

MAPLETON MUSINGS

Column courtesy of Mapleton Historical Society



Making hay

This spring, at the Drayton Kinsmen Farm Show, the Mapleton Historical Society worked on a display about hay. The display included some of the different ways that farms have evolved over the years in the art and science of haying. This crop is an integral part of the farm, with timing and getting the crop in being critical.

In the 2011 census, almost 20,000 acres of alfalfa and alfalfa mixtures were grown in the township. A decrease of 5,000 acres from the 2006 census.

As much as farmers have fine-tuned the methods of gathering and storing hay, one thing that farmers cannot change is *the weather*. When doing this research, it was interesting to find many references to the weather and how it affected the local farmers. Listed are a few of the excerpts found mostly from local historian Stephen

Thorning's work as he researched the local paper.

1902 - Rain and thunder storms produced a wet summer from June until late July. The continued wet weather frustrated farmer's attempts to get their hay in. Haying operations on some farms were not finished until the last week of July. On the other hand, the moisture helped the grain crops, particularly wheat and barley. Farm supply dealers predicted a bumper crop, basing their forecasts on the sales of binder twine. (Stephen Thorning, Aug. 2, 2002)

1902 - Several new barns went up in the area during the month, some by bees, some by contractors and some with a combination of the two. Thomas Goodwin of Teviotdale let a contract for the first concrete silo on the vicinity. It has a capacity of 100 ton. (Stephen Thorning, Aug. 2, 2002)

1906 - June turned out to

be one of the wettest in memory, especially in the second half of the month, when several violent thunderstorms swept through the area. The wet weather hampered the haying operations of farmers, and upset the plans of various organizations for their planned outdoor functions. (Stephen Thorning, May 26, 2006)

1906 - July - Though the weather hampered haying, farmers were generally in a good mood, as commodity prices continued to rise. During July, hogs hit the \$7.50 hundred weight mark for the first time. (Stephen Thorning, July 28, 2006)

1906 - The Berlin Sugar Beet Co., with a new factory near Bridgeport, issued some figures on beet cultivation. In the Drayton area, 172 farmers were cultivating sugar beets under contract, growing a total of 286 acres. That represented about 5 per cent of the crop under

contract to the company. It worked out to be less than two acres per farm but the beets were a labour-intensive crop, requiring constant hoeing. (Stephen Thorning, May 26, 2006)

1933 - July - Though the depression lingered, farmers were pleased with the large hay crop of 1933. Quality was excellent as there was no rain at all during the haying season in late June and early July. Most farmers had their haying completed by the end of the first week of July but there was fears that the lack of rain would affect corn crops. (Stephen Thorning)

1956 - July, the coldest and wettest summer in years, frustrated farmers by delaying their haying operations by several weeks, and even then, it was a struggle to get the work done between showers. Reports from Niagara brought bad news to home canners: 1956 fruit crops would be only a fraction of

those of 1955; the cherry crop was estimated to be down 80% (Stephen Thorning, July 14, 2006)

1956 - Biehn's store in Goldstone offered farmers the best deals in the area on Co-op baler twine at \$6.95 and binder twine at \$8.50. Drayton druggist N.H. Barnsdale urged farmers to fight flies with Howard brand sprays and powders, malathion barn spray, and aerosol cans of pine-scented DDT for use in the kitchen. (Stephen Thorning, July 14, 2006.)

1957 - June with haying season about to start, Allis Chalmers dealer Percy Trussler held a "Baler and Mower meeting" on June 6. He demonstrated the new AC model D14 tractor and new haying equipment. The evening also included some films and refreshments. (Stephen Thorning, June 1, 2007)

1958 - The month of May

entered local weather lore as the driest and coldest in memory. Seeds failed ... and hay-fields showed no inclination to grow. Weather changed on June 1, with a generous but gentle rain. Farmers referred to it as the "million dollar rain." Though some feared their fields were beyond redemption. Haying operations towards the end of the month produced meagre yields. (Stephen Thorning, June 6, 2008)

Today, Farmers still have to watch the weather forecasts and try their best to get the hay crop in. In Mapleton Township, be encouraged to watch the different ways farmers work to bring in the hay for the livestock they feed.

Marvel at how each year hay making always seems to get done in spite of the weather.

Submitted by Liz Samis of the Mapleton Historical Society.



Alma celebration - The Alma Optimist Club and the Girl Guides of Canada jointly put on a Canada Day celebration at Wallace Cumming Park in Alma. TOP LEFT: From left, organizers Marlene Skerit (guider) and Optimists Mandy Mulder, Natalie Deschamps, Rob McKay and Jim DeBock (front) ran the day's activities; TOP RIGHT: Jaelyn, left, and Myelle Mulder, of Alma, take their pancake treat back to their picnic table to eat while Jeannie DeBock looks on; MIDDLE: DeBock, left, and Skerit lead the Canada Day parade down the track; and ABOVE: Alma residents Caleb Snyder, left, and Ben Wagner took part in the day's games. Photos by Jaime Myslik

Fire destroys sugar shack

By Caroline Sealey

MAPLETON - Drayton and Moorefield fire departments responded to a structure fire on June 26. Upon arrival at the scene, firefighters found a sugar shack engulfed in flames. The sugar shack was located at the rear

of the property on Sideroad 12 in Mapleton Township.

Mapleton Fire Chief Rick Richardson said, "There had been some welding going on in the shack in the morning. The workers returned from a lunch break and discovered a fire in a pile of wood located inside the sugar shack."

The shack was completely destroyed in the fire. An older model John Deere tractor located in the building sustained damage.

Firefighters were on the scene for approximately six hours. There were no injuries and no damage estimate is available.

SUMMER is Here!

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