

Black River News

• Together • We • Can • Accomplish • Great • Things

VOLUME 18 ISSUE 4

The Sap Woods

APRIL 2023

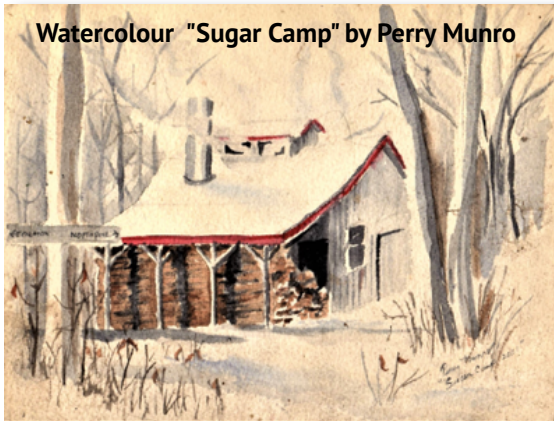
One of the first clear memories of my life is of the sap run in the spring. I remember my mother saying, "Oh, your father is down in the sap woods". To me the sap woods could have been a hundred miles away. It was later when Zane [Long] and I were probably around ten years old and we were allowed to tap some maple trees each spring, I realized that the start of the sap woods was only a hundred yards behind my parent's house, and it ran down a deep ravine towards the brook.



Maple tree tapped with an over 100 year old wooden spile. Photo by Perry Munro

But to backtrack, every spring my father would tap a few trees and the sap would be boiled down to syrup on the kitchen wood stove. The steam from the

simmering sap would steam up the windows and sometimes even lift the edges of wallpaper. I remember the sweet smell



Watercolour "Sugar Camp" by Perry Munro

of the sap and as it grew nearer to syrup there was that wonderful anticipation of the taste of the first run of syrup. We probably only made a few pints of syrup in the entire season and it was not squandered on pancakes - noisiree - we enjoyed it with homemade white bread that was broken into pieces and dipped in your own private tiny bowl of syrup. It was a magical time.

During the 1920's, my grandfather Lawson Atwell and his sons Maxie, Percy and Kennie, tapped about 30 maple trees in the sap woods. The sap was boiled down in a large barrel and some of the syrup was taken to Wolfville to sell. There is still evidence of that time in one of the huge old maples - a wooden spile, seemingly almost petrified in time, still sticks out of a tree. It was common practice at that time to hand carve the sap spiles from a piece of softwood and stick a small nail on the end of it to hold the bucket.

As time went on and Zane and I tapped our trees, I remember the huge effort it was to lug buckets of sap through the woods, sometimes in deep snow, with sap sloshing into our rubber boots. But none of the hard work dimmed our enthusiasm or the anticipation of the maple syrup.

One of the sweetest sounds in the world for me is the "plink, plink" of a newly tapped maple dripping sap into an empty bucket. As one completes the tapping process, the "music of spring" continues as tree after tree is tapped. To stand in the warm spring sun atop the softening snow, and hear these sounds is a truly magical experience.

When Perry and I moved to my Uncle Maxie's place in 1971, it was not long before we began to tap the maples. We rigged up several methods of boiling down the sap - one was a flat aluminum pan on a stove outdoors, and one was an old cookstove in the garage. Whatever the method, it was always a celebration of a season.

When we finally decided "to go back to the land", with very little actual knowledge of what that really meant, we committed to the maple syrup project. We believed that it was a sustainable way to earn some money from the land without cutting down the lovely hardwoods. We consulted the NS Department of Agriculture who had a specialist in maple production at that time. It was determined that we had enough maples, etc., etc., and we bought our first evaporator. I remember well the first time we stood over that evaporator and waited, and waited, and waited for the syrup to come off. Boy, did we have a lot to learn.

Judi Atwell Munro



Munros at the Sugar Camp:

l-r: Perry, Judi, Sara, Shawn, Kathleen, Todd

Good Neighbour

W

ELL he's out there and at it again.

It snowed last night because I can hear the hum of the tractor and the scrape of the blade as our driveway is being plowed. Husband, father, grandfather, volunteer fireman of many years' standing and our across the road neighbour extraordinaire - Jeff England. He makes sure our driveway is clear so we can get out if needs be.

