

Six Months in the Life of a Post Depression Era Farmer

The following are entries from Henry Haslun's diary, mostly pertaining to operating his Yankee Street dairy farm that lay in the towns of Summit and Fulton. He made entries only from January through June 1939. The accounts were daily at first then became sporadic after a few months. Henry's son Henry "Hank" Haslun was kind enough to lend me the diary. Hank was a baby, for the most part, during the 5 or so years his father worked the farm.

I will write a few entries in total and then list highlights of entries that entail events that are different from the normal routine. Daily listings were often: get up, build a fire, chores, pump water, take care of the cows, get the milk out and cut fire wood. He also often mentions getting up late and feelings of despair. I have added some clarifications of people and places in parenthesis. Henry's father Hans emigrated from Norway to Brooklyn and then bought the farm, stock and equipment on Yankee St. for \$7000 in 1919.

January 1, 1939- Happy New Year folks, up in fair season, the day is real snappy. Do up chores and go to Cal (Calvin) Coles with the milk, Doll and Granny (horse team) go through snow real nice. Back and we clean up and go up to Pap (Hans)& Gullette's (step-mom) for lunch and what a time we have, real cold at night and we close the front and rear storm doors. So we call it a day and quit in good spirits.

January 3- Cold East wind, up a bit earlier, clean up and haul manure, do up balance of chores, go to woods and haul out buzz wood, pull a load of slabs up to Dad's. Go back after dinner and skid some logs and manage to get quite a good start. Joe (Bendel sp?, hired hand) has a tooth bothering him and suffers untold pain at night. I'm also up and down trying to keep place a bit warm.

January 5- Happy Birthday Nice and warm, go to town and get a haircut. Leonia (Henry's wife, Leonia Walker Jennings) calls me and tells me the man is on deck to kill the pigs. Reightmyer (from Richmondville) also came to fix Delco Plant (a gas motor with a generator that charged batteries, which then supplied enough electricity to provide lights for a home) and turned back because of bad roads, I go to Lang's and pick up men to butcher. We work until 11:30. We finally get to bed. Joe felt real grumpy tonight. Sure has been a real hectic day.

January 6- Take the butcher equipment back. I pull Lang's car up the John Boynton hill. Leonia & Joe have a row and Joe files his intentions on quitting. I go out and borrow some money from Howard Palmer to pay Joe off.

January 7- Joe goes to Lang's and does not say good-bye. Einar (Haslun, a nephew, Harold's son) comes up and helps me with the chores. Put the hams & shoulders in brine. Girl is born to Ern (Ernest, a son of Miles) & Mildred Crapser. STILL NO NORSKIE (Norwegian baby) FOR ME.

January 8- I go with milk and find Si (Si Youmans, first name probably Silas) has gone. We try out some of the lard and have quite a nice lot. George came up toward nite, finish the chores and up to the house.

January 10- Harold Cass comes and he helps me clean up. After lunch he and I go to the wood and cut a load of chunks & manage a nice lot. Harold (Haslun, Henry's brother) takes some mail for Gulette. I cut meat for Leonia to can.

January 11- I clean up and get around to go to the election of our new directors at the Coop Creamery Comp. the meeting is pretty well attended. I wait and ride home with Joe and Clifton. Leonia has the hay pitched so we eat and go down and finish chores. Real cold and the snow is falling fast.

January 13- Harold, Clinton and Jim Sperbeck come to work in the woods. Harold and I go at skidding, Jimmie and Clinton saw some wood by hand. We get home and drink a hot cup of coffee.

January 14- Harold Cass comes for the load of wood I promised to haul for him. We go down and put on a good one – sleighing is real thin and poor Dolly and Granny have a hard pull to town, slip to beat the band on the state road. I go and haul a load for me, Stelzer too.

January 15- Lois (Leonia's daughter from a 1st marriage to Jay Jennings, she was about age 13 in 1939) is on the job. Harold and the boys and Frances (Crapser Haslun) stop on the way to Gullettes.

January 17- The day starts off with the usual procedure. The snow plough came and the boys (I assume the town highway crew) put up some snow fence the length of the drifted spots.

January 21- Go out, finish up putting saw dust out of ice house. Leonia goes down to Crapsers – George comes home with her and stays over night with me. Real cold tonight. Leonia bakes doughnuts today.

January 24- Cold continues, I don't know what I shall do if this keeps up, hay goes fast. Cut firewood.

January 28- We managed to cut about 1 ½ cords of wood. Cold at night. I take a good bath to-night.

January 30- Lois is on the way to school. The storm gets to be a lulu before noon. I go to work on our maternity pen for the new cows. Lois stays down at Richmondville. Roads are heavy at night.

February 2- I go to the barn and find a new calf in our new maternity pen, nice heifer calf.

February 4- Old Mom has a rousing big bull calf and has a difficult time in having same. I'm obliged to lend a hand. Leonia and I go and get a jag/jig (a jag is a very full wagon load of any product) of wood for us and Pop. Had to get new track (beaten path in the snow) broken.

February 5- I take ham and shoulders from out of the brine, put in to soak. Take myself a shave.

