Life on Sawin Hill Road

As reflected in the diaries of
Elmer C. Henley
1876 - 1953

Summarized by Edward A. Holt
Harpswell, Maine
2007

Contents

Background and Acknowledgments

These insights to life on Sawin Hill Road from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s are derived from a weekly diary kept by resident Elmer C. Henley. Elmer Henley was born in North Waterford, Maine, November 19, 1876, the son of Pliny B. and Ellen (Whitney) Henley, and he died in Harrison, Maine, November 4, 1953. He married Rena Jackman of Walpole, New Hampshire on October 28, 1897. He grew up on Sawin Hill Road, which extends about 2.5 miles from Route 118 in North Waterford north into Albany Township, and he lived there until 1934 when he moved to Harrison after being transferred to a different mail carrier route.

Elmer began his diary at the age of 11, and at first kept it daily, but before long he settled into keeping a weekly diary. The diaries were kept in 31 small notebooks of varying sizes. Initially they spanned just one year each, but later they do not correspond to precise calendar years. Over the course of his life he didn't miss many weeks, so it is a long record.

Elmer recorded his activities faithfully, and the diaries provide rich content about his work and recreation. Because he was an RFD mail carrier, he also noted weather and travel conditions. He also recorded some of his inner thoughts—his hopes, worries, and disappointments. He was a hard and conscientious worker who cared about his family, and he comes through in his diary as an honest and likable man who did what he had to do to provide for them.

The topics in this summary are supplemented by a few items from brief diaries of Elmer's father Pliny Henley and his mother Ellen Whitney before they were married.

This summary would not have been possible without the cooperation of Randall Henley of East Waterford, a great grandson of Elmer, who is the custodian of the diaries. I am grateful for his generosity in sharing them freely.

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The North Waterford Cornshop

Waterford, Maine 1875-1976 has a section on corn shops that begins, "There are reports of a corn shop at North Waterford before 1900, but no specific information has been discovered."[1] The evidence exists in the diaries of Elmer C. Henley. On March 29, 1892, at the age of 15, this North Waterford native noted, "Went down to the corn shop to see about getting a job."

Elmer worked in the North Waterford corn shop three seasons, 1892-1894. In fact this pretty well dates two of the photographs in the Waterford history, the top photo on page 61 and the photos on page 63 and 64. Elmer is identified in each of these photos, and he looks to be about 16 years old. Elmer's friend and near neighbor on Sawin Hill Road was Harry Sawin, who also worked in the cornshop at this time.

The corn shop season started up in March or April and lasted to the end of October, with a break in late summer before the harvest began. The work varied during the course of the season however. From early spring to early August, they made cans. After a break, in late August or early September, they began packing (filling and sealing the cans), and at the end of the season they applied labels to the cans and boxed them up for shipment.

Boys like Elmer were generally hired as assistants to a more experienced hand, but once they gained experience they could work by themselves. Elmer worked his first month, April 1892, for 50 cents a day, after which he got 75 cents a day. He worked for a man named Herbert Lord. The first day he worked he put on 95 bottoms while his mentor soldered 200 tops. Within a week he put on 232 bottoms while Lord soldered 300 tops, but he noted that his thumbs got quite sore.

When his mentor was not there, he might be without work for the day, or he might have a chance to work for another man. For example, in May 1892, Elmer wrote, "Lord worked in the spool factory today. He is taking George Hobson's place who is taking Gus Manning's place who is sick. I worked for Rufus Rice." The next month Elmer noted, "Herbert Lord went to Norway and Rufus Rice went to conference so I went a fishing and caught 3 perch."

It appears that people took work one day at a time, going wherever they had the opportunity to make the most money. The shop was closed for town meeting day, but most days Elmer wrote, "I worked in the cornshop."

The availability of work in this case also depended on the supply of materials and the reliability of equipment. "I worked in the cornshop. The tin is all made up and I do not know when they are going to have more."[2] Work did not resume until the tin arrived two weeks later. In September 1894 Elmer wrote, "The engine blew up today or rather it broke, the boiler did not burst." The next day he said, "I worked in the shop, canned corn

[1] Waterford Historical Society, *Waterford, Maine 1875-1976* , published 1977, p. 56.
[2] Elmer C. Henley diary, June 21, 1892.

by hand." And the next day, "I worked in the shop. The new engine came this morning but they did not have time to set it up, so we canned corn by grindstone power."

At the end of his first season, Elmer summarized, "I got my pay for my work through packing time and labeling time a few days ago. I had $1.35 a day in packing time and $1.25 in labeling time. I received in all $50.94. I have earned $125.64 this summer."[3] The same day he also noted, "I went to Norway bought a suit of clothes and an overcoat and some other things."

The next year Elmer went back to see Charles Chute, the cornshop manager.[4] With his now demonstrated aptitude and reliability, he was offered more. "I went down to the cornshop to try and get a job. Chute offered me 75 cents a day the rest of this month, $1.00 a day from May 1st to canning time, $1.75 a day through canning time and $1.25 a day in labeling time."[5]

With greater experience and skill, Elmer graduated to making cans by himself. On August 4, 1893 he noted, "We are done making cans! I made 400 a day the first 4 days of this week, 500 Friday and 300 today. 2400 this week. I worked alone part of a day while ago and made 200 so that all l ever made alone is 2600." One senses pride in the statement, but also some relief to be done with the tedium.

There were occasional breaks, however. On July 20, 1893, he wrote, "I worked in the shop this forenoon. This afternoon Harry and Chute and I went out to Addison Millet's haying. He is sick and there was quite a crew there to help him." How many business owners and workers today would leave the shop floor to assist someone with farmwork? More likely we would take up a donation.

Trying to make the number of cans match the quantity of corn delivered to the cornshop could produce a rush of work. In the canning season of 1893, "We run short of caps today and I worked till 12 o'clock tonight to cut some."

Another problem that cropped up for canning was, surprisingly, the weather. "I worked in the shop a little while this forenoon but it is rainy and warm which makes the cans sweet so that we could not work."[6]

At the end of that season, a management decision resulted in some unexpected work. "I worked in the cornshop. Burnham did not have succotash enough in his shop at Bridgton, and did not sell all his corn at this shop, and he is going to mix it with dry beans and

[3] Elmer C. Henley diary, October 31, 1892.
[4] Some other entries suggest that a man named Burnham was the owner. He also operated other canning shops in Maine. *Waterford, Maine 1875-1976* suggests that sweet corn from the Waterford Town Farm was sold to A. H. Burnham beginning in 1892, but concludes this must have been in Harrison. This Burnham may have been the same as in Burnham and Morrill.
[5] Elmer C. Henley diary, April 8, 1893.
[6] Elmer C. Henley diary, October 14, 1893.

make succotash. He has got to have about twelve thousand cans. The cans of corn have to be opened by melting the solder so they can be used again."[7]

The year 1894 proved much the same, but near the end of the season, when canning was underway, Elmer wrote, "I worked in the shop. We have been making cans today. They did not make enough by twenty thousand."[8] That seems like a pretty serious underestimate. The next day they worked late, until nearly 9 o'clock "so that some of the crew could go to the fair tomorrow." By October 1, they finished canning corn, which meant they had made up the shortfall of cans.

Then another problem arose. "I worked in the shop. We commenced to can our succotash today. They had about 25 thousand cans which turned black in the cans and it has got to be taken out and canned over again. It will take about a week."[9] But the next day management thought better of it and decided to accept the loss. "They are not going to can over any more succotash as it makes it no better."

In 1895 the cornshop did not run. Elmer and Harry Sawin and some of the others worked at another shop in Lovell, managed by Charles Chute. It didn't pay as well because they cut back on wages ($1 a day) and he had to board himself. They would come home on Saturday afternoon or evening and go back on Sunday to be ready for work on Monday.

Elmer's worth and work ethic was proven beyond a doubt. For the 1896 season, Chute offered Elmer (along with the other workers who had been with him recently) a job making cans at a shop in Vermont. Four of them took the chance, because they followed the work for cash wages. Chute offered to pay them 38 cents a gross of cans. And in the bargain, Elmer met his future wife.

[7] Elmer C. Henley diary, November 3, 1893.
[8] Elmer C. Henley diary, September 17, 1894.
[9] Elmer C. Henley diary, October 22, 1894.

