

## **1850s Prince Edward Island**

Prepared by Marlene Campbell of Wyatt Heritage Properties, Summerside  
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### **The purpose of the program**

The material that forms this program on life in early British North America from the Prince Edward Island perspective is written to describe the facets of daily life in Prince Edward Island during the mid-eighteen hundreds, or more precisely, the decade of the 1850s. Canada, as we know it today did not exist in the decade of the 1850s. But the foundation for building a country that would stretch from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean was being laid by men, women, and children who were emigrants to British North America, colonies of the country of Britain. The focus is on the common folk of the time.

### **The content of the program**

The materials that constitute this program are contained within a suitcase for easy storage and portability. This manual provides the core information. There are various supplementary resources, including some three dimensional objects. A complete listing of the contents is provided at the end of the text.

### **Introduction**

When Jacques Cartier discovered Prince Edward Island in 1534, it was a land covered in virgin forests and inhabited by the Mi'kmaq people. Over time the gulf island, which lay at a strategic point in the shipping lanes to Lower and Upper Canada, became a desired possession of France and England. Through war it was transferred back and forth between the two European nations until Britain became the final victor in 1758. The British deported the French Acadians who for the previous thirty-eight years had worked to clear and settle the Island.

Capt. Samuel Holland, a Dutch surveyor working for the British military, was given the job of dividing the Island into manageable units of land that could be settled by individuals. He surveyed the land into sixty-seven lots, each of approximately twenty thousand acres. He made plans for cities, villages, and farms on land that had only known the light step of the Mi'kmaq or early Acadian.

The British Crown owed favors to numerous people and decided to repay each with a generous gift of land in an exciting new settlement that would surely prosper and bring riches. The land gift, with conditions attached that it must be settled at the expense of the landowner, would also save the crown much money in the colony. A lottery was held in which sixty-five of the Island lots were given away, something that was not done in any other British North American colony. It was a move that was to bring much hardship to the Island and prevented its settlement and economic growth for years. Many of the landowners had no interest in bringing out settlers or improving the land. They held onto the lots purely to speculate on the land market. Settlers who did come were forced to rent

their land, which was a great burden considering that settlers going elsewhere in North America could buy land cheaply or receive it for free. A settler could work for years building up a farm only to be evicted if he couldn't pay the rent. Because of the land issue many historians state that the Island attracted poorer and less educated emigrants.

The first half of the 1800s was a time of growth for the Island population. By the 1830s people coming to the colony were moving inland and building settlements. By the 1850s immigration was reduced to a trickle. Settlers were concentrating on building strong communities and a strong economy. The land question was a hot political issue and people organized to protest the inability to own their own land and improve their lot in life, as well as strengthen the economy of the colony.

By the 1850s life on Prince Edward Island was easier than the preceding decades but it was still a struggle for survival. It was basically a rural society. Charlottetown, as the capital of the colony, was incorporated as a town in 1855. Summerside was just a fledging village with nearby St. Eleanors as the commercial centre.

### **Livelihood**

To survive, the average Islander of the 1850s had to have numerous survival and work skills. The Island was not a land for the weak of heart or body. Settlers had to be able to do as much for themselves as possible. Men, women, and children worked side by side, clearing land, planting crops, and producing what they needed to feed themselves, cloth the body and provide shelter from the elements. A man without a woman to help him in the home and on the land had a hard existence. Children were welcomed as a workforce, and were perhaps given a little more leeway than in the home countries because parents needed to entice them to stay at home and help. Neighbours helped neighbours through the work bee. This was the name given to a gathering of people working on a common goal. If a neighbour needed a barn built, a date was set and people came from miles around for a barn raising. It was the same with threshing grain or digging potatoes or making a quilt. The gatherings were called work bees after honeybees who all work together very hard in the hive to produce honey. The work bee was also a social gathering and once the work was done the play began.

For the average man in the 1850s, money was very hard to get. The barter system was the common way of doing business. People traded their labour and their produce for goods and services they needed. A boat builder might agree to build a dory for a farmer/fishermen in return for a combination of grain and cash. A doctor could receive eggs and a chicken for a house call. Nothing was wasted or taken for granted. To do so might mean one didn't eat. Did the average child get an allowance? No.

In many ways the 1850s was a good time in the colony. Shipbuilding was gaining strength and there was work in the shipyards for skilled tradesmen and some labourers. The tradesmen learned their skills by becoming apprentices to master tradesmen for a period of seven years. An apprentice is one who is bound by legal agreement to work for another for a specific amount of time in return for instruction in a trade, art or business.

When tradesmen came to work at the Island shipyards the method of pay preferred by the shipyard owners was the half-cash system. Most of the shipyard owners were also merchants. They owned a company store. They would pay their crews their salary half in cash and half in credit to the company store. The worker was then forced to buy what he needed at the store in order to get the rest of his pay. It always seemed to work that his pay was never enough to cover what he needed and he would have a debt to the store which made it very difficult for him to move on and seek employment elsewhere. Plus he could never try to save money by finding the best deal. It took many decades to get rid of this system on the Island.

By the 1850s, farmers on Prince Edward Island had reached a point where they had surplus crops to sell. They were no longer subsistent farmers, meaning producing just enough food to feed themselves. The surplus crops and livestock were being shipped to England, other North American colonies such as Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, and the United States. Farmers were at the mercy of the shipping agents who determined the price they received.

Many merchants gave credit to the farmers in the spring so they could plant their crops and would then buy the harvest from them deducting the debt. If it was a poor crop year the farmer could find himself in debtor's prison. If he couldn't pay the landowner the rent he could lose the farm altogether. The story was the same for the fisherman who needed gear from the merchant to go fishing and had to take the price for his catch the merchant offered.

Farmers also peddled their produce door to door in town to make some money. Eggs and butter were the produce farmers sold to the stores to get items such as tea, coffee, and sugar.

Finding work was easier for men than women. Women in the 1850s were still not considered persons under the law. They couldn't own property, nor could they vote, and they were very limited in employment opportunities. Women who needed employment outside the home worked as cooks in taverns, labourers in lobster factories and fish plants, on farms, as housemaids and housekeepers. A few were able to get jobs as teachers and nurses if they could get the education opportunities. Office work was the domain of men.

### **Transportation**

In the 1850s on Prince Edward Island the fastest way to get about was by boat. The first settlements were along the waterfronts and settlers slowly moved inland as they cleared land. Small dories were used for short distances and schooners of various sizes for greater distances.

Roads on the Island were still few and could more properly be called footpaths. Horseback and foot were the main way to get anywhere on land. It was not unusual for people to walk from Summerside to Charlottetown. Mud was one of the things that had to be contended with when using road transportation.

People looked for the shortest way to get somewhere. In winter this meant travelling on the frozen rivers and bays, which could be extremely dangerous depending on the weather. As the colony matured, ice roads were bushed with evergreen trees to keep people on the path. But if a sudden storm came up and visibility was lost, the driver of the horse would have to depend that a horse could sense its way. Often the animals lost direction and would head out to open water in the bay. People travelled as late into the spring as they could on the ice, often on unsafe conditions. Horses and people fell through and many people lost their lives.

In summer contact to the mainland was made by boat and in the winter people crossed on iceboats that carried the mail. A trip was not made lightly.

### **Shelter**

Immigrants who had been on the island for several decades had moved beyond the log house and into wood frame homes. The most popular architectural style of farmhouses was the Ell shape that is still seen about the countryside. The lumber was Island cut and the shingles Island made. By the 1850s sawmills dotted the countryside. Birch bark was sometimes put between the outer wall and the shingles to cut the wind. There was no commercial insulation to buy so most walls were left hollow although wood chips and seaweed were sometimes used. Without insulation these homes were cold in the winter months and hot in the summer.

