

A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR TEACHERS – *A BROOKSIDE HARVEST*

The focus of *A Brookside Harvest* is to develop an understanding of life in 19th century Saratoga County, specifically as related to the harvest and harvest related activities. This is done through our living history celebration of harvest traditions, including demonstrations and hands-on activities in gathering the harvest, preserving and cooking the harvest, keep warm through the fall and winter, and leisure-time activities and having fun.

I. Setting the Stage

In 19th century Saratoga County the family farm was very important. More and more people were moving to the towns and cities, and the farmer had to produce foodstuffs to feed those people. Late summer and fall were very busy times for the farm family. All members of the family took part in the fall harvest of crops such as corn, hay, oats, as well as fruits such as apples and pear, and vegetables like tomatoes, squash, and beans. In addition, fall was a time to bring in the winter's wood supply and to get out the warm quilts and long underwear. There was still a bit of time for "having fun" by playing with handmade wooden toys or wood hoops and graces.

In order to bring this time to life, entries from *Delia Denison Diary, April 1883 to August 1885*, are included below:

"The Diary of Delia Salsbury Denison paints the life of a seventy-year-old farm wife in rural Upstate New York in the 1880s. She lived on a farm near the Village of Galway in Saratoga County. Her days were filled with chores: making butter and soap, tending a wood fire, baking bread. And there were constant struggles: keeping warm in winter, fighting the hen lice, nursing the sick. Certainly not the "good old days. Delia made a daily entry in the diary from April 22, 1883, to August 31, 1885, some-times writing just a few words. The diary is made of lined notebook paper with covers fashioned from heavy, brown paper bags, sewed at the top with yarn. It measures 4 1/2 inches by 7 1/4 inches. With the exception of two entries penned in ink, the diary is written in pencil."

[Note to teachers: Delia Denison's diary is a great first hand account of life in 19th century Saratoga County. Even though your students are young, they would benefit from using this material. I encourage you to read the diary entries with your students and show them the written word. At *A Brookside Harvest* I plan to have the original or reproduction of the diary on display so that the students can see Delia's own words.]

Diary Entry

Friday August 17 1883
Rice. Mowed & raked hay here afternoon the 2
Mrs Pettits came, put on a quilt & worked
till they rooled it once

Monday August 19 1883
I made a cake, H call'd on our friends to invite
to quilt
Tues the two Mrs Pettits & two Mrs
Halls & Girtie came & quilted & finely
got it off, I rocked the dear babe & got
tea.
Weds I hemed part of my quilt

Notes

put on a quilt: a quilt, ready to be tied off or quilted was put on a frame which was either suspended from the ceiling or rested on a frame or on backs of chairs. It was rolled up as the outside edges were finished. Usually the neighbor ladies came to help, hence a "quilting bee."

Rice: name of a son of a neighbor