

## ***Miracles on Maple Hill***

### **Driving Tour Directions to visit locations mentioned in *Miracles on Maple Hill* by Virginia Sorensen.**

Pictures courtesy of Cal Robinson, Edinboro PA

Updated January 2020.

The story of *Miracles on Maple Hill* is based on real people and places of the Edinboro and Cambridge Springs area. While living in Edinboro from 1952 to 1958, Mrs. Sorensen was introduced to a maple sugarhouse in the spring of 1953 and as she said, "The story began." Published in 1956, her writing tells of maple sugaring and the people and places of which she became so fond. *Miracles on Maple Hill* is a reflection of her time here in Northwest Pennsylvania. This Driving Tour provide quotes from Virginia Sorensen's *Miracles on Maple Hill* and her 1957 Newbery Award Acceptance Speech.

Some of the local characters included in the book:

Marly and Joe:	Amy and Karl Hipple
Mr. and Mrs. Chris:	Harvey and Amy Kreitz
Harry-the-Hermit:	Tony Beigel
Miss Annie Nelson:	Ann Behler

The character of Dale, a POW, was based on the experiences of local Presbyterian minister, Rev. Leonard Hogenboom, when he was a POW in WWII.



Joe and Beth Krush

Illustrators of the book

## **Driving Tour Directions**

Including quotes from Virginia Sorensen's:

**1956 *Miracles on Maple Hill* and**  
**1957 Newbery Award Acceptance Speech**

**\*\*This driving trail can begin at - Hurry Hill Maple Farm Museum (1 a)**

**or**

**The Edinboro Library (1 b).**

1. a **Hurry Hill Maple Farm Museum - 11424 Fry Road Edinboro PA**

[www.hurryhillfarm.org](http://www.hurryhillfarm.org)

[hurryhillfarm@verizon.net](mailto:hurryhillfarm@verizon.net)



A room at the Hurry Hill Maple Farm and Museum is dedicated to Virginia Sorensen. In ***"Miracles on Maple Hill: Where the seasons take on new meaning,"*** visitors can see a collection of artifacts, illustrations, pictures of places used in the story, photos of people on whom Sorensen based her characters, information on her time in Edinboro, and

her deep knowledge of making maple syrup. *Miracles on Maple Hill* is considered historical fiction. The book is true to the process of making maple syrup and all characters are based on real people and places in and around Edinboro and Cambridge Springs in the 1950's, but the story is fiction. At the museum, you can also hold Sorensen's Newbery Medal, on permanent loan from the Sorensen family, and see the original cover of *Miracles on Maple Hill*, a gift from the illustrators, Joe and Beth Krush.

***Directions to next location***

***(from Hurry Hill Maple Farm 11424 Fry Road Edinboro PA)***

***Turn right (south) on Fry Road and go 2 miles to Rte 6N. Turn left (east) on Rte 6N and go 1.3 miles to Culbertson Square Stables – the Edinboro Library and the PHMC marker on Rte 6N (also known as 413 W Plum Street).***

***There are two things to see at this stop.***

## 1. b PHMC Marker at the Edinboro Library Rte 6N (413 W. Plum)



This **Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission** marker was dedicated in 2015 and reads:

*"Miracles on Maple Hill* was a book inspired by Virginia Sorensen's time in Edinboro, Pennsylvania. In it, she illuminates the centuries-long agricultural traditions of the rural maple

syrup industry in Erie and Crawford Counties and the restorative qualities of country life. *Miracles on Maple Hill* won the 1957 Newbery Medal for its distinguished contribution to American literature for children."



**Literary Landmark** The second item to note is above the book return to the right of the front doors to the Edinboro Library. On May 1 2017, during Children's Book Week, Hurry Hill Maple Farm Museum Association, Friends of the Edinboro Branch Library, and Friends of the Erie County Library placed two Literary Landmark plaques recognizing Virginia Sorensen. One is here, above the book return and the other is in the Erie County Bookmobile. They recognize Virginia Sorensen's book *Curious Missy*, a story written when she lived in the south and about a little girl's insistence on providing a mobile library to rural kids in Alabama.