Mail Delivery

Rural Free Delivery officially became part of rural America in 1896, and even then as an experiment. It became an official service in 1902 and in 1913 was expanded to include parcel post, which caused rural delivery service to blossom.

> This opened Rural America to the rest of the nation. It allowed the distribution of national newspapers and magazines. For the first time people in the rural areas could know what was happening in the rest of the nation. People in the rural areas could now order merchandise, from the big cities, that could not be sold in their rural communities. Most important of all the roads of rural America had to be opened up to allow the mail to go through. This allowed the United States to be tied together by a system or roads and bridges that led to the building of a great infrastructure.[10]

Supporting the last point is a newspaper clipping from October 1950.

> South Albany - Work on Roads. Through funds available for R.F.D. routes, considerable work has been done on the roads in Albany. More gravel has been applied on the Sawin Hill road in two days than during the past 10 years. If this work could continue each year, those living here and working away would not have to walk out during mud time, and would be much appreciated by our mail carrier and those living on this road. Many cars have been damaged by large rocks in the road and scores have been stuck on the hill near the Dresser place ever since the rain last April. During the past two years, bushes have grown in so thickly in places that the paint on the cars passing through has been ruined. The work just finished was under the supervision of Bert Brown of Bethel and a mighty fine job for the money spent. It is understood by the writer that unless something is done about the situation, mail will not be delivered to some of the patrons more than three times a week.[11]

In North Waterford and Albany, there was no rural free delivery until 1905. When people went to the village, they stopped at the postmaster's to pick up their mail. In mid-1905, however, Elmer Henley wrote, "We are going to have a rural free delivery and I have put in an application for carrier." He and two other local men traveled to Rumford Falls for an examination, which Elmer said was very simple. On September 3, he wrote, "I heard from the delivery business last night. We have not got any appointment yet but I got the highest rank of the 3. I got 97.75%. Frank got 95.25% and Arthur got 78%. I expect to get the job now."

This was a boon to Elmer because it gave him steady income for a part-time job (about $48 per month to start), while he could still do his farm and woods work. The route was about 17 miles and included North Waterford outside the village, Bisbeetown and South Albany. People who could not get to the post office regularly appreciated the service, and the carrier made lots of friends. At first there was some doubt about whether there was enough mail to make it pay. "The business of the route is improving and we hope to hold

[10] See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rural_Letter_Carrier.
[11] Lillian Lord Brown scrapbooks, handwritten date October 1950.

it now. They are taking a lot of daily papers." Just once he noted how long it took him, when he rushed and probably did not stop to chat. "I made the route Sat. in 2 hr. 34 minutes to get to the fair."[12]

Covering the route in all seasons was a challenge. "Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays these couriers from the swift completion of their appointed rounds," was perhaps the ideal, but this was not always true on RFD 1, North Waterford. Winter weather, and mud season before roads were paved, could be a barrier. On December 17, 1916, Elmer wrote, "There is so much snow I could not get around the route only up to Lynchville and back. Must be 16-18 inches, blew all day today."

In the early years, Elmer used horseback, horse and wagon, horse and sleigh, and shank's mare. On March 7, 1907, he wrote, "I have had a very hard week on the road, had to make the first part of the route on snowshoes one day, Tuesday I think. I have used Bonnie all the week. He has stood it well." Five years later, same month, he noted, "It has been a warm week, quite a lot of rain. I have had difficulty in making my trips on account of soft roads." And in February 1918, "I never saw such a cold winter. Snow came early too…Wed. it [snow] was so soft I had to carry mail on skis."

In August, 1912 he bought a Ford car, his first, and finished his route more quickly, but by December of that year, he was back to using a horse and sleigh. He noted in early December 1917, "It was snowing yesterday morning and I started with car and had to give it up and take a team." This pattern continued for a number of years, where he used the car from May to about December, then switched to horse and sleigh, and in the spring as the snow disappeared and the ground grew soft, he switched again to horse and wagon. For example, in 1916 he noted, "Snow has all gone. Wheeling pretty good."

The mail was brought over from Norway to North Waterford in the afternoon, and delivered in the morning of the next day. But on December 3, 1921, Elmer wrote, "Well they have changed my mail time to 12:30 p.m. I do not get in till after dark. Some of the patrons petitioned the department for the change thinking they would get their mail the same day it came over from Norway, but the stage does not get in till about 2 o'clock so it makes it too late for me to take the mail same day it comes." He added, however, that if the mail is brought over by car it gets in between noon and one o'clock, allowing him to deliver it the same day. Reading between the lines, Elmer would rather have continued with the morning delivery.

When Elmer was sick, or took a vacation, his substitute was Water Lord. This arrangement lasted until 1927 when Chester Holt took over as his backup.

In the winter and spring, he had to frequently adjust his mode of delivery according to the weather:

> April 8, 1923. It has been warm all the week. It has rained some. The roads have been almost impassable for days. One day I did not try to go with the mail and the stage

[12] Elmer C. Henley diary, October 3, 1909.

[mail delivery from Norway] did not go. The snow is pretty well started but the drifts are still pretty deep.

December 12, 1923. Still warm, snow nearly gone in the road. The roads are awful.

April 12, 1925. I have been around the route with a car 3 days now but there are some very bad places and I think I shall go with team again a few trips.

January 24, 1926. We had about a foot of snow and I had to carry the mail with team about 10 days. Then we had a rain and settled it, then about 3 inches of snow. I am using car again.

January 2, 1927. I took out the big car Wed. morning and was going part way round the route to break out ruts into it. Went all right but rear end gave out so I have used horse since a little too much for the Ford. We have got the big car into Gard's garage. It has got to have a new ring and pinion gears.

February 13, 1927. Cars are running on the main road though there are too many drifts to get my car down off the hill. I did get it down to the main road and back today with the help of a horse, and if it does not storm again I am in hopes to be able to get out all right.

February 27, 1927. It stormed all night Friday night and most all day yesterday. It stormed about 18 inches I think and drifted a lot. The stage did not get in till seven o'clock last night so I did not go on the route. Could not have got around anyway. I helped break out our road today.

January 18, 1931. I have not been able to get over the hills on the route for a week, use car and do a lot of walking. Have been hoping to get them to plow the roads, but am afraid they will not.

December 24, 1933. It has been a rather bad week, snowed 9 or 10 inches Wed night. I could not get around the Albany part of the route Thurs. but got most of the mail delivered by walking some and people meeting me. Fri. too I left a lot of the mail at Shedd's for them to come and get. Yesterday they had all the roads broke and I managed to get around most of the route. Had Fred McAllister help me up this hill with team. The road was not plowed well.

December 28, 1933. It began to snow again Tuesday forenoon and snowed so fast and was so cold (about 4 above) and windy I could not carry the mail at all. It snowed about all night and yesterday the roads were blocked (we had about 15 in.) so I did not carry the mail yesterday. This morning it was 10 below but got up to about 15 above by noon and we managed to get the truck started and was going to try and carry the mail with it, but they did not get our road broke out in time. Have done it since dark but the wind is blowing again and the mercury has gone down to near zero again. So there are four days mail at the office except what little people have come

and got. My Dodge is down in Chester's yard. We tried to start it Tues. by running it down hill, but the battery was flat and we could not start it, so we got it into Chet's yard and left it. It will have to stay there till it is warmer. I have never been so long without getting the mail around.

December 30, 1933. Still cold, cold that has broken all records. Yesterday morning it was 22 below here and only up to 10 below in the middle of the day. Down again this morning to 19 below, up to 2 above at 1 o'clock, down now to 3 below. They broke our road out today. We managed to get the truck started and I took Albert with me and we went to Lynchville and Bisbeetown and left some of the Albany mail at Shedd's and brought some up to the house for the Albany plow crew to get when they come down this way breaking, which they have not yet done. So I managed to clear the Post Office of the accumulation of six days. We had lots of trouble with the truck. It has been so cold lots of people have not been able to start their cars, trucks and tractors. Tires go flat and water gets in gas and batteries go down. I am in hopes it will moderate tomorrow.

