

HILL FARM IN EASTERN KENTUCKY

The following article is of interest because it shows what the life of a farmer in the mountainous part of Eastern Kentucky might be like. The Gabbards married into the Brandenburg and Moore families. They were relatives of the Brandenburs who lived in Estill, Owsley and Lee Counties, Kentucky

Isaac W. Gabbard Article, Berea Citizen, unknown, date, Berea, Kentucky (see #599):

Editor's Note: Would you like to amble through the past on a Kentucky mountain farm? If so, you would enjoy I. W. Gabbard's records of farming in Owsley County 40 years ago. They represent one small but important part of Berea College's Southern Appalachian Archives, where the two big collections are the 57-year records of the Council of the Southern Mountains and the Appalachian Volunteer records. Other interesting Berea Archives are: the Appalachian Ballads, Appalachian Feuds, the Frontier Nursing Service, 1962 Regional Survey, and early material on Pine Mountain and Hindman Settlement Schools. Berea's librarians are searching for more, particularly coal mining and lumbering records, or more old farm account books similar to I. W. Gabbard's.

MOUNTAIN FARM

by A. H. Perrin

In this day of mechanized farming, using \$20,000 to \$50,000 farm machines, it is pleasant to turn back the pages to a mountain farm and a farmer of an entirely different era; one who kept remarkably detailed records of daily work as well as monthly weather summaries. He even traced generations of one branch of his family.

That man was Isaac W. Gabbard of Owsley County, In seven assorted notebooks and account books, Gabbard's unique records were recently turned over to the Berea College Archives as a gift of Miss Bertie Gabbard and Mr. T. J. Wood.

Few men working a farm every day have the interest or the inclination to do the nightly paperwork necessary to keep the detailed records which you find here. Work, weather, family records, crops grown and sold, livestock - all are recorded. There is even page after page titled "Things I didn't want to forget." I W. Gabbard's interest in his family goes all the way back to Henry Gabbard who brought his family to Clay County from Washington County, Virginia, in 1816.

How good were the "good old days" when county taxes were about \$24 on the farm; when 20-year old mules instead of tractors pulled plows and wagons; when you dug loads of coal from you own farm seam; and when a man often helped at the Gabbard Cemetery digging kinfolk's graves?

Compare this man's record with any you know now. In 1936 in Cow Lick, he and his mule plowed the "upper garden" - his was a mountain slope farm - to plant 18 rows of Irish potatoes, four rows of peanuts and one of popcorn. That year he burned his tobacco bed on March 28 and planted 19 acres of corn, three acres of wheat and one of beans.

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May 1936 was the driest ever, with only one rain recorded and July was the hottest July ever. In June 1936, I. W. Gabbard served on the jury in Booneville for 13 days, and in September he spent 10 days digging coal on his farm - coal he burned that winter. That year his tobacco just about paid his taxes. He kept a large "package" of tobacco for himself, but sold 180 pounds for \$24.87. His potato crop brought \$1 a bushel.

Imagine a farmer today who, before getting involved in heavy spring work, made 13 white oak baskets during March and April and sold 10 of them. Imagine a Kentucky farmer today so self-sufficient that in addition to wheat, tobacco, oats, grass, and a few hogs for meat and lard, raises popcorn, broom corn, regular corn, potatoes (Irish and sweet), beans, beets, cabbage, lettuce, peanuts, peas, watermelon, cashew melons, pumpkins and rhubarb.

In his 1938 notebook, he wrote pages giving his personal views on the political records and competence of county officials and judges and lawyers. He took delight in listing family kin names, all related to his Gabbard family, and including Huntsuchers, Woods, Herds, Rowlings, Wilsons, Combs, Browns, Isaacs and Baldriges. He listed all of the people in Owsley County who were over 90 years old.

He took special written note of Joseph Wilder, who was married three times and fathered 31 children, as well as one Joseph Gabbard who died at his sister-in-law's in Berea that year. Joseph, he noted, was known in Berea as "Wild Bill" in Arkansas as "Devil Bill" and in Owsley County as "Boosankles." By 1939, I. W. Gabbard's tobacco crop had jumped to 724 pounds, which he sold for \$130.89. He spent eight days stripping that tobacco. That year he sold 36 bushels of Irish potatoes and two bushels of apples.