There were many skilled carpenters in the colony involved in shipbuilding that turned their skills to home building in downtimes at the shipyard. For farmers it wasn't just a house they needed, but barns and storage sheds as well. Many hands make light work and neighbours got together to hold barn-raising bees. Lumber was plentiful and many fine buildings became a part of the landscape. But with the land question not settled the fear was always there for many people that they could be turned off their farm.

For the townspeople the cost of buying a lot was a big investment in comparison to income.

### **Lighting**

Natural light was very important to Islanders of the 1850s. Chores revolved around the availability of light. Settlers rose with the sun in the morning and went to bed with it in the evening during the longer seasons of spring and summer. As the hours of daylight began to shorten with the coming of fall people rested more. People lit their homes with candles or oil lights in the 1850s. Gas lamps had been available in major North American cities since the start of the century but the cost was beyond the means of average person.

It was the job of the females in a household to make the candles. This was done using string and tallow. Tallow is rendered animal fat. If a pig or cow was slaughtered for the meat, all the fat would be saved and melted down. The fat was also used for cooking and baking. If a family was fortunate enough to have a candle mold, the making of the

candles was much easier. String would be tied in place down through the centre of the mold and then the mold filled with melted fat. It would be left to sit until the fat hardened and then the candle would be removed from the mold and hung on a rack until needed. It was a long process to make enough candles to do a household. If a family couldn't afford a candle mold, pieces of string would be tied on a stick and dipped in a dish of fat time and time again until enough fat built up on the string to make a candle. This would be a job for the young girls of the family. Once a candle burned down the remaining wax would be put back in the candle pot to be melted down and remade into another candle. Because of the work involved in making candles they were not wasted. This is where the expression, "ready for the pot," originates.

Oil lamps, which were centuries old, used whale oil, fish oil, beeswax, olive oil or nut oil as a fuel. What was burnt depended on availability. The wick, which burned, passed through a metal chamber that controlled the amount of oil picked up. If a family couldn't afford a store bought lamp they could hollow out a stone, place a wick and the oil in the hole and have a lamp this way. People were creative and resourceful.

A discovery made in the late 1840s and perfected in the 1850s would change the way homes were lit. A man named Dr. Abraham Gesner, who was a medical doctor and geologist from Nova Scotia, discovered in 1846, how to distil coal oil from solid hydrocarbons. In 1853, he finally perfected the method and kerosene was introduced to the world. Dr. Gesner is considered the founder of the modern petroleum industry. His discovery is credited with saving the world's whale population. He studied, described and mapped the rock formation of Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick.

As people were able to afford kerosene lamps, candles were replaced. Women of the house cleaned the lamps every morning and filled them with oil for the coming night. Both the candles and lamps were dangerous and many homes and barns were destroyed by fire. If a lantern got knocked over in straw or hay in a barn a fire could start very quickly and there was little that could be to control the flames.

### **Home Heating**

In the 1850s, homes on Prince Edward Island were heated by wood or coal. Wood was harvested from Island forests and coal was brought to Island shores by schooners. For the average person wood was the most affordable. It was plentiful and was a by-product of clearing land. Trees were cut, limbed, and sawed by hand. Then the blocks had to be split with an axe. If possible, the wood would be seasoned for a year to dry the sap so it would burn better and give a greater heat. Looking after the wood supply was a job done by the males of the household. Children had the job of filling the wood box and cutting the kindling. Kindling was made by cutting a stick of wood into thin strips and drying them by the fire so that they would ignite easily to get a fire going.

Fireplaces were common for both heating a house and cooking the family food. They were very inefficient as much of the heat went up the chimney. As soon as finances allowed, a family purchase was a stove. Once a family could afford to build a wood

frame house they would build several chimneys in it so more rooms could be heated with fireplaces or stoves. The bricks for the building of chimneys were made from Island clay.

Lighting a fire was not an easy job in the colony. For the average person matches were expensive to buy so they would be used very frugally. Matches were invented and perfected between 1805 and the 1830s in Europe. Often a fire was built using a flint stone and striking it against a piece of steel to create sparks. The flint stone and steel was carried in a tinderbox.

Fires, once built, were usually not allowed to go out. The hot coals or cinders would be used to light other fires. Often people travelled to neighbours to get coals. They would carry them in a pan with a handle. This was how the first Anglican Church built in the settlement of St. Eleanors was burnt. In 1835, the servant girl was carrying a pan of coals to the church to start the fire. She accidentally dropped them, setting the building on fire.

Homes in the 1850s were cold in winter. With no insulation and no central heating system it was not unusual to wake up on a cold winter morning to find a layer of frost on the walls as well as the windows. The water in the kettle on the stove could be frozen solid. If the kitchen was the only room to have a stove or fireplace the children would huddle in bed until Father or Mother got the fire going and then everyone would dress in front of the warmth.

In summer the fire had to be on to cook and bake. A kitchen would heat up quickly making it a tough place for the cook to do her job. Families that could afford to do so built a summer kitchen on the back of the house or as a separate building in order to keep the main house cool. If the kitchen was in the main part of the house the cook would be up early in the morning to have the baking done before the heat of the day. Fires were often lit outdoors in summer to heat the water for washing clothing. The ashes created by burning wood were spread on the land to make the soil sweeter or less acidic for the growing of crops.

### **Water**

If possible, early settlers built their homes close to a brook, stream, or spring to provide their water supply and refrigeration needs. They also looked for damp areas on the earth surface that might indicate the existence of an underground spring that could easily be dug out.

A brook or spring was often preferred over having to dig a well because it lightened the workload. The cattle could be turned out into the brook to water instead of hauling water from the well to the cattle.

The brook could be used for bathing and doing the laundry and keeping food cool during hot weather. People were not aware at this time of water related bacteria that caused illness. Water was hauled in buckets to the house for cooking and cleaning.

Wells were dug by hand and lined with rocks to keep them from caving in. Once the vein was struck, the water would flow in for a depth of about four feet. An average well would be about twenty feet deep. A bucket on the end of a long rope would be dropped to the bottom of the well and pulled up full of water. A labour saving winch and housing was usually built over the top of the well to make the task easier and to shield the water surface below.

It was common for milk and butter to be stored in the well during the summer. As time and resources allowed, people erected small buildings where large ice blocks could be used to keep food from spoiling.

### **Food**

For the colonists of the 1850s the expression “living off the land” summed up their situation. Life, for those in the colony with money, was good, for their plates were piled high with the foods that could be bought from the farmers peddling door to door, or selling at the markets. The waters teemed with fish and shellfish and there were all kinds of wild game. As well, the storekeepers had well stocked shelves of products brought by ship from the United States or from Great Britain.

For the average person the story was different. Putting food on the table for a family was hard work and a full-time job. Most of the food had to be grown or raised, harvested, slaughtered and cured, and preserved. The majority of people living on Prince Edward Island during the 1850s were farmers and fishermen. Tradesmen usually farmed as well in order to provide sustenance for their families.

The majority of the work surrounding food preparation fell to the women of the household. Men hunted and fished but it was the women who cleaned and cooked the game. Mother and daughters, along with young sons, planted and grew gardens big enough to carry a family through a year. When the colonies were first settled seeds were brought from Europe but the settlers would save seeds from their crops each fall to plant the new crop in the spring.

