



## *La sucrerie ou l'érablière*

Acadians and Canadians, who settled in the Madawaska region at the end of the 19th century, brought with them traditions and customs inherited from their ancestors and adapted them, as best as they could, to their new environment. Thus, the maple forests found in the northwest of New Brunswick were easily developed into small businesses known in Quebec as “sucreries” or sugar bushes.

Who set up the first sugar bush in our area? Nobody knows. However, we know that Jean-Baptiste Cyr (Crock), ancestor of the Cyr's of the Madawaska settlement, exploited a maple sugar grove in the Pays-Bas region (near Fredericton) before the arrival of the Loyalists in 1783. Rev. D.J. Leblanc, pastor of Central Kingsclear, wrote to P.-L. Mercure on October 30, 1900,

“Tradition tells us something interesting about the origin of the “Croc” name. The old Jean-Baptiste had cut down most of the maple trees to ship to France (...) Nevertheless, our Acadians were amused, thinking of the French, “Won't they have enough to bite into (croquer)! They were far from thinking that this nickname would remain.” (Papiers P.-L. Mercure)

In the Madawaska region, the “Crocs” along with other Acadians and Canadians, kept the custom of collecting maple sap each spring, of making maple syrup, and spreading maple taffy on the snow. In their Report of 1831, two Americans, J.G. Dean and E. Kavanagh, declared that the inhabitants of the Madawaska settlement “manufacture large quantities of maple sugar

from rock maple” and that the way they mark their properties even applies to their sugar bush or maple groves.

Up until very recently, our Madawaska maple sugar bushes were family-owned businesses and operated in an old-fashioned way; they were, however, part of the Madawaska scenery and were sources of happy gatherings upon the arrival of spring. Today the maple industry has become very modern and has been commercialized on the world market. Those ultra-modern “sucreries” or sugar bushes have the advantage of accessibility and facilitate gatherings of the young and not so young, as well as of healthy and handicapped people. Many are those who can enjoy the delights of the “sucreries” as in the old days.

**G. Desjardins**