RECOLLECTIONS OF THE 1930S

Life in the Hills Remembered—Part 2

Maude Bailey Haskin

Maude’s recollections of the 1930s cover her life as a young married lady. On March 27, 1932, Easter Sunday, Maude Marguerite Bailey and Almon Palmer Haskin (at ages 18 and 21) were married at the home of her parents in Broome Center. They had a lovely home wedding with many friends and neighbors, and it was a beautiful spring day. (The next day was a blizzard.) Maude made her own three-tiered wedding cake decorated with roses.

The newlyweds rented half a house across from the old creamery for $5 a month. Almon started working for the Town of Gilboa and made 30 or 35 cents an hour. On January 28, 1933, Loretta Mae was born, and Beatrice Marie arrived the next year, on August 9.

The house had no running water, no electricity, and no indoor bathroom. They bought a Kalamazoo kitchen wood stove for $5 a month, quite an investment at the time. Refrigeration was an icebox. She heated water carried from the well on the woodstove, washed clothing on a washtub, and used homemade lye soap. Two flat irons were heated on the stove for ironing. They later bought a wringer with a gasoline motor and a wringer—that was a great time-saver.

In 1935 Almon got a job driving the school bus nights and mornings, and this continued for 13 years. When his brother, Bates, heard about the new job, the first thing he asked was, “What kind of car are you going to get?” (Now, isn’t that just like a brother.) Instead of getting a new car, Almon and Maude bought a farm in Flat Creek a couple of miles from home. The cost of the 100-acre farm was $1,800 with a down payment of $100 and a mortgage payment of $100 per year. The house on the farm had no more modern conveniences than the house they had rented.

They didn’t have anything to start farming with, and bought their first 2 cows from the Fastert Brothers over in Guinea for $35 a piece. Then they went to Abe Soler’s and bought 8 more cows. She doesn’t remember the price, but they didn’t have a nickel to pay down on them. Abe later said that was the first time he ever sold cows to anyone without any money to put down. Abe Soler was a cattle dealer between Grand Gorge and Stamford. Through the years, they bought many cows from him and he was always very good to them.

Maude helped with milking, haying, fence building, and all the farm chores right along side Almon. In the mornings, while they milked the cows (by hand), they put the sleeping little girls in a blanket in the backseat of the car, parked near the barn. Both Maude and Almon worked very hard and slowly improved the house, barns, and their way of life.

On September 21, 1939 electricity came up through the valley, bringing an end to the “old ways” and the life on our hills changed forever.