In February 1927 Elmer had a snowmobile for a demonstration. Snowmobiles were originally converted Model T Fords, and conversion kits were patented by Virgil White of West Ossipee, New Hampshire in 1913. These kits had wooden runners 5 feet long and 8 inches wide. "The snowmobiles back then were much bigger and slower than today's speedy sleds, with a four-cylinder, 20 horsepower engine, moving at a top speed of 15 miles per hour. They were crucial in an era when plowed roads were virtually non-existent."[13]

Elmer tried the loaner on his route but "it vibrated so much I did not dare go all the way around." Chet Holt, his substitute, covered the remainder with the snowmobile, and Elmer said the machine did the job in spite of a lot of drifts. In November 1927 he bought one up in Rumford. It was a built-over Chevrolet ton truck that cost $650. A couple weeks later he used it to help move some timber that was being cut on his land. One can almost feel his disgust when he wrote, "I got out my snow car and broke an axle first thing."

A month later he voiced frustration with it, saying, "I cannot do anything with the snow car. I think I will have to let it got back to the man I had it from."

But he still had it a year later, and got some use out of it before trading it in. On February 3, 1929 he wrote, "I am rigging up the snow car…I am going to try and haul my ice with the snow car. I traded it in towards the Hudson but it has not gone yet." A week later he added, "I used the snow car on the route yesterday, but it went pretty hard for it was so sticky…I had to mend the radiator and waterjacket on the snow car engine." And his diary entry for the next week stated, "I am carrying the mail now with the snow car. It works fine. I have hauled 3 loads of ice with it. I can haul 12 or 15 cakes and three times as many loads as with team."

[13] Genther, Cathy, "Get a look at vintage snowmobiles Feb. 10," Maine Sunday Telegram, February 7, 2004, p. K2.

In 1933 the Postal Service decided to combine his route with Stoneham, and create another consolidated route in Harrison. The Stoneham carrier did not want to go to Harrison so Elmer agreed to do it. Nevertheless, on January 14, 1934 he noted, “I got word that I am to go to Harrison to carry mail the 1st of March, and I certainly dread it.”

It was a big change for him personally, to leave the hill where he had grown up, and as a carrier, where he knew few if any of the people on his new 40-mile route. Not long after leaving, he sold his home and land holdings to his son Berkeley G. Henley. Undoubtedly his neighbors, friends and postal patrons missed him. He retired as a carrier in July 1940 after nearly 35 years of service.

Entertainment

For all the long hours and hard work of a farmer or mill worker in the late 1800s and early 1900s, life was by no means continuous drudgery. Visiting neighbors and relatives and other forms of socialization were often available, even if work was involved. Children were expected to contribute according to their age and ability, but they had time to play too.

Ellen Whitney, in a diary kept for six months of 1869, mentions lots of visiting among neighbors. For example, on February 23 she wrote, "We went down to Hubbard Sawin's last evening," and on the next day she wrote, "We are going down to Henry Sawin's this evening."

On May 18 she noted, "Went to a quilting today at Lewis Sawin's," and the next day she wrote, "Went to the circle this afternoon at Perley Kilbourne's. Rode with Lydia and Lizzie Sawin. Had a good time."

Elmer Henley's diaries are wonderful because he started so young, and even if the early entries are repetitive and unimaginative, they tell a story of normal life. Elmer was born November 19, 1876, and he started his first diary entry on his eleventh birthday. Amidst the many repetitions of "trimmed trees" or "hauled wood" are examples of a boy's recreation. During that year of 1887-1888, he went partridge hunting several times, went into the woods and made a bough house and built a fire, and went sledding and skating. He also made a few box traps and caught a squirrel. One day, as he harrowed, raked and plowed the garden, "four Italians came along with musical instruments."[14] That must have been a surprise.

Later diary entries suggest different activities. Fishing was frequent recreation over the years of his youth. In 1892, he and Harry Sawin went smelting over in Stoneham, where "Harry and I got a half bushel of smelts and could have got 5 bushels if we had wanted to. The brook was full of them."[15] After he married, he took his wife Rena with him at least once. "We went fishing again Tuesday night. Rena caught 10 pouts. I caught 1 chub and Sadie caught one pout. Annie Sawin went with us and she caught 5 pouts."[16]

Also in his youth he went swimming quite often. On June 23, 1892, he noted, "I went in swimming today for the 25th time this year."

In 1894, at the age of 17, he wrote, "I helped John Horr a little while, and bought a bicycle."[17] The next day, "I went to Bethel on my bicycle." That must have been quite a ride, as they did not have 15-speed bicycles in those days.

[14] Elmer C. Henley diary, May 13, 1889.
[15] Elmer C. Henley diary, April 21, 1892.
[16] Elmer C. Henley diary, August 1, 1901.
[17] Elmer C. Henley diary, June 16, 1894.

When Elmer entered his teens, in the 1890s, he mentioned skating on French's pond frequently, sometimes in the day, often in the evenings. Either the moon was bright or they had a bonfire to light the fun.

When he neared the age of 20, the entertainment was definitely more social. Several entries mention that he "went to a circle," but the activity is not clear. 1896 revealed a busy social life. "Sadie [Elmer's sister] and I went up to Sawin's and played croquet this evening. We all hung Winnie Brown a June box."[18] I remember hanging May baskets, but never heard of a June box. "I went to a surprise party to Charles Doughty this evening. We had a very good time, stayed till near midnight."[19] "I went to a dance a while last night and then played cards the rest of the night. Did not got to bed at all."[20]

He married Rena Jackman of Walpole, New Hampshire in 1897, and their first child arrived in 1899, with seven more in regular order through 1915. But even during this time, their entertainment seemed not to diminish. In fact, is it somewhat surprising how often they went to dances.

In the summer of 1901, they made six visits to the Albany Basins, a resort that was owned and run by neighbors John and Lydia Lord.

"Rena and I went up to John Lord's to a dance Fri. night. There was not a large crowd but we had a pretty good time. Roy Lord took us up in his farm wagon, there were Roy and his wife, Woodsom Scribner, Sam Young and his wife and us."[21]

"Yesterday Rena and I and Sadie went up to the basins house just before dinner. Roy Lord and his family went up. We went up in the hall and practiced dancing and we sent out and got Nowel [Newell] Andrews to come up in the evening and fiddle for us, and gave out a free dance. We had a good time all round, danced till twelve."[22]

But that wasn't all. That same summer they also went dancing in East Stoneham and "down to the corner," meaning North Waterford village.

Rena was a pianist and played for church services, but beginning in 1912, for dances. "Rena played with Newell Andrews for a dance at Hunts Corner last night. We took Geraldine York up with us. The going was very bad so there was not much of a crowd but we had a nice little time. Rena never played for a dance before. She got a dollar and my expenses free."[23]

They attended, and she played for, a lot of dances at Hunts Corner (where 12 to 20 couples typically attended), at South Waterford, North Lovell, and Paul Howe's (location not stated).

[18] Elmer C. Henley diary, June 6, 1896.
[19] Elmer C. Henley diary, November 12, 1896.
[20] Elmer C. Henley diary, November 27, 1896.
[21] Elmer C. Henley diary, July 18, 1901.
[22] Elmer C. Henley diary, August 4, 1901.
[23] Elmer C. Henley diary, April 12, 1912.

"We went to the clerk's ball over to Norway Tuesday night, went with Winnie Knight in his auto. Lin Flint went with us. Had a fine time. Rena played at the village for a dance Fri. night and at Paul Howe's last night. 3 in one week, it is too much."[24]

"We went to a dance at So. Waterford Thurs. night and Rena and Newell played Fri. night at No. Lovell and Sat. night at Paul Howe's, so it made us 3 dances right off. I am pretty sleepy today."[25]

"We went to dance at So. Waterford Wed. night and Hunt's Corner Thurs. night. Rena and Newell played. Had about 75 couples at Hunt's."[26]

"We had 3 dances this week No. Waterford, So. Waterford and Hunt's Corner last night. Had 50 couples."[27]

"We went over to McIntire's Fri. night. Rena played for a dance in dedication of the new cow barn they have been building. There must have been nearly four hundred people there."[28]

Undoubtedly they went to a lot of these because Rena could earn some money. But there were others where she did not perform. For example, "We went to the Kokomo's Ball at No. Waterford Fri. night. Had Arlington's Orchestra of Portland, had a big crowd. Orchestra cost $39."[29]

Once they got a car, they could go further afield for their entertainment, and more variety was on offer.

