

Benjamin Hawley's Diary – Chester County

1775

[March]

Third Month. Fourth Day. Cloudy rain & snowing. I went to Son. Wm. Tho. Grubbing till after breakfast.

Fifth Day. Clear & hard frost. I went to Mill. Bot 8 bushels of shorts 4s 8. 8 paid.

Sixth Day. A fine day. Mend the cow crib. Bro' the calf away. Fencing some. Son Wm. came & killed the calf & staid all night.

Seventh Day. A fine warm day. Son Wm. took the calf to market. Rec'd 17s 6. I carried the hide to Jo. Dilworth w' 8 ½ lt. a 8... 5s 8 not paid. Jn' gone to Bradford.

First Day. Cloudy & fog. E-ly wind. Rebekah 3 weeks.

Second Day. Draw'd some wood & load of dung. Jn. came home.

Third Day. Drest 4 lb. 2 oz. of flax.

Fourth Day. I went to monthly meeting.

Fifth Day. Cold, cloudy. I went to the store. Bo' 1 lb. of Tea 5s, 6 lb. of sugar 3s 9. Paid him 6s.

Sixth Day. Plowing & mending the shead.

Seventh Day. Hazy, plowing & d

First Day. Hazy. At home all day. Moses Stackhouse came here. Rebekah 4 weeks.

Second Day. Some clouds. Draw'd rails & fencing.

Third Day. Sl-y rain & showers most of the day. About odd jobs.

Fourth Day. d' & showers of rain. Went to Taylors vendue.

Fifth Day. Cloudy. Small rain then snowing fast, the ground cover'd about 1 foot deep. I went to the Mill w/ 1 ½ bushels of rye. Bo' 2 bushels of shorts 2s.

Sixth Day. Clear & cold wind, the ground cover'd w/ snow.

Seventh Day. A fine day, warm, the snow mostly gone. I went to Mill w/ bushels of wheat. Hannah Jeffries & Jane came. Rebekah went away. I paid her 15s for 5 weeks work.

First Day. dd, very warm. I went to Concord Meeting. Jane Jeffries beg. [?]

Second Day. dd, very warm. Draw'd rails & firewood. Made a barpost.

Third Day. Clear & cool wind at N.W. Draw'd dung & set up bar posts.

Fourth Day. Clouds & cold wind, sharp frost. Went to Mill. Bot ½ a bushel of salt at 4s 8, 1 ½ d of Bran. Cash paid 3s 11. Tho. digging the garden.

Fifth Day. Hazy & clouds bo' 2 bushels of Bran 3s. Tho. finished the garden. We planted peas, beans & sowed the seeds about ½ past 11a.m. -p.m. Snow & rain.

Sixth Day. Cloudy, plowing fallows.

Seventh Day. Like to clear. Some clouds. Cool N.E.ly wind. Drawing dung. Jane 1 week.

First Day. Hazy & cool wind. I went to Birmingham meeting & to Rachel Seals.

Second Day. Clouds and Ely wind. Draw'd dung.

Third Day. Hard frost, clouds & a showers of snow. Plowing for flax. Cold N.W. wind.

Fourth Day. Hard frost, clear & cold. Plowing for d.

Fifth Day. d, not quite so cold. Finished plowing by the Barn.

Sixth Day. Went to Mill. Bo' 4 ½ qt. of stripco for drasseria 1s 6, 6s 9 Buttons, 1s—2 qt. of rum 2s 2.

1. Why does Benjamin Hawley refer to the days as “First Day, Second Day...?”
 - a. Benjamin Hawley was a member of the religious sect called Quakers. They referred to themselves as “Friends.” They did not believe in using names of months and days that came from pagan deities, so they used a simple numbering method to separate the months and days. Sunday became “First Day, “ while January was “First Month.”
2. What do you notice about every entry that Benjamin made in his diary? What was the most important thing that he focused on every day? Why do you think that is?
 - a. Benjamin never failed to note what the weather was like that day. In a time before weathermen, colonial farmers depended on things like almanacs to predict the weather. Any colonial farmer who could afford one had an almanac, which was a book printed every year that contained information about weather forecasts, planting dates, tide tables and astronomical data like the times of the rising and setting sun. Benjamin is making similar notes in his own diary that he can save for next year, to try to plan his activities.
3. What kinds of activities did Benjamin and his family do in March?
 - a. Benjamin’s sons William and Thomas helped him to “grub,” or remove stumps from the fields.
 - b. Benjamin mended the cow crib, the long open box that held the cow’s food.
 - c. Benjamin “bro’ the calf away,” which meant to take it away from the farm, and his son William killed it and later took the meat to market while Benjamin took the hide to sell for leather.
 - d. He “drest” the flax. Flax is a plant used to make linen cloth. “Dressing” the flax means the process used to free the flax “fibers” from the stem of the plant. This is the step before spinning it into thread.
 - e. Plowed the fields in order to plant corn and flax in the months to follow.
 - f. Mended the shead (shed.)
 - g. “Draw’d” or moved rails and fencing through use of the oxen or horse.

- h. Made a bar post (what this is remains unknown.)
 - i. He and Thomas dug in the garden, and planted vegetable seeds.
 - j. Plowed the fallows (the fields left uncultivated the year before.)
4. What kinds of items did Benjamin sell in February?
- a. One and one-half bushels of rye.
5. What kinds of items did Benjamin buy in February?
- a. One pound of tea and six pounds of sugar.
 - b. Two bushels of "shorts," likely for animal feed.
 - c. Half a bushel of salt and one and a half bushels of bran.
 - d. Four and a half quarts of stripco, buttons, and two quarts of rum. (It is not known what stripco is.)
6. What are some words that are unfamiliar to you? Look them up in the dictionary. Which definitions do you think are correct for what Benjamin was saying?
- a. "shorts" meaning the byproduct of flour milling. The "shorts" consists of the bran, wheat germ, and some bits of flour that weren't considered fit for human consumption. Benjamin was likely buying the shorts for his animals.
 - b. "crib," or a long open box that holds food for animals.
 - c. "vendue," or a public sale at auction.
 - d. "fallows," or a piece of uncultivated land. Farmers would often rotate their fields, leave one or more fields unplanted for a year or more in order to increase its fertility.