One of the difficulties which the stockman faced in the early days in Alberta was coping with the winter weather; supplying feed and shelter for the stock. The worst winter on record in southern Alberta occurred soon after the Hansons established on Beaver Dam Stock Farm on the Saint Mary river; i.e. the winter 1906-07. It began with a severe blizzard and continued with high winds and abnormally low temperatures all winter. Although the Hansons were prepared with a supply of feed and the trees along the river valley gave shelter, they watched the destruction of the livestock of the neighboring Brown Ranch. This outfit had little owned land and ran cattle on the open range with no facilities for wintering, leaving the cattle to fend for themselves. They operated on the west side of the Milk River Ridge and Lumpy Buttes. The ferocious blizzard drove the cattle into the St. Mary river valley. The low temperature and snow had caused ice and slush to form and block up the river in several places making deep water in between the ice dams. The cattle, driven by the fierce blizzard, waded into the slush and water. Those that were not drowned came out on the other side soaked and freezing. They huddled in bunches among the dense willow clumps. With blizzard winds and the temperature around -50°F the cattle literally froze to death where they stood and there remained standing huddled among the willow clumps until the spring thaw came. The piles of bones along the river in both the Shaw and Hanson places were evidence of the disaster until the bone collectors came through the country many years later.

Submitted by Wallace R. Hanson