

This past summer the Orleans County Department of History was given copies of diaries written by Charles H. St. Calire, from his great granddaughter Elaine Hilliard of Ennis, Texas. I've selected some passages from the 1858 diary taking us back 140 years when Mr. St. Calir was just 21 years old. His comments and descriptions of what he was doing give us insight into a rural young man's life of the mid-19th century. Incidentally, the St. Claire residence and farmstead where Charles grew up is located just west of Albion along the Erie Canal. Know today as the "old Parker place", it is currently owned by Derek and Chris Howlett. Our photo shows a view of it from the Albion-Eagle Harbor Road.

Jan. 1 Sawing wood all day.
Jan. 3 Sunday, very windy and O how the ladies hoops upset them.
Jan. 6 At school and in eve went to Hopkins where I had a grand time fiddling.
Feb. 3 Good for sleighing with L.F. and D.P. Loomis.
Feb. 14 No Valentines for me.
Feb. 16 Rec. one valentine, listened to Declarations at school.
Mar. 2 weather cold and stormy, had a party at our house we had a good time.
Mar. 5 A Minstrels at Barre Center, awful cold time.
Mar. 7 Sun. went to Baptist Ch. and saw 12 people baptized.
Mar. 15 Have been jobing, went up to Arthurs school, have hired out for Mr. Wm. Wood for seven mo. for one hundred dollars.
Mar. 20 School over, how I dreed to farm and work, thousands of pigeons flying today.
Mar. 21 Went to Collinses to dinner and to confirmation Class in P.M.
Mar. 29 Comenced work for Mr. Wood. Fixing fences and drawing manure.
Mar. 31 Plowed, drew manure, beautiful weather, seems quite natural to be farming again.
Apr. 1 Passed off without my getting fooled.
Apr. 6 Plowing and splitting rails, very tired and sore.
Apr. 11 Sun. went to meeting in Knowlesville with Seth and Jay. Had introduction to several pretty girls.
Apr. 12 Rainy, Mr. W. killed a beef, first time for me to help dress one.
Apr. 13 Drawing manure between showers. Mr. Wood went to Albion and bought a new iron beam plow. I am very glad.
Apr. 19 Stormy, Miss Washburn was here to tea, she teaches school at Albion, I have been fiddling all eve.
Apr. 21 Split wood and cut hay. Miss W was here in eve. Had a very good time. Went to Eagle Harbor and bought me new boots.
Apr. 24 Picked stone, dug some ditches, split wood and fixing place for a hedge fence P.M.
Apr. 26 Went home on foot today. Found Mother and Grandfather quite sick...the canal is half full of water.
Apr. 27 Helped set out peach trees and drew manure, sowed clover seed in chaff...
May 7 Saw a horse run away and smash a buggy but no one was hurt.
May 9 Su. went to Albion with L.McCord he called with a two horse carriage. We went and got Miss Burton and Lib Washburn and went to Mt. Albion. Had a fine time.
May 12 Plowing and helped the boys make a cider press.
May 18 Drew rails A.M. and chopping in woods cut my boot and went to Eagle Harbor to get it mended, not successful.
May 25 Planted potatoes and corn, oiled harness...
June 6 washed sheep at creek, went fishing in

June 19 Cultivated corn, men here shearing sheep. Went bathing in eve and had lots of spectators.

June 27 Sun. went home, witnessed a terrible accident. Mr. Loveland drowned, our neighbor. Bought me a new suit of clothes at Wilders.

June 29 Watered hedge. 96° in shade.

July 4 To Medina and celebrated, had a grand time.

July 13 Helped kill a calf and cradled barley and later rye.

Aug. 8 Sun. today is my twenty-second birthday. It does not seem possible I am so old. I wonder what changes another year will have in store for me.

Aug. 10 Finished cradeling oats 17 acres in all.

Aug. 18 This week have plowed, draged and cleaned barley, picked stone and fired stumps.

Aug. 29 Still drawing manure. Have done about 250 loads this season. I'm getting tired of such work.

Aug. 27 Have helped Seth make a bookcase.

Aug. 29 Sun. to Knowlesville all day meeting. Pleasure of seeing all the fair ones of the city.

Sept. 2 Plowing and pulling beans for days, nearly finished, my fingers are so sore.

Sept. 11 Drew wood and helped boys make very good cider.

Sept. 12 Sun. walked home and back. Had the pleasure of eating my fill of peaches.

Sept. 25 I saw a comet in eve... It has now been visible about a week.

Sept. 29 Been to Orleans County Fair and went by the Academy and saw old friends.

Oct. 2 Chopped wood at the woods, husked corn, went to school meeting in eve and after J. Whipple and I went coon hunting, no coons but saw comet.

Oct. 18 Digging potatoes now also splitting wood.

Oct. 26 Finished potatoes and picked apples all day.

Oct. 29 Heavy freeze, drew pumpkins and helped saw wood and was nearly hurt by the machine.

Nov. 2 Election Day. I did not go, plowing all day.

Nov. 6 My labor for Mr. Wood finished tonight. He has paid me the cash.

Nov. 7 Sun. I have been at Mr. Woods all day making my farewell visit.

Nov. 10 Been jobing, laying brick. It seems strange to be home once more.

Nov. 11 Helped father fix stones for steps.

Nov. 15 Went to Albion in A.M. and deposited \$25 in bank, layed brick rest of day.

Nov. 18 today was day appointed Thanksgiving, but it has been a day of work for me.

Nov. 22 Made a new bargain with A.T. and am now working for \$12.00 a month.

Dec. 6 A.T. and I went to Mr. Skinners to thresh clover.

Dec. 12 Sun. went to Methodist meeting with Geo. Goold...I have a very bad sty on my eyelid.

Dec. 21 ...I have bought me a stove today. Threshed for Mr. Field - Stormy. Helped trim Church in eve and had a fine time with Minnie Huff.

Dec. 23 At home fixing to butcher hogs...Picked up stove...and bought a picture with a chance in a lottery.

Dec. 25 Christmas - stayed home helping Father in morn. and to Grandfather's in P.M. for a Christmas dinner.

Dec. 27 Helped make sausage.

Dec. 31 Today ends 1858. I have labored very hard and very steady for the last year and have managed to save a little money for a rainy day. I hope I may do as well the coming year and enjoy