### **Sugarhouses of Rural Northwestern Pennsylvania**

**"Virginia Sorensen wrote the Newbery Award-winning novel for children *Miracles on Maple Hill* during her time in Edinboro and Cambridge Springs. The novel celebrates the resilience of children, the healing power of nature, and the first harvest of each new year: gathering sap from sugar maple trees to make pure maple syrup."**

The Literary Landmark™ program is administered by United for Libraries.

### ***Directions to next location:***

### **from PHMC Marker at the Edinboro Area Library**

***Turn right (east) on 6N towards Edinboro. Go slowly 1/10 of a mile and turn left on Lakeside Drive. Go 3/10 mile along Lakeside Drive and stop at Pat Crawford Beach to look at Edinboro Lake.***

## 2. Edinboro Lake



Mrs. Sorensen once told an Erie newspaper journalist, “I want to live here forever. “She was fond of the Edinboro area, had many like-minded literary friends, and like many Pittsburghers and locals, loved Edinboro Lake. For a brief time, the Sorensen family lived on Lakeside before moving to Meadville Street. Mrs. Sorensen wrote extensively about her feelings for this valley.



**“Every summer she [Lee, Marly’s mother] had come to visit her Grandma at Maple Hill, right here in Pennsylvania’s corner.” *Miracles on Maple Hill***

**“There was an article in a Pittsburgh newspaper that said it was the greatest sugaring year in the history of Pennsylvania.” *Miracles on Maple Hill***

**“The name the Indians had left in the valley, Conneauttee, meant “Land of Lingering Snow.” And it did linger, from late October on, steady and white and deep. But cold hard winters are what prepares the maple trees for a good sap run. The village was isolated by muddy roads and dangerous pavements and sudden blizzards. Edinboro, old-timers told us with an odd fierce pride, had the worst winters in the world.”**

**Newbery Speech**

***Directions to next location:***

***Follow Lakeside Drive to the end, follow the curve left and as the road curves again to become Monroe Street, proceed back to Rte 6N.***

***At Rte 6N, turn left and go 1 mile to Edinboro. At light, turn right (south) on Rte 99 (Meadville St) and follow Rte 99 to the next light.***

***Turn left on East Normal St and pull over on the right for views of next two locations, part of Edinboro University of Pennsylvania:***



***The next three locations are part of Edinboro University of Pennsylvania***

***On the “fly page” or credit page of *Miracles on Maple Hill*, Virginia Sorensen writes: For Those Who Helped: Harvey Kreitz and Waldo Bates and Royce Mallory. You will learn of their contributions during this driving tour of Miracles.***

### **3. Academy Hall**

Academy Hall was built in 1857 and in the 1950’s housed the English department and many classrooms. Royce Mallory, Head of the English Department, was Dr. Fred



Sorensen’s department chair, an avid outdoorsman, and a good friend to author Virginia Sorensen. Edinboro College had only 500 students in 1952 and the townspeople and college staff were known to work together. Mr. Mallory went door-to-door asking Edinboro community residents to take in students in need of housing.

### **4. Compton Hall**



Compton School was built in the 1930’s housing the Edinboro Elementary School on the first floor and the High School on the second. Compton was Joe’s school in *Miracles on Maple Hill*. Mrs. Sorensen’s son, Fred, went to high school here and as she became acquainted with the faculty, she used them as characters in *Miracles on Maple Hill*.

