

John Stelle's 1847 Diary

In July, 2004, the historical society was given a group of Stelle Family archive materials that document some of the history of the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead. One of the most fascinating items is a diary from 1847 that was written by John Stelle - the brother of Clarkson Stelle who owned the Kennedy-Martin-Stelle Farmstead from 1832 to his death in 1850. John Stelle owned the large farmstead on the opposite side of King George Road.

Miss Beatrice Stelle, a great-great granddaughter of John Stelle who lives in Williamsport, PA, donated the materials which also include a 200-year old family bible, early deeds, an 1832 will, and several early photographs, all of which will eventually be displayed at the Brick Academy.

The diary offers a fascinating glimpse into life in Bernards Township as it was over 150 years ago, through the eyes of a local farmer writing in the first person. John Stelle, 57 years old when he wrote the diary, was a busy and prosperous farmer. His entries always contain observations about the weather and the conditions it created, from bad, muddy roads, to fine weather for sleighing, to water in his cellar. He sees numerous neighbors and friends, and travels around the countryside to a variety of destinations related to his farm business - many of the names and places will be familiar.

Stelle's work was literally never done. During the winter of 1847 - no matter what the weather - he made repeated trips to Peapack for lime, to an unidentified mountain for fence rails and wood, to nearby towns to sell his farm products. He and his sons sowed their fields, endlessly threshed the previous year's crops, repaired equipment and looked after the work animals; and he carefully recorded amounts and prices of all his farm products. But he took every Sunday off, usually attending church at Mt. Bethel Baptist Church, and frequently socializing in the afternoon.

The entire diary is being transcribed, and the full transcription for each month (January through March so far) will be available online at the KMS Farmstead website: <http://www.b-k-ind.com/barn/> A printed copy of the transcription is also available at the Brick Academy. The following excerpts from January have been edited to add punctuation, but the original grammar and spelling have been retained. Clarifications and illegible words are marked in [brackets].

Friday, January 1, 1847

I wish you a happy New year its warm and foggy has not froose [froze] abit last night wind in the South we sawed the big maple tree Down - Jacob Came from the [?] and the mud Deep frost all dirt Clear all Day -

Saturday, 2.

the wind in North west but warm its not froose abit last night alittle blowy this morning Cleared of [off] and we thrash all the ry in the Barn and Cleaned it up. warm anouf for first of April.

3 Sundy wind west and warm it hant froose one bit last night and hant froose abit this year its quite foggy this morning - I think its agoing to be Colder went to Chirch the mud is very Deep getting Colder I think it will freeze tonight.

Monday, January 4, 1847

the weather has got Colder it froose quite hard last night wind North East and Clouday looks like Snow. It began to Snow at 12 Oc and Snod til 2 1/2 Oc then turned to Rain and hail [probably sleet] we got wheat and ry in out of the Barreck its Raining very hard the Snow most gon its Raining hard at Dark.

Tuesday, 5,

It Rained till 4 Oc this morning and the wind Blew very hard it Cleared of at 5 Oc not Cold water quite high we finish Cutting the Big mapel tree Jacob went to John Worth for the girls it has Been very Clear all Day and pleasant I sod [sowed] som Salet [lettuce] and Redish to Day -

Wednesday, 6.

the weather is pleasant froose alittle last night my Self and Clarkson Jacob and Freeman went to Ephraim Came back and thrash 160 sheeves of ry the[n] Jacob and Freeman Drawed [Sand?] for the Path of the Machine

Thursday, January 7, 1847.

Foggy wind East and began to Rain at 9 O'c it Rained alittle all the foure noon we sheld Corn freeman wash the one horse harnes Jacob Com from I. Randolph it Rained very hard all the Afternoon wind Blew hard from the N.W. and Cooler

Friday, 8,

the weather has taken a grate Change last night and very Cold the theemometry[thermometer] stood at 17 I went to Isaac Lewis and got aload of tarr for the path for the house walk and very Cold.

Saturday, 9.

Clear and Cold the thermometry Stood at 14 Jacob and Clarkson went to Plainfield we thrash ry and finish the ry I went to bring Margret Thompson home the water and ice was so high we Could not Cross I took her up to James Vails.

10 Sunday Cloudy wind west and Snoes wind got East and has Snod alittle all Day M[?] Compton hear [here] high water & ice Didnt go to Chirch Snow 3 inches

Monday, January 11, 1847.

Wind North East and Snod alittle all the fore noon. We Cleaned up the ry had 34 bushel it Cleared of in the after noon and goes Colder I kild two Sheep for felt Vill

[Feltville], Cleard of and its quite Cold the Snow is aboute 7 inches, its very Dry Snow.