Gabbard had no regular help but he did pay \$3 for two day's plowing by a neighbor, Hayes. He hauled 200 bushels of coal himself and 113 shocks of fodder. The livestock on his farm included one mule (16 years old), two cows, two heifers, one baby calf, one sow, one pig. His credit was good enough so that he could borrow \$50 from the bank for six months. In his accounts, Mr. Gabbard never once mentioned something he had read in a newspaper or magazine, but every once in a while, he did go to town to replace the battery in his radio. He voted regularly and does comment on state and national election returns.

In 1943, he recorded his tobacco allotment as 1.5 acres, and he marketed 676 pounds in Lexington. Once that year, he shipped seven possum skins to Sears and Roebuck, but doesn't record what he was paid for them. There were a few days in his daily work calendar when he wrote, "done no work, Went fishing" and some days marked "squirrel hunting."

May 22, 1943, he took a personal census of Sassafras Branch, and summed up his neighbors as follows:

- Population - 39 at present
- Those absent - 10 gone out
- In service - 9 Army and Navy
- Old adults (over 50) - 3
- Farm owners - 4
- Number of acres - 400

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Workers on farms - 20 men and women
Number of gardens - ?
Mules and horses - 6
Cows - 9; Hens - 200
Old Age Pensioners - 1
U. S. Pensioners - 1
Dogs - 6; Cats - 10
Republicans - 100 percent

That same year, 1943, in one notebook, he traced a branch of his family for 130 years from May 10., 1813, when Rebecca Wilson married Samuel Wood Jr. and listed 663 family names, generation by generation. He told where many were buried. There is no telling how much detective work went into that compilation, but it is a most remarkable genealogical study, done as a hobby by a farmer working every day in the fields.

In 1947 and 1948, his journal showed one-sentence notes on family deaths, suicides, family brawls, and serious automobile accidents. Typically, he devoted more space to items like these: "Some hybrid corn did exceptionally well, yielding 150 to 172 bushes per acre" or that "in November, eggs sold for 55 cents to 60 cents a dozen" and he made \$100 in 1948 by selling eggs. His tobacco crop totaled 133 sticks or 1,340 pounds worth \$649.71. That year he used 1,100 pounds of fertilizer and 2 tons of manure.

A remarkably exact record-keeper was I. W. Gabbard. Each night he listened to his battery set radio and marked up his records for the day. How astonished he would be that in 1979 people would find so much interest in those farm records.

Eugene F. Gabbard
Route #3, Box 172
Amora, IN 47001
January 24, 1979

Dear Mr. Moore,

Got your letter and the clipping about I. W. Gabbard. I. W. was the son of the late Pleas Gabbard of Ricetown, Kentucky. It is possible that they received their mail at the Cow Creek office. His farm was about equal distance from the two mentioned post offices. I. W. was a more-or-less self-sufficient boy. He never married, lived with his parents until their deaths and he continued to live at the old home place. Quite an interesting man, satisfied with facts gleaned from personal observation.

Bertie Gabbard, still living, is a first cousin to I. W. Bertie was devoted to the Pleas Gabbard family. I. W.'s sister was a victim of cancer and lived in the old home place until her death. Bertie was a nurse to her and left her own home to look after Thelma. The old Gabbard ties were really strong among many of my people.

Isaac W. Gabbard's mother was a Wood, by family name. Actually, I am quoting from my Dad, Rev. I. H. Gabbard, that I. W.'s mother was his half-sister. Dad's father was quite a ladies' man among the free-agent girls of the mountains of Owsley County. If

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this is true, I. W. would be a very close relative of mine. I. W. Gabbard's father took his own life. Several very sad things happened to I. W.'s family and immediate kin...The girls at Booneville still live at the old home place on Meadow Creek. Best wishes for a real good New Year, 1979.

Sincerely, Gene & Ruth

P. S. The spelling of the word "Wood" in the clipping was spelled "Woods" among the mountain people.

MOTHER COUNTIES OF EASTERN KENTUCKY COUNTIES

Estill County was made from parts of Clark and Madison Counties in 1808

Owsley County was made from parts of Estill and Clay Counties in 1843

Lee County was made from parts of Estill and Owsley Counties in 1870

Heidelberg was in Owsley County, before Lee was made, then in Lee County

Hohenzollern-Schwedt is in Germany, close to Polun

Kuktren Castle (which belonged originally to Brandenburgs) is in Poland

Note: Estill County was made from parts of Clark and Madison Counties in 1808. Owsley County was made from parts of Estill and Clay Counties in 1843. Lee County was made from parts of Estill and Owsley Counties in 1870. Heidelberg was in Owsley County, until 1870 when it became part of Lee County.