

THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF WOMEN IN A
NEWFOUNDLAND FISHING COMMUNITY

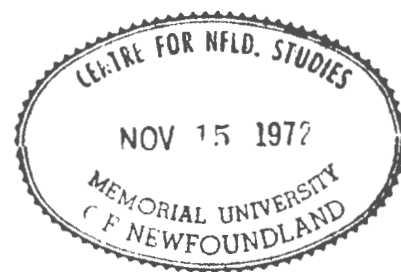
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THE TRADITIONAL ROLE OF WOMEN IN A
NEWFOUNDLAND FISHING COMMUNITY



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ABSTRACT

This dissertation is based on tape-recorded interviews made with twenty-three informants during fieldwork carried out in the Trinity Bay community of Elliston during the period May-September 1970, and on research done at the Provincial Archives and at the "Newfoundland Room", Memorial University Library, St. John's, during 1969-1971.

The aim of this study is to show the extremely important role women played in a fishing community during the period 1900-1950. To do this, I have presented a composite picture of a woman's life from the "cradle to the grave". Following the opening chapters which deal with methodology and the history and geography of the community, I take up pregnancy, birth, and babyhood, with its attendant beliefs, customs, and practices. Then I consider a girl's childhood - games played, schooling, and work load. This is followed by a chapter on the young adult - her role expectations, entertainment, work load, and courtship and marriage customs and practices. The next three chapters deal with "women's work", both inside and outside the house, through all seasons of the year, living and working conditions in the home, and feeding and health practices. This is followed by a chapter which deals with the woman's involvement in church and church-oriented social activities and her participation in

death and funeral arrangements. My conclusion summarizes the changes that have occurred in the twenty-year interval 1950-1970.

Thus I have given a generalized description of the community's culture and its value system - a picture of the folklife. Most of the folkways herein described no longer exist in the community, partly because a way of life has vanished as Elliston no longer has a viable fishing industry.

My description is specific and concentrated on Elliston - one small community. But, I feel much I have described would be true (though with obvious variations) for many other fishing communities in Newfoundland.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Background and Collecting Experiences.....	6
Geography and History of Elliston.....	28
Pregnancy, Birth, and Babyhood.....	58
A Girl's Childhood.....	94
Teenage Activities, Courtship, and Marriage.....	152
Living and Working Conditions in Elliston Homes.....	180
Feeding the Family and Health Practices...	215
The Woman's Traditional Role at Different Seasons of the Year....	241
Social Activities, Death and Funeral Customs and Practices..	278
Twenty Years Later.....	301
Bibliography.....	314

INTRODUCTION

In the following pages I have tried to draw a composite picture of a woman's life from the cradle to the grave, during the period 1900-1950, in Elliston, a fishing community near the tip of the Bonavista Peninsula on the east coast of Newfoundland. I am mainly concerned with the woman's role in the culture; but in this community the roles of men and women were so intertwined that one cannot be discussed without the other. And even within this comparatively stable period these roles were not static.

Ideas about what was "men's work" and what was "women's work" changed, particularly with regard to the fishery, because of modifications and innovations in fishing equipment and the manner in which fishing was carried out. In the early days of settlement, each "planter"¹ employed "youngsters" (servants) to fish for him. There were enough men "to make the fish" (i.e. cure it) as well as catch it. Although some women "servants" may have worked "at the fish" on land, the planter's wife was not necessarily involved in the operation.

Before the mid-nineteenth century, the "planter"-controlled fishery had ceased in Elliston and fishing was

¹ A planter was a well-to-do fisherman who employed other men to fish for him. He was a middleman between the merchant and the poorer fishermen, his "youngsters."

being done by small crews consisting usually of two or three brothers. Fishing had become a family business and the fishermen's wives and daughters made up the "land crew" doing the greater part of the "shore work". Men who had rowed a heavy fishing boat for several miles in dead calm could not be expected to do all the heavy work on the land, so the women took added responsibilities during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth. With the introduction of engines in fishing boats, however, there was some reduction of strenuous work on the water. Hence, the majority of the men, though not all, would help with the shore work.

The men, at least those with whom I talked, were well aware of the woman's major contribution to the fishery. It was a man who declared: "Women did more than half the work." And another said: "It couldn't have been done without the women."

The greater part of my information comes from about a dozen seventy to eighty year-old informants - men and women - for the men were as willing as the women to talk about the role women played. Often when I was interviewing an elderly couple the husband supplemented the wife's account. And, some of what I have written is from my own knowledge of what things used to be like. For I had the advantage that I grew up in the culture during part of the

period that I am discussing and, during one summer near the end of the period - in the late 1940s - I was part of a fishing crew. It was hard work and since there were lots of fish we were under constant pressure for four weeks. It was "come day, go day, God send Sunday!" For Sunday was the only rest day during those hectic four weeks.

My twenty-three informants, referred to by number, were, I believe, fairly representative members of the community. They ranged in age from the middle forties to the eighties; the greater number being in their seventies. Some were parents of large families; others reared only one or two children. They were from varying religious backgrounds chiefly Anglican and United Church, but some with Salvation Army connections as well. I interviewed no large merchant or business man, simply because there are none left, the big local business having gone bankrupt in the 1960s. Two or three of my women informants had been schoolteachers.

Obviously considerable variations exist even in such a small community. Of the four sections of Elliston locally thought of as separate communities, I worked in three: Maberly, Neck, and Elliston Centre. Fieldwork with other people would have undoubtedly revealed additional data and there were many other people I would like to have interviewed but I got so much from my first group of informants that I did not wish to spread my net too wide. Besides, I

had been taught that it was better to concentrate on a few good informants. After all, I was not doing a general survey of the area. I was not, for instance, interested in finding out how many people knitted, nor how knitting was done, but rather in the importance of knitting in the lives of my informants. Nonetheless my description of women's work, though based on a few specific informants, in a way represents the standards of a majority of the whole community.

My informants are mostly retired people who are reminiscing about the past, as there is no longer a viable fishing industry in Elliston. But, much of what they say is about the life I myself lived and have seen change. Having been away for a number of years I have gained a certain amount of perspective and detachment, but, by going back and steeping myself in the tradition once again, I was made aware of many details which I had forgotten. In writing I had the great advantage of having my aunt, born in 1900, to clarify what came from others. She grew up in the culture, spent nearly thirty years away from it, and then some twenty years ago, returned to live in the community.