## Ann Behler's 1939 office in Compton Hall



Ann Behler, the school nurse, became Miss Annie in *Miracles on Maple Hill*. Mrs. Sorensen had consulted Ann Behler, "What would she do if two kids didn't appear at school?" True to her reputation, Behler replied that she would "be out directly to find out what ailed them." **Mrs. Sorensen called Ann Behler, "a kindly woman who was not at all formidable except in devotion to duty [children]." *Newbery Speech***

The Edinboro principal, who let the students out of school to help gather sap in the last chapters of *Miracles*, was modeled after James W. Parker. Mr. Parker once commented that occasionally older students were hired in the fall as farmer's potato pickers. Mr. Parker also noted that when the Edinboro School was built, money ran out and the school had a dirt front yard with no lawn. The new lawn became a reality because the entire school, from grades 1-12 participated in making it happen, an early version of what we now know as "community service." Younger grades picked up stones. Older students hauled stones in wheelbarrows, raked dirt, and spread seed. Similar to the time when the students helped gather sap in *Miracles on Maple Hill* when Mr. Chris was ill.

A newly formed band at Edinboro High in the 1950's became Joe's band in the book. Virginia Sorensen writes, **"A band? He'll like that one, all right. They march at all the football games in red and gold suits." *Miracles on Maple Hill***

### ***Directions to next location:***

***Continue on East Normal and turn right on Kiltie Road. Take the next right at East Hall and stop at the side of next building on your left, which is Loveland Hall (facing the green space).***

***As you are driving toward Loveland Hall on your right is the back of Compton Hall.***

Note the beautiful rounded windows on the sides of the old gym. The gym was the site of most community events such as the [Edinboro] Community Fair and where Mrs. Chris enters flower competition with her chrysanthemums.

## **5. Loveland Hall “The Art Department Building” (behind Compton)**



### **Waldo F. Bates, Jr Chairman of Art Department 1920-1955**

Waldo F. Bates, Jr., a WW I veteran who was reported as the designer of the shoulder patch for the new Rainbow Division (42nd Infantry

Division, a division of the United States Army National Guard), came to Edinboro in 1920 to begin the Art Department with one student. Bates’ time at EUP was recently honored at the EUP ART100 celebration. Bates loved his Edinboro community, even to the point he turned down an invitation to lead the New York City Metropolitan Museum of Art, and wanted everyone to love Northwest Pennsylvania as much as he did. He took Virginia Sorensen to the hermit’s hill to meet Harry-the-Hermit, and to the sugarhouse of Harvey Kreitz.



***“Then, one unforgettable day in late February, a fine old New Englander known as Pop Bates, head of our little college Art Department, took us out to see what was going on in the [Edinboro] sugar bush. Here spring could actually be seen and smelled and tasted, rising out of the ground.” Newbery Speech***

#### ***Directions to next location:***

***Go back out to East Normal St, turn left and at the light turn left onto Rte 99 south and continue to Virginia Sorensen’s house, 222 Meadville Street, directly across from the college.***



## 6. Home of Virginia Sorensen 222 Meadville Street



The Sorensen family lived here from the fall of 1952 through 1958. It was in this house that Mrs. Sorensen penned *Miracles on Maple Hill*. She was having breakfast with her son Fred in the back kitchen nook as they watched backyard cardinals when the phone rang and she learned of her Newbery Award in 1956.



### Virginia Sorensen at her typewriter

**“Being school folks, we arrived in Pennsylvania in September, and enjoyed passionately what happened almost at once to the maple tree. That breathless, unbelievable inner light! But soon they faded, the leaves fell and were burned along the village streets on smoky chilly evenings. Then one morning, the piles were white. Winter set in.”**  
***Newbery Speech***

The community of Edinboro, Cambridge Springs, the lake, the seasons, the college, neighbors, friends, ministers, people in Virginia’s everyday life created a playing field for the *Miracles on Maple Hill* story. The story is a reflection of her time in Northwest Pennsylvania.

