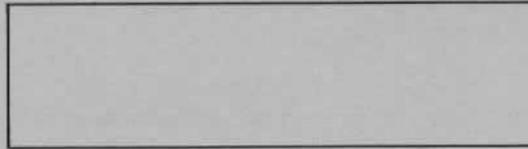


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THE MARTIN FAMILY OF HAMBURG IN 1885

Most of us are looking forward to March, 2009, as a relief from a long, bitter cold winter with lots of snow. An 1885 diary, written by Hamburg Township resident Malone Boswick, recounts a similar winter. The mercury is regularly at 18° as the high for the first week of 1885. Often it's snowing "... like a New England snowstorm." This continues for several days with temperatures dropping to -18° at night with high winds. In February the neighbors are working together with teams and shovels to break a path for horses and sleighs through the drifts.

During this period Malone's daughter and family, Minnie and Hiram Martin with children Annie 10, Wheeler 8, and Smith, not yet 5, must keep their farm and home going. They had settled November 18, 1875, coming from New York, setting up "... tents at the Dopp place." The Martins had previously lost two boys as babies. This winter the children are battling whooping cough. Dr. McHench comes from Brighton, when he can get through, to try to alleviate their discomfort. Several neighbor children, of the Appleton and Tompkins families, are also sick.

In the meantime with temperatures at 4°, three hogs are butchered, and calves are born. Minnie must add the task of making sausage and head cheese to her regular chores of cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing, mending, sewing, etc., to be ready when Mrs. (Theron) Phillips comes to help make quilts the next day. Quilting at each others' homes was a regular occurrence.

The Martin farm is in Section 4, 120 acres, 1 ½ miles south of Chilson, four miles west of Brighton, on Chilson Road. At least once a week, usually Saturday, Hiram drives the team into Brighton to trade (wheat, produce, dried apples) for supplies and to get eagerly awaited mail from the post office.

The temperature is -10° January 26, a good day to cut ice on Bishop Lake. Many farmers had an ice house in the yard. "Mr. (Orville) Saxton is getting ice. An awful day for it. Mr. (Theron) Phillips got in the lake. Mr. (Hiram) Martin pulled him out." Wood cutting and chopping was a vital chore. Several neighbors combine their efforts for this also.

Even with the frigid weather, difficulties with transportation, illnesses and hard work, every few weeks Mrs. Boswick records an anniversary party, a church supper, a 'social' or a surprise party on someone. In between there is an occasional daytime visit taking a home-made goodie along.

Spring rains melt the snow quickly and the creek rises. April 1, "A fair day. Birds and children enjoy it." By mid-April, school will begin for the summer term. "Mr. & Mrs. Appleton are cleaning the school house." This is Cady School, about ½ mile south on Chilson Road. Teachers at these rural schools boarded with the various families in the district. Miss Mary Boylan often was with the Martins. Little Annie is not well enough to attend school regularly.

In the next few days frogs are heard peeping, pasture seed is sown, sheep put to grass, lambs are born, bedding and curtains are washed and hung out to dry and the swallows return.

By mid-May, Hiram plants potatoes, the children plant lettuce and radishes. Marking prepared fields for corn planting takes several days, and then there is the work of planting. The three children seem to be recovering from their bout with whooping cough. However, little Annie is far from well. (To be continued. Compiled by Marieanna Bair from a diary loaned by Larry Lawrence; census records; obituaries compiled by Milton Charboneau. Additions, corrections requested. 810/229-6402.)