Good Friends Remembered at Museum Annual Meeting

Long-time benefactors and friends of the Page Farm and Home Museum, Phyllis A. Page and Harold L. Chute, were remembered for their dedication and support of the Museum by those attending the annual meeting on Friday, October 24. Mrs. Page, wife of Henry H. Page, passed away in March. Dr. Chute died in August.

Carl Smith, outgoing finance chair, wrote in his report, “I wish to acknowledge the passing of a generous benefactor, Dr. Harold Chute, and thank his family for their support. It was also with great sorrow that we lost Mrs. Henry Page, Phyllis. My deepest gratitude goes to her family for the generous remainder trust funds that benefit the Museum per Henry’s bequests.”

Chutes Earn Henry H. Page Award

The 2008 Henry H. Page Award, which recognizes “distinguished accomplishment in agriculture, and as agriculture relates to education, history, or Maine culture,” was awarded posthumously to Harold Chute and to Harold’s widow, Marion. Like Henry Page, the Chutes epitomize the qualities that the Museum celebrates: devotion to State, community, and family; contribution to Maine’s agricultural heritage, philanthropy; and economic development coupled with sound stewardship of Maine’s natural resources. The Award recipients serve as models for others, particularly the young, to inspire them to achievement by showing what is possible through what Henry Page called the secret of success in three words: “work, pray, and dream.”

Harold and Marion Chute’s lifelong support of the education of the young is embodied in the Harold and Marion Chute Schoolhouse and recognized in the Chute Scholar Program, in which participants fund school field trips to the Museum, so that children may learn valuable and practical lessons about Maine’s rural agricultural past.

Members Elect Officers and Approve New Board Members

The membership approved the slate of officers for the 2008–09 year. They are: Pamela Chute, chair; Melvin Johnson, vice chair; Judy Round, clerk; Gary Anderson, finance chair, and Mary Bird, member-at-large. The membership also approved three new members to the Board: William “Bill” Cook; George K. Criner, and Jacqueline “Jackie” A. Emerson.

Bill Cook and his wife Kathy have been involved with living history since 1973 when they joined the Brigade of the American Revolution. They were instrumental in the creation of the first living history program at Fort Stanwix in Rome, NY. The Cooks have been active in re-enacting and living history ever since. George Criner is Professor and Director of the School of Economics at the University. He and his wife Francie live in Orono. Jackie Emerson is a resident of Corinna. She is the daughter of the late Jerome A. and Hazel B. Emerson. Jackie is a graduate of Husson College; has taught both secondary and adult education and is very involved in her community and civic affairs.

Other members of the 2008–09 Board of the Page Farm and Home Museum include Gerry Page, Michael Pullen, Howard Segal, Cal Walker, Ben Dresser, Clark Thompson, and Larry Wade. Fred Servello is the College of Natural Sciences, Forestry, and Agriculture representative and Claude Junkins is Facilities representative.

A Moment to Reflect

William Jennings Bryan is quoted as saying, “burn down our cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic; but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country.” While Bryan made that quote many decades...
ago, he was referring to the vitality of agriculture and the truth that it is the backbone of our society.

As we continue to face economic uncertainties, we are grateful for the support of our many friends and benefactors. The Page Farm and Home Museum celebrates Maine’s rural heritage, offering lessons from the past that can serve us as we face the challenges and opportunities of our own time. Thank you for your continuing support of the Page Farm and Home Museum.

Submit to the Cracker Barrel

The General Store was one of the key places for people in old agricultural communities to meet and exchange stories, farming tips, jokes and tall tales. We here at the Page Museum are dedicated to preserving both this tradition and the type of conversation that it promoted. Your submission can be about anything relating to the Museum’s collection of Maine history relating to farms and farming communities between 1865 and 1940. Submission should be between 50 and 350 words in length. Electronic submissions (preferred) should be sent to: patricia.henner@umit.maine.edu and send in with the words “Cracker Barrel Submission” in the subject line. Mailed submissions, preferably typed, may be sent to: The Cracker Barrel, University of Maine, Page Farm and Home Museum, 5787 Museum Barn, Orono, Maine 04469-5787

This issue’s submission comes from Norman Fuller in Greene County, New York.

Although maple syrup products are made all over Greene County, there are only 6-8 commercial operations. Most of these are in the mountain top area. Production of maple syrup products brings about 4 million dollars of income to the area.

The Indians made maple syrup before the coming of the Europeans. Maple syrup does not come ready to use from tapping the trees. It takes about 35-40 gallons of sap to make one gallon of maple syrup. The sap has to be boiled down for hours. The best variety of tree to tap is the sugar maple. The tapping season in Greene County is about 4-5 weeks. Trees are usually tapped in mid to late February.

Most of the information for this article is based on my own personal experiences of tapping trees in Maine as a child and on our property in Athens as an adult. We made syrup as an educational experience for our children, grandchildren, Cub Scouts and 4-H members.