I have tried to give a generalized description of the culture and its value system - a picture of the folklife. For example, I was interested in why they told stories and sang songs, but not in collecting all the stories and songs.

The oral folklore is integrated in my description of the culture and not treated in separate genres. In short, my essay describes the past cultural history and the folkways, most of which no longer exist in the community.

In the first chapter I describe my background, preparation and method of collecting. After that I give a brief geographical and historical description of Elliston, including a discussion of the basic economy, showing how it shifted from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. In my third chapter I discuss what the anthropologists and folklorists call the first of the "rites of passage", birth. In successive chapters I take up: a girl's childhood; teenage activities, courtship and marriage; living and working conditions in Elliston homes; eating and health practices; women's work at different seasons both indoors and outdoors; and general social activities ending with death and funeral practices and customs. In my final chapter I summarize much of what I have described, primarily by contrasting the past with the changes that have occurred in the period 1950-1970.

My description is specific and concentrated on Elliston - one small community. But, from my experience as a teacher in various parts of Newfoundland and from talking with Newfoundlanders from different parts of the island, it seems reasonable to suggest that much I have described would be true (though with obvious variations) for many other sections of Newfoundland.

BACKGROUND AND COLLECTING EXPERIENCES

My interest in folklore, particularly the folklore of Newfoundland, stems partly from an accident of birth. For I was born at the height of the Depression in the sizable fishing community of Elliston at the tip of the Bonavista Peninsula on the east coast of Newfoundland. As a child I knew Elliston as a thriving community with everyone busy - men, women, and children. Today, its one industry, the in-shore fishery, is almost defunct and the community seems to be made up chiefly of retired people on pensions or unemployed people living on welfare. I was a teenager at the time of Confederation with Canada in 1949 and fiercely anti-Canadian. Even today I tend to think of myself as a Newfoundlander first and a Canadian second. Perhaps my attitude is a bit more understandable when one realizes that in Elliston, before 1949, our contacts with mainland Canada were few indeed. Canadian goods coming into the Dominion of Newfoundland before Confederation were subject to duties as were American goods. But, we felt closer to the United States. Hardly anyone from the community went to the Mainland to work; the great exodus to Toronto had not yet begun. Yet, nearly every family in Elliston had several relatives living somewhere in the United States, chiefly around Boston, most of these having emigrated during the 1920s. In addition, during the war years the Americans had established a

small "listening post" military base at "Mark's Path" in Elliston. The American boys got on well with the people of the community. Towards the end of the war the base came under Canadian control and was run quite differently. People found the Canadian soldiers stuffy and cold in comparison to the easy-going American boys. I was too young to have any ideas on the subject but this was the attitude that filtered down to me from my elders.

Like most of my contemporaries in Elliston, after completing high school I left the community and have returned to it only for short intervals, usually in the summertime. The intervening years since 1950 have been spent mainly in urban areas, except for one year spent teaching on the west coast of the island following four years at University in St. John's. The bulk of my teaching has been done in and around St. John's, but I also spent four years at Gander in central Newfoundland. Thus I have a very good idea of other Newfoundland areas than my home town.

The fishery was still very important in Elliston during the 1950s, but towards the end of the decade it became evident that it was dying out. Fewer crews took part in the fishery each year and now where once there were up-

wards of one hundred boats "on the collar"¹ during the fishing season there are but three. A way of life has gone forever - a life of which I was once a part. Children growing up in Elliston today are quite unaware of conditions that existed just a few short years ago.

I was well aware of the great changes taking place in Elliston in recent years, but I did not become especially interested in studying the old ways until I decided to take courses in the Department of Folklore at Memorial University. Undoubtedly my interest in folklore springs from my strongly nationalistic and regional feelings and I was intrigued by the chance to study my own culture, particularly since it had changed.

During my first year in Graduate Studies 1969-70, I attended classes in the Introductory Course in Folklore, Folksong, Folklife, and Newfoundland History. All these courses played a part in preparing me for my field work carried out during the summer of 1970. Weekly collecting for Dr. Halpert's introductory classes made me aware of the vast amount and variety of genres of folklore to be found in Newfoundland. In this course concentration was chiefly on

¹ Large fishing boats were "launched" from the shore at the beginning of each fishing season. When they were not being used they were placed "on the collar" that is, they were "moored" or "anchored" in a safe area some distance from the shore. Fishermen used small rowboats to move between the "collar" and the shore.

different aspects of our own tradition. Obtaining material for a paper on death and funeral practices and for "Calendar Customs" involved me in interviewing for the first time - armed with pen and notebook only. The research and means of collecting used in obtaining material for a major paper on fishing boats for the Folklife class, involved interviews with strangers for the first time. After this I was eager to do further collecting. The history paper which I wrote on Elliston served to heighten my interest in the community since now I knew more about its background.

While doing various papers for folklore classes I found myself stressing the woman's role, but, in the course of my reading in folklore collections I found that even those done by women stressed genres not life. The authors seemed intent merely on recording texts, and the woman's role received only passing attention in general folklore books. For writing this paper I found books by anthropologists concerning "growing up" and "women's role" in other cultures valuable in that I was made aware of the differences that existed between those cultures and mine. Autobiographical books dealing with rural areas in Britain and the United States were more pertinent in providing parallels and made me remember things from my childhood that I might otherwise have forgotten. Therefore, I have included in my bibliography books which gave me insights, but which are not re-

ferred to specifically in footnotes.

Here I felt was a topic worthy of study, and I was certain that I could easily collect this material so frequently neglected by folklorists. With this end in view, I began my summer field work in Elliston. Older women and men were my chief informants, for the men were as knowledgeable as the women on many aspects of the "woman's role".

To these people I did not have to explain my interest in folklore - they knew my parents and my upbringing. They knew my father's fondness for a funny story and a joke; my mother's knowledge of family relationships and general community history, and her special attention to the celebration of birthdays, anniversaries etc. Hardly a day passed in our house (when we were children), but some member of the family would give at least the punch-line of one of Father's oft-told anecdotes, applying it to the situation at hand. Invariably, the result would be delighted laughter from nearly everyone else. Or, Mother would comment that it was so-and-so's birthday - she knew the birthdate of practically everyone around - not just the members of our immediate family.

