

PIONEER LIFE IN KIPLING... CONTINUED

A small amount of cream would be churned in a glass or crockery jar which had wooden paddles that were turned by a crank that was attached to the top of the lid. This made a smaller amount of butter for use at the table. Greater amounts of cream were churned in a large wooden barrel which could hold up to five gallons of cream yielding approximately twenty-five pounds of butter. The butter was then washed, salt added to give some flavour and stored in crocks. If butter was to be sold it would be shaped in a one pound size wooden butter press and wrapped in parchment like paper. As nothing was wasted the treat of buttermilk was enjoyed by all and used in baking great cakes, pancakes or just drunk as is as a treat.

Pioneer women did not have the appliances to keep food fresh. Some homes did have ice houses where they kept perishables cool while others put such items as milk and cream in pails and hung them down the well to keep cool. Meat was preserved by salting or smoking and later was canned for keeping. Eventually homes had ice boxes and then with electricity, the refrigerator and freezer were used.

The annual harvest meant many hours of planning and preparation by the household. It was taken for granted that the pioneer women would cope with all the extra physical and menial tasks. If a crew was hired she would have to provide accommodations plus meals. This meant extra laundry as well. If neighbours helped with the harvest, their wives often helped with the preparation of meals. Needless to say, cooking and serving food to threshing gangs resulted in piles of dirty dishes. Often the threshing gangs went from farm to farm and the tasks were repeated many times keeping the women busy baking and cooking. In spite of the extra work involved, harvest time was looked forward to with anticipation, it meant catching up on news and music and dancing after the chores were done.

Pioneer women were very resourceful. They wasted nothing. Leftover porridge was used as a thickener in soups, stews, breads, etc. The cotton flour and sugar sacks once removed of their ink writing were washed and bleached by boiling to make them white were used for tea towels, pillow cases, sewn together for sheets, diapers, undergarments etc. The occasional coloured ones were used to make a dress or shirt or tablecloth. When fowl were plucked the feathers and down were saved for quilts and pillows. Goose feathers were used for cleaning ashes from the fireplace or cook stove. The cornstalks were used as a broom. Pioneer women "made do" with the things that were available to them and this was the secret to their success. They expected very little in the way of material possessions and comfort.