Root crops such as potatoes, turnips, beets, and carrots were very popular as they grew well in the Island soil, could be used for many dishes, and stored well in root cellars for winter use. Onions were grown in huge quantities as they added flavour to food and were an important part of home remedies. (To fight off a cold, people would rub their bodies with goose grease and stuff a couple of onions in their underwear.) Peas, beans and corn made a wonderful treat fresh from the garden but they were also dried for making soups, baked beans, and cornmeal in the other seasons.

Early settlers planted fruit trees, especially apple, and wild berries were gathered and preserved. Methods of preserving fruit included drying in the sun or by the fire to take the moisture out. The product could be re-hydrated later by cooking in water. Honey and maple syrup often replaced sugar as a preservative. Sugar was expensive and difficult to get so jams would be boiled down until they thickened from the natural pectin in the fruit.

Rhubarb was especially treasured by the colonists of the 1850s as it was a perennial and would be the first thing to come up in the garden in the spring. It was a great source of vitamins and delightful after a long winter of no fresh produce. It was also used as a purgative for cleaning out the body. The settlers eagerly awaited the dandelions in spring to cook as greens, and make into dandelion tea and wine.

Farmers grew their own cereal grains of oats, wheat, and barley. Enough seed would be kept for next year's crop, surplus sold to raise cash and the rest taken to a local grist mill to be ground into flour, bran, oatmeal, and barley flakes. Most often the mill owner was paid with flour. The oatmeal was used for the morning porridge, oatcakes, oatmeal cookies, and oatmeal bread. Barley flakes were used in soup and broths for the sick. Wheat flour was considered the best flour and was the most expensive. Most housewives baked bread daily, other than the Sabbath.

Since grain was very precious, what was set aside for livestock was fed to the horses to keep them in good working condition. The cattle would be fed hay and often by spring many of them would be off their feet from the unbalanced diet.

Chickens, ducks, and geese were raised for eggs and meat. Cattle were raised for milk and meat. Pigs were raised for meat and sheep for meat and wool. Most rural families slaughtered and cured their own meat. Preservation methods were salting and packing in barrels, smoking and curing, and using an icehouse. Winter ice from rivers would be cut in blocks and stored in an icehouse under sawdust to keep it from melting. When needed, the ice would be used to freeze or cool food.

Settlers also made good use of the sea, which was generous with its harvest. Cod, eaten fresh throughout most of the year, was dried and salted for the winter. Herring was pickled, eels speared through the ice, smelts caught as they came upstream in the spring, and trout enjoyed whenever. Oysters were considered fine food that quickly became an export. In the early days of the settlement lobster was considered a food of the poor.

The only items the average person purchased at the store were things he couldn't produce himself like coffee, tea, sugar, yeast, baking soda, etc.

Diets on the Island varied depending on the origins of the settlers. The British, Lowland Scots, and United Empire Loyalists were more accomplished farmers than some of the other settlers and had more dairy and meat in their diets. The Acadians depended on wheaten bread, and soups made of dried peas as their staple. The Highland Scots liked their oatmeal and of course everyone had potatoes in their diet.

### **Clothing and Fashion**

For the settler living in any of the British North American colonies in 1850, clothing was made from three main materials – wool, linen and leather. These could all be produced on an ordinary farm.



Wool came from sheep, which were also raised for their meat known as mutton. The cold winter months of the Island insured a thick coat on the sheep. It would be shorn off in the spring and the women of the house would wash and clean the wool. After it dried, they would use carding paddles to straighten the fibres and then spin it on the spinning wheel. The finished product could be knit into socks, mittens, hats, and sweaters, or woven into woollen cloth for the making of pants, skirts, dresses, and yes even long woollen underwear. Colour would be added to the cloth or wool by using plant dyes.

Linen was produced from flax, a widely cultivated plant grown for its fibre as well as its linseed oil. Women would put the mature plant through a process of soaking, drying, and breaking the inner core of the plant in order to obtain the fibres that could be woven into linen. Linen was used to make items needed for housekeeping as well as for dresses, shirts, and underclothing. It especially favoured in the warmer seasons. The weaver would sometimes combine wool and linen to make a material called linsey-woolsey.

Leather, obtained by tanning the skins of wild and domestic animals, was a necessity for footwear, but it also made great outer clothing such as coats. Once an animal was killed for its meat the hide would be tanned. This was a process of removing the hair by soaking the hide in a chemical made from water and the bark of an oak or hemlock tree, and then drying and softening. In the early days of settlement people did their own tanning; however, as time went on a number of tannery businesses started. The by-product caused some pollution to brooks and ponds.

General stores carried imported cloth, referred to as dry goods. Cotton in colours and prints could be bought, as could flannel, gingham and silk. It would be a real treat for the average family to be in a position to make such a purchase.

### **Men's Clothing**

The clothing of the common man was very simple in the 1850s and in fact changed very little over the century. Farmers and labourers wore shirts and pants made of linen and wool. In the early days of the settlement the shirts were loose fitting and long enough that in the heat of the summer they could be worn alone, as well as over trousers. However, by the 1850s the shirts shortened in length and were being tucked into high-waisted pantaloons held up by suspenders. These were the forerunner of the overalls. Summer undershirts and drawers were made of cotton or linen. Many Island workers would only have two sets of clothing – the set of work clothes they wore all week and their Sunday clothing of a shirt, vest, and pants. When the Sunday set showed wear it became work clothing. Farmers and labourers wore straw hats to protect their heads from the sun in the warmer seasons.

The attire in the cold months was heavy and usually made of wool. Sometime coats and hats were made of animal furs. Winter underwear was made of wool that itched when it got wet. It was one piece with long sleeves and legs and a trap door at the back to accommodate bodily functions. It was called a union suit or long johns. Men who went to the lumber camps on the mainland to work for the winter never took their long johns off for the season. It was called being sewn in. They would have to be cut out of them in

the spring, as their body hair would grow right through the underwear. Underwear was worn well into the spring in fear of catching a cold.

### **Women's clothing**

Clothing for the working class or rural woman was very practical. The style of dress was full length but very simple in comparison to the style for the upper class. It was made of the same materials as the men's clothing. While a woman was working the dress was kept clean with an apron. On the Sabbath day the woman would put on her good dress. However, if she didn't own one she would put a fresh apron or shawl over her work dress. For the lower classes of women, bonnets were the preferred outdoor head attire to protect their skin from the sun. While working in the house they usually wore soft linen caps called mobcaps. Underclothing consisted of drawers, fastened with drawstrings around the middle that were made of wool for the winter and cotton or linen for the summer, and undershirts. Common women were in truth much more fortunate in their clothing than were upper class women of the time. Women were property of their husbands and the richer a man was the better he liked to dress his wife to show his wealth. Women were confined to fashions such as corsets and metal crinolines that were abusive to the body. During the 1850s lace dresses became very popular for formal events for the upper class and the first suits were made for women. Over time these fashions trickled down to other women.

### **Children's Clothing**

Children were dressed the same as their parents. Babies and toddlers, regardless of gender, wore smocks over pantalets until the age of four. Boys were then breeched, meaning they began to wear pants. Boys wore a shirt, pants, and a cap. In the 1850s it became the style to dress boys in sailor suits or knickers for their good clothing. The style of dresses for girls was the same as those worn by women but the length was shorter. You could tell the age of a girl by the length of her skirt. A girl of twelve could wear her skirt just below her knees. Each year it had to get a bit longer until by age eighteen it was full length. Girls wore a pinafore over their dresses to protect them as well as an apron. They wore a slip and drawers under their dresses. Since children grew so quickly a girl's outdoor coat was a wrapping cloak or blanket coat. Girls wore hats the same style as their mother's.