February 8- A real nice day so warm and calm. I go to town, Leonia is on with me to O'Neil's. I met Dave Dibble and talked with him. I see a few of the boys and visit with Stelzer's. Talk to Howard Palmer. Snow plough has been through as far as O'Neil's. Also ploughed Clyde Cook out. Red has a baby calf.

February 10- Cold-snow-rain and we have to cut wood. Leonia and I try to cut in a different place and we go on a wondering trip and do not end up getting any wood, and cut up an old hard wood plank.

February 13- Hear of Jim Whartons death. I take my first days milk. Road is none to good and I go to Claude Greys corner. I saw Si and paid him for the last load of feed he hauled and ordered a new one.

February 14- I get a call from Mr. Wandress (owned the Crowes Nest) to help fill ice house, Harold Cass comes over and I go with him and we haul 5 loads of ice. Leave for home and get stuck on Lang's road, Cal Cole is in the way with his Ford. We are forced to leave our sleigh and walk home. Get here real late.

February 15- Jim Wharton is buried to-day. I meet up with Cal Cole and he helps me get my bobs out of the road, he is not stuck, the Linn Tractor is blocking the road. I leave my sleigh at Lang's. The rain is falling in torrents. Had a land slide on the hollow road.

February 16- The day is rather warm. Rain and a dull day. We cut up two planks on the barn floor. Leonia goes down to see Crapser's and gets mail. I'm up to watch Daisy cow and she does not freshen.

February 25- Go with the milk and on to Summit, get some supplies and haul a jag of saw dust for Mr. Wandress. Euclid Proper (son of George) hauls me 75 cakes (ice) after dinner, Clif and I get it home.

February 27- I call (Ike) McIntyre (lived on Dyer Rd. Jefferson) and he is unable to come and shoe the team, and ask Ford and Cal and they say no can do. I pull all the manure out with the wheel burrow.

March 2- Mr. Macintyre comes to shoe team. Roy comes with plant (Delco power), can't seem to make it generate, call Roland up and still no good. Clifford and Cal Cole were here also. I sell Cal two calves, take Mr. McIntyre home to O'Neils. Old Mrs. Foote dies, so does Perry Payne, hauled a jag of wood.

March 5- Harry Decker wants a job. Lois & Leonia bring home a wreck of spinning wheel.

March 6- I get my barn clean and go at fixing up the ice house. I manage to get frozen milk can loose and paint numbers on cans. Leonia goes for Gullettes mail, they have a letter from Betty (probably Elizabeth Haslun who lived in NYC).

March 17- I let Harold Cass take the team to get ice. Leonia's birthday.

March 18- Euclid hauls me two loads of ice at \$3 per load. Harold also hauls 18 big cakes with the horses. I am late as usual at the barn and some tired. To bed after listening to radio, real cold.

March 30- Pete DeLong comes as hired man. I go and get a jag of wood from Chas. Wilday. Long John says he will come help me, he is a bit disturbed. Roy had to get Corwin Denny (lived in West Fulton at 4 corners) to re-adjust wire hook up on my Plant, now it runs like a charm.

April 2- Call Pete, he answers but does not come to milk. I go on and milk seven cows and take my milk and am early. What a storm is raging, a real depth of snow has fallen. Home and Pete is not up yet, call him out and feed the cows, clean up the ten un-milked cows, feed some silage for the first to-day.

(subsequent entries mention Pete was very often late to work)

April 6- I find young heifer has a calf partially born, head and one foot out, she is in trouble. I cannot get calf out so I call Roe. We work hard and do not get calf out until we cut head off. Heifer cleans up and we put her in calf pen. Roe helps us milk. Pete goes down to help gather sap. It rains all day. I am feeling pretty sick to-day so I take it a bit easy.

April 9- Happy Easter. Einar and George come up, Einar helps me milk and we listen to radio. Real cold.

April 17- Catch Si O.K. and send all my milk, I make a second trip to pick up milk cans and some feed. Hard travel, mud sink holes and snow up via O'Neils wood road. Pete clips a few more cows. Up at 12:45 to listen to Joe Louis, Jack Roper fight. (Louis won by a KO)

April 21- I rode up to town with Har. Cass and back, left my grocery's at Lew Proper's, run down and see Harold and Francis. Leonia gets Boston Rocker ,wreckage.

April 29- I go to milk meeting with Al O'Neil. Meeting is a grand mix up of opinions and our gang, up this way, quits the coop. I am disgusted, I have some wild ride back with Albert. Pete is alone milking.

May 15- Ford is balking and we have quite a time starting same. I drag some and also pick some stone.

May 17- Hot day to work. Put the cows on pasture for first time to-day.

May 18- Ted Hellijas and I go in quest of lime, no results. We go to a party given for Margaret Grey.

May 20- Jared VanWagnen comes and sells me a grain drill. I take a good bath and listen to radio.

June 1- Pete and Leonia find the trouble with my veal calf, a big length of inner tube in his throat.

June 3-Leonia went to Snook's sale and gets back late. Gave Pete \$3 tonite.

June 4- (Final entry) This was a most provocative year, as you can see by lack of finishing entries. A discouraging year due to lack of good help and etc. Henry

(Edward Foote helped me place some of the names of people in the diary in order to create this map)



