

Customs and Traditions. Bobbie Kalman & Tammy Everts. Illus. Barb Bedell, Antoinette DeBiasi, Tammy Everts, Karen Harrison, Tina Holdcroft, Rudy Irish, Debra Watton. 1994. 32 pp. ISBN 0-86505-495-9 library bound, ISBN 0-86505-515-7 paper. **Fort Life.** Bobbie Kalman & David Schimpky. Illus. Tammy Everts, Antionette DeBiasi, Barb Bedell. 1994. 32 pp. ISBN 0-86505-496-7 library bound, ISBN 0-86505-516-5 paper. **A One Room School.** Bobbie Kalman. Illus. Antoinette DeBiasi, Barb Bedell, Debra Watton, Tammy Everts. 1994. ISBN 0-8650-497-5 library bound, ISBN 0-86505-517-3 paper. **Children's Clothing of the 1800s.** David Schimpky & Bobbie Kalman. Illus. Barb Bedell, Sarah Pallek, Hilary Sandham, David Schimpky. 1995. 32 pp. ISBN 0-86505-480-0 library bound, ISBN 0-86505-519-X paper. **Settler Sayings.** Bobbie Kalman. Illus. Barb Bedell, Antoinette DeBiasi, Andy Cienik, Tammy Everts, Halina Below-Spada. 1994. 32 pp. ISBN 0-86505-498-3 library bound, ISBN 0-86505-518-1 paper. **A Child's Day.** Bobbie Kalman & Tammy Everts. Illus. Antoinette De Biasi, Barb Bedell, Tammy Everts. 1994. 32 pp.. ISBN 0-86505494-0 library bound, ISBN 0-86505-514-9 paper. **Games from Long Ago.** Bobbie Kalman. Illus. Barbara Bedell. 1995. 32 pp. ISBN 0-86505-482-7 Library bound, ISBN 0-86505-521-1 paper. **Old-Time Toys.** Bobbie Kalman & David Schimpky. Illus. Barb Bedell, Tammy Everts, Sarah Pallek, David Schimpky. 1995. ISBN 0-86505-481-9 library Bound, ISBN 0-86505-520-3 paper. All books: Crabtree Publishing Co. (Historic Communities). \$20.95 library bound, \$9.95 paper.

These eight colourful books are part of a series called Historic Communities that examines many different aspects of life when North America was being settled by Europeans. The inhabitants are called "Settlers" throughout, a rather refreshing change from "Pilgrim." The books are arranged in small, easy-to-read segments and a glossary and index are included in each one so that children could easily use them as reference books in their school or home libraries. Even with their reference quality, they are a delight to read, bringing many aspects of settler culture to life. The colourful illustrations are often photographs, and are sometimes a combination of photo and drawing as on the covers of *Fort Life* and *A Child's Day*.

Life for a child in settler times is examined from more than one perspective, making our forebears seem more real. *A One-Room School* shows how children were educated, complete with things modern children would find funny, like exploding ink bottles and spiders in a pencil case. The realities of military life are shown in *Fort Life*. The various buildings within a fort and the types of work that had to be done are shown in colour photographs and told in concise paragraphs. *A Child's Day* is exactly that, showing settler children at work and play. This book includes a small anecdote about a boy who forgot some of his chores and asks the reader to figure out what happened to him. The reader is often gently challenged in this way to interact with the text.

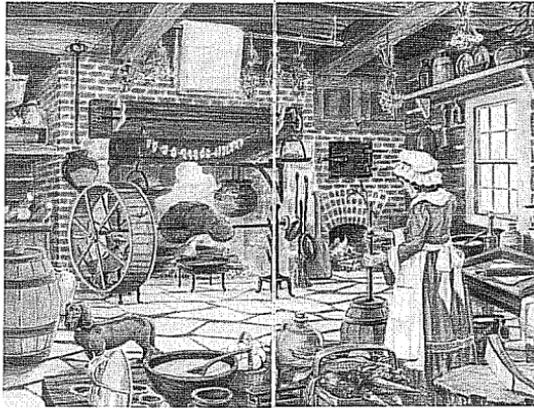
In the kitchen

No dishes to wash

Few of the earliest settlers had dinner plates made of tin or china. Instead, they ate from hollowed-out slabs of wood called trenchers, which were shared by two or more people. Some settlers used a tabletop instead of trenchers. This thick wooden tabletop had bowls carved right into it! Cleanup was simple—after each meal, the entire tabletop was lifted off and washed.

Run, dog, run!

Some settlers had a special way of cooling, even a fan. They cooked large pieces of meat on a spit, a metal rod that ran through the roast. The spit had to be turned so that the meat would be evenly cooked. Turning the spit was a tiresome task, that could take hours, so settlers trained dogs to do the job! Turnspit dogs were small, short-legged dogs. To turn the spit, they ran inside a hamster that runs inside a wheel for exercise.