Closets were not a necessity in homes built during the 1850s. With only two sets of clothing a nail or hook behind the bedroom door did the trick for storage.

### **Footwear**

During the 1800s footwear could be obtained in several ways. Settlers who lived in villages, towns or cities could go to an established cobbler (shoemaker) and have their footwear made. People in remote rural areas usually waited for a travelling shoemaker who would then board with the family while he made their shoes entirely by hand.

For the average person footwear was very different than it is today. Both men and women wore a working shoe that looked like the modern day work boot. It was made of heavy leather, had thick soles, and laced up the front. It would last for a long time. The

shoemaker made the left foot and the right foot the same and the wearer had to break it into the shape of his foot. This could be difficult for children as their shoes were usually made several sizes too big so that they would grow into them and not need a new pair anytime soon. Plus this way several members of the family could wear the same pair. Paper or cloth would be stuffed in the toes to make them fit better.

This was not the case for the upper class in the colony. They had shoes and boots made from kid leather (hide of young goats), silk or satin. Women wore high shoes outside the home and delicate slippers indoors. Their shoes were often made smaller than the foot to give them a very dainty look. Upper class men wore shoes in the summer and boots in the winter.

For common people, footwear had to last as long as possible, so shoes were not worn when the weather was agreeable to go bare foot. Children, especially, went about in bare feet doing their chores and going to school. Footwear was put back on to go to church and children often complained how the shoes hurt after the freedom of bare feet.

Rubber boots were invented in the mid-1800s and were considered a great invention. Charles Goodyear discovered how to vulcanize rubber in 1836.

The females of the household made the vast majority of clothing. It would be a rare thing to buy ready made clothing. Many men and women made their living as tailors and seamstresses sewing for the upper classes. A common man without a wife had things hard when it came to personal care.

### **Personal hygiene**

Up to the 1850s, people washed their clothing regularly since they had such a limited supply, but out of fear of illness they only bathed once or twice a year. It was the belief that the body's natural oils protected from disease. When it came time for the yearly bath, the father was first, then the mother, then the children according to age. The baby would be last. By that time the water could be so dirty that the baby might be lost in the tub. This is the origin of the expression "Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater."

By the early part of the 1800s a man by the name of Beau Brummel was suggesting to people in England that they bathe daily to, in fact, improve their health. By the 1850s this thought was being promoted in the British North American colonies. The idea was very slow to catch on. It would be the end of the century before the weekly Saturday night bath was the standard for most households.

Taking a bath was not an easy task. Water had to be heated on the stove and then poured into a washtub placed in front of the fire. After the bath the tub would have to be emptied outdoors. Families that could afford to do so had a special piece of bedroom furniture called a commode to hold a washbasin and jug for sponge baths.

Women grew their hair long but wore it up. They only washed their hair once a month but brushed it often to keep it healthy. They would run bran through their hair to control

dry flaky skin. By the 1850s the style for men's hair had changed from long to short, and beards and mustaches were very popular, as were bushy side-whiskers.

Even though the toothbrush goes back to the time of the ancient Chinese the majority of people in the 1850s would not have brushed their teeth. When they did, they used twigs massed on one end. Toothpaste made of soap and chalk was invented in the 1850s. Mouthwash was made up of different mixtures but the most common remedy to take away bad breath was to rub honey on the gums.

When tooth decay developed, the average person had to have the tooth pulled. A dentist would extract the tooth after giving the patient a drink of alcohol to kill the pain. An infected tooth could ulcerate and cause the death of a person. If a dentist was available, drilling was possible by the 1850s and the cavity would be filled with a mercury amalgam. People usually lost their teeth very early in life with the result of sunken cheeks and people looking old before their time. It was also difficult to speak clearly without teeth and to eat.

False teeth plates for those who could afford them were made in the early days from bone and ivory. The plate never usually fit right. In Europe and the United States tooth hunters would follow armies into battle and steal good teeth from dead soldiers to sell to dentists making plates. These plates were in great demand by the rich. By the 1850s most false teeth were being made out of porcelain.

### **Sickness and medical care**

Sickness was greatly feared in the 1850s. Seven out of ten children died before reaching adulthood from diseases that are considered common illness in the modern world. There was no immunization for things like measles, chickenpox, or whooping cough. Diseases that were especially feared were smallpox, typhus, cholera, and diphtheria.

There had been a vaccine for smallpox since the turn of the century but many people refused to be immunized. Edward Jenner developed the vaccine in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, but it was not made compulsory in the British Isles until 1853.

Typhus was caused by bites of infected body lice or fleas. Fifty percent of the people who contacted typhus died a horrid death. They developed high fever, severe headaches, intense delirium, body rash, inability to move, and dysentery. The surface of their tongues became white and in severe cases the tongue would become black, rolled up like a ball in the back of the mouth. Bluish spots appeared on the body. The second stage of the disease brought coma, and death usually occurred from blood poisoning or high fever.

Typhus was rampant on the ships bringing immigrants to Canada. Passengers were crowded with no proper sanitation and the straw mattresses would not even be changed after someone died. Authorities did their best to keep the disease within the quarantine stations at entry points but it spread into cities and settlements throughout the country. Settlers to Prince Edward Island were fortunate not to experience typhus on board ship.

Typhoid fever, which acted very similar to typhus, was caused by bacteria-laden food. It often developed in the summer when it was very difficult for settlers to keep food properly stored from the heat and flies.

Cholera, an acute intestinal infection caused by eating or drinking food or water contaminated with bacteria was very common. Medicine had not developed beyond the infancy stage and there was little understanding of bacteria and the importance of sanitation. As an example, in the town of Summerside garbage was simply thrown outside people's doors and often laid there for years. The source of water was shallow public wells from which people drew buckets of water. Livestock roamed the streets dropping feces wherever, which often leached down through the ground into the well water. As well, human waste leached from outhouses. People who contacted cholera suffered diarrhea, abdominal cramps, nausea, vomiting and dehydration that could result in death.

Diphtheria was especially feared in children. It was a contagious disease of the throat and upper respiratory tract that made breathing difficult. It developed quickly and was often fatal. Those that lived could have long-term damage to their heart and central nervous system.

Well-educated doctors were hard to find in the colonies and, even if available, many people could not afford them. The Charlottetown newspaper, *The Islander*, reported in 1859, that the "dread of a Doctor's bill kept poorer classes from getting help from doctors." There was no government Medicare in the 1850s and people were entirely responsible for themselves. Sickness could cause a family to lose everything they owned.

Doctors on Prince Edward Island during the 1850s used leeches or bloodsuckers to bleed patients. If someone was sick it was believed it was because their blood was bad and they needed to be bled. Sometimes the leeches got lost in the orifices of the body and had to be retrieved by giving the patient something to make them throw up or go to the bathroom. The barber also bled people. This is why the barbershop pole is red and white. The red stands for blood and the white for bandages.

If an operation was needed the patient was placed on the kitchen table and sedated with alcohol. Many died, not from the operation itself, but from the lack of sanitation that brought about bacterial diseases.

Instead of well-trained doctors in the colony there were lots of quacks who had purchased their degree certificate from supposed medical schools in the United States. Quack was the name given to a doctor with questionable cures. The name comes from the word quacksalver. There were many quacksalvers on the Island. These were people who made up tonics and peddled them as cures for all kinds of ailments. Mostly the ingredients were alcohol and opium. In 1856, the newly formed P.E.I. Medical Association tried, without success, to get the government to regulate the profession for the protection of people.