For years she kept a diary. During my childhood this was simply a lined exercise book. Here she noted the births, deaths, and marriages in the community; unusual

weather conditions; any special visitors; events of note in the community and in the world at large. She rarely knew the direction of the wind so her invariable question to Father when she was writing up the day's events was, "How's the wind today?" Many people were aware of her fondness for recording events and one of my informants during the summer of 1970 asked me to check my mother's diary to see when her (the informant's) father had died. She herself wasn't certain of the date, but she added: "If anyone has it written down, your mother has."

My Mother also had a great respect and fondness for things that were handed down in the family. Oftentimes I was told as a child where this or that piece of glassware came from, how, and why. Besides, there were scraps of family history, incidents (often humorous) from the past. For example, we were told that when her paternal grandfather went to collect his bride-to-be from a small community in Bonavista Bay, she, in those days of sailing ships, had no prior notice of his coming, and he found her busy harvesting potatoes. "She had to go aboard his schooner from the pratle garden".

Mother read to us and encouraged us to read. Before we could read for ourselves, hardly a winter Sunday afternoon passed without her reading some book or long magazine

story to us. Mystery, adventure, murder, love, western - whatever might be available. Her audience consisted of us three children, plus two or three neighbouring boys. She would be permitted to stop for supper only, and then she would finish the story by lamplight. Sometimes it would be nearly midnight when she ceased reading.

Being brought up in such an atmosphere - supplied with stories, the short local anecdotes as well as the longer fictional stories; with dialect all around me; and nurtured in a pattern of life little different from that of fifty years previously, which since the 1950s has largely disappeared - it seemed to my informants the natural thing for me to wish to record the still existing folklore of "home" before all is obliterated, or at any rate overlaid, with the veneer of culture produced by the mass communications media.

I did not have the problem of trying to justify or explain my interest in folklore. Because of my family background and my share in the culture, I had few of the problems that other collectors have when working among strangers.

The older people, my informants, know that a way of life has disappeared forever, and old terms and expressions are falling into disuse. Their grandchildren have far less in common with them than they had with their grandparents. There is little chance for that special rapport to develop

between the generations, or for the sayings and traditions to be passed on. Whereas they saw their grandparents every day, in most cases perhaps sharing the home of one set of grandparents, today's grandchildren are more likely to be found any place in the world but in their parents' birth-place. When they come to visit "home" occasionally, the children find it difficult even to converse with their grandparents. Instead of being in awe of the latter's superior knowledge, they may think them quaint and naive.

The life pattern that I experienced as a child was only slightly different from my parents' and my informants' childhoods. Today's child, whether living in Elliston or some other corner of Canada, has, in the main, a vastly different childhood from mine, with totally different influences at work on him.

The older folk, those now in their seventies and eighties, see members of my age group as having common ties with them, as well as being definitely part of the present age of change - a bridge, as it were, between two worlds. They freely shared their memories and knowledge of the past with me, because they knew that much of it had been part of my past too. Because I was "one of them", a local girl, childhood friend of their sons and daughters, they knew I was asking them questions in order to fill out gaps in my own knowledge of what things used to be like. I was not a

foreigner or outsider who might be suspected of wanting to show the rest of the world how quaint we used to be or still are. They, too, feel the need to preserve the knowledge of what it was like "years ago". Many were proud of having passed through the tough depression years, and though all agreed it was a life of back-breaking toil, "one drop of sweat pushin' the other, maid", they, looking back, admitted that they had enjoyed the hustle and bustle of life then. One couple, in their eighties now, said if they had to re-live their lives they would not want to change anything about them.

My informants were at ease with me at all times. Why should they feel otherwise? I was a "known quantity". And, because of fairly frequent visits "home" over the years, many of them have become acquainted with my husband and, more recently, my children. I suspect that I had some "stranger value" too. I have been away from the community for nearly twenty years; I have been teaching at the high school level in St. John's; and my husband is not a Newfoundlander but Scottish. Whatever the ingredients, the combination was a very good one for my gathering of the information I sought.

As mentioned earlier, my first collecting was done for a paper on death and funeral practices and customs in

Elliston. I interviewed my mother and my aunt, copying down their answers in a notebook. During the winter and spring of 1969-70 I worked on a major research paper "Fishing Boats in Elliston, Trinity Bay", for a course in Folklife. For this I prepared a questionnaire for distribution to a number of informants in Elliston and the nearby communities of Catalina and Bonavista. I distributed the questionnaire in Elliston myself, but in Catalina, Little Catalina and Bonavista I relied on friends to make suitable contacts. My informants were always friendly and helpful and several of them were exceptional in their services rendered. Their help far exceeded my expectations and gave me a lift when I most needed it. For instance for my Folklife paper I needed old photographs of boats and fishing scenes etc. I requested help through the "Letters to the Editor" column in *The Fisherman's Advocate*, a paper published weekly at Port Union, Trinity Bay. People sent me their precious fifty-year old snapshots straight from their photo albums - snaps that were irreplaceable. It was really heartwarming.

I doubt if such direct results would have been secured by an outsider - one having no ties with the area. Even in my fieldwork carried on in neighbouring communities I could be placed by my informants. I stress this to show the tremendous advantage I had for collecting in my home community. I am firmly convinced that any success I have had

in collecting and the ease with which the material was elicited, was due in no small measure to my family, and more especially my parents. They kept the kind of home from which no traveller, friend or stranger, was permitted to leave without a meal - a cup of tea - if he'd have no more. And, usually, there was a drop of something else to "warm the innards". Because the section of Elliston which is "home" to me - Maberly - lay at the road's end and there was no public eating establishment near at hand, Mother felt it her duty to have any traveller - salesman, oilman, tourist - in for a meal if he happened on her doorstep around meal-time. She never expected or ever got material rewards for her kindness except on one occasion when a poor old gentleman, a stranger, found himself in Maberly at dinnertime. He insisted on paying for his meal but Mother would have none of it. After he had gone she discovered a fifty-cent piece pushed under his plate. She kept it for years afterward!

