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THE MARTIN FAMILY OF HAMBURG IN 1885

(Conclusion)

Minnie and Hiram Martin live in Hamburg Township in 1885. Her mother, Malone Boswick, records the events of the year. The last portion of the diary deals with the fall and winter activities of the family and the neighborhood.

October, altho' cold and frosty, is the time when large pumpkins are harvested and winter apples picked. Many of the apples will be sliced and dried to trade for groceries and household necessities with the merchants in Brighton. That October, dried apples sold for .03¢ a pound, butter brings .10-14¢, eggs trade for .12¢ a dozen, lard .08¢ a pound, and potatoes are .25¢ a bushel. Wood is \$3.00 a cord and pork \$4.50-\$5.00 per cwt.

"It's time to go to Brighton to get ... winter clothing for the children." The fall school term begins. Every two to three weeks the teacher Miss Boylan, boards with them. A clipping from October, 1885, records "... sort of a blizzard Sunday, a quantity of snow fell; a man without an over coat felt like being kicked to death by rabbits."

The ears of corn, piled in the barn, need husking. Hiram finds this a solitary job; many of his neighbors are earning cash as railroad workers. With (Theron) Phillips' and (Bert) Stewart's help, the corn stalks remaining in the field are cut for fodder for the livestock. Hiram now also, with his team and wagon, goes to work on the railroad for some actual wages. Mrs. Boswick writes, "I have been over to the fence to see the men and teams work on the railroad." She records that 'socials' are held, and the various births and marriages occurring in the community. The sheep sheds need repair.

November 18, 1885, is the 10th anniversary that the Martins "... set up their tents at the Depperman Place." Mrs. Boswick's positive demeanor is noted as she describes Thanksgiving Day, "... we ate our bread in peace and our meat in pieces."

Strikes are threatened by railroad workers. Altho' some leave, most go back to work. A fight looms where the Toledo, Ann Arbor and Northern Michigan tracks cross (and still do) the Detroit Railroad track in Genoa Township. Occasional explosions "... that shake things generally" are heard where tracks are blown up in the Railroad War.

Throughout December, Mrs. Boswick writes of the weather, "I thought the roof would blow off", the progress on the railroad, and that little Annie's health does not improve. School is closed for the winter; the family goes to see the engines and watches the track laying.

Sunday, December 20: "A rather mild day, somewhat cloudy. At sunset the clouds were a beautiful rose color. Dr. McHench came to see Annie. Says she has diabetes. Hiram has gone to Brighton."

December 21: "Two engines in sight on the fields above here ... Annie no better." December 22: the doctor here today." December 23: "Hiram gone to Brighton to see the doctor again. Annie does not get along as we want her to." December 24: "Annie not any better." Christmas morning: "Our Annie still breathes.... Dear, darling Annie is gone." at 2:15 p.m. Five neighbor women come to aid and comfort the family. Two days later, Annie is laid in the yard near the house next to her little brother. The damp, foggy weather makes it seem "... as if all nature was weeping with us." After a week, the realities of the struggle to survive are again foremost. Stock must be cared for, wood chopped, washing done, clothes made, meals prepared, roads cleared, neighbors visited and helped. Everything changes, everything stays the same.

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