## **Drugs and druggists**

Doctors had little to work with in the way of drugs. They basically had morphine, opium and Quinine.

Quinine is an alkaloid from the bark of the cinchona tree, which grows in South America. The Jesuits brought it back to Europe from Peru in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the early settlers brought it to North America. It was the first chemical compound used to successfully treat infectious disease. The main use of quinine was to treat malaria, but it will kill fungi and bacteria so they used it to treat practically every disease including mouth and throat infections, cancer, fever, induce contractions in labour and to calm the nerves. They also used it to improve appetite and aid digestion. Long-term use of the drug can cause one to go deaf. In the early days on Prince Edward Island this was the principal drug given out by doctors.

Doctors used opium to cure everything. Opium is a bitter narcotic drug prepared from the dried juice of unripe pods of the opium poppy. It is strongly addictive. Doctors created many drug addicts by prescriptions of opium, especially women to whom they prescribed it for calming their nerves. It is from opium that morphine is made and doctors used morphine to kill the pain for patients they could do nothing to help, such as cancer patients.

If people couldn't afford a doctor or there wasn't one in the area, they bought patent medicine or tonics from peddlers or storekeepers. These patent medicines were guaranteed to cure everything. What they were was mixtures of alcohol, opium or morphine however; they were not advertised as such.

A Charlottetown chemist advertised in 1854, pure cod liver oil and lime for the "cure of consumption, scrofula, coughs, colds, asthma, bronchitis, spitting of blood, and all complaints of the lungs." Worms and other parasites were treated with numerous tonics. Earache was treated by blowing smoke into the ear canal. A cough syrup might be a mixture of honey, laudanum, peppermint, anise seed and whiskey. A liniment for rheumatism, sprains and bruises was a mixture of ammonia, turpentine, opium, rainwater and soap.

## **Home Remedies and Midwifery**

People depended greatly on home remedies and the help of neighbours when illness struck. They practiced prevention as best they could. Layers of clothing were put on children to keep them from getting a cold. Long underwear went on as soon as there was a nip in the fall air and was not taken off until late spring. By this time in history a belief was developing that more frequent bathing might help to prevent sickness and so the weekly bath became more common.

The Grahamites also started to promote the thought that exercise could help people, as could eating and drinking in moderation. A Grahamite was a follower of the American dietary reformer, Sylvester Graham (1794-1851). He promoted alternative medicine and

was the inventor of the Graham cracker. However, in the minds of many people disease was “God’s punishment for leading a sinful life.”

The native people helped the early settlers by showing them particular tree and plant roots and plants that would help with sickness.

Some of the following home remedies were popular:

- **Dandelion tea** for lumbago - a painful condition of the lower back likely caused by a slipped disk or muscle strain
- **Mercury, saltpeter, and tater** to clean the stomach and bowels
- **Alcohol** to improve appetite and skin colour
- **Turpentine** fumes inhaled for whooping cough
- **Goose grease** rubbed on the chest and back for colds and flu
- **Mustard** plaster for colds and pneumonia - a recipe of mustard, flour, and water would be mixed, placed between cloths and placed on the back and chest for a period of time
- **Linseed** poultice to draw out infections and splinters in the body

In the 1850s, the majority of babies were delivered at home by a midwife from the community. It was only if the midwife ran into difficulty that a doctor would be sent for. The midwife often stayed with the family for a few weeks to help the mother recover. Even though childbirth is a natural thing, many women died giving birth, as so little could be done to help them if anything went wrong.

### **Religion**

Although the British regulation for the settlement of the Island stipulated that only Protestants were to take up land, many landowners brought Roman Catholic settlers. This was especially true of the Scots. Settlements were usually divided on the lines of religion, which was an important part of life for the people of the 1850s. The number of clergymen in the colony was still small during the decade but worship was becoming more organized.

In the early days settlers often conducted their own worship services in homes or in the schoolhouse until a church could be built. If a preacher arrived in an area everyone turned out to hear him. He might baptize all the children of a settlement in one service and conduct a number of marriages. It was not unusual for people to travel for several days by foot and boat to attend a church service.

As settlements became more established in the 1850s more Island churches were built. The worship building often took several years to complete due to a shortage of cash. Special events such as tea parties were held to raise money for church building.

For early settlers religious denomination (religious congregations united under a common faith and name) was very important. For many people it was more important to marry someone of the same faith than someone of the same ethnic background. Therefore, on Prince Edward Island many ethnic groups intermarried in order to keep their religion pure. An example would be a Roman Catholic Irish person marrying a Roman Catholic Acadian rather than risking marrying a Protestant Irish person. A mixed marriage between two religions brought many consequences to a couple and their future children. It took a strong love to survive such a union and many people avoided the difficulty of the situation by “staying on their own side of the fence.”

The Sabbath day as a day of rest was taken very seriously by many denominations and no work, including play, was allowed on the day. The preparation work for the Sabbath would be done on Saturday. Church services could be several hours long and children were expected to sit quietly through them. Young people of courting age looked forward to church as it provided an opportunity for a young gentleman to offer to drive or walk home a young lady.

The churches were people’s moral watchdogs. They promoted the moral virtues of thrift, industry, and hard work. They also kept a close eye on the behaviour of members of the congregation. People could find themselves called before the church for such things as being drunk in public, fighting, or having a baby too soon after the wedding date.

### **Education**

For many Island children helping the family survive was the first priority. They went to school if and when they could. Twentieth century ideas such as ‘physical education’ were hardly necessary as some children were gladly in school to escape the physical demands of farming and fishing. Yet for many students once they knew their numbers and letters they were ready for the world. After all it was common for some of the most distinguished and accomplished people in the colony to sign their name with an X.

The upper class settlers in the colony had always had schooling in place for their children. Young people were either sent abroad or had tutors brought to them. Parents who had some education often taught their own children.

Places like Summerside saw schools divided along class lines in the 1850s. The working class parents had real problems trying to support a school and dress and feed their children. The entrepreneurial and governing class financed a separate school because they didn’t want their children exposed to contagion from vermin and skin diseases that they felt were spread by the lower class.

The colonial government didn’t concern itself about public education for there wasn’t money to pay teachers and establish schools. Parents in some Island settlements worked



on their own to promote education and by the end of the 1830s there were approximately fifty schools on the Island.

A start at reforming the school system was made in 1852 with the Liberal Government's Education Act. The government took control of the curriculum taught to children and they agreed to pay the salaries of teachers. Parents had to agree to take on the responsibility of building a school in their district and looking after it. The communities that already had their own schools didn't like to be told what they would teach their children. Other communities just didn't care about education. Many people saw school as a waste of time. They needed their children at home to help do the work on the farm or help in the house.

A government school inspector John Stark visited a school in Summerside in 1857. This was his conclusion: "Too much indifference exists, both in town and country as to the early and regular attendance of children." A very serious problem was that many children didn't have the clothing they needed to go to school in the winter when there would be less work on the farm. Students often registered when the school opened and came and went as they wished. If attendance fell to less than half of those registered the government was legally able to remove its support. It was very hard to keep numbers steady as many families came and went according to what jobs were available in an area.

### **Schoolhouses and Teachers**

The schoolhouse was an important building in the community of the 1850s. It was usually a one room wooden structure that might also serve as a place for church services. The poorer schools were furnished with wooden benches that lined the outside walls. Schools with better finances had wooden desks. The school was heated with a wood stove that was usually started in the morning by an older student. The wood would be supplied by families of students.