Father, too, believed in dispensing hospitality to others, especially travellers. Once, during the early years of his marriage, he was on his way to the "woods" for a load of boughs (used for kindling fires in summer), when he met an acquaintance from Little Catalina who had been searching for his horse all day. (Horses not used during the summer were let free to roam the countryside). He made the man

promise that he would call at "the house" for a cup of tea. Then, just in case the man might not do so, he turned round and brought him home for a meal. I regard this action as a case of truly "casting one's bread upon the waters". Although the results of this act of kindness were not forthcoming in my parents' lifetimes, yet I benefited from it. For the man who sought the horse back in the early 1930s was my chief non-Elliston informant for my Folklife paper. Apparently his wife was rather unwilling that he become involved for fear that I would "laugh at his way of putting things down". However, he said he'd chance that; seeing whose daughter I was I couldn't be too bad. He told me of his misgivings and also his reasons for helping me when I called on him at his home during the summer of 1970 to express my thanks in person.

My fieldwork during the summer of 1970 was fortunately not my first attempt to collect with tape recorder. I used one during the fall of 1969 while getting information on fishing boats. My first taping of an informant happened rather unexpectedly. My husband, daughter, and I, were at Maberly for just a few hours checking on the condition of my parents' house, and especially on the repairs that were being carried out to the roof. A family friend, a small storekeeper and former fisherman, dropped in to say "hello". We

chatted on various matters until I suddenly remembered that here was a boat builder, named rather appropriately, I think, Noah. So, I set up the machine and started questioning him though I did not have my questionnaire to consult. I had to work from memory. He proved a fine informant and was not the least perturbed by the use of the tape recorder. Far less perturbed than I!

The wonderful whole-hearted co-operation which I received in my quest for information about fishing boats really made me look forward to my field work in summer, 1970. This I began in early June and continued (with weeks off now and then) through till September. There was also a weekend jaunt in November. During my summer fieldwork the tape recorder was in constant use whenever I was interviewing.

I explained my use of the tape recorder by saying that I wanted to preserve the information that they could give me about the past so that I could refer to it later for my university work.

However, I must confess I approached every collecting session with new informants with some trepidation, fearful of my reception. Usually on my first visit I went by car (unless it was near at hand). And I would leave the tape recorder in the car until I had explained to the people of the house my reason for presenting myself so unexpectedly on

their doorstep. My reception was always such that on future trips I could walk in with my equipment. I found that when I had two or three informants in a room that I hardly needed to direct the questioning at all. Often they would keep the conversation going in the direction I wanted without any help from me.

My paternal aunt I found to be a staunch supporter and invaluable aid. Not only was she one of my best informants but also she helped with some of my interviews, eliciting material from informants which I might have overlooked. On several occasions I held my interviewing sessions at her house. Once she took me to visit an elderly couple, distant relatives, who live on the North Side of Elliston. It was she who did most of the questioning on this occasion.

Certainly being a local person I had the inside track, so to speak, and the added advantage of conversing, in the main, about things which were familiar to me. They couldn't "pull my leg" as they might be tempted to do on occasion, with an outsider. Besides, I could speak their language even though some of the words and expressions I have not used since high school days. Moreover, they spoke very quickly when talking about something especially interesting. I had no trouble understanding perfectly what they said at the time, though I found later that some of the conversation was difficult to make out from the tape. Luckily

only one or two tapes presented any real transcription problems. A stranger to the dialect would, I am sure, find these particular tapes undecipherable.

Collecting information about most things was almost absurdly easy. How to make blubber soap, how to treat wool from the shearing to the wearing, what the older houses were like, cures and charms, customary foods and clothing - all this my informants talked about quite freely. Because I was interested in the total picture of everyday things of the past I feel I had an advantage over those who collect specific genres like folksongs or folktales. My informants were only required to act normally, in a conversational situation. They were not called upon to perform. Hence the problem of "freezing-up", of artificiality did not arise. On the two occasions when I tried to set up a situation where I might expect to record tales or even songs, my plans fell through. I have no idea how I would have fared. On another occasion when I was questioning an informant, whom I knew to have been a good singer, about the songs he sang, I got very little information. Maybe, given the right situation he would have performed for me, but he seemed sensitive about the loss of his good strong voice so I didn't wish to push him. I doubt really that I would have got a good cross-section of his repertory anyway; certainly not the bawdy or off-colour songs, for he knew my strict upbringing, and be-

sides I was a school teacher, with all the role restrictions that the profession still conjures up. Furthermore, I do not sing, so people would not feel the need to pass on songs to me.

Unlike an outsider, I did not have to spend time choosing an abode in an appropriate location. Naturally, if I were spending any time in the area I would be expected to live in my old home. So, there I stayed. Often people told me how pleased they were to see the lights "blooming" from the windows once more. And, one night, about 10:00 p.m. we were visited by two women, married now and living on the North Side, but former residents of Maberly. As young girls they often came to our house with their knitting during the long winter nights. As they were passing by that evening they thought of past visits, so they came in.

Obviously my collecting could not be done on a nine-to-five routine. No housewife, however friendly, wanted to see me in the morning hours when she was busy with her housework and was listening to one of the "open line" shows on the radio. At that time I would have been an unwelcome interruption. Besides, I had a family to attend to also.

The weather played its part in determining whether I collected in the afternoon or not. If it was wet and miserable I tried to be off between 2:30-3:00 p.m. Then I

could be fairly sure that my informants would be at home and receptive to questions. On the other hand, I did not feel like trapping my informants indoors on a sunny afternoon. So, on such afternoons, our family group headed for the beach at Sandy Cove, a mile away, where I renewed contacts with people I had not met for years and we also enjoyed the sun and the sea.

None of my informants voiced any suspicions about why I was collecting information about the past. Only once did I run into a person, daughter of one of my best pair of informants, who, until she heard my motives for collecting and my identity, was rather critical. But she had been living for years in one of the larger urban centres and has changed her attitude towards strangers accordingly, and, to do her justice, could not have been nicer to me, once she realized I wasn't just a slick operator trying to take advantage of gullible people.

The quality of the recordings themselves varies, for I took each situation as I found it. I was not about to tell a person in his eighties that the tapping of his matchbox on the table made a very annoying sound on the tape. All sorts of noises found their way onto my tapes: ticking clocks, squeaking rockers, steaming kettles, clanking stove-lids, striking clocks, howling wind, children's cries, T.V. pro-

grams, background conversation, and, worst of all, the ringing of telephones. The latter sound I found the most annoying, and one which it was difficult to eliminate entirely from the tape, for, in Maberly and the Neck, ten households are on the same line. Five telephones ring until the correct party answers. Oftentimes an interesting point was drowned out by the ringing. However the sneakiest of all noises was the sound of a kettle boiling. I had no idea at the time it would do such a thorough job of blotting out conversation, but it was as effective as the known enemy, the noisy phone.