#### ***Directions to next location:***

**Continue on Rte 99 south 4 miles to Drake’s Mills. Slow down as you approach the “S” curve.**

**Immediately after crossing the bridge, turn left on Drake St and follow it 2/10 mile until it becomes Mt. Pleasant Rd at the Intersection with Kreitz Rd This is Marly’s School**



## 7. Marly's School "Maple Mountain School"

This yellow private home was a small one-room white schoolhouse in the 1950's and Marly's school in *Miracles on Maple Hill*. Notice beyond the Kreitz road sign, the

graveyard. Virginia wrote, "**It [the school] even had a graveyard behind it, on a low hill.**" *Miracles on Maple Hill*



**Graveyard with Kreitz road sign**



Opposite the school house, you can see a meandering creek that was once a huge pond with a dam to power Drake Mill. The hermit could see ducks on this pond with his telescope, high up on his hill.

### ***Directions to next location:***

***Turn right onto Kreitz Rd and continue 7/10 mile. Stop and admire Maple Hill (now Mt. Pleasant) now on your left.***

## 8. Maple Hill

This is the hill used as the hill in *Miracles on Maple Hill*. Virginia and her family admired the beauty of this hill during all four seasons as they traveled to the hermit's house and the Kreitz's sugarhouse.



In Chapter 9, Mrs. Sorensen talked about these fields and woods, **“Here spring could actually be seen and smelled and tasted, rising out of the ground.”** *Miracles on Maple Hill*

Tony Beigel, Harry-the-Hermit in *Miracles on Maple Hill*, lived on top of the distant hill and could see these fields and the pond at Drake Mill. **“Harry gazed down toward the pond and over the green valley with fields of cabbages blue in squares and meadows going brown here and there.”** *Miracles on Maple Hill*

**“When I was a little girl up at Grandma’s, mother [Lee] said, “I was certain the Maple Hill was the place where all the miracles happened.””** *Miracles on Maple Hill*

***Directions to next location:***

***Continue on Kreitz Rd 1/10 mile to Marly’s House on the right.***

## 9. Marly's House

On the right is the home of the white house that is still the private home of the real Marly (Amy) of *Miracles on Maple Hill*. It was from these windows that Marly exclaimed, **"Millions of tiny new buds beginning. So it would begin over, and over, she thought always and always, the miracles on Maple Hill."** *Miracles on Maple Hill*



Below are two pictures of Karl and Amy Hipple as children growing up in the white house. Their childhood experiences added to the story of Marly and Joe in *Miracles on Maple Hill*.



Amy and Karl Hipple

During the opening of the Hurry Hill Museum in 2009, Amy Hipple (Marly) was asked, "As a child, were you as tenderhearted as Marly was portrayed in the book?"

She replied, "Oh yes. My father gave Karl and I a calf to raise and admonished me, "Not to get too attached to the calf because someday it would have to be supper."

I cried but had to get over it, so I decided to call it 'Yum-Yum!'"



***Directions to next location:***

***Continue on Kreitz Rd another 100 yards to the Chris's House, on the left.***





This large white private home and farm was once the home of Amy and Harvey Kreitz, in the story portrayed as Mr. and Mrs. Chris. Virginia Sorensen knew the Kreitz family very well and considered Mrs. Kreitz a close literary friend. Mrs. Kreitz, a well-read member of a Cambridge Springs book club, gave book reviews without notes.

The sugarhouse, barn, and woods were to the left of the Kreitz house. Mr. Chris, a dairy farmer, had jersey cows as illustrated in chapter Six of *Miracles on Maple Hill*.

**"It's a big white house down a lane. Behind it is a huge red barn." *Miracles on Maple Hill*.**

**"The sap running gives me a feeling I can't describe." Mr. Chris said. "The syrup is Spring. It's the heart and blood of the maple trees. It's the sun shining. It's the snow melting. It's the bright new air and the earth as it starts pushing-pushing-pushing." *Miracles on Maple Hill***



**Black and white picture of Kreitz red barn**



Mr. Chris asked. "Before, you got the smell of *spring*, Marly. Now you've got the *taste*. The sap is the first miracle that happens every spring. After all winter, with everything shut up tight, all of a sudden the trees are alive again."  
*Miracles on Maple Hill*

Virginia Sorensen, her son Fred with Harvey Krietz at his sugarhouse. Harvey Krietz was the real-life character for Mr. Chris in the *Miracles on Maple Hill* Story.

