

WHAT DID WESTERN CANADIAN PIONEERS EAT?

A QUESTIONNAIRE

Askins, Mrs. Geo.
Arcola, 1893

(Instructions ; Fill in as much of this questionnaire as you can and mail it to Saskatchewan Archives Office, Box 100, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Sask.)

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Name Mrs. Geo. Askins.
Address Arcola Sask
Birthplace Heady Ontario.

1. INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

What year did you start housekeeping in Western Canada? 1893.....
Where did you set up housekeeping? West Carleton District.
Where had you been living before that? C. Carr District "now Arcola"
For how many people did you prepare meals? 2.....
How far was it to your nearest store? 10 miles.....
How often could a visit be made to the store? once a week....
What groceries did you usually buy in those earliest years? Tea, sugar, flour, oatmeal, salt, prunes, dried apples, syrup, soda, rice.

2. FLOUR AND OTHER GRAIN PRODUCTS

What brand of white flour did you use in the early years? Mill flour.
.....
In what quantities did you buy it? 1/2 bushel.....
What was the usual price per hundred pounds of white flour? \$1.20....
How much did you use graham flour? None.....
Whole wheat flour? None.....
Was flour milled locally? Yes... How far away? 100 miles that year? 1893
What was the price for a twenty pound bag of rolled oats? 60 cts...
What other grain products did you use? None.....
Cornmeal? Yes..... Whole wheat? Farina?
Other?
Did you grind your own wheat for porridge? Yes.....
How did you grind it? Crusher.....

3. SUGARS AND SYRUPS

In what quantity did you buy white sugar? *It comes in barrels. Quantities bought - small*
 What was the price for a ten pound sack of white sugar? *5-0 cts*
 What brand of golden corn syrup did you use? *Bee hive*
 What size of tin of syrup did you usually buy? *10 lbs*
 At what price? *7.5 cts*

4. DAIRY PRODUCTS

How did you get a supply of fresh milk in the early days? *By milking cows*
 butter? *Made butter* eggs? *Kept hens*
 What was the price of butter? *12 cts* of eggs? *10 cts a doz*
 Did you pack eggs for winter? *Yes* how? *In salt*
 Did you make butter? *Yes* cheese? *Yes*
 What kind of cheese? *Home made cheese*

5. MEAT AND FISH

What was your meat supply in the early years? *Salt pork*
 How did you get fresh meat? *Shot an occasional deer*
 How often did you get fresh meat? *Seldom*
 How did you preserve meat? *Salt*
 Was there a "beef ring" in your neighborhood? *No*
 If so what year was it organized?
 Did you use game? *Yes* What kinds? *wild duck & prairie chicken*
 For how long? *7.5 hrs in season*
 What part did fish play in the family diet? *Once or twice a year*
 Was the fish fresh, cured, or canned? *fresh*
 Kinds? *Pickeral or Pike*

6. BEVERAGES

What kind of tea did you buy? *green & black* At what price? *3.1. a lb*
 What kind of coffee did you buy? (beans or ground) ... *None*
 Price? What other beverages were used? *milk*

7. VEGETABLES AND DRIED FRUITS

What was the price of potatoes per bushel when you set up housekeeping?
20 cts a bu could you get potatoes at the store? ... *No*
 If not, where from? ... *grew them in garden*
 What year did you first grow your own supply for the winter of:
 Potatoes *1894* Cabbage *1894* Carrots *1894* Onions
 Turnips *1894* Beets *1894*

In what quantities did you buy white navy beans? ... *None*
 How did you buy prunes, (in bulk or by the box)? ... *box*
 What weight? *25 lbs* .. How did the grocer handle prunes (by box)? *box* ..
 What was the price of prunes? *10 cts a lb* ..
 What other dried fruits did you use in the earliest days? (apples, pears,
 apricots, peaches, loganberries, raisins, currants or others)? *apples*
pears apricots peaches raisins currants

8. PRESERVING

In the early years did you preserve any foods by drying? ... *No*
 peas? corn? beans? Saskatoons? *Yes*
 other foods? ... *rhubarb wild fruits (strawberries raspberries*
gasse berries black currants)
 What year did you first preserve fruit by canning? ... *1920*
 What year did you first preserve vegetables by canning? ... *1940*
 What year did you first preserve meat by canning? ... *1920*
 Do you still preserve foods by canning or drying? ... *canning* ..

