

1860's Rural Life in PEI



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Introduction:

An awareness of some of the day to day facts of the life in Prince Edward Island 150 years ago is of particular significance because:

1. 1989 Prince Edward Island had celebrated the anniversary of the 1864 Charlottetown Conference leading to the 1867 Confederation of Canada.
2. An understanding of the culture of that period will heighten appreciation for present and future cultural trends.
3. The decade 1988-1997 has been designated as the "International Decade for Cultural Development."

The word "culture" may bring to mind different meanings to different people. What does it mean to you?

Several dictionary sources state that the original meaning of culture was "tillage" or "cultivation", basically for improvement. As the early settlers learned how to cultivate their thoughts and activities to improve their crops, they also developed way to cultivate their thoughts and activities to improve the quality of their lives. The kind of culture that resulted was influenced partly by the nature of the environment in which they found themselves.

A broad concept of culture is stated, as follows, in Webster's New Collegiate dictionary: "Culture is the integrated pattern of human behavior that includes thought, speech, action, and artifacts, and depends on man's capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations."

This present age certainly has the means for transmitting and storing knowledge. It was not so easy in the 1860's, being mostly word of mouth, written account, or actual hand-made objects passed along from generation to generation. Writers of Island history have told us very little about the details of everyday life, so we have to try to piece together fragments of information gathered from previous researchers who have used old newspapers, ect from Public Archives, journals, diaries, and stories of family traditions.

Life in the 1860's

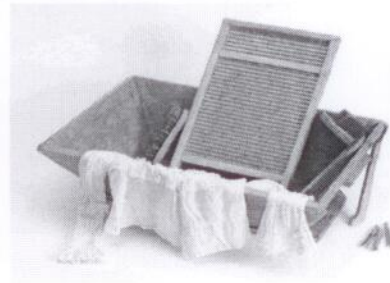
In the 1860's, Prince Edward Island was emerging from the pioneer stage into a period of growth. There was a vigorous ship-building industry, and a strong sea-borne trade between the Old Country and the Untied States. Most of the population was rural, engaged in farming, fishing, and lumbering. There were local builders of furniture, and of agriculture machinery and implements. Several newspapers were being published. A map of PEI in 1863 shows the location of many schools, churches, carding mills, saw mills, shingle mills, grist mills, distilleries and post offices. There was also shipyards, hotels or inns, woolen factories, and tanneries.

Transportation was still by horse and buggy or sleigh. A trip to town or the country store might be taken to pick up such imports as tea, salt, sugar, molasses, tobacco, clothing, ect, or occasionally it might be to visit relatives or even to attend a



more sophisticated cultural event in Charlottetown, such as military band concert, or an orchestra, perhaps the circus! For the most part, each rural community was a close-knit group, depending on their neighbors for entertainment as well as for help in the time of need. Visiting, story-telling, singing, and dancing were common means of social enjoyment, mostly done in their homes.

The duties in the household were many and varied. Much of the food was grown and processed at home, curing pork and beef, churning cream for butter, preserving berries, and making bread were some of the chores added to the actual meal preparation. Providing warm winter clothing meant washing and cleaning wool so it could be made into rolls at the carding mill. Then it had to be spun into yarn, dyed, and woven into cloth to be sewn by hand into garments. Sometimes, a traveling tailor might move into the home to make suits or coats.



When wash day rolled around, there was water to be pumped or raised by a bucket from a well, or carried from a brook or spring. The clothes were washed on a wooded washboard with home-made soap and pressed with an iron heated on the kitchen stove.

The family likely slept on ticks filled with chaff, or if lucky, might have a feather bed on top of the straw tick. Besides her other tasks, the Mother knit socks, mitts, hooked rugs, pieced patchwork quilts, and taught her daughters the domestic arts. Much of this work was done by candle light in the long winter evenings. Also, in some families the women helped with the outside chores as well.

With all the physical hard work necessary to survive and achieve some degree of comfort with the slow modes of transportation there was not much time, energy, or money for most finer arts of music, drama, literature, painting, etc. The culture of Prince Edward Island in the 1860's, as for any given group in an era, developed out of their needs for survival, their need for self-expression, and need to improve their lot in life, especially in their own homes. They have left us a heritage of being "active" in body and mind and "steady" in character along with arts and artifacts to their time. If we are to preserve this heritage, we must learn about it and transmit the knowledge to succeeding generations.

Recipes

Johnny Cake

This recipe comes down to the present generation from an ancestry famed for superior cookery ~ for over a century there was a rivalry between housewives to excel in the culinary art. This recipe demonstrates the virtue of cornmeal and it was all the better if ground in the old grist mills.

