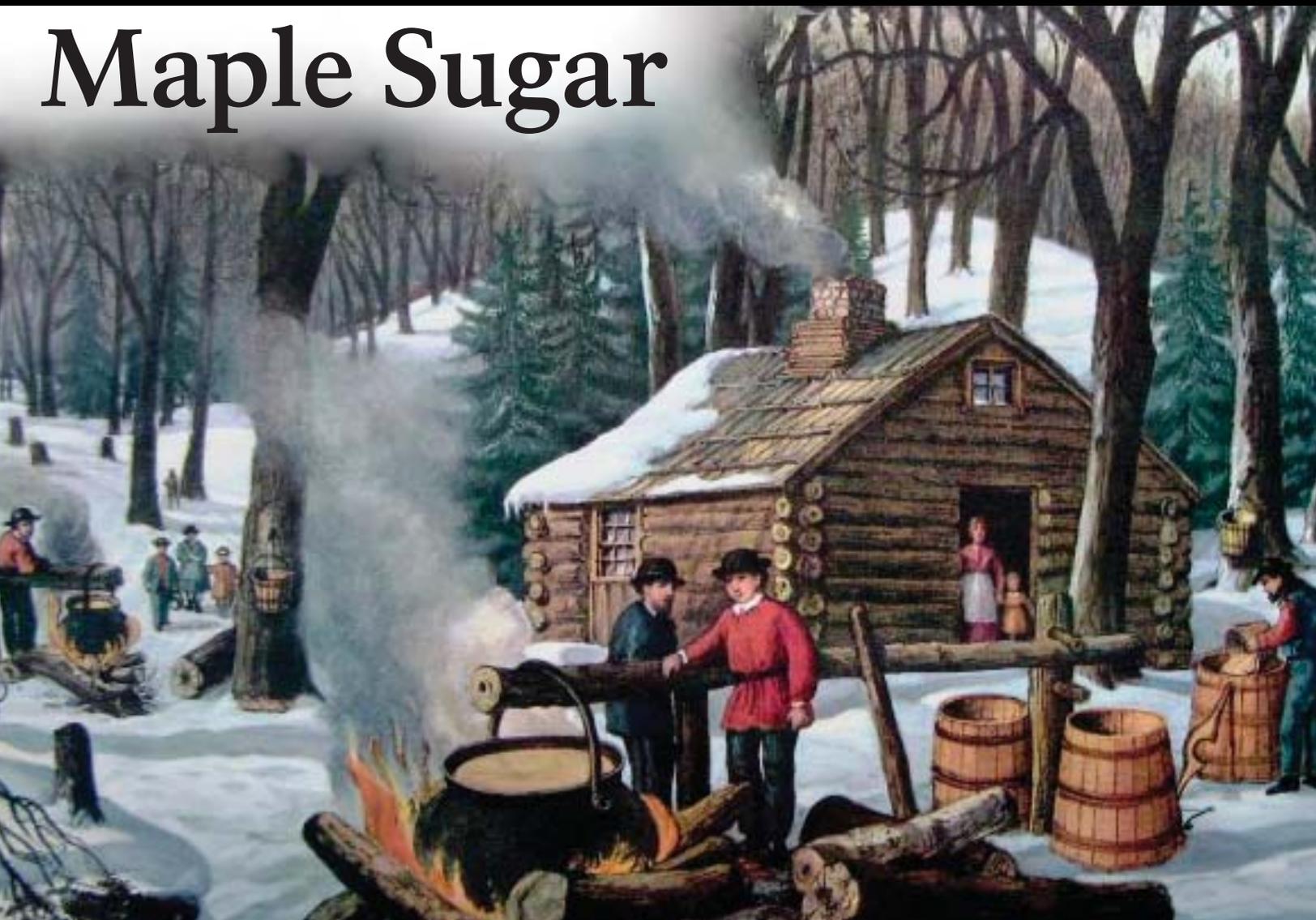




# Maple Sugar



A truly American activity, maple sugaring was a social event and a communal enterprise that heralded the coming of spring.

## A New World of Sweetness

In colonial times, sugar was expensive. Tracts to promote immigration to the New World described making sugar from maple sap as a great attraction —sweet, luxurious sugar, right from one’s own backyard !

The reality was that most early settlers of North America were subsistence farmers whose labor had to provide for all the immediate needs of a family. Most maple sap was boiled down into hard dry maple sugar that was easy to store, rather than used to make the sweet syrup we enjoy today. Sugar was also a preservative and enabled jams and preserves to last a long time.

However, maple sugaring on family farms was small-scale and labor-intensive. As an industry, it could not compete with the vast sugar cane plantations that came into the United States with the Louisiana Purchase in 1804. Also, after the Civil War, the cost of cane sugar fell considerably, and the import tax on cane sugar was removed. The maple industry declined.

In New England, though, the sale of maple syrup remains to this day an important source of cash, and today sugarhouses are still part of the regional scene.

## Tree to Table: Maple Sugar Day

At Millbrook Village, Maple Sugaring Day demonstrates all at one time the stages of the sugaring process that would have kept villagers busy for weeks . As late winter weather fluctuates, rangers tap several trees for sap. On Sugaring Day, sap collected from village maples is boiled down in cast iron kettles over an open fire to evaporate moisture and create the maple syrup. Both woodstove and outdoor cooking demonstrations display the use of maple syrup and sugar in recipes common in the 1800s.

Maple Sugaring Day is held on a Saturday in March; the exact date depends on weather patterns. Updated information is posted under “Events” on the park web site [www.nps.gov/dewa](http://www.nps.gov/dewa).

The event is free and is held outdoors. Please dress warmly if the weather is cold, and wear appropriate footwear.