

'Good old days'

Early life is told in diary

"Staid home . . . snowed a storm in the evening made Harve a sled in the evening," wrote Andrew Jackson Knight, a Salt Creek Township farmer, who kept a diary in the 1890s.

Between the lines of his terse — often misspelled — diary entries

one gets a picture of rural life in Monroe County at the turn of the century. "Herve,"

the recipient of the home-

made sled, was Knight's only

son, "Harvey." (the other five Knight children were girls, Flora, Florence, Cordy, Bessie and Iona.)

Their father, who was born on the family homestead in Salt Creek Township in 1850, received only a fourth grade education — hence the sometimes phonetically spelled words. Nevertheless, wrote Norris Wentworth, who transcribed the diary for publication by the Monroe County Historical Society, Knight's spelling and penmanship were remarkable.

INTERWOVEN IN HIS DIARY entries are recordings of his trips to Bloomington for merchandise and services. In the year, 1893, for example, Knight made 17 trips to town, the majority of which were to deliver such items as wood spokes and hoops (he had made), eggs, firewood, cattle (presumably for slaughtering) and bushels of wheat to be ground at a mill. His other errands were to buy molasses (twice) and fertilizer.

More information about purchases he made in Bloomington can be found in his neat year-end summary of expenses. Headed simply, "1893 Money Spent," it includes, for example on April 5, the following purchases:

One cross cut saw and handle	2.75 ct
My taxes	5.79
1 pare pants for myself	1.25
1 coat 1 pare pants and 3 socks Harve	1.00
1 pare No 6 shoes for Bess	50
11 yards 5 ca shirting	50
3 yds 6 calico	18
2 coffee 50 4 lbs sugar 25	75
Seewet potoes 5 lbs	25
Saucag 5 ct spool thread 5	10
Acid Plosphate	50

Lest any readers, taking note of the prices, heave a sigh about the "good old days," it is well to remember that those days also included outdoor plumbing, infections that doctors were almost helpless to control and roads that were impassable in inclement weather.

SINCE IT WASN'T CONVENIENT to go to town for treatment of every ache and pain, Knight also bought some 1890s-versions of such medicine cabinet items as syrup of figs, alcohol, gum of camphor and Indian root pills. In spite of the home remedies, the Salt Creek farmer was obliged on occasion to consult the doctor, as seen in his post Dec. 31, 1896, entry, which reads, "Finished pay-

(Back page, col. 8, this sec.)