During the first days of my collecting, I was almost scared to use the tape recorder for fear of making some stupid mistake with it. Perhaps this was because during one of my early collecting sessions I used the same tape twice and erased one complete side of a tape. Fortunately I discovered my loss when I arrived home that evening and managed to write down, though in abbreviated form, most of the things I had lost. Luckily I made no further mistakes like that, and I made sure that the battery was always well charged. Only on one occasion did the battery run down and that was after a particularly long evening session. I had used the machine during the afternoon as well.

I was guilty of one other mistake with the tape recorder. In November, 1970, I decided to check up on a few

things I had not dealt with during the summer. A woman, who I figured might be a good informant, and who had been away from home during my summer collecting period, was now home and I determined to see her for an hour or so. The interview took place in the fading light of an autumn afternoon and somehow, when I put on a second tape, I managed to twist it. Before I realized it I had lost about fifteen minutes of the interview. However I managed to get the same information later, though from another source.

Although I got most of my information from several couples in their eighties and seventies, I also received much valuable information from a woman who had just turned sixty and from another one just in her forties. My sixty-year old informant was particularly good because she had grown up in a household where stories, jokes, and tricks were commonplace. Often during recording sessions reference would be made to my father and mother and someone would mention what good informants they would have been. Sometimes I felt that my informants exerted themselves perhaps just a little bit more to try to make up to me for my loss.

After a particularly good session I would return home elated. But every essay into the field was not equally rewarding. I tried, unsuccessfully, several times to interview my former schoolteacher, a native of the community who

has lived there practically all his life. He, I thought, would be a mine of information. But I never did manage to interview him. Nor did I find time to see many more people who might have made a valuable contribution to my cause. I wish now I had tried to range farther afield. The North Side I scarcely visited for I am not very well acquainted with people in that section of the community.

Since I was, as it were, reconstructing the pattern of life of the past, I did not rely on one informant's memory only. I asked the same questions again and again of different people. I found the questionnaires I obtained from the Newfoundland Folklore Archives on "Folk Medicine",² "The Folktale",³ and "The Old Hag",⁴ extremely useful as guides for questioning on these topics. For information on death and funeral customs I used Seán Ó'Súilleabháin's pertinent chapter in *A Handbook of Irish Folklore*. For beliefs and superstitions I had a finding listed based on *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, volume six, *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions of North Carolina*, edited by Wayland D. Hand. Usually I found that one informant's answers backed up another's, providing a fuller picture. Men

² MUNFLA Q69/70 A.

³ MUNFLA Q69/70 D.

⁴ MUNFLA Q69/70 B.

lecting of information from others and I babbled on when I should have been silent. Fortunately for me these lapses were not too frequent.

Sometimes I felt guilty about forever being a taker and never a giver. For most, all I did was send them cards at Christmas and drop in to see them when I was in the area later. So little for so much! But I feel that they enjoyed my visits, for I provided an interested audience for their reminiscing and they were glad to give me the information, knowing that I planned to preserve what their children will not preserve.

GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY OF ELLISTON

Elliston (originally known as Bird Island Cove¹) is a community situated far up the Bonavista Peninsula on the north side of Trinity Bay, approximately two hundred miles by road northeast of St. John's. It is a "wild" place in the sense that it has no proper harbour, being quite as open to the Atlantic as Cape Bonavista itself. The best shelter it has to offer boats is found in the inlet on the north side of the settlement. Access to the sea is difficult except in two or three places. Yet the fishing was good enough to compensate for the lack of a proper harbour and the dangerous coast, and people began settling there during the first decade of the nineteenth century.

Between Bird Island Cove [Elliston] and Bonavista, five miles to the northwest, stretches a range of hills known as "The Ridge". There are, however, no extremely steep hills in the community; the land on the whole has a very moderate slope. Elliston is spread out quite a distance below "The Ridge" and follows the crooks of the coastline. The houses in

¹ The name was changed from Bird Island Cove to Elliston in the early 1900s through the efforts of a United Church clergyman, Reverend Charles Lench. It was done to commemorate the first visit of a Methodist missionary to the community in 1814, an Irishman named Ellis.

the community are not all situated along one main road. Instead they are found in little clusters, and there are "drungs" (lanes) and roads shooting off in all directions from the main artery. In some cases the homes are at quite a distance from the sea. Most have a small plot of land surrounding them and this area is fenced. The main meadow land and the biggest vegetable garden a family possesses may be located one or two miles away from the house.

Considered as part of Elliston are several distinct communities which were mentioned individually in some of the early census returns. Naming them in order from the section nearest Bonavista these are: North Side, Northern [Noder] Cove, Elliston Centre [The Cove] including Elliston Point [Porter's Point], Sandy Cove, The Neck, Maberly [Muddy Brook], and for a limited period before 1900, Northern [Noder] Bight, long abandoned.

The exact date when the first of the permanent settlers went to live in Bird Island Cove [Elliston] cannot be verified, but available records seem to indicate that they moved in from Bonavista during the first decade of the nineteenth century. The area is, however, mentioned in records as early as 1774. At that time "Bonavista merchants, justices of the peace, and others, sent a petition to the governor, Lord Shuldham complaining 'that a number of "masterless" Irishmen (runaway servants) had gone to live in a secluded

cove called Bird Islands and were there building fishing rooms.²

According to one of my informants [No.4] "when John Chaulk, the first of the settlers, came to Noder Cove to set up residence he found two Irishmen, Peter Hackett and Michael Meaney, already fishing from that spot. They made things rather difficult for him there so he moved further along the coast to Maberly" [Muddy Brook]. Here conditions were somewhat similar to those in Noder Cove, there being a sizable brook flowing into the sea at that point. It was not, however as sheltered as Noder Cove. Why he did not choose to settle in Elliston Centre [The Cove] where another large brook flowed into the sea is a mystery. Perhaps he wished to put as much territory between himself and the Irish as possible. The latter, however, moved away with the influx of permanent settlers who followed Chaulk's lead. No one knew or cared where they went.