Fortunate schools had an outdoor pump for water supply. A cup used by everyone would be chained to the pump. In cold weather a bucket of water was taken indoors and students used a ladle to get a drink. The toilet facility was an outhouse, which students often worried about using in case other students turned it over while they were inside.

Students could range in age from six to twenty-six. Often the older students were bigger and stronger than the teacher and the schoolhouse was often very noisy and disorderly. There were some interesting methods of punishment. Ada MacLeod tells in her book, *Roads to Summerside*, about the way Mr. Jelly, a teacher from Ireland who taught at Read's Corner, disciplined. "If a student misbehaved he would have one of the bigger boys hoist the transgressor on his back and while the teacher sat at his ease, he would apply the rod to the most convenient part of the culprit's person."

The three R's— reading, writing, and arithmetic — were the common subjects taught in public schools. Students in private schools also learned such subjects as Latin, French, history and behavior. Private Island schools for girls also taught fine needlework and proper behaviour. Writing instruments and paper were precious items, which is one

reason memory work was so important. The common school tools of the day were wooden framed slates and slate pencils.

Schools were often closed due to the lack of a teacher. In the early days of the colony many of the teachers were men from England and such universities as Oxford who had run into career problems because of their love to drink. It was hard to keep good teachers in the job because the pay was so low it was difficult to survive and support a family. A married male teacher might receive part of his pay in produce and wood. Single teachers often received room and board with families in the community as part of their payment.

It was debatable if women should be allowed to teach, even though they could be students. St. Eleanors was very forward thinking when it hired as its first teacher, Miss Ellen Lawson. This is what the school inspector for Prince County reported April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1851 – “A school has lately been opened in the village of St. Eleanors under the care of Miss E. Lawson, and as there are various conflicting opinions in communities concerning the eligibility of females for the government of district schools, I feel it is my duty as well as a gratifying privilege to say that the services of this lady are highly appreciated by her patrons and I am disposed to anticipate that she will discharge the duties of her trust with credit to herself and advantage to her pupils.” Miss Lawson moved on to teach in Summerside. Female teachers were expected to stop teaching as soon as they married.

### **Entertainment and Recreation**

People living in Prince Edward Island during the 1850s depended greatly on their own creativity for entertainment. Most of peoples' waking hours were spent at work but play was incorporated into the chores. When men and women gathered together to work they sang, told stories, riddles and jokes, recited poetry, and talked of the old country. When the work was done at night people often gathered in homes for a kitchen party with dancing, music and stories. The storyteller was a very important person in a community. People would gather to listen to the tales and share in a laugh. Politics were a source of entertainment. People would travel to hear politicians speak and often everyone got into the act. Alcohol played a big part in gatherings and for many settlers became a serious handicap.

### **Games Children Played**

The streets of the towns and villages, the barnyards and woods of the countryside were the playgrounds of children living on Prince Edward Island during the 1850s. Children were not given much time to play but when they had time they made the most of it.

The most popular winter activity would be sledding for in this time period the Island had plenty of snow during the winter months. Sliding on the ice of ponds and rivers was also popular. Those who could afford ice blades skated and those who couldn't afford them used their boots to slide on the ice. Building snowmen and snow forts, and throwing snowballs were fun activities for a nice winter day. From the native people, settlers learned a game called shinny which was played both on ice and in the fields. There were two teams with each player having a stick with a curve on the bottom that they used to try and hit a homemade puck between two sticks of wood marking the opposing team's net.

Summer activity included ball. There was baseball, dodge ball, and kick ball. Skipping was a favourite of girls and boys loved their marble games. Hide and seek, and tag were popular with children of all ages as was leapfrog, and hopscotch. A popular pastime for children was the hoop and stick game. A child would use a stick to keep a hoop standing and rolling as quickly as possible. The hoop was usually a ring off a barrel.

The favourite part of school for most children in the 1850s was recess. Children were quick to rush outside to play games. Tag, counting rhymes, hide and seek, and baseball were among the favourites.

Indoor games included string games, tops, wooden toys and dolls. Children also played checkers and games such as I Spy that required no props.

Settlers would get together when possible for picnics and play such games as Three Legged Race, Egg in the Spoon, and Push the Potato.

### **Questions for Critical Thought and Ideas for Further Exploration**

#### **Introduction**

- Why did Prince Edward Island have such desired land? Why was shipbuilding such an important industry?
- How would the Aboriginals and Acadians feel when the British started to settle? Did the English have the right to deport the French? Would there have been other alternatives?

#### **Livelihood**

- Why were working bees so effective?
- What would be some of the benefits and downfalls of using a bartering system versus a money centered economy?
- Children worked hard in the 1850s without an allowance. What do you think the pioneers of that time would think of children getting allowances today? What do you think it would be like to be in their shoes?
- Do you think learning through apprenticeship is a good idea? How would it differ from going through post-secondary programs?
- Look at the book *Early Prince Edward Island Probate Records from 1786 to 1850* to get an idea of the lifestyles of individuals at the time.
- Read the book *A Child's Day* to learn more about the life of a North American child in the 1800s.

- Have a look at the Spokeshave Plane in the suitcase. This was a tool used by carpenters to smooth cylindrical wooden surfaces. What might be some examples of its use?

### **Transportation**

- As discussed in this section, horses were vital in transportation. Have a look at the horse tool in the suitcase. Explain why such a simple tool was so important.
- Skates were a good method of transportation in the winter. Take a look at the skates in the suitcase along with the rubber boots, which were good for walking in rainy weather. Are these types of footwear as valuable today? For whom would they be important for in the 1850s? Today?

### **Shelter**

- Buying houses was not an option in the 1850s. Shelters had to be built and were not done to satisfy people's wants, but their needs. Discuss these needs and have a look at the Heritage House Notes in the suitcase. How do these houses differ from your home?
- Look through the book *The Kitchen* to learn more about the most important room in an early settler's home.
- Read the book *In the Barn* to learn more about its use in the lives of the pioneers.

### **Lighting**

- Why were kerosene lamps preferred to candles?
- Try making your own candles by using either the mould provided in the suitcase, or by the traditional dipping method described in the activities section.
- How do people use the expression "ready for the pot" today? What do they mean by it?

### **Heating Homes**

- The invention of matches greatly eased the job of lighting a fire. Iceboxes greatly aided in keeping foods frozen or cold. Make a list of other early pioneer inventions that helped in daily life.
- What time of year would be the hardest for pioneers in the 1850s? Think about the hot summers and the cold winters in the uninsulated home. How did the time of year affect the daily routine?
- As mentioned in the activities section, listen to the song about the Jeffrey boys on Allan Rankin's CD found in the suitcase. Listen for the type of wood good for heating homes.

## **Water**

- Water conservation is becoming an important issue today because of the amount of water wasted. Did pioneers in the 1850s use water wisely?
- Which would be more beneficial for a settling family – a large piece of farmland with the ability to produce a plentiful harvest or a small piece of farmland by a brook?

## **Food**

- Check out some of the recipes in the activities section. Try making your own bread and butter like the pioneers. Pioneers ate much simpler than we do today. Compare the amount of ingredients used in the bread recipes to the amount found in the bread you buy at the store. Be sure to look at the butter mould and paddle included in the suitcase.
- Based on the foods available to the pioneers, would you say they had healthy diets? Do you think it was easier or harder to eat healthy in the 1850s compared to today?
- Read the book *The Kitchen* to learn more about food preparation in the mid-1800s.
- Take a look at the potato masher found in the suitcase.
- Icehouses helped pioneers to keep food cold in the summer. Check out the ice tongs in the suitcase; they would have made handling the ice much easier.