The settlers had some interesting tools and gadgets in their kitchens. Look at them using these illustrations as clues. Are any of these settler gadgets still used today?



trencher



a spit was used for roasting hot bread from the bread oven



butter mold



a bellows fanned the fire



a bread raised high above the coals



bottle



dog wheel

A new taste sensation!

Water was considered an unhealthy drink. English settlers drank, etc. the Dutch drank beer, and the French and Spanish drank wine. Even children drank alcohol! Eventually the settlers tried drinking water. They were surprised by how good it made them feel!

The magic of honey

The settlers believed that honey had many purposes. Besides tasting good, it was used as a cure for poisoning and had temper. Honey was also thought to protect cows from disease. The settlers believed that keeping beehives near their homes would prevent lightning from striking their houses.

Powerful plants

The settlers thought that some plants held special powers. Women often fastened a twig from an elm tree to their chairs. They didn't think butter would form without this magic twig. Many types of herbs were used for flavoring foods and curing illnesses. They were hung over the fireplace to dry.

Illustration from *Customs and Traditions*

Other books in the series show one complete aspect of settlers' lives. *Children's Clothing of the 1800s* shows by photo and drawings different types of clothing worn by children from birth to teen years. Jonah's trousers are explained in fun verse and easy-to-understand drawings starting with Jonah and proceeding backwards to the sheep who grew the wool. A series of photos show a girl getting into her layers of underwear. Both of these rather complex processes are simplified and clarified on two pages of the book and handled with a respectful, matter-of-fact tone — a strength common to all the books in the series.

Games from Long Ago and Old-Time Toys both show how children amused themselves in their brief times of leisure. Not content to simply describe games and toys from 100 years ago, these books include instructions for playing the games and making one of the toys — a thaumatrope, a disc with a design on each side. When twirled, the designs seem to come together into one. Many of the games were made up in the course of doing all the work necessary in a settler's life, such as playing through a maze of cornstalks, or bobbing for apples. Even games familiar to the readers may seem clearer when they see baseball as it was played over 100 years ago. The classroom games described might even encourage a new generation of spellers at a spelling bee.

Settler Sayings and Customs and Traditions are sub-divided into groups of sayings or customs that go with a whole area of life. A series of customs and

traditions come from holidays, more from the process of courtship and marriage and still more from the settlers' efforts to remember their past. Here a black-and-white drawing of a modern family is included with the colour ones about the settlers, encouraging readers to start their own family or classroom journal, surely a positive step in encouraging an interest in history. In *Settler Sayings* we learn that the kitchen produced the saying "Upper Crust" and the print shop produced "Top Drawer," both for interesting reasons. Even the strange saying "Mind your Ps and Qs" is explained in the pages on Inns and travel. Settler bartenders used it when a customer was behaving badly: beer was sold in pints and quarts and the customer was encouraged to pay attention to how many Ps and Qs he or she had already consumed. Now it simply means "mind your manners."

Each book in the series is a delight to read and a joy to view. The drawings and photos are very expressive and show very clearly ideas that may be new to young people. The text is divided into easily-digested paragraphs that present the past as just that, not portraying our forbears as heroes or poor people, not as superior or inferior, but just as people getting on with their lives in their way. In this series, their way is very interesting indeed.

Wanda Pratt has a long time interest in history and language which has prompted her to write some local histories for the Sarnia, Petrolia, and Oil Springs, Ontario, area.

WILDERNESS ODYSSEYS

Annie. Luanne Armstrong. Polestar, 1995. 336 pp. \$16.95 paper. ISBN 1-896095-00-3. **The Women on the Bridge.** Mel Dagg. Thistledown, 1992. 112 pp. \$16 paper. ISBN 0-920633-99-4. **With the Indians in the Rockies.** James Willard Schultz (repr. 1912). Fifth House, 1995. 136 pp. \$6.95 paper. ISBN 1-895618-64-9.

Ever since Catherine Parr Traill penned *Canadian Crusoes*, authors have created wilderness odysseys, journeys of discovery. Here, in three novels with Western settings, we voyage into the past and cross from known worlds to uncharted ones.

Annie, a strong first novel by Luanne Armstrong, focuses on a voyage of self-discovery as a solitary girl on horseback travels through a sea of prairie grass. Armstrong's style is deceptively simple, at times laconic. This lends power to the story of Annie's struggle for physical survival, and her internal odyssey. For example, Annie's sense of painful isolation is deftly drawn by Armstrong, who writes: "Loneliness clutches her with shining sharp talons" (63). No excess verbiage exists here, yet this image mirrors Annie's battle to stay alive.

Armstrong is particularly successful in showing Annie's encounter with an aboriginal community, one which offers her a replacement for her lost family. Though it would be easy to slip into sentimentality, Armstrong does not, instead sketching a vivid picture of a close-knit group, adding small details which pull