"We did not have any dance to go to last week. Rena and I went to Prof. Chapman's concert at Norway Fri. night. He had a gifted Italian tenor and a soprano artist and a cellist. It was great."[30] They must have really wanted to go, because he added, "It was a bad night to go. It had stormed and it was cold and windy and roads drifted. Took us 3 ½ hours to get over there and over 3 to get home. It was 7 below zero when we got home at 2:40 Sat. morning."

Occasionally they went to the pictures, including "The Birth of a Nation" in 1915. They also went to the Chatauqua shows in Norway in 1918. Later, in the 1930s, they went to see ball games, and out for picnics. In one such outing with neighbors, "Ezra and Nora [Lebroke], Jerry and I, Ann and Willis [Littlefield] and C. Holt and his wife went over to our camp and had supper. We forgot to take butter and knives and forks, had to whittle

[24] Elmer C. Henley diary, February 16, 1913.
[25] Elmer C. Henley diary, May 11, 1913.
[26] Elmer C. Henley diary, November 30, 1913.
[27] Elmer C. Henley diary, June 28, 1914.
[28] Elmer C. Henley diary, October 31, 1915.
[29] Elmer C. Henley diary, May 12, 1912.
[30] Elmer C. Henley diary, March 9, 1913.

sticks to eat our beans with." Rena, who would have organized such things better, was away visiting at the time.

On December 4, 1932, "We went to Waterford Fri. night to an illustrated lecture on the "Far North" by McMillan the polar explorer. It was great." In 1936, "We went to Portland Tues. night to a concert given by the great Kirsten Flagstad, the world's greatest soprano."[31]

Finally, there were regular family reunions. "I went up to Papoose Pond today to a picnic meeting of the Sawin Johnson family that have been held nearly every year since I can remember. There were about 20-25 present of a possible 2 or 3 hundred. Harry Sawin was the oldest he is 80 last February."[32]

That represents quite a lot of variety and enjoyment in a hard-working life. We do not know if all those on Sawin Hill Road were as active as Elmer and Rena Henley, but surely most of them had more opportunities than we might have thought.

[31] Elmer C. Henley diary, February 6, 1936.
[32] Elmer C. Henley diary, July 20, 1947.

The Seasons of a Farmer's Life

For the first century and more, every man on Sawin Hill Road was a farmer. He might have done other things for income, but farming was what everyone did at least part-time. And for the farmer, farm work began in the spring.

May was too early to plant generally, but it was a good time to prune apple trees, move rocks from the fields, burn brush and stumps, spread manure and begin to harrow and plow the fields, getting the ground ready for planting. In a warm year, corn and potatoes might go in at the end of the month. In 1911, Walter Lord, Merritt Sawin and Ernest Brown each planted an acre of corn May 27, and Elmer Henley had an acre planted the next day. Elmer (and probably all of them) planted sweet corn for the Harrison factory.[33]

In 1889, when Elmer was 12, he wrote on May 6 that in the morning he "drove the stags [young steers or oxen] to plow and helped get off rocks. After dinner I burned some brush then we went down in the woods and twitched out wood, then we plowed." A few days later he recorded, "I harrowed a little and raked up chips and helped plow garden."[34]

June was definitely the month for planting. Elmer usually planted corn and potatoes, and often beans. In 1917, one of his more ambitious years for farming, he planted, with the help of two of his sons, an acre of yellow corn, an acre of sweet corn, a "good acre" of clear beans and beans planted in the acre of sweet corn. "We did that Mon. afternoon by hand three of us. Beans are worth 10 or 12 dollars a bushel now…" (June 21) Within a week he had also planted 13 bushels of potato seed on one and a quarter acres, 165 hills of pumpkins and squash, and two gardens, suggesting that the acreage was for cash crops and the gardens for his family's use. It seems evident that he got more productive as his sons grew older and could help, just as he had helped his father years before.

One year he set out two thousand little pine trees over about two acres down in what he called the "Perley" field, and put manure around his apple trees. As if that were not enough effort he wrote, "I am not planting anything but a garden and potatoes." But he added, "We set out 50 asparagus plants this spring."[35]

Just when he could plant depended on the weather, but ranged from the end of May to nearly the end of June. For example, on June 2, 1912 he wrote, "I have managed to get the manure on my corn ground and it has been harrowed over twice with the disk harrow. Roy [Lord] put his horse with my two and harrowed one half day and he is going to help me another. It has rained so much I could not do much."

By the end of June or early July, as the plants started to come up, he was hoeing the rows of corn and potatoes, usually twice. In 1916 he sowed buck wheat, and got five "big loads" of clover. He often he sowed oats, and he was not the only one to do so. John Horr

[33] Elmer C. Henley diary, May 28, 1911.
[34] Elmer C. Henley diary, May 13, 1889.
[35] Elmer C. Henley diary, June 11, 1922.

and Charles York also raised oats, because Elmer mentioned helping them mow and get in their oats.

By early July Elmer he had also turned to haying, weather permitting. Sometimes haying was not done until near the end of August, though this could have been a second crop of the season. Hay was the primary feed for the animals that most people kept, and Elmer's father Pliny Henley looked for opportunities to harvest more hay than his fields provided. "This morning papa went up to Beckler's to see about getting his old place [on Abbott Hill] to cut the hay on."[36] And the next year Elmer wrote, "We began haying today. We are agoing to cut Hubbard Sawin's farm on shares this year."[37]

At the age of 14, Elmer was impressed with their haying results. "We got in a load of hay ten feet high and 20 feet long and twelve feet wide and 4 or 5 feet above the railing. It filled the door full."[38]

But that was small change compared to his adult years when he had purchased much of the land on the hill. In 1916 he noted, "I finished haying yesterday. It is the latest I ever hayed. The barn is full clear up above the high beams 2 to 3 feet. Hay shed full and silo, we got in about 41 loads and two good loads of second crop."[39]

In 1917 he wrote, "We have been haying pretty steady. Have got all done but about half the lower field and a little down in the Perley field. Have got the barn pretty full and 5 loads in Pod's barn."[40] Within the month he had finished building another barn to store the overflow.

In 1919 he harvested 70 loads, "most of them pretty good ones. Must be 50 or 55 tons in all. Hay is $50 ton they say in Berlin, N. H."[41] Hay was becoming a cash crop.

By the 1920s, Elmer was having his hay baled. In 1924 he wrote, "This afternoon I went to Norway and settled for pressing hay. I had 11 ton and 4 lbs at the York barn and 14 tons and 1787 lbs at upper farm. 2774 of this is no. 2 hay."[42]

But just as he reached his maximum productivity, the hay market dried up. Cars became more prevalent and fewer people needed horses, and they kept fewer cattle too as farming gradually declined. In 1928 he wrote, "I am going to mow one more piece and let it go at that. Hay does not sell much nowadays and I have enough for my own use."[43]

September and October were harvest time, and seemingly the busiest months judging from Elmer's diaries. Corn, potatoes, beans and oats all came first, followed by apples.

[36] Elmer C. Henley diary, May 6, 1889.
[37] Elmer C. Henley diary, June 30, 1890.
[38] Elmer C. Henley diary, July 18, 1891.
[39] Elmer C. Henley diary, September 21, 1916.
[40] Elmer C. Henley diary, August 12, 1917.
[41] Elmer C. Henley diary, August 17, 1919.
[42] Elmer C. Henley diary, July 24, 1924.
[43] Elmer C. Henley diary, September 30, 1928.

In 1909 Elmer mentioned that he got in 22 horse loads of corn. In 1913, the corn earned just $29.72 off one acre, which he blamed on very dry weather. The next year he got $99 for three-quarters of an acre of corn. In 1917 it brought $58.65, “frost hurt it quite a lot.” And in 1919 the sweet corn brought $152.65 and the corn fodder brought $12, though he did not say how much ground he had planted.

That same year, 1919, he also reported that after threshing oats he had 90 bushels, which he considered rather small for four acres. It seems that farmers on the hill hired threshers, because Elmer often mentions that the threshers are coming tomorrow, or that they were at Horr’s or some other place the day before.