Local tradition does not indicate what settlers came to Elliston immediately after John Chaulk. But, according to available records several who were well established "planters" by 1813 bore names still found in the community. Church records seem to indicate that the majority moved from Bonavista, but neither local traditions nor records indicate how many of

² Order given by Governor Shuldham, St. John's, October 7, 1774, p.220, Vol.S1,5. Copied from Mr. N.C. Crewe's "Elliston File", Provincial Archives, St. John's, Newfoundland.

these were Newfoundland-born, or how many were immigrants. Church records show only that John Chaulk married Mary Flinn in Bonavista on October 11, 1786³ and he died in Bird Island Cove [Elliston] in 1838, aged 85 years.⁴ Those of his descendants who remained in Maberly located in the areas close to the sea and had all the land in the heart of Maberly as well as the best fishing premises (if best there was).

At the time of settlement "Bonavista and the Bird Islands are allowed to be the best places on the whole coast for fish"⁵ was an opinion expressed by an agent in the fish trade. So, it seems natural that when fishermen could find no more room in the Bonavista area to set themselves up as independent "planters" they moved further along to this, as yet, unused section. And although the coast around Elliston was "wild" and dangerous, the community grew and became an important fishing community during the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

³ Information copied from Church of England Bonavista Church Records, Births, Marriages and Deaths, 1786-1834.

⁴ Information copied from Mr. N.C. Crewe's "Elliston File", Provincial Archives, St. John's.

⁵ A statement contained in a letter written by William Kelson, agent for Slade's business at Trinity, to his employer Robert Slade, Poole, June 25, 1813. Copied from Slade Letter Book, "Slade File", Provincial Archives, St. John's.

Fishermen could not survive, however, unless they could sell their fish and buy the provisions that they could not themselves produce. Many Bird Island [Elliston] "planters" as early as 1813, dealt chiefly with Slade and Company, a West Country English firm from Poole in Dorset. This firm was well-established in Trinity at the time that Bird Island Cove [Elliston] was settled. Since most of the settlers moved from the Bonavista area it seems likely that at first, they would have continued to trade with Bonavista firms, though I could find no records to substantiate this. At any rate, in a letter to his employer at Poole, Slade's agent, William Kelson wrote on June 25, 1813:

The greater part of the Bird Island planters now deal with me instead of going to St. John's or Bonavista, and to encourage them I have already sent down 160 hogsheads of salt with a small assortment of goods and provisions and have no doubt of obtaining the whole of them. I calculate on procuring from thence (if the voyages turn out tolerably) the Active's cargo of fish. I wish it were not such a "wild" place for craft to ride in, but I think it will answer very well if we can only get a store built at Catalina. I am told there is an excellent place in the latter harbour for vessels to lay close to wharves and stores, which might be constructed and which had been unoccupied for several years' past. . . Catalina is said to be with respect to safety for shipping not inferior to Trinity.⁶

The parent company acted on the agent's advice and by 1818 a branch of the Slade business had opened in Catalina,

⁶ *Ibid.*

managed by sub-agent, James Lanigan. Elliston accounts secured earlier, were it seems, transferred to Catalina and the planters' wants were supplied from the Catalina trade. However, the branch business could not make independent decisions on anything of importance; Trinity had to be consulted.

Names of early planters in Elliston crop up again and again in the Slade records. In a letter from Trinity written on November 18, 1814, Kelson lists the number of "youngsters" wanted for the next spring. Included are "one for James Porter of the Bird Islands; two for Thomas Clouter, Bird Islands".⁷

In letters covering the period 1813-1820, Kelson mentions names of other Bird Island residents: Hill, Crew, Brown, Tucker, Burt, Cole, Chard, Trass [Trask], Fielding [Felden]. George Crew, a native of Dorsetshire, was living in the community in 1814, for it was in his home that the first Methodist missionary to visit Bird Island Cove, Ellis, held his religious service.

A "Dealers' List" contained in the Slade File shows that in the year 1825 over two hundred people were then living in

⁷ Excerpt from a letter written by William Kelson, November 18, 1814. Slade Letter Book, "Slade File", Provincial Archives, St. John's.

Bird Island Cove. The list names the planters and their "youngsters" and/or sharemen⁸ but does not name wives and children. The list, the agent says, does not include all those who dealt with him, only the main ones. And, from other correspondence in the Slade File, it appears that not all the Elliston planters dealt with the Slade Company though the greater number did. It seems likely that unless they got much better dealings when that company opened its branch business at Catalina, they would have continued to deal with some Bonavista supplier. And affairs were not always amicable between the planters and the Slade business, as excerpts from correspondence between the Trinity and Catalina agents indicate. On November 3, 1819, Kelson wrote to Lanigan: "I am not sorry to see Hill and Crew come back and I hope they will not have reason to blame themselves for so doing."⁹ And on May 30, 1821, he wrote: "You may depend on it, not one of your Harbour, Ragged Harbour, or Bird Island people shall be furnished with a farthing's worth of our stores at this place."¹⁰

⁸ Men who worked for a "planter" or a better-off fisherman. They were not paid a fixed wage, but received a "share" of the proceeds of the "voyage".

⁹ Excerpt from a letter of November 3, 1819. Slade Letter Book, "Slade File", Provincial Archives, St. John's.

¹⁰ Excerpt from a letter dated May 30, 1821, contained in the Slade Letter Book, "Slade File", Provincial Archives, St. John's.

The managers of the fish businesses had to be ever on the alert against competitors; for example, in a letter of August 14, 1819, Kelson wrote:

Prices are not yet named here but should Thompson take it in his head to do so and actually collect produce in your Harbour, Bird Islands, or Ragged Harbour, at a stated sum, it will be necessary for you to give your dealers equal encouragement. Garland's talking about bringing back all those planters who have ever dealt at that House...¹¹

Slade and Company continued to supply dealers in Elliston until about the middle of the nineteenth century. Some time during the period of their business interest there, they maintained a store, perhaps only during the summer months. At any rate a store belonging to Slade and Company was being used as a classroom when the Inspector of Protestant Schools visited the community in 1858.¹²

That the merchant supplier played a very important role in fishermen's lives in the early days is evident from documents of that period. Not only did he supply needed fishing equipment and provisions, but also he was the settlers' only contact with the Mother Country. Through his offices

¹¹ Excerpt from a letter dated August 14, 1819, Slade Letter Book, "Slade File", Provincial Archives, St. John's.

¹² *House of Assembly Journal*, 1859, Education Report, Appendix, p.255.

the planters obtained their "youngsters"; on his company's vessels came letters and any other correspondence. Even an item like a watch needing repairs went through his agent to the appropriate spot "back home".

