

The Open Suitcase Series – Program Description

The Fox Industry of Prince Edward Island

This program reveals the beginning, prosperity, and decline of the fox farming industry. It outlines the tools and techniques used in the industry. Students get to learn about the two Islanders who started it all. A complete description of the topics covered and the contents of the suitcase are also provided. The program encompasses suggested activities and questions for critical thinking.

The written material covers the following topics:

Setting the Background: Riches of the North

Learn the history of furs including where they were in demand, what types of animals were being used, and where the first fox farm was found on Prince Edward Island.

Early Fox Farming in Prince Edward Island

Why would raising foxes in captivity be difficult? Who were the first two Islanders to accomplish the task successfully? Though the men tried to keep their techniques a secret, eventually they shared their methods with others. Why did so many people want to raise foxes in captivity?

The Silver Rush: Expansion of the Industry

Money was good in fox farming and many tried to get involved. For what prices were furs selling? What about live breeding stock? Learn about fox shows, the million-dollar train and other topics related to the expansion of the industry.

The Brittle End: Declining Demand

Over-production, World War Two, and a change in fashion were some of the main factors contributing to the decline of the fox industry. How many fox farms were found on the Island prior to, and following the decline? Why did mink pelts become more popular?

Fox Forts: Logistics of Raising Foxes

Discover the techniques behind fox farming, including what worked and what didn't. Learn about the nature of foxes, and how fox farms accommodated these valuable animals.

Tools of the Trade

From pens to tattoo kits, grooming and pelting boards, food and medication, taking care of foxes was no easy task. Discover some of the tools used and methods practiced in the fox farming business.

Robert Oulton: Profile of a Fox Founder

Learn about the life of one of P.E.I.'s most well-known fox breeders. What sort of life did he live? What conditions led him to experiment with fox farming?

Sir Charles Dalton: Profile of a Fox Founder

The fox farming business enabled Sir Charles Dalton to retire a millionaire. How did the fox farming industry influence his life? What did he do with his newfound fortune?

Items in the suitcase

There are a variety of items and materials in the suitcase that allow students to learn in a hands-on way. The suitcase contains lot cards and fox tags, along with samples of pelts and furs from a variety of animals including fox, mink, and sable.