

Daily Activity 1800s

For most of the time that mankind has been in this area the primary activity was survival. The land had to be cleared of stumps and rocks and the roots broken up, the ground plowed, fences, barns built, and orchards planted. All food had to be gathered, hunted, grown or caught. Almost all things used on the farm had to be made there. There were no local stores from which to buy food no money to buy things in the early pioneer days. Here are just a few of the seemingly endless tasks that had to be done. First priority of daily activity was to ensure the protection and survival of the family and livestock. This was done by maintaining the cabin, barns, fences and one's firearms. Securing food to eat and preparing it was a daily priority as there was no refrigeration. There were no stoves or microwaves or running water. It was like primitive camping now but without the modern camp stove, tools, gear and plastic items. Just out in the woods with nothing. Everything had to be made using your ax or knife.

Building a temporary shelter then a cabin and barns and improving them. Roofs had to be maintained or suffer the wet consequences. Digging a well, lining the well, covering the well were big jobs. Making split rail fencing to keep the livestock from wandering took a lot of time. The most time consuming jobs were clearing ground, grubbing, plowing, harrowing (breaking the clumps up), planting, Then in a short while there was endless weeding in the fields and gardens. Digging drainage ditches and road ditches. Fixing tools, making tools, making beds, furniture, building: wagons, buggies, sleighs, sleds, an ice house, a root house, a smoke house. Keeping an eye out for varmints that were a threat such as wolves, foxes, cougars, bears, crows, birds, rabbits, insects, worms, sometimes savages or thieves. For these the rifles were always kept on the ready. Many early unsuspecting settlers were killed while they were engaged in working by Indians and thieves. Sadly it was easy to sneak up on a working farmer and shoot him from behind. Pioneer women and children were usually killed with knives. Hundreds of early settlers were killed in this way. After rule of law was established in the Warren area by 1820 most of this had ended.

If there was livestock, they had to be looked after meaning being fed, cleaned, milked and cared for. Food for them had to be grown, bought, found and sometimes prepared. Not all animals could graze all of the time especially in winter. Harnesses had to be made and maintained. The woman usually had to care for young children, prepare meals, wash clothes using a wash tub and wash rack, build fires and maintain them. Because there was no electricity fires were used for lighting, heating, cooking, baking, drying and scaring away varmints and insects. There were sometimes hoards of insects especially mosquitoes. Fires demanded wood that had to be cut down to small sized and in case of starting fires very small size. Usually the fire was kept going 24 hours a day because if it went out making a fire without matches was not an easy task. Women had to make and mend clothes and bedding by hand, and preserve foods by drying, salting, and canning. Preparing dinner meant that one had to kill the animal, remove the head and entrails, defeather it, skin it, cut it up all this before cooking it. All done without a kitchen sink or running water. How many folks today even know how to prepare a freshly killed chicken, deer, possem, raccoon, or muskrat for dinner. And remember there was no electricity or appliances. There was so much work to be done that children were often prevented from going to school in order to help with the work. We called them chores. Everyone except babies had tasks to do. There were no throw away diapers, tissues, napkins, pads, or toilet paper and no plastic or throw away items. Water was drawn from a well using a bucket. Later hand pumps were installed. Cisterns were built and rain water from roofs was piped to the cistern giving another source of good free water. Water from ponds was sometimes available but we have since learned to boil all water before drinking for safety. Many old cemeteries such as Warren Union Cemetery have many buried there who died from bad water or spoiled food related conditions such as "Summer Complaint." Even today some folks have died because they drank some living little microscopic ameba.

See *Diary of an American Farmer in Michigan* (found on DVD or at <http://dogoodforall.today>)

It shows: how life was in the late 1800s, what was done each day, where they went, what the family did, the weather conditions in Michigan. Tells actual daily happenings, births and deaths that in some cases were not recorded by the government. It is a treasure of daily information of that era.