It is only from Church records, business firms' correspondence, and House of Assembly Journals that we can obtain any documentary information about early residents in the community. The majority of people living in Elliston today when asked where their ancestors came from, reply vaguely: "England, somewhere". Others state definitely that this family came from Dorset, this one from Devon, that one from Cornwall. Others are from Ireland. It is probably a safe guess that the majority of the early "planters" were of West Country stock; and the "youngsters" who came out and stayed were chiefly from the West Country or Ireland.¹³

Doubtless during the first decade of settlement before 1820, the residents of Bird Island Cove [Elliston] were not overly concerned with formal schooling. Very likely they were "planters" who with grown-up sons and daughters and/or "youngsters" (i.e., bound servants) were best able to get on with the business of making a living and establishing themselves in this virgin territory. By the 1820s though, the

¹³ Checking through Dr. Keith Matthews' *A "Who Was Who" of Families Engaged in the Fishery and Settlement of Newfoundland 1660-1840* (St. John's), Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1971, I found that many Elliston family names were overwhelmingly West Country in origin - Dorset, Devon, Somerset, and to a lesser extent, Cornwall.

planters' children and the "youngsters" who had decided to stay in the country, would be marrying and having children. If they themselves had any education it is natural to assume that they would want the same for their own children.

It is not clear when the first school was opened in Elliston, but, according to the records of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, (hereinafter referred to as the "S.P.G.") a missionary was stationed in Bird Island Cove [Elliston] between 1823-1826, at a salary of £15.¹⁴ In 1827 the position was vacant, but it was not vacant for long, for an entry in Reverend James Robertson's letter-diary to the Anglican bishop of Nova Scotia, dated November 22, 1829, noted that: "a reader is stationed at Bird Island Cove by the Society. He teaches Sunday School and will open a daily one when the people procure him a school house."¹⁵ By December of the same year, Reverend Robertson can report that "the church has been clapboarded and a school house has been procured."¹⁶

There is no record of the school's being kept open by

¹⁴ S.P.G. Report, 1826, "Newfoundland", p.54.

¹⁵ S.P.G. Report, 1829-30, pp.127-8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

the S.P.G. or its successor, the Newfoundland School Society, during the 1830s. And, if so, the people of the community - Anglican and Methodist - were not satisfied with the schooling that could be obtained in a school where the teaching was slanted towards the doctrines of the Church of England. For, two years after the passing of the first Education Act, 1836, when government first legislated grants for education, a petition for instruction was presented to the House of Assembly on July 28, 1838. It was signed by forty-seven men on behalf of the three hundred and twenty-nine residents of Bird Island Cove.¹⁷

Their plea for government assistance fell on deaf ears, it seems. For, although there is mention of a "branch school" (presumably the Newfoundland School Society) at Bird Island Cove in a 1838-39 report from a Mr. Meek at Bonavista,¹⁸ a second petition was presented in 1843 from "Philip Tocque and others" of Bird Island Cove, "praying for the establishment of a school at said place".¹⁹ This second petition was as ill-fated as the first to judge from the information contained in the "First Report upon the Inspection of Schools in Newfoundland" presented by J.V. Nugent, February, 1845:

¹⁷ Copied from Mr. N.C. Crewe's "Elliston File", Provincial Archives, St. John's.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *House of Assembly Journal*, 1843, p.178.

Bird Island Cove:

Although I had arranged on Monday to visit the Bonavista schools, finding the weather rather more favourable on Tuesday, November 26, and fearing another change, I thought it better to pass to Bird Island Cove although in a different district, and accordingly I arrived there on that day at noon, the distance five miles.

Bird Island Cove lies between Catalina and Bonavista, about three leagues from the former and two from the latter. It contains upwards of 60 houses and its population 329 is almost entirely Methodist. There are about 100 children of an age to go to school, but as there was a Branch school established here by the Newfoundland School Society, the place was overlooked by the Board of Education in the distribution of their funds. It appears, however, that the society has determined upon discontinuing the school, for what reason I did not learn, and had notified the teacher Mr. Minty, to that effect, shortly before my visit, and it was accordingly closed on the Friday following my inspection, being the last school day of that month, the Society's schools not generally being opened on Saturday, and thus these poor people, much to their annoyance, now left without any school whatever.

The day school here consists, or I should say, consisted of 79 pupils - the night school 18; making a total of 97, general attendance 54 at the day school as, from the extreme difficulty of getting to the school house, younger children can seldom go there. It would take about £100 to make a tolerable road for them and this would be an improvement exceedingly desirable for the general convenience of the people.

The salary of the teacher was £25 together with half the sum collected from the children, which this year only amounted to £4 through the failure of the fishery. The teacher had but £2 of that sum, the remainder going to the society. The school house was unfinished and very uncomfortable and there was neither desk nor table to write on, yet I found that there were no fewer than 20 writing on slates and a much better hand than

could have been expected from children labouring under such difficulties. There were 40 reading and several of them pretty well. I found, however, only 16 at school, for, as they were to close on the following Friday, none went this week, (the weather being very severe), save those who resided in the immediate vicinity of the school house.

The road from this place to Catalina has been opened but that to Bonavista has not yet been begun, and both would be most useful to the people; for this cove being, as it is called "wild" those two harbours of Bonavista and Catalina are the emporia whence they principally derive their supplies. There are 62 houses, and 321 Protestants and 8 Catholics at Bird Island Cove.²⁰

Elliston [Bird Island Cove] was not visited by Inspector Bertram Jones during his school inspection tour of 1845. However, a "Report of Schools under Protestant Board of Education for Trinity Bay North" from H.J. Fitzgerald, Chairman, dated at Trinity, July 15, 1845, gave the following information:

The school at Bird Island Cove was opened for six months last winter, at a cost of £7.10 sh. sterling, and the master paid from a balance in hand; but that having been expended, and no other means arising for continuing the salary of the master, the Board has been obliged most reluctantly to close this school.²¹

Some six years later, on April 11, 1850, yet another petition was presented in the House of Assembly from George Crew and others, inhabitants of Bird Island Cove, "praying

²⁰ *House of Assembly Journal*, 1845, Appendix, p.181.

