

## Bringing New Life to a Film on Minnesota Maple Syrup Making in the 1960s

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In 1961, the University of Minnesota Extension Service produced a 16 mm color film depicting both old and modern methods of maple syrup production. The film was produced to promote and expand the production of maple syrup in Minnesota. According to the film's press release, the film "points to the untapped profits in Minnesota's maples."

Titled "Working the Sugarbush: The Maple Sugar Story," the film was created through the efforts of long time Minnesota Extension Forester Parker Anderson, who provided the script and technical direction, and University of Minnesota Extension visual education specialist Gerald R. McKay, who did the filming. Narration was provided by Bob Doyle, a well-

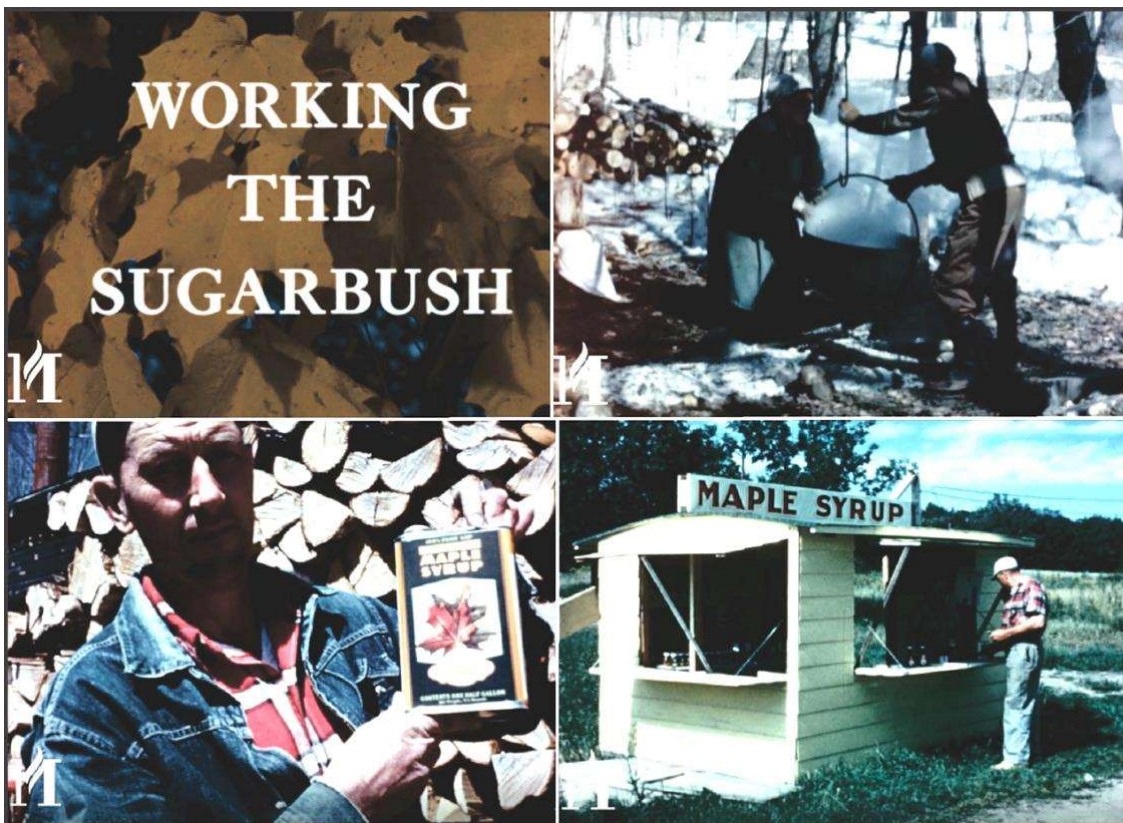
known KUOM radio figure and Director of TV and Radio at the University of Minnesota.

Most of the scenes were taken around Mille Lacs Lake and in the east central part of Minnesota. The purpose of the film is to show opportunities for profit available to those who do a good job making maple syrup. The opening scenes mention how the state's early Native American residents made maple syrup and show Chippewa Indians at Mille Lacs boiling sap in open air kettles. Later sequences show the selection and tapping of trees with brace and bit and then a backpack mounted power tapper, which was novel at that time. Additional scenes emphasize other cutting edge sap gathering technology for that era in

the form of heavy plastic sap collection bags and the 3M Mapleflo brand plastic tubing system. Many different faces appear, ranging from foresters and extension agents to overall clad syrup makers feeding wood fire evaporators in steam filled sugarhouses.

The 22-minute film was one of 12 agriculture related films chosen by United States Department of Agriculture to be featured for the month of January in 1962 in the patio theater of the USDA building in Washington DC. The film was later distributed by state agricultural agents to be shown to groups and at various events around the state.

When it was discovered that the copy of this film was preserved in the archives of the Minnesota Historical Society and was still in good condition, a request was submitted for a digital copy to be made of the 16 mm film. After determining that the University of Minnesota Extension continued to hold copyright for the film, a request was granted for myself and the Minnesota Maple Syrup Producers Association (MMSPA) to have permission to share the digital film with the public on our respective websites. A high-resolution digital copy is being acquired from the



**Figure 3.** Images from the film. Clockwise from upper left – title image, sugaring in the Mille Lacs Ojibwe community, roadside syrup stand, displaying a can of Minnesota maple syrup.

Minnesota Historical Society. Those interested in viewing the film can look for a link to watch and download it which will be posted in the future on

the Maple Syrup History website ([www.maplesyruphistory.com](http://www.maplesyruphistory.com)). Additional arrangements are also being explored for the film to be available for

viewing and download at the MMSPA website.

*Originally from St. Cloud, Dr. Matthew M. Thomas is a historian of the maple industry who shares his research and writing at the website [www.maplesyruphistory.com](http://www.maplesyruphistory.com). He is the author of the recent book "A Sugarbush Like None Other: Adirondack Maple Syrup and the Horse Shoe Forestry Company", available for sale on eBay and the book "Maple King: The Making of a Maple Syrup Empire," available on Amazon.com. He can be reached at [maplesyruphistory@gmail.com](mailto:maplesyruphistory@gmail.com).*



*Figure 4. Maple syrupers socializing in Litchfield the evening before the Spring Membership Meeting. From left – John & Cindy Beckwith, Neal DeMars, Margo & Chris Ransom, Laurie & Paul Reddie (meeting hosts), Ken & Karen Borrell, Dave Carlin, Corinne Peterson, Sue DeMars (hidden), Don Somers, Ralph & Amy Fidely. Image Courtesy Stu Peterson.*



*Figure 5. Paul & Laurie Reddie, hosts of the Spring Meeting in Litchfield.*