



FAME MAY NOW STICK TO MAN WHO HELPED TURN SAP INTO SYRUP

As a maple syrup producers head to the woods this month to tap trees and boil sap in sugarhouses, their success will be largely due to a little-known inventor whose innovations in the late 1800s are relatively unchanged.

G.H. Grimm, who created an evaporator that turns sap into syrup, is emerging from his anonymity.

Hundreds of North American maple syrup producers attending a national conference this fall in Akron are to travel to Hudson for the unveiling of Ohio Historical Marker at the Evaporator Works, an office complex named after Grimm's factory.

Gwen Mayer, archivist at the Hudson Library and Historical Society, will recount Grimm's life and accomplishments. She spent a year uncovering his life after a friend who owns a sugarbush - a grove of sugar maple trees - asked her about "G.H. Grimm, Hudson o.," on the door of his evaporator.

"Grimm really to me is a pioneer in his industry," she said. "I did not realize the extent of his national exposure."

Gustave Henry Grimm came to Ohio from Germany in 1864. He moved to Hudson in 1870, according to historical documents and Mayer's research. The 28-year-old tinner worked for merchant John Chapman before opening a competing stove store.

He installed the first gasoline street light at Aurora and East Main streets in 1879 to see if it would work better than coal oil lamps. Grimm also was a firefighter and councilman.

Ohio was the largest producer of maple syrup and sugar at that time, said Randall Heiligmann, a professor of forestry at Ohio State University who works with maple syrup producers. Sap was boiled into syrup in flat pans; the process was inefficient because the longer sap boiled, the darker and less desirable it became, he said.

Others had invented flat evaporators, but Grimm's evaporator, patented in 1882, increased the surface area for heating, which allowed for faster evaporation of the sap. The sap also flowed continuously. "He paved the way for the technology used today to produce maple syrup," said Heiligmann.

In 1888, Grimm founded the G.H. Grimm Manufacturing Co., which sold his Champion Evaporator and other products he

developed, including spouts, buckets and hooks. He also manufactured cast-iron stoves.

Grimm traveled to Vermont in 1890 to sell his product and was so successful he set up a factory there. He then sent his cousin, R.H. Grimm, to Quebec, Canada, to operate another factory. That company is now Dominion & Grimm Inc., which manufactures maple syrup equipment.

Two years later, Grimm and his family – his wife, Esther, and daughters, Nella and Helen – moved to Vermont. Heiligmann believes Grimm realize the maple syrup market was growing in the Northeast.

At one point, Grimm's company was the largest manufacturer of maple supplies in the world, Mayer said. His initial factory remained in Hudson until 1945. Grimm died in 1914 and Nella ran the company until selling it in 1951. It was later purchased by Leader Evaporator Co. The company in Swanton, Vt., is the largest U.S. manufacturer of maple syrup equipment and supplies.

Mayer said Grimm wrote scholarly papers about sugaring, including whether it was feasible to tap maple trees in the fall, and spearheaded a protest and visit to Washington, D.C., to object to the McKinley Tariff of 1890, which he and others believed would make it too expensive to export maple syrup.

Heiligmann said the tour to Hudson in October will highlight Ohio's rich history in maple syrup production.

"It will be a cool event," he said.

Karen Farkas (Plain Dealer Reporter), *FAME MAY NOW STICK TO MAN WHO HELPED TURN SAP INTO SYRUP*, Cleveland, Ohio, Feb. 10, 2007