In the days when we straggled down the mountain daily for gainful employment, we knew our driveway would be cleared by the time we got home should a blizzard arise during the day, which it did on many occasions. So many times, heart pounding and nerves frayed, we would slew into our cleared driveway having bucked drifts, slippery roads and whiteouts most of the way home. We long time residents of Black River well remember having to get a run on from White Rock, down across the bridge, for many years one lane, hoping against hope that nobody was coming the other way. We'd have the pedal to the floor in an attempt to get up and around Smith Bend so we could make it to the Lower Sunken Lake Road. Didn't always happen. I know I for one ended up backing down the mountain more than once, having failed to make it, barely able to see my tracks, praying nobody else was in the process of making their dash. How much sweeter it was then to find our driveway clear.

Jeff is a great neighbour in a community of good neighbours. I started a list once to welcome newcomers to the community: Who To Call When You Need Help. I soon realized that I was naming almost every single house up and down the roads. I cannot think of anyone who wouldn't lend a hand with or without being asked if the need was there. That's quite something to be able to say.

Striving to emulate Jeff's good neighbourliness, on a particularly stormy day when he was at work, we decided to blow out his driveway. Do for him what he had done so many times for us over the years. To make it even better, I asked Zane to blow a path to their steps and I would clean off their door step, just for good measure, don't ya know. He was almsot to the step when CA-CHUNK followed by silence. The snowblower quit in a way that you just knew wasn't a good thing.

In those days, Jeff drove a VW Jetta. VW Jettas work especially well in cold weather and start right up no matter how cold it gets IF one uses a block heater and that requires it to be plugged in. To do that, one needs an extension cord. Jeff had just bought himself a very nice, twenty-five foot cord for the very purpose. It, we discovered, had been buried under the snow but was not nicely and securely wrapped around the tines of the snowblower - or part of it was at any rate. Oops.

Ah well, we tried. Jeff forgave us and life has gone on. Still and all, I give thanks every snow storm for having someone who has been our neighbour and someone we have relied on for many years now. It isn't uncommon for him to plow us out before he plows his own driveway or heads off to work. Thanks, neighbour!

Gladys Long

Perhaps you have a similar story. Our community is made up of good neighbours - people who find a way to make your day a little lighter and brighter. Your story doesn't have to be present day it can be a story from the past. Let us know; we would enjoy reading it and sharing it in our newsletter. You can contact us by email or telephone - see the contact numbers on the next page.

Annapolis Valley High Speed Internet

We thank the AVHS for the complimentary internet at our community hall.
CONTACT them at 902-692-9100 or annapolisvalleyhighspeed.com.
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Black River

... from the Wolfville Acadian

This column was originally printed in the Wolfville Acadian and was printed without the wife's name, as was the practice of the time. Where it is known we have included it in brackets.

May 4, 1950

Mrs. Byron (Verna) Long and Clara have returned home after spending a week with her mother, Mrs. Clem, of Victoria Harbour.

Sunday visitors with Mr. and Mrs. Rupert (Inez) Long were Mr. and Mrs. Waldo (Dorothy) Long, Mr. and Mrs. Robie (Isabel) Long, New Minas, visited the same home Wednesday.

Mr. and Mrs. Jack (Grace) Allen, Grand Pre, spent Sunday with the latter's mother, Mrs. Jennie Long.

Mr. and Mrs. Roy (Elizabeth) Smith and family, Wolfville, were Sunday guests of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph (Blanche) Smith.

Mr. and Mrs. Ian (Hazel) Long, accompanied by Mrs. N.R. Hawkins, Mrs. Burton (?) Malott and Joanne Smith, motored to Halifax on Friday to attend the graduation of their sister, Miss Elaine Smith, who has completed her training at the Grace Maternity Hospital.

Sympathy is extended to the family of the late Mrs. Clyde (Florence) McInnis of this place.

Mrs. Florence Eisenhauer, and Mrs. Stanley (Elsie) Levy, Melanson, accompanied by Mrs. Kenneth (Ida Mae) Amith and two children, White Rock, visited friends and relatives here on Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Budd (?) Cohoon, Hantsport, visited Mr. and Mrs. Joseph (Blanche) Smith on Saturday evening.

We are sorry to report that Mr. and Mrs. John (?) Schofield are not so well.