## **Clothing and Fashion**

- After learning about women's apparel in the 1850s, would you rather be rich or poor? List some of the pros and cons of both lifestyles.
- Clothes, as were most things in the 1850s, were designed out of need. Describe the purpose of the following clothing items: long johns, straw hats / bonnets, aprons, corsets.
- Have a look at the carding paddles found in the suitcase. What was the more useful / important tool to pioneers in the 1850s – the butter paddle or the carding paddle? Why?
- Flax was an important fibre used in making clothing. Take a look at the hackle found in the suitcase. Why would this tool have been useful for the pioneers?

## **Footwear**

- Shoes are said to be one of the most important pieces of clothing since we wear them every day. Getting a pair of shoes made just for you sounds like quite a

privilege to us, but was it a pleasant experience to those in the 1850s? Were new shoes comfortable?

- As an upper class lady in the 1850s, you wore a corset to make your waist smaller and shoes that were too small to give you dainty feet. If you had to wear either of these uncomfortable pieces, which would you choose?

### **Personal Hygiene**

- What does the expression “Don’t throw the baby out with the bathwater” mean when it’s said today?
- As described throughout this program, pioneers did all sorts of things to avoid catching an illness, such as never taking off their long johns in the winter, eating onions soaked in vinegar, and only bathing once or twice a year. Why were they so afraid of getting sick? Did they have the type of medicine and health care system that we have today? Try answering this question before reading the next section on sickness and medical care.

### **Sickness and Medical Care**

- Imagine being very sick but having nowhere to go for help. How do you think parents felt when their children were sick and they could not afford to see a doctor or buy any vaccines or medication?
- Because of the numerous illnesses that were so common, preventing sickness was very important. Try to remember some of the precautions put in place along with other things the pioneers did to avoid getting sick.

### **Drugs and Druggists**

- The pioneers of the 1850s did not have much available when it came to medicine and drugs for pain and curing illnesses. Would it have been more advantageous for them to develop more effective treatments to these common illnesses or improve sanitation as a preventative measure?
- How do treatments of the 1850s compare to those used today for similar illnesses, for example, cancer, earaches, colds, sprains, and bruises?

### **Home Remedies and Midwifery**

- Because of the cost and scarcity of medication and doctors, home remedies were very common. Talk with older members of your family and community to discover what home remedies were used when they were young. Does your family still use any today?
- What do you think it would be like to be a midwife or a doctor in the 1850s? List some of the challenges they would have faced.

- Midwives were very important in the 1850s as many people had very large families. With all the risks associated with childbirth as well as all the infant illnesses at the time, why was it still important that people still have such large families?

### **Religion**

- In the 1850s, people often looked to the church to promote morals. What might some of these morals be? Are they still encouraged today?
- What is your opinion of observing a Sabbath day of rest? Was it helpful for the pioneers?

### **Education**

- Why was there a push in the 1800s to open public school? Why is education so important?
- What were some of the disadvantages that prevented children from going to school? Would they have seen it as a missed opportunity to not be able to go to school?
- How do you feel about the methods of discipline? Were they effective?
- Have a look at the ink well and the slate pencils in the suitcase. Which do you think pioneers preferred writing with – quill pens and inkwells or slates and slate pencils?

### **Schoolhouses and Teachers**

- Why might women teachers not have been welcomed in some communities?
- Would the job of a teacher be an easy one? Make a list of the challenges they would have faced. Think about the building, the age range of students, etc.

### **Entertainment and Recreation**

- Pioneers of the 1850s worked very hard but they still took time for recreation. Why is recreation important?

### **Games Children Played**

- Games in the 1850s were simple and often used basic supplies from around the house. From what you learned in this section, did the children make the best out of their recreational time?
- Are many of the games played over a hundred years ago still popular today? Make a list of the games pioneers played that you still play today. Can you think of other games that require only simple materials that could have been played in the 1850s?

- Check out the book *A Child's Day* to learn more about the life of a North American child in the 1800s.

### **Suggestions for Activities:**

1. Go to the Island Register website <http://islandregister.com> and view the 1863 Lake Map based on actual surveys by civil engineers D. J. Lake and H. S. Peck. The map gives an accurate overview of the Island at this point in its settlement. You will be able to see the stage of development in your own community.
2. The Island was originally covered in Acadian Forest. To learn about the type of trees early settlers cleared from the land, check out the MacPhail Woods Ecological Forestry Project website <http://www.macphailwoods.org/acadianforest.html>. You can also look at the Island Nature Trust website at <http://www.islandnaturetrust.ca/forest.html>. What is the status of the Acadian Forest on Prince Edward Island today?
3. Listen to the song about the Jeffery boys on the Allan Rankin CD. Discover what types of wood are best for certain fires.
4. View the PEI Heritage Foundation architecture booklet included in the box. How many of these early house designs can you find in your community? Try to date your own home and name its architectural style.
5. With the supervision of an adult, try making candles without a mould. Take a deep pot and melt tallow (which can be purchased in the meat department of most grocery stores) or Parowax until it is a liquid. Place a pencil or small stick in the centre of a string long enough to make two candles. Dip the string into the melted tallow and allow it to harden. Dip them again, let harden, and then repeat until enough wax is built up to make a candle. It will take thirty to fifty dips.
6. Try making candles using the mould provided in the box. Run the wick through the mould and secure it at the top. Pour in the melted wax or tallow and allow it to harden. Was the mould an improvement in the making of candles?
7. If you experience a dry scalp try running bran through your hair to see if it helps.
8. Cut up an onion and soak it in vinegar for a few minutes. Then eat it as a snack. This was often a bedtime lunch. See if it will prevent you from getting a cold.
9. Talk with older members of your family and community to discover what home remedy cures were used when they were young.
10. Have a debate on whether or not disease is a punishment. Think of it in terms of our modern day. Are people getting diseases because God is punishing them or is it from eating fast foods, not exercising and getting enough sleep?



11. Bread is called the staff of life as it has been the main source of nutrients down through the generations. Try making the Irish Soda Bread recipe or the Frybread recipe listed below. Both would have been common with settlers of the 1850s.

### **Irish Soda Bread**

½ cup (125 ml) milk  
1 teaspoon (5 ml) vinegar  
2 cups (500 ml) flour  
1 teaspoon (5 ml) baking soda  
1 teaspoon (5 ml) cream of tarter  
½ teaspoon (3 ml) salt  
2 tablespoons (30 ml) butter

Add vinegar to milk and set aside. The vinegar will sour the milk.  
Mix together flour, baking soda, cream of tarter, and salt.  
Rub in butter with your fingertips.  
Add milk mixture to flour mixture a little at a time and stir in to form the dough.  
Shape the dough into a flat circle about 2 inches (5cm) thick  
Bake on a lightly greased cookie sheet 30 minutes in a 425F or 220C oven.  
Eat while fresh and warm.