He finished digging his potatoes in October. In 1909, “I had 57 bu. good ones and nearly half as many small ones...I got in my garden stuff, had over 30 bu. cattle beets, don’t believe I had 4 sq. rods of ground. I had 90 good heads of cabbage.”[44] In 1918, he had about the same yield, 61 bushels, and in 1920, 68 bushels. In 1923 he wrote, “I finished digging my potatoes today. Had 60 bu. good ones, and 12 or 15 small and scabby ones. I dug 4 today that weighed together 6 lbs.”[45]

It wasn’t always so consistent. In 1916, he had a very good year, 90 bushels, “66 good 24 pig.” But in 1911, “I have got the apples picked, potatoes dug and manure out…I got out 22 loads of manure, top dressed with most of it. I had 33 bu. of potatoes.”[46]

As to beans, he tried for several years, but in November, 1917 he noted, “We got done threshing beans, could not make anything at it.”

September also saw the start of picking apples. This was another little industry that involved not only pruning, manuring, and picking, but also making barrels. Then there was the question of whether to guess the market and sell early before they were picked or wait until later, and prices varied depending on whether he sold them with the barrels or without the barrels—which he made.

In 1907, Elmer wrote, “Apples do not seem to red as well as I expected. Some have sold for $2 and some $2.25. I have not sold yet. I picked 120 bbls am holding for $2.25.”[47] The next year he wrote, “There are but few apples this year and I shall not have to make many barrels.” A short time later he added, “I sold my apples to Twitchell for $1.75. They picked them this afternoon.”[48] When the buyer did the picking, the price was lower.

In 1909, he did very little business in apples. “My apples were packed, only had 9 barrels to sell. They had to sort them so well on account of the new law that they were nearly half culls.”[49]

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[44] Elmer C. Henley diary, October 31, 1909.
[45] Elmer C. Henley diary, October 7, 1923.
[46] Elmer C. Henley diary, October 15, 1911.
[47] Elmer C. Henley diary, October 27, 1907.
[48] Elmer C. Henley diary, October 24, 1908.
[49] Elmer C. Henley diary, November 2, 1909.

In 1911 and 1912, he packed 50 barrels and 41 barrels, respectively, selling both for $1.50 per barrel, quite a bit lower than a few years earlier.

But he saw an income in apples, and in 1916 bought some more producing land. “I have bought the orchard field that went with the Littlefield place, of Walter Lord. Gave $300.00 for it. There are 40 very nice grafted apple trees on it and some pear trees and quite a lot of apple trees that are not quite so good, old ones etc. It is in a fairly good state of cultivation and ought to cut 5 tons of hay. There are about 7 acres, will have quite a farm in time.”[50]

His investment paid off. Although he had “not many” apples in 1918, the next year he had three men picking for two weeks and harvested 301 barrels which he sold for $4 a barrel, plus 50 barrels of cider apples for $.65 a barrel. He recorded with some satisfaction, “I have paid up a good many of my old bills and notes.”[51]

1920 was not such a good year, as he sold only 40 barrels at $2.50 each without the barrels. On September 24, 1921 he wrote, “I have bought Ernest Brown’s [apples] and Berkeley has bought Chas. York and Merritt Sawin’s. We shall have in all about 400 bbls I think.” The next week he noted, October 2, 1921. “We are ready to pick apples. I have sold them to French for $4. I have to help pack them.” He had four pickers, including himself, and four packers most of the time, and instead of making his own barrels he purchased 490 of Lee Kimball. A few days later he said, “We finished picking and packing apples today. We had in all 472 barrels, 321 our own and 151 Berkeley and I bought…My apples packed 5 barrels out of six and would have done a little better but for the odd kinds. We shall have several hundred bushels of cider apples, which I have sold to Rob Hill for 20c a bu. here.”

Some later years were also productive, but prices declined to about $1.25 a barrel in 1929, when he sold just enough to pay his taxes. In 1930, he noted he would have had about 300 barrels if he had picked them all. As it was, he sold 150 to 200 barrels on the trees for $.25 or $.33 a barrel, and sold some No. 1 apples all picked at $1.50 a barrel and some on the trees at $1.00, but added that he was “lucky at that, some big orchards will not be picked at all this year.”[52] In 1932 he said, “I have quite a lot of apples but am afraid they will not sell.” In 1933, his last growing season on the hill, he wrote, “I took a load of apples Friday and sold them out over in Fryeburg and Conway, got about $28 out of 15 barrels and had to sell 11 of them barrel and all. They went so hard I don’t think I shall try it again. Apples are plenty and cheap, and mine were not sprayed and go hard.”[53]

With all the plowing, planting, hoeing, haying and harvesting—not to mention making barrels for his apples—he might have wanted a rest, but there is no rest for the weary,

[50] Elmer C. Henley diary, June 5, 1916.
[51] Elmer C. Henley diary, November 2, 1919.
[52] Elmer C. Henley diary, October 19, 1930.
[53] Elmer C. Henley diary, October 15, 1933.

especially if he is a farmer. Maine farmers always had a crop of rocks to be harvested in their spare time.

Starting at the age of 12, he began helping his father "get off rocks." In September 1891, most days were spent hauling rocks. Many of them had to be blasted to break them into pieces small enough to haul. Elmer mentioned that he "went and got the drills sharpened and papa and I blasted two rocks."[54]

When he took over the farm, most years he spent at least a few afternoons blasting rocks or hauling off rocks. In 1921, after his busy fall picking and packing 472 barrels of apples, he wrote, "I am trying to get off some rocks and get my land ready to plant next spring, and have a lot of work around the house painting papering and putting in new windows and a dozen little things."[55]

[54] Elmer C. Henley diary, September 12, 1891.
[55] Elmer C. Henley diary, November 6, 1921.

Maple Syrup

Another sort of crop for many with wooded land—and that included many on Sawin Hill Road—was the March ritual of making maple syrup.

The first time Elmer Henley mentioned making maple syrup was in 1891, when he was 14. "Papa and I went over to Norway depot and got our sap evaporator." They bought 90 tin sap buckets and some wooden pails, and Elmer went to work making sap spiles. George French, who lived further up the road, had a stand of maple trees and the Henleys made an arrangement to tap his trees and give him one gallon of every seven for the use of the orchard.

In late March they began tapping trees and over two days tapped nearly a hundred trees. This was before the days of flexible tubing to connect the trees and collect the sap. Elmer and his father were kept busy carrying the buckets to the evaporator. On the first day of boiling, Elmer noted, "Boiled some sap, had bad luck, evaporator leaks."[56]

Apparently they got the problem fixed, because for two weeks his diary entries read either "Worked on sap," or just "Boiled sap." It must have been a good season because he wrote, "We could not boil sap as fast as it runs over to French's so we moved the evaporator over [home] and set it up in the hogshed and hauled the sap over here and boil it. We can boil longer at home."[57]

When he had the farm, and especially after he expanded his land holdings, making syrup became a major activity. In 1918 he went at it with renewed vigor. He cut and sawed the logs to build a sap house, ordered a new evaporator from Vermont, bought 100 new 12-quart buckets, and over a couple weeks tapped about 150 trees. For four weeks worth of effort, he made about 50 gallons of maple syrup—but he still had the evaporator, sap house and buckets for another year.

The next year, despite buying 50 more buckets and tapping 200 trees, he made only 41 gallons because the weather was poor. In 1920, he made 81 gallons of syrup, and "Sold about 50 at $3 per gal. Shall not sell any more at present as sugar is very scarce."

The weather affected the operation from day to day. In early April 1923 Elmer said, "It has been warm all the week. Too warm for sap to run. I have about 180 trees tapped and have not got enough sap yet so I could syrup off any. We got about a barrel or a little more today."

A few days later he wrote, "It has been fine sap weather so far this week. I syruped off the first batch Tues. 10th. We have made about 17 gallons so far and there is 9 inches of sap in the tank. Boiled 8 gallons today. I got Herman [Holt] to go with the mail and boiled all day till 10 tonight."[58]

[56] Elmer C. Henley diary, March 28, 1891.
[57] Elmer C. Henley diary, April 8, 1891.
[58] Elmer C. Henley diary, April 12, 1923.