1 cup yellow cornmeal	1 cup sour cream
1 cup flour	½ tsp. soda
3 tbsp. sugar	3 tbsp. butter
1 tsp. salt	2 eggs
2 tsp. baking powder	

Mix dry ingredients well. Add butter, cream and eggs. Beat thoroughly. Bake about 25 minutes in a moderate oven, using a 6 x 10 inch pan. Delicious with baked beans.

Ginger Lemonade

This is a Traditional haymakers' Drink.

Take 1 cup vinegar, 1 cup sugar, 2 tsp ginger; stir well together. Put in a quart pitcher and fill with ice water. Add 1 tsp soda. This will make the mixture fizz. If one wants it sweeter, more sugar may be added.

Molasses Cookies

1 cup molasses
1 tbsp soda
1 tbsp vinegar

Bring molasses to a boil. Add soda and vinegar. Blend well, and let cool a bit.

Add 1 cup fat, 1 cup brown sugar, 1 beaten egg. Stir in sifted dry ingredients: 4 cups flour, 1 tsp salt, 1 tsp cloves, 2 tsp ginger. Mix well. Roll thin, bake in moderate oven until lightly browned.

Root Vegetables

5 carrots
2 large parsnips
1 celeriac
2 tbsp(30 ml) butter
1 medium red onion, thinly sliced
salt and pepper
1 tsp(5 ml) wine vinegar
½ tsp (2 ml) old-fashioned Dijon mustard

Peel the carrots, parsnips and celeriac. Cut into julienne strips.
Cook in boiling water just to cover 10-15 minutes so that they are still crunchy.
Keep the vegetable warm and set aside the cooking liquid.
Melt the butter and saute the onion until transparent, not brown.
Add ¼ cup of the cooking liquid, salt, pepper and vinegar.
Mix in the vegetables. Stir in the mustard when you serve.

Mussels Cooked Under Pine Needles

This recipe was originally cooked on the shore by fishermen for Brouage, the birthplace of Samuel Champlain.

3 kg (6 pounds) mussels
1 large bag of dried pine needles
Pine board about 18 inches square
Bread and butter

Collect a bag of pine needles and let them become very dry. One hour before cooking, soak the pine board in water. Beginning at the center of the board, arrange four mussels in the form of a cross. Insert mussels one by one between each mussel in the center. Enlarge the circle until the board is covered with mussels. Cover with pine needles, about 6 to 8 inches thick

Light each corner and re-cover with more needles (4-5 inches thick) Use a fan to help flame. The shells will become nearly black. Fan the ashes off of the mussels (a calendar works well). Open and place on a serving plate.
Serve with thick slices of buttered bread.

Cranberry Marmalade

3 cups (750 ml) cranberries
1 cinnamon stick
3 whole cloves
1 cup (250 ml) boiling water
2 cups (500 ml) granulated sugar
¼ cup (200 ml) red wine
Rind of 1 orange
Orange sections from one orange

Place cranberries, cinnamon stick and cloves in a sauce pan. Add boiling water. Bring to a boil, cover pot and boil for 3 to 4 minutes or until skins burst. Add sugar and bring to a rolling boil. Boil for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Add wine and orange rind and return to boil. Remove from heat, stir and skim off any foam. Pour into a glass serving dish. Decorate with fresh orange sections.

Braised Pheasant

½ bottle dry red wine
2 tsp (10 ml) savory
2 tsp (10 ml) parsley
1 medium carrot, shredded
2 pheasants, cut into serving pieces
½ pound (225 g) salt pork

In a large bowl, mix together wine, savory, parsley and carrot. Add pheasants and marinate for 5 to 8 hours in refrigerator. Slice salt pork and melt in a heavy casserole.

Remove pheasants from marinade, pat dry with paper towels and saute in melted fat until pale brown. Pour some of the marinade on pheasants, cover and cook for 3 hours at 350° F (175° C). Baste meat frequently with more marinade.

1860's Rural life in PEI Quiz: True of False

1. In the 1860's PEI was in a pioneer stage of growth
True or false
2. Ship building was poor at the time, and almost unheard of
True or False
3. The majority of the population was in cities
True or False
4. There were not yet things like hotels, tanneries, and newspapers
True or False
5. Transportation had graduated from horse to car
True or false
6. Water was taken from wells or carried from a brook or spring
True or False
7. Much work was done by candle light
True or False
8. Women's chores were in the house at this time, and they never did chores outside
True or False
9. Unlike the habits of today's modern culture, life's daily tasks developed out of the need for survival
True or False

1860's Rural Life in P.E.I Answer Sheet:

1. True

2. False

3. False -Most was rural

4. False

5. False- Still used horse or sleigh

6. True

7. True

8. False - On occasion the women had to take care of the outdoor chores

9. True