### **Frybread**

1 ½ cups (375 ml) flour  
1 teaspoon (5 ml) baking powder  
1 tablespoon (15 ml) melted butter  
½ cup (125 ml) warm milk  
Pinch of salt  
Pinch of sugar  
4 tablespoons (60 ml) vegetable oil

Mix all ingredients except oil in a bowl  
Knead the dough until smooth and divide into four pieces  
Shape each piece into a flat circle  
Using a medium setting, heat the oil in a frying pan on the stove  
Cook or “fry” dough pieces one at a time until brown and crispy

12. Butter does make it better. The early settlers who owned dairy cows made their own butter. They separated the milk and churned the cream into butter. Try making butter in the classroom using a very simple method. Purchase a 125 ml container of 36 percent fat whipping cream. Pour the cream into a large Mason jar and seal the cover tightly. Then take turns shaking the jar. As the churning process progresses the contents of the jar will fall away from the sides. Upon opening the jar you will find a clump of butter in the midst of the buttermilk. Drain the buttermilk and drink it or save it for making muffins or

pancakes. Shake the butter some more until all the buttermilk is removed. Drain buttermilk again and remove butter. You can eat as is or add a pinch of salt to give flavour.

### **Resources used to compile this information**

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*Three Centuries and the Island*, by H. H Clark

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*Lot 16 United Church and Its People*, by Marlene Campbell, Lot 16 United Church, 2004

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“A Little Learning: Early Education on Prince Edward Island, by Diane Morrow. *The Island Magazine* Fall/Winter 1989

“Physicians Quacks and Opium Eaters; The Professionalization of Medicine in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century”, by Douglas Baldwin & Nancy J. MacNeill MacBeath. *The Island Magazine* Fall/Winter 1989

*Customs and Traditions*, by Bobbie Kalman and Tammy Everts, Crabtree Publishing Company

*Home Crafts*, by Bobbie Kalman, Crabtree Publishing Company

*Pioneer Recipes*, by Bobbie Kalman and Lynda Hale, Crabtree Pub. Company, 2001

*Schoolyard Games*, by Bobbie Kalman and Heather Levigne, Crabtree Publishing Company, 2001

*19<sup>th</sup> Century Clothing*, by Bobbie Kalman, Crabtree Publishing Company, 1993

### **Resource material to supplement the text:**

Items in the suitcase: Besides the written material contained in the binder a number of other materials have been gathered for the suitcase that will increase the student's understanding of the lives of the people of the day. Items are,

**Early Prince Edward Island Probate Records from 1786 to 1850:** The wills contained in this book reveal a great deal about how people lived their lives, what material possessions they had amassed, and how they chose to distribute them upon death. The wills reveal how women and daughters were viewed in comparison to male offspring, and even how behaviour could be controlled through the promise of an inheritance. They also reveal literacy rates. Many things can be learned through a will, not all of them are written down.

**The Kitchen:** Written by Bobbie Kalman, this book is part of the Historic Communities series published by Crabtree Publishing. It tells the story of the kitchen considered to be the most important room in an early settler's home. It answers many of the questions about how people of the time went about preparing their daily food. The book is filled with colourful photographs and illustrations.

**In The Barn:** Written by Bobbie Kalman, this book is part of the Historic Communities series published by Crabtree Publishing. It tells the story of the barns built by pioneers to house their animals and crops. It relates well the chores of the different seasons, as well as tells how the barn played a part in the social lives of people. The book is filled with colourful photographs and illustrations.

**A Child's Day:** Written by Bobbie Kalman and Tammy Everts, this book is part of the Historic Communities series published by Crabtree Publishing. It tells the story of the day in the life of a North American child in the 1800s. The book is filled with colourful photographs and illustrations.

**Ads from The Islander and The Examiner, Charlottetown newspapers of the 1850s.** A number of ads from the two papers were scanned to show students not only what was being sold at the time, but the style of writing in newspaper ads. The ads tell a great deal about the life of the times.

**Heritage House Notes:** This is a book written by the Museum and Heritage Foundation of Prince Edward Island. It shows the different styles of architecture built in early Prince Edward Island.

**Allan Rankin CD:** Rankin, an Island songwriter and singer sings a song about cutting the firewood. He refers to what types of wood to burn to meet different needs such as cooking and heating.

**Artifacts:** Several artifacts have been placed in each suitcase for students to examine and identify. The artifacts included will depend on the suitcase your classroom has received.

### **List of artifacts**

**Candle Mould:** This candle mould would be considered a real advancement in technology. Several candles could be made at once and left to harden in the mould. Once hardened they would be removed and hung over a nail until needed. The old way of making candles was very labour intensive. Children and women had to hand dip the wick in the melted fat, hang it to harden and then dip again until a candle was formed.

**Potato Masher:** What ever tools a pioneer woman had to work with in her kitchen were likely handmade at home using wood. This potato masher is a perfect example of how people were inventive.

**Butter Mould:** After the woman of the house or the children had churned the butter and washed out the buttermilk, the butter would be spooned into moulds and left to harden. Once the butter had set it would be removed from the mould, wrapped and stored in a cool place. Most moulds were one pound forms and many had a designed carved in them that would transform to the soft butter. The plunger pushed the butter out of the mould.

**Butter Paddle:** After the butter was churned, and the buttermilk drained off, the butter would then be washed with clean water to remove any remaining buttermilk. The butter paddle would be used to squeeze out any remaining water before the butter was spooned into the butter mould.

**Carding Paddles:** Once the sheep were sheared the collected wool would be washed to clean it and then in order to untangle and fluff it, it would be carded using carding paddles. The spinner would then spin it into a long continuous thread.

**Hackle:** Flax was a common crop grown by early Islanders to make clothing and linens. The flax fibres were pulled through the teeth of a hackle to comb out knots and make long threads that could then be spun and woven.

**Ice Tongs:** People had to find ways to keep their food and drink cold and fresh in the heat of the summer. They used ice for the job. In winter when rivers and ponds were frozen large blocks of ice would be chopped out and stored in the icehouse for summer use. The icehouse was a building burrowed in the ground and without windows to keep it cold during summer. The ice would be packed in sawdust for additional insulation. The large cold blocks would be handled with ice tongs so that the person moving it wouldn't get cold hands.

**Skates:** Skates weren't just for recreation; they were also a means of transportation for the early settler who used them to travel over frozen waterways. Skates have been

around for centuries with the first European ones being made of bone. These skates are simply the metal blades set in a wooden platform that fastened onto the skater's boots.

**Rubber Boots:** Charles Goodyear discovered how to vulcanize rubber in 1836, and from there the many uses of rubber continued to grow and expand. Rubber boots were invented in the mid 1800s and are still going strong today.

**Ink Well:** For those early settlers fortunate enough to know how to write the tools included a quill pen and an ink well. The ink well held the liquid ink which the quill would be dipped into. The ink that stuck to the quill would then be used to write on paper. The quill could be various materials as long as it was pointed and the ink would adhere. This ink well is crockery meaning it is made from clay but for the right price they could be purchased made from crystal, metal, ceramic, etc.

**Slate Pencil:** Students in the mid-1800 would have little opportunity to have paper on which to write their lessons as it was expensive and hard to get. They did their school work on a piece of slate (An argillaceous rock which readily splits into thin plates) that could be marked on with a slate pencil. When the lesson was done the slate would be wiped clean for the next assignment.

**Horse Tool:** This is another handmade tool created out of necessity. Horses, which were the work animal of the farm and a source of transportation, could be high strung when it came to having medicine given to them or work done on their feet. This tool was simple a handle shaped out of a block of wood with a rope put through one end. The rope would be placed over the horse's nose and mouth and twisted tight by the handler. This kept the horse still until the necessary work was completed.

**Spokeshave Plane:** There were many types of planes used by carpenters, wheelwrights, coopers and joiners. A plane is a carpenter's hand tool with an adjustable blade for smoothing or shaping wood. The Spokeshave Plane is a small plane that has a handle on each side of its blade; used for shaping or smoothing cylindrical wooden surfaces (originally wheel spokes.)