The next day, however, “It grew so cold that sap stopped running by the middle of the afternoon, froze up hard now.”[59] Apparently that was only temporary, because a week later he wrote, “Sap has run every day since the 9th but it has been warm today and it is drying up. We made 54 gallons in 9 days. Berkeley gathered 3 barrels today but I did not syrup off any today, the first day I have not since the 10th.”[60] Two days later it was all over. “I cleaned up on the boiler today, have made so far 66 gallons and enough left to make one more I guess. 60 of it is first class, what we made yesterday and today is dark.”[61]

In 1924 Elmer ordered a gathering tank for more efficient operation, and 1925 and 1926 were more productive years with 89 gallons and 107 gallons, respectively. Sometimes they could do better if the snow was just right so they could use horse and sled to carry buckets; another time they did not make as much as they could have because they were sick and could not tend to the buckets or the boiling.

1927 was their best year. “We are in the midst of the biggest sap run we have had for years. It began to run well Sat. I began to boil at 9 Sunday morning and have made 50 gallons up to 11 o’clock tonight—3 days.”[62]

“I caught up with the sap and washed the evaporator Fri. afternoon after boiling 3 gallons in the morning. Sap has run every day. I am about up with it tonight. Have made 90 gallons since a week ago this morning, 8 days. We have 500 buckets out.”[63]

“We have had the greatest run of sap for many years. I have boiled every day but yesterday. I boiled 6 gallons today making 132 in all.”[64] By the time the run was over, April 14, he had made 147 gallons, and had already sold about 100.[65] This was followed in 1931 by only 28 gallons, however, the “poorest sap season I ever saw.”

The seasonal activities were expected, but the results were never predictable.

[59] Elmer C. Henley diary, April 13, 1923.
[60] Elmer C. Henley diary, April 20, 1923.
[61] Elmer C. Henley diary, April 22, 1923.
[62] Elmer C. Henley diary, March 29, 1927.
[63] Elmer C. Henley diary, April 3, 1927.
[64] Elmer C. Henley diary, April 10, 1927.
[65] Elmer C. Henley diary, April 17, 1927.

Barrel Making

Barrels were a necessity for packing farm produce, especially apples and potatoes. People who bought barrel goods often found a variety of uses for a few empty barrels, but farmers who shipped bulk produce needed them in quantity. Necessity being the mother of invention (and farmers not having a lot of cash with which to buy them), barrel making became just another skill that farm families learned.

Elmer Henley learned barrel making from the ground up. In 1893, at the age of 17, Elmer was cutting trees specifically for making barrel staves. In November of that year, day after day he noted in his diary, "I cut stave timber."

The next spring, in March, he repeatedly wrote, "I cobbed strips." Exactly what he meant by this is unclear, but I imagine he was shaving or beveling the ends of the staves to accept a hoop, or cutting a groove in the ends for fitting the barrel head. Whatever this involved, the quantity he produced was impressive. After three weeks of practice, he stated, "I cobbed strips until about three o'clock when it began to rain. I am cobbing inch and a half strips, I can cob eight thousand in a day I think but have not worked on them a whole day yet."[66]

This work continued almost daily until April 18, 1894 when he wrote, "I cobbed strips this forenoon. I finished them I cobbed 124 thousand. Father helped me a little. I earned about $30. Went fishing this afternoon caught 2 trout."

Barrel making, or cooperage, came in handy later when Elmer was in charge of the farm because he was motivated to pack his apples for sale. He began making barrels again in 1904, and in 1907 he began training his 8-year old son Berkeley.

"I have been making bbls all the week…Berkeley helped me. He can set up and truss as fast as I can finish them when he gets right at it. We made 60 Mon. have worked afternoons the rest of the week. Berkeley has helped me when he has not been at school. We made 30 this afternoon, made 175 the week."[67] Three weeks later he added, "I cannot make all the bbls I can sell. Expect to have Roll [Roland] Littlefield to help me next week. I shall have 75 to a hundred bbls of apples this year I think."[68]

Two weeks after that he took time off his part-time job delivering mail to make barrels. He also started training a neighbor, Roland Littlefield, to help him make barrels. After a few weeks he noted, "Role…has got to be quite a bbl maker." This work went on for several weeks. When he ran out of his own staves, he got Virgil Littlefield to saw for him, and he bought a load of staves in East Waterford.

By October 27, he wrote, "My old stock is all gone and I can not get stock fast enough. Role is making for me and he worked 5 days last week. Verge Littlefield is sawing staves

[66] Elmer C. Henley diary, March 21, 1894.
[67] Elmer C. Henley diary, September 7, 1907.
[68] Elmer C. Henley diary, September 28, 1907.

for me but he cannot get them out fast enough. I have made nearly 2,000 so far. I never saw such a rush for bbls and hope I will never see another unless I am better prepared for it."

Despite his tiring of it, he continued until mid-December. "I have finished making bbls, made just 3,000 in all, have been tinkering around home some afternoons."[69] Clearly he was making them to sell for cash, but he was not that interested in doing it for others. He continued making barrels for his own use over the years, the number varying with the size of his crops. In 1908 he made 371, in 1909 he made 740 and in 1910 he made 1,037 barrels, but he never again approached his record year of 1907.

One result of 1907, however, was that he helped launch Roland Littlefield into the cooperage trade for a while, and this led to a small building being located at the corner of Route 118 and Sawin Hill Road. The 1977 town history made note of this. "At the beginning of the century Roland Littlefield operated a cooper shop on the Sawin Hill road near the Herman Holt farm. He produced shook and barrel staves."[70]

[69] Elmer C. Henley diary, December 15, 1907.
[70] Waterford Historical Society, *Waterford Maine 1875 – 1976*, p. 70.

Chalk Pond

In the latter half of the nineteenth century and into the first part of the next century, Chalk Pond was known as French's pond for the brothers James, Washington and Perley French who lived nearby. For Elmer Henley, its value was for fishing, ice, skating and chalk.

In the 1890s, he fished there, frequently catching pickerel and trout, though the latter were small. "Papa and I went fishing over to French's pond outlet. Papa caught 6 and I caught 26 trout. Our biggest trout we got weighed 4 oz and all of them weighed 2 and ¾ lbs."[71]

Young people, and older folks too, often went skating on the pond. Lillian Lord Brown also mentioned that there were many skating parties on the pond. But she also noted that the pond was too muddy for swimming, and added. "Plenty of snakes."

In 1891, Elmer mentioned getting ice. "Papa and Henry Sawin and Merritt Sawin each have got an ice house so they are getting it together."[72] This was an annual occurrence that provided for a number of families on Sawin Hill Road. "We got ice. I sawed and father hauled. Merritt and Lew Sawin and Mason and his boys and George Abbott and Henry Sawin are getting ice up to the pond too."[73]

When he helped his father, Elmer generally cut ice while Pliny Henley hauled. One year Elmer noted, "I cut ice. Father hauled 4 loads. He hauls 20 cakes at a load. They are 16 x 16 x 13 inches. It is very good ice."[74] Another year he mentioned that he sawed 115 cakes of ice for neighbor John Horr, at one cent per cake.

In 1903, Elmer provided more detail about the ice trade. All through January he sawed ice on French's pond, weather permitting. It must have been hard work but he did not complain. On January 20, 1903 he wrote, "I sawed ice this forenoon and helped Charles York pack his ice this afternoon. I am done sawing ice. I sawed for a cent a cake. I sawed

For York	200
For Henry Sawin	259
For Littlefield	226
For Father	216
For Merritt Sawin	205
For Aunt Anne Flint	232
For Pod Lord	130
Total	$14.68

[71] Elmer C. Henley diary, June 28, 1890.
[72] Elmer C. Henley diary, January 17, 1891.
[73] Elmer C. Henley diary, January 7, 1895.
[74] Elmer C. Henley diary, January 18, 1896.

In 1929, Elmer used an early snowmobile, a truck converted to traveling on snow, to haul his ice. He noted that he could haul 12 or 15 cakes a load and haul three times as many loads as with a team.

Cutting ice could be dangerous. Although he doesn't say it was on French's pond, one year he wrote, "Willie Woodley was drowned the other day, he fell through the ice while at work cutting ice. It was a terrible shock to us all and must be something awful for Mabel."[75]

In addition to cutting and hauling the ice, it had to be covered with sawdust so it would keep longer—another little job.

As to the name Chalk Pond, people were aware of the chalk from an early date. Although he did not specify the reason for doing so, in 1890 Elmer mentioned "I went over to French's pond and got some chalk in the evening."

