeological, and ethnographic methods were combined to present a narrative history that examines the relationship between the components and boundaries of the maple production landscape and its changing technologies, environments, demographics, policy and regulation, and patterns of sociability.

Like much of agriculture, the Euro-American maple production industry has declined in the number of producers, while individual commercial sugarbushes have grown in size with greater mechanization. The infrastructure requirements of new technology and the needs of the maple producing family have led to new spatial arrangements in Euro-American maple production. Sugarhouses have moved out of their traditional setting in the sugarbush to a more accessible and visible position near the home, farm, or improved road. Likewise, sugarhouses have evolved and changed with the changing technology of maple production. Over time, the structure of the Euro-American maple production industry has become more complex, with more segmented product sales, syrup buyers and packers, central evaporation plants, and equipment dealers.

American Indian maple production, once abundant in the nineteenth century, has significantly declined since reservation settlement, with very few maple producers today. The technology and materials used in Indian maple production have improved over the last century with the introduction of flat pans and metal and plastic sap collection devices, while basic production methods have changed very little. Maple syrup made for home and family consumption is the primary product and men have replaced women as the labor force in the Indian sugarbush. In spite of its decline, maple production in American Indian communities continues to serve as an important symbolic element in the development and maintenance of an Indian identity, solidifying the relationships of individuals and communities in the present with their land and their ancestors.