Mr. and Mrs. Freeman (Mildred) Ells and Gladys, Gaspereau, visited Mr. and Mrs. Frank (Hattie) Ells and Mr. and Mrs. L.W. (Mabel) Long, Sunday.

Mrs. Ian (Hazel) Long and Linda spent Sunday afternoon with her parents Mr. and Mrs. Howard (Lillian) Smith, White Rock.

May 18, 1950

The Community Club reopened for this year at the home of Mrs. Joseph (Blanche) Smith on Thursday night. The former president, Mrs. Ian (Hazel) Long, was succeeded by Mrs. Percy (Mildred) Atwell. At the close of the evening refreshments were served by the hostess. The next meeting will be with Mrs. L.W. (Mabel) Long.

APRIL events ●●●

SUN MON TUE WED THUR FRI SAT

						1 Sequence, Darts, Crokinole Games Night 7-9 pm
2	3 Ways/Means 10 am Maintenance 7pm	4	5 Computer Simplified 10:30 am	6	7	8
9	10 Sewing/Crafts Meeting 11 am	11	12	13	14	15 BINGO for the whole family 6:30pm-8pm canteen-50/50
16 Monthly Meeting 7 pm Directors Meeting 7pm	17 Book Club 7pm-	18	19 Computer Simplified 10:30 am	20	21	22 Ticket Auction VIEWING 1-2 Auction Following
23 Sharing Stories 7-9 pm. 30	24 Sewing/Crafts Meeting 11 am Heritage Meeting 7:00pm	25	26	27	28	29

• **April 1 Games Night 7-9 pm. Special Invitation to the Community.** Come out and enjoy a **Games Night** at the Hall. We hope to have enough people to play darts, crokinole, scrabble, sequence, etc. Canteen Available or bring your own snacks. Free will offering and/or food bank item would be accepted but not necessary. Let's get together.

• **April 15 6:30pm-8pm BINGO** for the whole family. Prizes for the lucky winners. It promises to be an exciting evening for parents and children. Admission Free/Donation to Food Bank and free will offering accepted. Canteen and 50/50 Tickets available.

• **Ticket Auction: FUNDRAISER - April 22**
Viewing from 1pm-2pm, Auction following.
Many Items: crafts • gift certificates • gently used items • preserves • baked goods and much more
• Door Prize • Canteen • **Tickets: 10 for \$2, 30 for \$5**

• **Sharing Stories - For our next Black River Community Social** we will have a social time to share stories of the Black River Area. There is a lot of interesting history, local personalities and community happenings that would be great to share. Join us on **Sunday, April 23 from 7-9pm** at the Black River Hall for a fun evening of storytelling and yarns. Refreshments will be served! *If you have any suggestions for story tellers or topics of interest please contact Jeff Moore at jeffreydonaldmoore@gmail.com.* Check our fb page for updates on who will be sharing stories. Surely this will be an event with lots of laughs and good memories of our community. See live links below to our podcasts, facebook and newsletter.

• **Newsletter.** The current newsletter can be picked up at the little Library at the front entrance to the Hall. If you are unable to pick it up at the Hall please let us know and we will find a way to deliver it to you. Contact: sharonlake07@gmail.com. or 902 542 5125 **Note: Our newsletter will be available at select places in the Valley area (eg. White Rock Hall, Gaspereau Corner Store and Dabro's Farm Market).** Some back issues are available.

NEWSLETTER : The deadline for submissions is the 15th of each month for the following month.

Contacts: • sharonlake07@gmail.com • 902 542 5125
• gladyslong67@gmail.com • 902 542 1994

LIVE LINKS TO OUR FACEBOOK, NEWSLETTER & PODCASTS below:

<https://www.facebook.com/blackrivercommunityhall/>

<http://blackrivercommunityhall.weebly.com/>

<https://anchor.fm/storiesfromblackriver>

<https://open.spotify.com/show/1zMHYxDMwQ9uUjCNQSmN7U?si=m5N2VSsQQZufzbSNR96dyQ>

• **CONTACTS: Hall Rental/Events Booking: Daily Rental-\$100, Damage Deposit \$50 Contact: Jayn Kenny 902 542 0002**
jayneileenkenny@msn.com

• **Quilting & Crafts:**

• **Book Club:** mary.tanner.long@hotmail.com

• **Card Games:** White Rock contact Tim MacKay 902 697 2374
or email tim.mackay@eastlink.ca

Classifieds...