In 1904, Elmer wrote, "A man from New York has secured the right to work French's pond for the chalk or mud that is in the bottom. Today Role Littlefield, Roy Lord and I went out to the Flat and saw Potter who is to have charge of the job and hired out to work on the pond."[76]

An undated newspaper clipping contained a follow-up to this idea. It confirms the essential information in Elmer's diary, but suggests that the work was delayed for some time—perhaps years.

> Leon Kimball is cutting ice on Chalk pond for a number in North Waterford. Chalk pond has changed its name to the more fancy one of Crystal Polish lake. A party from Vermont having leased it for a year or more, is mining it for the valuable polish they are gathering from it. The clay what is called infusorial earth, being composed of minute shells and insects, the bones of fish. It is thought the wash from the mountains above the lake bring into it some mineral matter too. They are composed mainly of mica and feldspar, etc. Roy Lord has taken a contract to get about 40 or 50 barrels into powder. It is dried and then ground, making a fine chalk-like powder, that is unsurpassed in polishing and cleaning glass and metals of all kinds. Clarence Potter, a miner from the Provinces, first formed the idea of its value, and leased a portion of the pond, and made great preparation for dredging. But he was soon after instantly killed on the railroad, and the matter was dropped until last fall, a gentleman from Vermont went to prospecting. It ended by his leasing the whole pond.[77]

So in addition to French Pond and Chalk Pond, someone tried to name the body of water Crystal Polish lake. Thankfully, it didn't stick.

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[75] Elmer C. Henley diary, January 28, 1917.
[76] Elmer C. Henley diary, August 5, 1904. Elmer made no further mention of this enterprise.
[77] Lydia Lord Shedd scrapbook newspaper clipping c. 1914 (based on other dated clippings on the page).

Working in the Woods

Timber was another crop for folks with woodlands, and even if they did not own the land, they could often get work in the woods.

Timber harvesting had its own place in the annual cycle of work. It fit in between the end of the field harvest and ended when the ground got too soft to work in the woods and the sap began to run for maple syrup.

Cutting might begin in November, but operations were sensitive to the weather. Hauling timber out of the woods had to wait until the ground was frozen and preferably was covered with snow so that oxen or horses could pull the logs more easily. But the snow could not be too deep or the animals could not work. When the snow was just right, they used a sled to haul the logs. If it warmed up and the snow melted, a sled was useless. If the ground got soft, the animals might get bogged down.

Even when the timber was logged and hauled, there was always "working up wood," cutting and splitting if for various purposes, whether for wood stoves, barrel staves, shingles or boxwood.

Elmer Henley started working in the woods with his father when he was a boy. His entries are filled with monotonous "Worked in the woods." By the time he was 18, he was carrying a heavier load. In the early years in particular, the language he used for getting logs out of the woods was often "paraded out," or simply "paraded."

In the winter of 1894-95, he wrote:

> February 14, 1895. We paraded birch. We have got out all the birch there is in this part of the woods where we are at work now, also all of the spruce. We shall go to hauling now.
> February 16, 1895. Father hauled spruce and I sawed birch.
> February 18, 1895. Father hauled spruce and I sawed birch. Father hauls about 6 or seven hundred feet at a load.
> February 23, 1895. Father finished hauling the spruce. We have got out in all 16,591 feet of spruce it is mostly small, the largest log scaled 98 feet.

Three years later Elmer and his father Pliny logged Sawin Hill itself, which is steep, until "the mountain" was pretty well "scun over." After parading them out of the woods, the two of them loaded logs and Pliny hauled them to the mill using oxen or horses. While he was gone, Elmer continued cutting up stove wood. He threw it into a cart or bobsled and they would haul it home later. His father could make two trips to the mill per day, and they would haul another load out to the edge of the woods ready to go to the mill the next morning. But when the weather turned warm and the roads too muddy, they had trouble hauling. Elmer noted March 23, 1898 that "We finished hauling the birch yesterday. We have had quite a struggle to get it in and there are four or five thousand [feet] of long timber which we could not get in."

It was hard work. In 1903, Elmer wrote that he had cut timber for Walter Lord for 32 days. He worked seven or seven and a half hours per day and averaged one and a half cords per day. Whether cutting cordwood or cutting timber, it could be dangerous work, with no worker's compensation safety net. Working in the woods in 1871 for his future father-in-law, Charles Whitney, Pliny Henley cut his foot and did not get back to work until 19 days later. In January 1946 a news item reported that Ernest Brown cut his foot badly while working in the woods.

In 1905, Elmer had enough experience to begin gauging the value of timber and invested to work it for a profit. H. Burnham bought a nearby wooded pasture and wanted it cleared, so Elmer bought the wood on the stump, estimating that he could produce 20 to 25 cords of box wood pine, a little white birch and 40 or 50 cords of wood and barrel stave timber, mostly from gray birch.

To get good at this, first he had to be able to estimate how much wood of each type could be harvested from a parcel of woodland. Then he had to know how each type of wood might be used, and how it would attract the most value. He also had to know the market to be able to guess how much each yield would be worth. Finally, he had to figure in expenses for help in cutting and hauling wood to the mill or other destination.

In 1910, he earned nearly $400 from timber, but he paid out about $150 for cutting and hauling, so he netted $247.55. The next year he tallied his income and expenses as follows:[78]

Amount and Type	**Price**	**Value**
17,895 ft pine logs	$11.00 per thousand feet	$196.85
2,735 ft spruce logs	$10.00 per thousand feet	$ 27.35
85 ft hemlock logs at	$ 8.00 per thousand feet	$ .68
37 ¼ cords pine bolts	$ 4.50 per cord	$167.63
3 cords birch bolts	$ 5.00 per cord	$ 15.00
1 cord yellow birch bolts	$ 3.50 per cord	$ 3.50
7 cords spruce bolts	$ 4.00 per cord	$ 28.00
TOTAL VALUE		**$439.01**
Amount	**Wages Paid**	**Cost**
20,715 feet logs	$ 3.50 per thousand feet	$ 72.50
48 ½ cords bolts	$ 2.60 per cord	$125.45
NET INCOME		**$241.06**

In 1909 Elmer bought a portion of the Washington French place from Walter Lord, and he wasted little time in getting off timber. The winter of 1912-1913, he got in 4,725 feet of pine logs worth $51.97; 1,344 feet of pine and birch bolts worth $67.20; and 3 5/8 cords of pulp wood worth $18.12. He also sold barrel timber on the stump to Roland

[78] Elmer C. Henley diary, April 2, 1911.

Littlefield for $.75, for a total of $138.04. He noted, “I have done it all myself afternoons so have had nothing to pay out of it.”[79]

On August 24, 1918 the Henley home burned and the family relocated across the road. Less than two months later, Elmer reported that they were pretty well settled and that he was yarding hemlock. “Have got a chance to sell ash for $40 a thousand delivered on the road. Am in hopes to get out 3 or 4 thousand.”[80]

Within a month he and his sons had finished yarding the ash, and when it was hauled away, he found that they had cut 5,500 feet. He thought the $220 earned was “quite a windfall,” and it no doubt helped him re-establish his household after the fire.[81]

In subsequent years, timber sales varied with the buyer and the woodlot he wanted to cut. In 1919, they hauled pulpwood to Bethel. In 1921, he and others cut and hauled timber to the Bisbeetown mill. They had a buyer, the Brown Company of Berlin, N.H., that paid $25 per thousand feet delivered to the mill, but it cost $9 or $10 per thousand feet to cut and haul from their wood lots. In 1926, he sold 25,000 feet of hard wood at $35 per thousand to the Mason Mfg. Co. of So. Paris to be delivered over there. He also sold 25,000 feet of hemlock to Harry Brown and 30 cords of wood to Walter Cullinan of Norway.

1928 was a banner year. In October 1927 he bought a timber lease on Sawin Hill Road for $2,500 and commented to himself, “There is more timber on it than anyone realizes. I think I am going to cut 200 M [thousand feet] of pine this winter if I can get $16 at mill.”

By December he had four men cutting, yarding and swamping logs, and he noted, “Timber turning out more than I expected so far. I think there are six or seven hundred thousand of all kinds on the lot.”[82] He increased the number of workers, and on February 5, 1928 he wrote, “We had 9 choppers all week but fired 2 last night. They showed need of a vacation.”