Tuesday, 12,

Wind west and Cold themom 13 its quite Clear and fine winter weather I went to felt Vill with two Sheep they weyed 88 lb at [?] \$4.40 I was Back home at 3 Oc Jacob went to Long hill its first Raight Sleighing freeman Drawd wood out of the field west of the Farm John Stelle

Wednesday, 13.

Wind South west and very Cold and Clear the themometer Stood this morning at 4 above zero - I went on the Sled to pepack and got 1 load of lime freeman went to turkey [Summit] with ry not quite so Cold looks like Rain

Thursday, January 14, 1847.

wind west and Clouday not very Cold I went to Pepack and got 1 load lime on the Sled it goad [got] warmer and the Snow run and Spoilt the Sleding freeman went Turkey with ry and Buckwheat and we went to S[?] Randolph and paid an Evening Visit and Eat oystersters first [?]

Friday, 15,

wind in the South west and quite moderate but frose som last night we hitch up three teams and got one Oats Stack in the Sooky Lot, and thrash two Loads quite Damp thrash Bad its quite warm and is foggy and looks like astorm it hant froose none at 8 Oc

Saturday, 16.

the wind South west and Rains not frose any last night it Appears like thaw its quite foggy and warm at 9 Oc we went and finish thrash the Stack that we Brought from the Sookey Lot Daniel Ayers helpt we had 65 bush[els] I think its going to be Cold -

Monday, January 18, 1847.

wind North East and looks like astorm I kild one hog and went Down to Clarkson's and helpt him kill three hogs and one Beef. Raind at 12 Oc Freeman and Jake Drawd in the little Stack of wheat Over the Ditch and it Raind quite hard before we get done it Raind on till Dark

Tuesday, 19,

Cloudy wind North west and its growing Colder it hant freese any last night its freeing now we are going to thrash the wheat 10 Oc - we thrash all the little Stack and I kild one Sheep - we got Don Thrashing half past 4 its going to bee a Cold Night -

Wednesday, 20.

Cloudy wind East it looks like a storm I went to Felt Vill and to turkey with Oats I took 21 bush of Oats to turkey and 40 to feltvill 1 hog 1 sheep - quite Cold all Day Freeman and Jake Drawd in one Stack of Wheat

Thursday January 21, 1847

Clear wind North west - and pleasant freeman went and got a load of lime Jake and I Cleand up wheat we had 22 B. in the afternoon their [there] Raisd [arose] black snow Squals and groes Colder it has the appearance of a Cold night the Squals keep Rising

Friday, January 22,

Clear and very Cold the themometry Stood at 11 this morning I went to Pepack and got 1 load of lime. Freeman Sheld Corn and fixt for mill - at 4 Oc I think the weath is moderate som.

Saturday, 23.

Clear and pleasant wind west thawd alittle. I went to pepack and got 1 load of lime Freeman got the Big Colt Shod Jacob Came from Plainfield and left his wife there. Sunday 24 Clear and not Cold them. Stands at 34# Sund[ay] Jacob mother and my Self went to John Worths and paid them a visit.

Monday, January 25, 1847.

Clear and fine this morning Ephraim and I went to the mountain and got [fence]Rails it Clouded up in the After noon and looks like a storm. freeman went for lime Jacob went to Smalleys and their [there] I beleave Staid all Day for he Did not git home til [?]

Tuesday, 26,

Cloudy wind East and looks like Rain Ephraim and my Self went to the mountain for Rails we had Vendue [auction] and Sold 2 lots of Wood it Rained before we got home - Freeman went for lime - we heard of the Deth of Charles Smaley[\'s] Child at Mr. Coxes

Wednesday, 27.

wind in the North west and Colder & Cloudy Freeman went for lime I went to the funeral of Charles Smalley Child its quite Cold the Roads fine Hugh Kirkpatrick stopt and took Dinner with me, its verry Cold.

Thursday, January 28, 1847.

Wind west and Clear and Cold went to the mountains and Freeman went for lime Jacob went to Plainfields and got his New harnes, its Clear and fine weather as ever was Roads first Rait [rate] - Jacob paid \$28.00 for his harness -

Friday, 29

Cloudy wind East and looks like Rain we went to the mountains and it Camon [came on] to Rain Jest as we began to load, and it Rained all the way home and then Rained all afternoon Jacob helpt Clarkson boy thrash wheat - Freeman went and got aload of lime/ Corn [?] 80 lb at New market

Saturday, 30.

the wind Northwest and Cold began to freeze at 9 Oc we hung up the meat to Smoke, we thrash 1 Stack of wheat and Cleand it up, Jacob helpt

31 Sunday quite Cold but Clear, I went to Thomas Simpson and to Chirch Jacob and Freeman went Chirch fast ice on the [?]