Of all the mistakes I made in my maple syrup production, the most disastrous one was our tapping of trees in Maine and boiling the sap all the way in my mother’s kitchen. The wallpaper was loosened and had to be replaced. This ended my maple syrup making in Maine. I learned by doing—a hard lesson.

The first step in making syrup is selecting the right trees. The best trees are sugar maples in the open. A tree with a large crown or top will produce more sap than one with a narrow top.

For equipment you will need spikes or sprouts, buckets to catch the sap, covers, hangers, collecting devices, a bit brace and a 7/16 auger. For boiling and storage, you need a source of heat such as a stove or outdoor fireplace, a strainer and jars or plastic jugs to hold the finished syrup. Today a candy thermometer that reads 220 degrees or over is available for testing syrup.

In tapping the trees, try to find a clean spot that has not been tapped before. Using a 7/16 auger in a bit, drill a hole 2-2 ½ inches deep on an inclining plane. Clean all shavings out. A ten penny common nail is ideal for doing the cleaning. Tap your spike in gently. Place a hook on the spike and hang your bucket on it. Make sure the sap is dripping into the buckets. Only hang as many buckets as you can handle. There are covers for the buckets available, but I personally only use them during rain or snow storms.

To collect the sap use 5 gallon pails to transport the sap to the boiling center. Be careful not to overfill the pails since spilling sap is costly. The sap is then strained and put into 10 gallon milk cans.
The hardest part of making syrup is boiling it. In the valley region of Greene County syrup boils at 207-208 degrees. The boiling point of water at sea level is 212 degrees. The sap is boiled on an outdoor fireplace, on an outside wood stove or in a shed. When the sap temperature reached 212 to 214 degrees, we take it into our home to finish the temperature off at 215 degrees. In older time, people tested the syrup by putting it into cold water. If the syrup turned into a small hard ball it was ready.

The syrup is then strained into glass jars or plastic containers. Syrup needs to be strained since unstrained syrup has a sand-like consistency. When straining syrup remember to change the filters at least once, as they will clog up with syrup sand. After straining, the maple syrup is ready to pour in jars or jugs to seal. Be sure you get your syrup at the right temperature. I’ve taken syrup off too soon and it soured in the jugs and at too high a temperature, it turned into maple sugar in the jugs.

Making maple syrup can be fun and the whole family should be involved. A good guide on “Making Maple Syrup” is available from the Cornell Cooperative Extension in Cairo.

Upcoming Events

Brown Bag Lecture Series

• **Tuesday, January 27—Mucus and the Mare.** Robert Causey, Associate Professor of Animal and Veterinary Sciences, offers findings from recent research on reproduction and infertility in horses.

• **Thursday, February 12—Not Exactly Victoria’s Secret: Ladies’ Lingerie of Long Ago.** Join Michelle Goldman, needle worker and past president of the largest chapter of the Embroiderers Guild of America, and learn about what women used to wear.

Watch for future lectures, which will be posted on our website. All Brown Bag Lectures will be held at 12 noon in the Page Farm and Home Museum. Bring your lunch. Beverages and dessert are provided.

Did you Know?

The Page Farm and Home Museum seeks to connect all ages of visitors to the museum with the diversity of agriculture and provide lifespan education of how the past has been instrumental in forming the present and the future.

Did you know that:

• **The Page Farm and Home Museum** serves as the state’s most important collection of farm technologies and artifacts of rural culture?

• **The Page Farm and Home Museum** is an integral part of the University of Maine’s network of campus exploration sites?

• **The Museum is a valuable resource** for the teachers and students of the state of Maine and that in 2008 there were 186 school groups hosted at the museum?

• **In 2008, over 4,000 walk-in visitors** experienced the museum? Over 1,450 participated in programs at the museum? Over 1,200 participated in holiday and vacation programs?

A Win-Win Way to Support the Page Farm & Home Museum

You can make a gift and secure a guaranteed lifetime income that won’t shrink while also helping support the Page Farm and Home Museum by establishing a Charitable Gift Annuity.

• Your payments are guaranteed, no matter how long you live;

• The amount of your payment is fixed forever, regardless of the performance of the financial markets or overall economy;

• Immediate income tax deduction;

• A portion of the payments may be income tax free;

• Higher income from lower yielding assets;

• You may establish a named, endowed fund to support UMaine in your area of choice.

The planned giving folks at the University of Maine Foundation can help you establish a charitable gift annuity by calling them at 207.581.5100 or toll free at 1.800.982.8503.
Travel from Past to the Future
Join us and become a Friend of the Page Farm and Home Museum

___ Yes, I/we wish to support the membership of the Museum

  ____ Enclosed is my $25 membership donation
  ____ Enclosed is my additional donation in support of the Museum $______________
      (make all checks payable to the University of Maine)
  ____ I wish to charge the amount of $_________ to my (circle one) Visa  Mastercard

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Send your donation to: Page Farm and Home Museum, University of Maine, Orono, Maine 04469-5787