

Living in the Country: Elam Bartholomew's Diary

Elam Bartholomew was born in Pennsylvania. He grew up on a farm in Ohio. When he was 12, his family moved to a farm in Illinois. When Elam was 21 years old, he moved to a farm in Rooks Country, near Stockton. There he and his wife raised five children, In addition to being a farmer, Elam was active in local government. Elam Bartholomew kept a diary. The following excerpts are from October 1877.

<i>Mon. 8</i>	<i>Did our wheat threshing today, finishing at 3 pm and working the rest of the day at husking corn.</i>
<i>Tu 9, Wed. 10, Th 11</i>	<i>Spent each of these days knocking about at little odd jobs of all sort – nothing in particular but everything about the farm in general.</i>
<i>Sab 14</i>	<i>Spent the day in reading and rest. First anniversary of life in our own home! Our living expenses for the 12 months ending today have been as follows for the articles enumerated, viz: Flour, 630 lbs., \$17.00; Cornmeal, 260 lbs., \$4.70; Dried Fruit, \$5.55; Sugar, 30 lbs., \$4.00; Lard, 10 lbs., \$1.25; Coffee, 6 lbs., \$1.50; Beans, 25 lbs., \$1.75; Salt, \$1.00; Tea, \$1.00; Coal oil, 5 gal, \$2.25; Sundries \$4.00; making a total for the year of even \$54.00 or about \$1.04 per week!</i>
<i>Wed 17</i>	<i>Worked in the a.m. for neighbor Jacob Shell at stripping sorghum for molasses and making in the p.m. worked at clearing sorghum and other rubbish from a piece of land to be sown to rye, yet this fall</i>
<i>Mon 22</i>	<i>Made a trip to Stockton early in the morning to attend the October term of the District Court and officiate as clerk thereof. Judge Joel Hoyt of Beloit presided. The docket was very slim so court adjourned for the term at 3 o'clock pm. Having considerable other business to attend to I remained in town overnight putting up at the home of Sheriff John Russell.</i>
<i>Tu. 30</i>	<i>Worked for neighbor J.A. Barker at helping him in the building of his new stable.</i>

Wed. 31	<i>Worked for Mr. Barker in the a.m. at husking corn and in the p.m. at his stable again.</i>
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Questions:

1. Why do you suppose Elam rested on the 14th?
2. What clues tell you what type of crops Elam and his neighbors were growing?
3. How does Elam help his neighbors?
4. What is he doing when he goes to town?

How much did things cost when Elam bought them? Figure the cost per pound for some of the things Elam purchased. How much do these things cost today? Check your local newspaper ads or visit a store to find the costs for today.

Item	What is cost Elam in 1877	What is the equation?	Cost per pound or gallon	What would it cost Elam today?
Flour, 630 lbs.	\$17.00			
Cornmeal, 260 lbs.	\$4.70			
Sugar, 30 lbs.	\$4.00			
Lard, 10 lbs.	\$1.25			
Coffee, 6 lbs.	\$1.50			
Beans, 25 lbs.	\$1.75			
Coal Oil, 5 gal.	\$2.25			

Question:

What surprised you the most about Elam's expenses?