 To what extent? ... *for home use*
 Did you make your own vinegar? ... *Yes*

9. PLEASE FILL IN THE FOLLOWING TO THE BEST OF YOUR MEMORY:

| FOOD | Year you first remember seeing it in the store | How was it sold? - In bulk, 10 lb. sack, can etc. | Amt. you usually bought at one time. | Price of this amount |
|----------------------------------|--|---|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Soda biscuits | 1884. | wooden box. | box. | — |
| Macaroni | — | — | — | — |
| Graham flour | 1897. | sack | 5-lb. | — |
| Brown sugar | 1884. | lb. 5 cts | 10 lb | 50 cts |
| Molasses | 1884. | bulk. | 1 qt. | — |
| Table salt | 1884 | sack. | 20 lb. | 70 cts |
| Common salt | 1884 | barrel | - | \$ 2.00 |
| Lily white syrup | 1910. | 10 ^{lb.} pails | 1 | 75 cts |
| Toilet soap | 1893 | bars. | 1 | 20 cts |
| Baking powder | 1897 | Can. | 1 | 25 cts |
| Baking soda | 1884 | package | 1 | 10 " |
| Dried peas | — | — | — | — |
| Dried corn | — | — | — | — |
| Vinegar | 1897. | qt or gal | — | 40 cts a qt 20 cts a lb |
| Raisins - seeded | 1897. | box. | — | — |
| seedless | — | — | — | — |
| Rice | 1890. | bulk. | 25-lb. | 5 cts a lb. |
| Currants | 1897. | by the | lb. | 5 " " " |
| Store jam - kinds? | — | — | — | — |
| Cheese (Cheddar or store cheese) | 1897. | by the | lb. | 40 cts a lb. |
| Vanilla | 1897. | " | bottle | 25 cts a lb |

10. BAKING

What type of yeast did you use? 1/4 cup.....

Did you make yeast for your own use? Yes..... Using starter? Yes.....

Using hops? Yes..... Salt rising? No.....

Did you buy baking powder? No..... Baking soda? Yes.....

Cream of tartar? Yes..... Did you make your own baking powder? Yes.....

.....

11. PLEASE FILL IN THE FOLLOWING TO THE BEST OF YOUR MEMORY:

| FOOD | Earliest date it appeared on the market | Approximate price at the time. | How did it differ from the same product to-day? |
|--|---|--------------------------------|---|
| Canned salmon | 1897 | 25-cts. | not so good. |
| Canned sardines | 1897. | 3 tins for 25- | much the same |
| Other canned fish that appeared early - give names | — | — | — |
| Apples - fresh | 1890. | \$3 a barrel. | better |
| dried | 1884. | 10 cts a lb. | more plentiful |
| Lettuce | 1895- | 10 cts a head. | the same |
| Tomatoes - fresh | 1893 | 15-cts a lb | — |
| canned | 1897. | 20 cts a can | Same |
| Bananas | 1897 | 10 cts - lb | Same |
| Lemons | 1897 | 40 cts a doz. | |
| Oranges | 1897 | 30 " " " | |
| Cornflakes | 1930 | 2 packages for 25-cts | |
| Other prepared breakfast cereals - give names. | Shredded Wheat grape nuts pep. | — | — |
| Pearl tapioca | 1897. | 10 cts a lb. | |
| Minute tapioca | 1940 | | |
| Sago | 1900 | 10 cts a lb. | |
| Dates | 1900. | 10 cts " " | |
| Walnuts | 1893. | 40 cts " " | |
| Icing sugar | 1893. | 10 cts " " | |

12. WATER SUPPLY

Where did you get water for drinking and for cooking? (Well, river, slough, dugout) Well.....