At the end of February they had got in over 300,000 feet of pine, and were still at it. By the end of March he summarized the results. “I have got all my scale bills now. We got in all 363,230 ft. pine, 28,005 hard wood and 32,170 hemlock. I sold the pine to the Conway Box Co. for $16 at Durgin’s mill [in Bisbeetown]. I have got off more than enough to pay the $2500 I am to pay for the lot, though it cost me big to cut it... I have left as near as I can guess 30 M pine, 75 to 100 M hemlock, 30 to 50 M hard wood and 2 to 4 hundred cords pulp mostly spruce and an awful lot of cedar.”[83]

[79] Elmer C. Henley diary, March 28, 1913.
[80] Elmer C. Henley diary, October 20, 1918.
[81] Elmer C. Henley diary, December 22, 1918.
[82] Elmer C. Henley diary, December 25, 1927.
[83] Elmer C. Henley diary, March 25, 1928.

After that, though, the economy soured as the Great Depression set in, and Elmer was glad to get any small orders. He employed his sons as much as possible to try to keep any income in the family.

In 1930 he got orders for 100 utility poles for the Waterford Light Co. This called for 25 foot cedar poles about six inches in diameter at the top. Later that same year, they got a couple orders for a total of 300 six-foot cedar posts, these probably for road edge guard rails. Still, at the end of that year he wrote, "Times are harder than ever before. Work is very scarce everywhere."[84]

In 1931 he wrote, "School is done and we are going to cut some cedar, though I have no orders now that I am sure of. Business is very poor and prices low, no improvement in sight."[85] A year later he said, "Times are terrible hard, we have cut quite a few cords of wood lately and sold $3.75 per cord."[86]

In 1933 he got an order for about 4,000 feet of ash for snowshoes, to be delivered to Scribner's Mill in Otisfield. He did not have enough ash on his own wood lots but what he lacked he was able to buy to make up the order.

News reports of cutting many cords of wood, or hardwood bolts, from Sawin Hill lands continued well into the 1950s. It may be less newsworthy now, but the timber harvest from the woodlots along the road continue to provide income to the owners, and to the people who do the job.

[84] Elmer C. Henley diary, December 4, 1930.
[85] Elmer C. Henley diary, June 14, 1931.
[86] Elmer C. Henley diary, October 2, 1932.

Sickness

Contagious disease in this era could not only end life, it could put life on hold. Scarlet fever visited the Henley family in 1908, causing them all to be quarantined. Elmer wrote in his diary January 12, "Well we are shut in. Erna came down last Sunday with scarlet fever. She is up and apparently about as well as ever now but we have to be shut in 4 weeks and if any of the rest of us have it, it will be much longer. None of us have ever had it but Rena. They will not even take my cream to the butter factory. Father has two of my cows for their keep, and we have two cans of cream that we have got to churn."

Nevertheless, Elmer could work in the fields and woods by himself, so he was not entirely cooped up in the house. "I am working down by the big hornbeam, cut scrub pine for box timber, also cutting bushes. Am going to clear that corner which is getting quite bushy."

A week later he noted that he had been hauling barrel timber all week. "None of the rest of us have the fever yet." The following week he reported pretty much the same. "No more scarlet fever yet. We shall be out in another week if no more of us have it."

On February 3, he was getting restless. "It is four weeks yesterday since Erna came down with scarlet fever. We expected to be disinfected yesterday but they did not come and they have not come today yet." Finally, the following week he reported, "They smoked the house and let us out last Tues. about the coldest day we had had for the winter…The rest of the children have the chicken pox."

A number of years later, another daughter, Arline, stayed home from attending Norway High School for at least two weeks, but this time she wasn't the one with the sickness. She was kept home as a preventive measure because "They have small pox at Norway. We tried to get to Norway to have her vaccinated today but the roads are so bad we did not get there."[87] If it wasn't one thing, it was another, but at least they weren't shut in.

In October 1918, Elmer reported, "Berkeley and Erna have been at home 2 weeks and will be at least a week more on account of the Spanish Influenza epidemic of which many are dieing."[88]

[87] Elmer C. Henley diary, April 7, 1929.
[88] Elmer C. Henley diary, October 13, 1918.

Barter, Trade and Cash

For farmers, cash was usually in short supply. They sometimes sold their produce, eggs or meat to merchants or even door-to-door. Elmer Henley went to great lengths to sell his apples at a good price, and the same with potatoes. He occasionally sold meat from an animal he had raised. "We had out pig killed Mon. I peddled out most of the fresh meat and bought two pigs of Ernest Brown."[89]

In part because of the scarcity of cash to pay for hired help (thought that occur), farmers traded their labor, sometimes just to help each other out. In 1911, Elmer Henley wrote, "I mowed for Merritt Sawin this afternoon and he is going to help me getting in [hay] some afternoon this week."[90]

The next year, recounting his preparations for planting, he said, "Roy [Lord] put his horse with my two and harrowed one half day and he is going to help me another."[91]

In 1894, Elmer worked two to three days on the road as a way of paying the road tax owed on their land in Albany.[92]

Sometimes two items were bartered for equal value. For example, when the Henley's home burned in 1918 and they moved in with Walter Lord's family, Elmer noted, "I have traded one cow and my little steers for the hay in the barn here."[93] A couple weeks later, he traded unspecified items, but probably corn, potatoes or apples, for "the wood and quite a lot of other things here."[94]

More often labor was traded in exchange for an item that would otherwise require cash.

In 1873, Pliny Henley bought a pair of boots from Whitfield Barrows in Bolster's Mills, and paid for them by cutting two cords of wood at three dollars per cord.[95]

Thirty years later, Elmer Henley bought a 50-pound pig of Roy Lord, and noted, "Roy owed me $2.12 for cutting wood and I am going to cut another cord for the pig $3.12."[96]

When the Henleys needed a $7 cultivator, a piece of equipment that John Horr sold, they paid for it by sawing cordwood for Horr at $1 per cord.[97]

Later, Elmer Henley traded some cedar shingles he had sawed out with Herman Holt for a new sewing machine.[98]

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[89] Elmer C. Henley diary, April 16, 1916.
[90] Elmer C. Henley diary, July 9, 1911.
[91] Elmer C. Henley diary, June 2, 1912.
[92] Elmer C. Henley diary, May 28-30, 1894.
[93] Elmer C. Henley diary, September 29, 1918.
[94] Elmer C. Henley diary, October 13, 1918.
[95] Pliny B. Henley diary, January 11, 1873.
[96] Elmer C. Henley diary, February 15, 1903.
[97] Elmer C. Henley diary, March 21, 1895.

In 1912, Elmer bought his first car, which he probably justified by his rural mail delivery job. But he also used it, at least before cars were more generally available, by carrying passengers. A month after he got the Ford, he noted he went to Norway fair two days. "I earned $13 with the auto the last day."[99]

Just as John Horr sold cultivators and White Sewing Machines (which Herman Holt carried on for a while), Elmer Henley tried his hand as a salesman to earn cash in the 1920s.

"We went to Norway Fri. night to see a demonstration of a new cooker (new to me at least) it is the Sechrist Pressure cooker. I have engaged to sell them around here."[100] A few weeks later, however, he wrote, "I have been selling Knight lanterns, have sold 12 in all, have not yet sold any lamps, they are very good lights. I bought a pressure cooker price $35 am going to sell them if can get satisfactory terms."[101]

The cookers may not have worked out for him, but he continued for a few months at least with the lanterns. "I have been canvassing with lights and irons some. (Diamond self heating (gas) irons and gaso. lights) have sold 6 or 8."[102] But a year and a half later, he had found something else to sell. "I have sold $400 worth of Hydro tires this season all but four 30 x 3 ½ tires which I have on hand. They are fine tires I hope to do quite a business in them next season. They are sold only through agents."[103] Sales may not have been his strongest asset, however, as he didn't write about it any further.

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[98] Elmer C. Henley diary, June 25, 1911.
[99] Elmer C. Henley diary, August 11, 1912.
[100] Elmer C. Henley diary, December 7, 1924.
[101] Elmer C. Henley diary, January 11, 1925.
[102] Elmer C. Henley diary, June 25, 1925.
[103] Elmer C. Henley diary, December 12, 1926.