

THE MAPLE FESTIVAL

Good day, everyone--it's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.

Most Pennsylvanians would be very much surprised to hear the Commonwealth referred to as the Maple Syrup State--but in the small, pretty community of Meyersdale, in Somerset County--they feel strongly about such a reference to Pennsylvania, for Meyersdale is the home of the annual Pennsylvania Maple Festival, the home of what might be called the best Maple Syrup in the World. And it is that...On a radio program in April, 1947, Kate Smith told how she just loved maple syrup--she mentioned Vermont maple syrup--but that didn't deter the people of Meyersdale, who sent the singer a gallon of 100% pure Somerset County maple syrup by air mail. A short time later, Kate Smith took about four minutes to talk about the high quality of the product. Letters came from all over the country after that--demanding Somerset County Pennsylvania maple syrup--and with all that publicity (and \$1,000 that they borrowed) the folks and businessmen of Meyersdale began themselves a festival, crowned their first Queen, and hosted their first governor, U. S. Senator and in later years a lot of celebrities--including the famed tenor John Charles Thomas, who came to sing for them, after he tasted their maple syrup. Kate Smith, who sort of started the whole thing, never got there. After Kate gave them the publicity--Vermont and Ohio officials (envious of the Pennsylvania product's sudden promotion) offered to debate the merits of maple products of the various states, and smug Vermont, reputedly the number one producing state,

squirmed. And the reason? Pennsylvania now had a festival and Vermont didn't want it known that for years the maple syrup producers in Somerset County, Pennsylvania were sending as many as 17 carloads of pure maple syrup in drum lots to Vermont every year. You see, Vermont has been long noted for its table syrup--but that's 85% cane syrup and 15% maple syrup. As their festival at Meyersdale improved year after year, Vermont got less and less of the Pennsylvania pure maple syrup--and if you get a gallon of it, you'll find it is 100% pure and not adulterated. Later on, disturbed again by the promotion of Pennsylvania maple syrup--the governor of Vermont and his Secretary of Agriculture visited Pennsylvania's Meyersdale and Somerset County, noting at the time that these good folks in the heart of the southern tier mountains were then doing a better job of promotion of maple syrup than the people of Vermont. One hopes they keep it up--with their annual Maple Festival, which is now attracting thousands of visitors every year to an area which (Vermont notwithstanding) produces the finest and purest maple syrup in the world--100% unadulterated--in the can. Incidentally, one might also comment in passing that this area of Pennsylvania--it's called the "Rooftop of Pennsylvania"--is one of our loveliest--and you must see it. A delightful part of the state--a delightfully succulent product--maple syrup from Meyersdale--and one hopes that you and Kate Smith, who began it, will visit there some day.

This is Pete Wambach. It's a beautiful day in Pennsylvania.