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Diary Entry by Hoyt G. Post

Hoyt G. Post

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19 November 1848

Holland, Ottawa County, Michigan

A diary entry of Hoyt G. Post, in Part I, dated 1850, Post wrote an account of his life in the Holland Colony. He had arrived in the Colony in May 1848 to build a store. He enjoyed the hunting and fishing in the area. Hoyt's diary, in general, is very negative about the Dutch settlers.

Typescript in the Post Family papers, the Holland Museum, Holland, Michigan.

F 5 8
Post Family
Paper -
Diary

HOYT G. POST

Part 1.

1850

Holland Museum Collection
at the
Joint Archives of Holland

Holland, Ottawa County, Mich. Nov. 19, '48. - I have often resolved and re-resolved that I would keep a journal for my own amusement exclusively, and two or three different times I have commenced, but for as many reasons I have discontinued. But now I resolve to put my former resolutions into effect, and from this date to write, at all events if my life is spared, till this book is filled. I intended before my arrival here that as soon as I was established I would keep a memorandum of all that I saw or heard that I thought worthy of being put on paper; and doubtless I shall write many things that to another person may appear trivial and perhaps unworthy of a moment's reflection, much less to be inscribed in a book; but as this is written only for my own amusement, and it is not intended for the benefit or pleasure of even a second person, that, of course, will not deter me from writing whatever my fancy may dictate. I expected that my residence here would be an era in my hitherto monotonous life; and really, why is it not an event in one's existence when he bids good bye to his own people and the pleasures and enjoyments of social intercourse with friends most dear, and takes up his abode among people comparatively uncivilized, with tastes and dispositions diametrically opposite one's own, in fact, a people foreign in every respect, for so in fact are the Holland Dutch. They are a people distinct from all others of my acquaintance with regard to their interests and habits. I was disappointed in them, being told repeatedly that they were a Christian people that were scrupulously honest honorable and conscientious in their recognition and discharge of duty even to the minutest particular, and so it appeared to one on first acquaintance, but it does not require a vast deal of sagacity or knowledge of human nature soon to detect deceit, hypocrisy, and unblushing falsehood in their professions to a far greater extent than one is accustomed to see among Americans. There are a few honest, upright men among them, men who do not pretend to do anything more than they practice, and are careful to let their conduct show that they intend to be virtuous and sincere. But persons of that class are rarely to be found even among a population of from three to four thousand. I came here intending to like this people, and as it was to all appearances to be my home for some time to come, I resolved to overlook

the faults and failings to as great an extent as possible, in a word to be charitable and forgiving, but a short residence showed me that my allowance of patience was not sufficient to enable me to overlook the almost endless list of entirely unlooked for failings; thus, I did not expect to see men of good standing in church as well as in the social circle stoop to the meanest and most contemptible knavery, but such scenes I am compelled to witness almost daily, but my impression will make a sufficient impression on my memory as to obviate the necessity of writing the operations I have witnessed. I came here in May 1848 and while the store was being built had but little business on my hands, but spent my leisure time in acquiring knowledge of the people among whom my lot was for a time to be cast. They were I found extremely courteous to strangers, at least were so to me, seemed anxious to get acquainted and made themselves as agreeable as possible, in some respects tidy and neat, and in others, and those to me the most important disgustingly filthy, taking care as a general thing to make clean the outside of the platter but minding little for the inside. Black Lake had been the scene of many an hour spent agreeably by me whether skulking stealthily along the bank to get a crack at the wary duck or gliding over its rippled bosom in the light Indian canoe. I will also remember the pleasant hours spent in angling, also the satisfaction I felt while towing ashore some sturdy codfish or bass. I am a passionate lover of rural scenes and rural sports, and I think no fellow feels more satisfaction in strolling through the woods than my beloved self. But every sweet has its and I have found by experience that when caught in the woods at night that there is little of the agreeable and romantic in lying on a pile of brush, shivering in the night air with half a sufficient covering, in a word, the poetry of the thing becomes decided vexation and I am always pleased with the idea of sitting by a stove after such an adventure and dismissing the idea of "a life in the woods" for a time. One or two evenings since I witnessed the most brilliant display of the Aurora Borealis that I ever saw. The whole heavens were lighted up with the most magnificent splendor, while on one part a livid light made the sky appear as frequently before sunrise. In another part streams of white light were darting in every direction.

