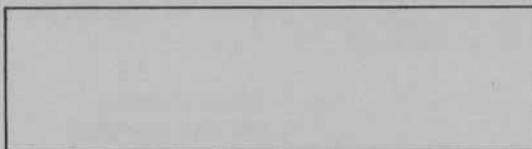


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THE MARTIN FAMILY OF HAMBURG IN 1885

(Installment two)

Malone Boswick is living with her daughter and family, Minnie and Hiram Martin, in Section 4 of Hamburg Township. In 1885, she kept a small diary detailing the hardships, heartbreaks and joyful successes of rural life of the time. The family strives to survive beginning with a very cold January with much snow.

Spring heralds the arrival of warm weather and the preparation necessary for the crops, to be grown for themselves and their livestock, begins.

May 18 reads "A very warm day. Strong south wind with little dashes of rain. Mr. Mangle's baby died. Jennie Sexton came for a dress to put on it to bury it. Evening very cool." This shocking entry is later followed on July 30; "Mr. Mangle died from sunstroke while working in the field. Temperature 80° at 8 p.m." It had been 90°-102° that week. A day later Hiram and others interrupt the haying harvest to attend his funeral at the Lutheran Cemetery in Genoa. Mrs. Boswick's interpolation of life and death is startling to read.

Farmers of the time either brought with them the knowledge of the hard work of the routine of farming or soon learned. The entire family helped with everything from the preparation of the fields, with very little mechanical help, to the final harvest of hay, wheat, corn, potatoes, apples and garden produce. Milk and eggs were usually available as was meat from the livestock raised. Reading the details of caring for the stock and the preparation of food prior to serving at dinner could easily make one weary.

Mrs. Boswick records that beans are planted and sheep were washed, in June, in readiness for shearing. The Martin boys, Wheeler 8, and Smith 5, appear to have overcome the whooping cough, which dogged them all last winter. But little Annie is still not very strong. Mr. & Mrs. Stewart celebrated a 30th anniversary with a big party. A cow dies giving birth, a baby boy is born at Ralph Beurmann's. "Mr. Martin begins the haying - signaling it by cutting off the legs of two hens before 10 o'clock." The very hot days include very strong winds. Again one notes the neighborly cooperation so vital to the success of each of them with haying and the wheat, corn and bean harvests as these crops ripen. A neighbor brings the first red raspberries and Minnie goes huckleberry picking a few miles west in the huckleberry swamp, and "... new apple pie for dinner."

One usually walked to the church on Swarhout Road, 1½ miles south, to hear a missionary or a lecture. An occasional baseball game made a Sunday complete.

When flour for the kitchen was needed, a trip to the mill at Pettysville or Campellton with a load of wheat ensued. Some was traded to the miller to pay for the milling, the rest sold to him. Later that fall two yearling cattle are driven to Mr. Pottertown in Hamburg. (Probably driven south on Chilson and Hamburg Roads, c. 5-6 miles)

Late August brought new excitement. The Toledo, Ann Arbor and Northern Michigan Railroad is being built. It parallels Chilson Road about ¼ mile east of the Martin's. August also brought watermelon.

By September it was time to separate the ewes from the lambs. A trip to Brighton, when Minnie bought a raincoat and umbrella, also brought sweet potatoes. "...the first we have had." The pears are picked and preserved. Despite high winds, winter wheat is drilled September 16. In a week the Howell Fair opens. The bean shellers with the machine finally arrive. These beans will be taken to Brighton, perhaps to sell to the Hyne Elevator. An eclipse of the moon is observed by the family. During the year Mrs. Boswick notes meteors, sun dogs and northern lights. (To be concluded.)

Compiled by Marianne Bair from a diary loaned by Larry Lawrence; census records; obituaries compiled by Milton Charboneau. Additions, corrections requested. 810/229-6402.