"I heaved buckets full of sap in the raw cold air and ate such meals in such ardent spring hunger as I shall never forget." *Newbery Speech*

***Directions to next location:***

***Perform a U-turn and return on Kreitz Rd to the intersection with Mt. Pleasant Rd. Turn right on Mt. Pleasant Rd and proceed 1.2 miles stopping along the right side of the road near a mailbox.***

*You will see a long curving driveway on the left side of Mt. Pleasant Rd. This road up the side of the hill is the Hermit's Road. The house at the top of this hill is a private home.*



## 11. Hermit's Road

Tony Beigel, Harry-the-hermit, lived on top of this hill from around 1917 until 1954. Mrs. Sorensen was taken to meet Tony by Waldo Bates most likely in the fall of 1952. Mrs. Sorensen's son, Fred, told me that his family often visited Toggenburg Hill (named after the goats that Tony kept) that his mother loved the way the hermit lived with his goats, bees and honey and his simple life.



Tony, like Harry-the-hermit, left honey to sell and a small box for money at the bottom of this driveway. Joe and Marly are at this exact spot, **“But look here, Marly, what do you think of this?”** There was a note standing in the box against a little pile of honeycombs. The note said, **“Take honey. Leave money. Gone for the day.”**” *Miracles on Maple Hill*

**Tony Beigel and his chain and bee hives**



### **End of Driving Tour: a final thought**

This is the end of the driving tour but not the end of the story. As all stories of community, other tales link back and circle round to add more detail and links to the lives involved. Rev. Leonard Hogenboom and his family came to Edinboro in 1952 as the minister of the Presbyterian Church. He quickly became part of the community sharing his experiences as a prisoner of war in the Philippines during WWII. Virginia Sorensen became friends with Rev. Hogenboom and incorporated many of his experiences into the character of Dale (Marly's father) in *Miracles on Maple Hill*.

Tony Beigel, the character Harry the Hermit in the book, lived in a cabin up the hill (Hermit's Road) until 1954. In the fall of 1955 Rev. Hogenboom's family purchased Tony Beigel's property including 25 acres for \$800. During the months and years to follow the townspeople worked on the cabin to improve the comfort level for Rev. Hogenboom and his family when they went there for a "get-a-way." Rev Hogenboom and his family moved to Florida in 1958 but continued to return to "Hogeys' Hill" to visit friends in Edinboro and the surrounding area. They continued to do so until 1978 when the property was sold. To many locals, the hill holds the memories of stories about both the Hermit and Rev. Hogenboom.

**\*\* Square Roots is Rev Leonard Hogenboom's autobiography. A copy of this book can be reviewed at the Hurry Hill Maple Museum.**

Mrs. Sorensen published scores of books for children and adults. This quote below from her 1957 Newbery speech sums up her thoughtful perspective of her most notable book, *Miracles on Maple Hill*, penned right here in Pennsylvania's corner:

**"Do we not have every day, from light to dark to light again, in the rich variety of cold and heat, rain and snow and sun? Still nearer to life, do we not have the seasons, those large rhythmic patterns of dark and light that are gradual enough to be observed with savor and awaited with eagerness? Can there be too much celebration of these simple and profound things?" Newbery Speech**

#### ***Directions Back to Edinboro:***

***Continue east on Mt. Pleasant Rd 1.3 miles and at the intersection of Kinter Hill, turn left and drive up and down "Maple Hill" 3.3 miles to return to Rte 99. Turn right on Rte 99 to the town of Edinboro.***