It was a grand display as I ever witnessed.

Monday, Nov. 20. Went to the mouth of Kalamazoo with two Dutchmen to try to get some goods around by the lake and also to make arrangements to get Van der Har's lumber around. I started about daybreak with my fellow travelers, but being better qualified to tramp I soon distanced them and they were soon shouting to me to "wait". The surface of the ground was frozen just enough to make it treacherous and uncertain where there was mud, and the traveling was uncomfortable, the weather mild and still as death were the forests through which we passed. One after.... we left the log huts of the Dutchmen in the rear and finally the last one and plunged into the hemlock woods. I noticed any quantity of wintergreen berries and stopped occasionally to luxuriate upon a handful of this delicate little fruit. By twelve o'clock exactly we were at Nichols' stretching our weary "understanding" in the warmth of a stove. In due time came dinner accompanied by sharp appetites and the pork, vegetables, et cetera were disposed ^{of} and disappeared as if by magic. If there is anything in the world for me which restores tranquility, soothes the passions and makes me at peace with all men it is after a forenoon's hard work to sit down to a right hearty dinner. I invariably forget all trouble and vexation in the enjoyment of the innocent pleasure.

Dinner over, I began to cast about for the most proper time and method of shipping the goods, and found the "Gazelle" in as good order as might be expected, considering the trials through she had been subjected in coming down the river.

I soon found that the only possible way I could get the goods around was to put them aboard the Gazelle and take the responsibility of being captain and all hands and try to navigate alone. On the strength of this resolution I began to arrange. I soon had a sail booming up to the wind and my boat bailed out and everything shipshape and was about to cast off when the wind went down and a dead calm came on much to my annoyance. But this did not continue long. The wind soon began to blow, but to my infinite vexation directly from the North West, the very point to which I wished to sail. My cake was all dough, it was impossible to dispute that and to try to make the

mouth of Black Lake with a northwester in my teeth was alike impossible. I hauled my boat out, secured it, bundled my overcoat on my back and trudged on home, much out of humor with old Boreas for interfering summarily with my plans and spoiling my calculations.

Sunday, November 26. My twenty-first birthday. This day frees me from all pecuniary obligation to my parents. Henceforth I must make my own calculation and do my own figuring in the world. The idea of landing out in the world on my own responsibility is pleasing on one side and taking another view it is rather solemn. Hitherto I have had a father to lean upon in time of need, parents who were bound and were willing to all the extent in their power to assist me in this life; but today their obligations cease. "Take care of yourself", I seem to hear them say. "You are now 21, and must look out for yourself hereafter". And I can take care of myself if my health is spared. Also I this day resolve that in all my business transactions of whatever name or kind to be strictly honest and upright. No man shall have occasion to say to me, "You have obtained money wrongfully"; also to preserve my moral character as the dearest gem on earth, to keep clear entirely of the habits of profanity, licentiousness, and Sabbath breaking. Regarding these vices as the rocks on which most young men break, these in particular I intend to shun as though one failure would ensure my destruction. With Divine assistance, I intend to practice habits of industry, economy, and justice in all things; to devote my spare time to the improvement of my mind and gathering useful information, in innocent pleasure and recreation I shall spend a portion of the time God has given me, believing, as I do, that He placed me in this beautiful world with the perfections and variety to enjoy these blessings in a proper manner; and I am also aware that a great deal of caution and judgment is necessary to decide how much is a proper time for amusement. And as everyone must decide this for himself I shall watch myself closely and be careful that I do not extend this limit and be found squandering my time. I intend also, never under any circumstances, while in the enjoyment of health to be without employment and never to be in any employment that is in reality degrading or that will sink me in the