How far was this water from your home? 30 ft.....

How was it brought to the home? (pail, barrel, tank) pail.....

Regarding water supply, mention any changes which have taken place since you first started housekeeping, giving dates where possible.

Wind mills, & engines are used for pumping

13. SOAPS

Did you buy laundry soap or make your own? *Made your own.*
 If you made your own, did you use lye? wood ashes? *wood ashes.*
 What kinds of laundry soap did the grocer handle? *Royal Crown & Pearl
 Sunlight.*

14. FUEL

What fuel did you use in the earliest days? *wood*
 Where did you get your fuel? *Moose Mt.*

Mention any changes in the use of fuels which have taken place since you first started housekeeping, giving dates where possible.

coal, oil, gas & electricity
coal, oil
oil & gas about 5- yrs ago. 1945-
electricity 1949 & 5-0

15. METHODS OF COOKING AND TYPES OF UTENSILS

For cooking, did you use an indoor fireplace or open hearth in the earliest days? (Give dates) *neither*

Did you use an outdoor fireplace or bake oven? (Give dates) *No*

By whom was your first cook stove made? *Mine was Prince of Wales 1893*

What year was it purchased? *1893* Price? *\$20.00*

What types of utensils did you use? (Iron, copper, tin, homemade) *Iron, tin*

For preparing food? (china, earthenware, wooden bowls, other) *earthenware bowls wooden for butter*

When did you first see enamel ware? *1900*

Aluminum? *1916*

16. WRAPPINGS AND CONTAINERS

Mention any changes which you recall in the wrappings and containers received with the food you purchased (give dates where possible).

bread wrapped, 1940.
Tea in lb. packages.
currants & raisins lb.
a good many things are wrapped
in cellophane,

17. Give a typical day's menu (breakfast, dinner & supper) for the earliest year you can remember. Give the year and list the members of the family with their ages at the time. State the approximate month, e.g. winter or summer.

10 of a family.

Summer
&
Winter

Much the same

Breakfast - Oatmeal Porridge Meat & potatoes, bread, butter
dinner - Meat, vegetables, dessert pickled beets
supper - Meat or eggs - potatoes - bread, fruit
biscuits.

18. What year did you serve your first Christmas dinner in Western Canada?
... 1935..... Give the menu. List those present and give their approximate ages at that time.

Turkey
Vegetables
Plum Pudding

Family gathering at home

40 yrs.
38 "
36 "
34 "

19. Were you ever reduced to almost starvation level living on one or two locally produced foods? Give details.

No -

20. Mention any outstanding differences in the preparation of meals in the earliest days as compared with today.

Buy bread - & Cookies.
 fresh meat, & fowl.
 or
 Canned.

21. When did you begin to rely on purchased foods and prepared foods instead of homegrown and home prepared foods? (Give as many details and dates as possible).

Always relied on home foods.

22. Please add other details from your early experiences of buying groceries and securing foods in other ways during pioneer days in Western Canada. Include items not mentioned above, quality, methods of merchandizing, prices, problems of storage, shortages and other details. [Use back of page if more space is needed].

Mode of transportation, horses, wagons. Stone boat sleighs. Now mostly cars.

A pioneer of this ^{district} (now Arcola) drove to Souris with a yoke of oxen, for a quart of flour, taking two weeks, a distance of about 110 miles. The farmers drew their grain to Alameda & Oxbow, a 2 day trip stopping at a half way house over night sleeping on floors. When beds were full. Other farmers took their butter & eggs & went to Masonville 60 miles for their supply. before any little stores started up.

(over)

The Excelsior Homemakers Club
appointed three of the Ulder members
to fill in this questionnaire.

Excelsior Homemakers Club