



HELP WANTED:

Progressive state-of-the art Museum seeks inquisitive individual for position of Historian. Successful candidate will be able to read differing accounts of stories, determine similarities and differences, and come to conclusions regarding actual events. **Apply Yourself Here.**

YOU BE THE HISTORIAN

A Day in the Life of a Farm Woman

Daily life on the farm included **chores** for each member of the family. Rising early each morning to feed **livestock**, milk cows, gather eggs, haul water, and prepare the morning meal was a daily task for men, women, and children. When the men went off to work, the women did daily household tasks, including cooking, cleaning, sewing, butter-churning, gardening, and child-rearing. Seasonal activities related to farm life were also important, including butchering livestock, preserving meat, soap-making, and **canning**. For women on the farm, there were also **social** visits among neighbors that were often tied to some chore like quilt-making or **harvest** of the crops. Families might also take a trip to town on Saturday to purchase goods, pick up mail, or visit friends and family.

YOU ARE HIRED

Historians are often asked to compare and contrast the lives of people from different time periods. Read these diary entries from four different Kansas women and then answer the questions on the back.

Abbie Bright is a 22-year old single woman who lived with her brother Philip on land near Clearwater in Sedgwick County, Kansas.

Sept 25, 1871—*Philip went to W[ichita] was gone one night... came home about 3 p. m. yesterday, and had walked nearly all the way from W[ichita]--20 miles. He brought me a cake of chocolate, nutmegs, medacine and nice cakes. I wanted a couple pounds of broun sugar for baking. We have plenty white. He got 7 lbs. because he could get that much for a dollar. Laney will bring the sugar and some other things when they come home.*

Sept 30, 1871—*Since Monday have been in bed nearly all the time. Had an attack like Mrs. L[ane]. Thankful to be better. I came the nearest to being homesick I ever was. Philip has been doing the cooking. I have no appetite, and that worried him. It is laughable to see him bake flap jacks for himself. To be ill and not see a woman for a week—is hard luck.*

Sara Ella Miner Blume is a 43-year old woman who lived in Rawlins County, Kansas. She is married to farmer August Blume, and has two children.

July 13, 1896—*Commenced to herd the Cattle today with Olive and the two little boys, will go out until the 1st day of Sept. That will finish the herding for this year. We had early Cabbage first, the 5th day of July and early Tomatoes the week following.*

VOCABULARY

Chore: (**chor**) noun A job that has to be done regularly, such as washing dishes or cleaning.

Livestock: (**live-stok**) noun Animals raised on a farm or ranch, such as horses, sheep, and cows.

Canning: (**kan-ing**) verb To put in a jar or can; to preserve.

Social: (**soh-shuhl**) adjective To do with people getting together in a friendly way or for companionship.

Harvest: (**har-vist**) verb To collect or gather up crops.

OVER →

Sept 17, 1896—I had to get up at 3:30 this morning it rained so hard all night that our house leaked all over. I was busy taking up water and I had to put the Couch together so it would not get wet all over. We have been making Hay this week, but all that is out in shocks is perfectly soaked and no doubt ruined, we have got one stack over half done but it is wide open. August and I tried hard to get it part closed but the wet spell set in to quick.

Ida McLain Bradley is a 62-year old woman with six children. Her husband and sons fared 81 acres near Blue Mound in Linn County, Kansas, with pigs, chickens, cattle, a large garden, and an orchard.

Aug 24, 1920—We did a big washing today & Arlie, Merrill, Don & myself went to the Osage [River] below Bill Murrow's. Arlie and I sat in the car while the men fished, they only caught 2 little fish.

Sept 18, 1920—I blacked the cook stove today, cleaned the lard vessels good in the cellar. We went to town tonight, took in the eggs, got \$.46 for them. We sent the Kids some more peaches this last week. The peaches are all gone now. I did not put up hardly any.

Ethel Mae Hill is a 47-year old woman who lived in Smith County, Kansas with husband Saul Albert Hill and two children.

Aug 28, 1939—Thrills & thrills. I drove the car over to Pa's this p.m.—alone. That is something. Ed McIlvain came down and brought a large piece of melon for supper.

Sept 12, 1939—Albert took 4 calves to fair. Wind is fierce today. Went to Clara McIlvain's to finish quilt. Had ice cream for lunch.



QUESTIONS

1. Women who lived on farms in the country often felt alone because their neighbors were far away. How did the experience of “going to town” differ from one time period to another?
2. What types of social activities did these women do? Were they related to work or just for fun?
3. How did families get and use their food? Did they buy food at a grocery store, grow it in a garden, or sell it for cash?
4. What kind of work did each woman do? Did she help out with farming, take care of the animals, or tend a garden?

BEYOND THE MUSEUM

Stories and diaries of women from Kansas provide insight into daily life, hardship, family, and comfort. Start your own diary and record things like what you did today, how you feel, who you meet or visit, and what the weather is like. Ask your grandmother if she has a family diary that you can read. To learn more about farming, interview a woman who lives on a farm or pick up these books at the Smoky Hill Museum Store or your local library.

Pioneer Women: The Lives of Women on the Frontier by Linda Peavey

Butter in the Well Series by Linda K. Hubalek

Voices from the Valley by Judy Magnuson Lilly



Smoky Hill Museum • 211 West Iron • Salina, KS 67401

www.smokyhillmuseum.org • 785-309-5776

A division of the Salina Arts & Humanities, a department of the City of Salina.