- **PORCUPINE CREEK PRODUCTIONS** - handcrafted by Nellie Schofield - nellieed.schofield@gmail.com. Tel: 902.542.5134
- **JESSICA MYRA - NATURAL FIBRE CREATIONS**-mothermuse@outlook.com
- **JACK SPINNEY is offering QUALITY, DRY KINDLING \$6** for a full feed bag. **DROP INTO THE HOUSE AT 85 UPPER SUNKEN LAKE RD or CALL 902.713.5094.**
- **HUMBLE HILL HOMESTEAD** offering: farm fresh eggs in a variety of colours, frozen-fresh rabbit, veggies and transplants seasonally. Contact via Facebook Farm Page or call/text 902.300.5482
- **FOR SALE: Locally grown lean ground beef \$5/lb.** Custom beef orders for sides and quarters \$5/lb. Call Shawn Levy 902 300 4432

Birthdays

Nancy Morse	Apr 1
Todd Schofield	Apr 1
Joyce Carnell	Apr 2
Donna (Stephen) Levy	Apr 5
Patrick Clancey	Apr 9
Sarah Levy	Apr 11
Brittany Gertridge	Apr 14
Jayden Oulette	Apr 14
Shane Kaizer	Apr 17
Violet Levy	Apr 18
Beau Milligan	Apr 19
Pam Schofield	Apr 20
Francis McLearn	Apr 20
Josh McLearn	Apr 21
Aiden Levy	Apr 21
Paul Levy	Apr 22
Kyle Chappus	Apr 23
Evan Ells	Apr 24
Blair Schofield	Apr 24
Mitchell Long	Apr 25
Sage Munro	Apr 26
Tracey Pick	Apr 26
Nellie Schofield	Apr 27
Joel McLearn	Apr 29
Aaron Levy	Apr 30

Anniversary

Paul & SueAnne Russell Apr 9

With Thanks

- We had a fun time at the March Break **Bingo**. The turnout was great and it is a pleasure to see all the children having such a good time. Thanks to Gordon Berry for doing the calling and those members of the community who helped to make it run smoothly.
- Many thanks to **Jeff McMahon of Longspell Point Farm**, Kingsport for their doantion of potatoes to our *Take-Out Ham Supper*.
- **Thank you to the community** for your support of the Take-Out Ham Supper. Thanks for your donations of food, your time and assistance. It is always appreciated and the Supper was delicious. We have some excellent cooks in our area.

Photo by Francis McLearn



Sunken Lake and Area Journal of Wildlife Observations

recorded by Clara Spinney

- **Feb 19** - A northern shrike visited the bird feeds of Don and Theresa Feltmate. Although they are native to this area it is the first time I had even heard of them.
- The Woodpecker population has picked up to about normal at my feeders. I was worried about them for awhile but it has been a different winter.
- I have a real mystery going on here. The little birds have stopped using their main feeder. It has always been their favourite. It has been emptied, scrubbed, dried and refilled. They still don't use it but they feed normally at the other feeders. Same seed, so it can't be that. If you have any suggestions please pass them on.
- The otters are still here. They are using open holes in the ice at the upper end of the lake. Three have been seen so I am wondering if it is a mother with two of last year's pups.
- I have had reports of geese flying over here but I have not seen them. I have seen several large flocks flying over the dykes near New Minas and Port Williams. I'm sure they are looking for spring also.
- The squirrels are back, not just coming to the feeders which have been overlooked all winter but now they have changed the rules. This week one was seen coming from our shed with a pill bottle containing some screws. I know building supplies have become very expensive but really ...
- Spring is here. I for one am looking forward to the return of the ducks and all our summer birds, some furry friends also. I believe we will all welcome it.



Northern Shrike

Telephone Clara 902.542.3180 with any of your wildlife observations and she will add them to her own or email: claraspinney123@gmail.com

HALL RENTAL:

- Daily Rental \$100 • Damage deposit \$50 Effective January 1, 2022

Hall Rental/Events Booking: Jayn Kenny
jayneileenkenney@msn.com, 902 542 0002

Accepting bookings for Hall Rental Now

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