²¹ *House of Assembly Journal*, 1846, Appendix, pp.106-7.

that the House would grant them sufficient to support a school master in the community."²²

Finally in 1854, their petition was answered and a school was established where the teacher was paid by government funds. However, his yearly salary £25 was only the same as it had been during the days when the Newfoundland School Society operated the school. And it did not vary for fifteen years. Apparently the teacher's salary would have been higher if the school had been in Bonavista District instead of being under the Trinity Protestant Board. Funds allocated to the latter board were spread more thinly than in Bonavista District. For example, in Newman's Cove, a settlement with a much smaller population than Elliston, the teacher received £30. And, although Elliston was much nearer Bonavista than Trinity, and was overwhelmingly Methodist, it continued under Church of England jurisdiction until the formal split between the Protestant denominations in 1874.

Documentary information for the period is scanty. But, lists in the House of Assembly Journals from 1854-1874 which indicate communities having teachers, teachers' names, salaries, number of pupils taught, and, during some years, the number of girls and the number of boys attending, show that one man taught for seventeen years in Elliston - fifteen

²²*House of Assembly Journal*, 1850, p.119.

of these at a salary of £25 per year. This man, William Minty, was one of the signers of the "first petition for instruction" in 1838. It seems that he taught in Elliston previous to his appointment in 1854 under government pay, as he is mentioned as being the teacher there in 1844 when the first inspection tour took place. Another signer of the first petition, Mark Chard, according to local residents, also kept school in Elliston. One seventy-one year old informant [No.1] mentioned older people of her childhood who said they "went to school to Mark Chard". That would be roughly the period around mid-century and later. It seems he kept a private school rather than a government or church-sponsored one. Apparently both Chard and Minty received their education before coming to Newfoundland, for both came out as "youngsters" apprenticed to Bird Island Cove [Elliston] "planters", and a list of dealers with Slade & Company of Trinity, 1825,²³ indicates that both were servants at that time. However, chiefly because of their education, likely superior to that of their employers, they, when their apprenticeship was served, became prominent members of the community.

Early inspectors did not always include Bird Island Cove in their itineraries. This was probably because it was not a port of call because of its "wildness". It was more easily reached by land than by sea and this meant a journey

²³ Dealers in Slade & Kelson's business at Catalina, Summer, 1825, "Slade File", Provincial Archives.

on foot over a rough path from Bonavista, five miles away. None but a very dedicated government servant would take such a journey in inclement weather. The school inspectors who followed J.V. Nugent did not write such detailed accounts of communities as he did on his first tour. Remarks about teachers and pupils in Elliston during the late 1850s and during the sixties are brief and often uncomplimentary. Inspector John Haddon, who visited the community on July 29, 1858, showed considerable lack of understanding of conditions in a fishing community and of the need for the teacher, Mr. Minty, to supplement his miserable salary by fishing in the summertime. Haddon complained that although he had asked the teacher in advance to have the children at school ready for his inspection - "He declined to name a day saying he would not be able to get the children to come."²⁴ This of course was quite true for nearly all the pupils would be involved either in the fishery itself, or replacing the mothers at home. Nugent had recognized this important fact of out-port living and mentioned it in his first report:

The moderate advancement of the children generally, even in the schools longest established and best conducted, would seem the natural result of the practice on the part of the parents not only of withdrawing them altogether from school at a very early age, but even of frequently keeping them away during the summer months to assist them in the operations of the fishery. To remedy this evil appears to present the strongest obstacles,

²⁴ *House of Assembly Journal*, 1859, Education Report, Appendix, p.255.

because as soon as the child reaches his sixth year and frequently before it his services in turning fish upon the flakes, and a variety of other employment about it, - and also, a little later in bearing his part in the take of fish at sea, - render his assistance too valuable to be dispensed with by very poor people upon almost any grounds.²⁵

The first inspector was also aware that it took more than dedication to produce good teaching. Said he: "It may be unreasonable to expect for such a pittance [salary £10-£25], to procure men competent to put into practical operation any sort of uniform system."²⁶ But a later inspector, Mr. Haddon had different ideas, and in his report of 1858 suggests that more female teachers might be employed seeing that those he had seen conducting schools showed great adaptability and they would be cheaper.²⁷ Nugent in 1844 spoke well of children who were working under extremely difficult conditions in Elliston, but Haddon in 1858 said nothing about the school situation or equipment except:

The school is kept in a house built for a store by Messrs. Slade and Co. and kindly allowed at a nominal rent. At a small cost it might be made a suitable school room, the dimensions are 25 feet by 16 feet and 11 feet stand, it is studded, clapboarded, and double floored.

This is a compact settlement, and the attendance at school should be large, yet the

²⁵ *House of Assembly Journal*, 1845, Appendix, p.192.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p.191.

²⁷ *House of Assembly Journal*, 1859, Appendix, p.292.

number stated on the returns furnished by the Board is only 27 which shows that the school is not as useful as it ought to be.²⁸

Later inspectors during the 1860s are not quite as complimentary as Haddon, but it is clear from their reports that the school at Bird Island Cove was not of high calibre during those years. In 1867, the inspector wrote: "The school is always in a low state chiefly for want of more money. Only £25 is allowed for this place, with such a considerable population whereas the Bonavista Board give £30 to Newman's Cove. I have always urged the advantage of joining Bird Island Cove with Bonavista District."²⁹ And again in 1868: "I think there are 40 children who do not attend school. It is owing to the poverty of the parents, who cannot afford to clothe them decently enough and in many cases to the indifference of the parents towards education".³⁰

In 1870 the inspector wrote: "For many years the state of this school was unsatisfactory. The Board have now dismissed the former teacher and have engaged a trained teacher of high attainments and exemplary character, under whom it

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p.255.

²⁹ *House of Assembly Journal*, 1867, Appendix, p.623.

³⁰ *House of Assembly Journal*, 1868, Appendix, p.640.

is confidently expected the school will be successful."³¹

The new teacher who remained for one year received only £28, perhaps this partly explains why he left. In 1871, Mr. Minty taught at a salary of £36 and for 1872-74, the salary was £45. What happened after this on the matter of salary is unclear, for there was no further information of that sort given in later House of Assembly Journals. In 1873 Elliston was still under the Trinity District Board in spite of regular recommendations from inspectors that it be placed in Bonavista District. In that year (1873) the Anglican priest at Catalina placed an advertisement for a teacher for Bird Island Cove in the Royal Gazette, and, according to local tradition, it was in the early 1880s before the first Methodist schoolhouse was built and the first Methodist schoolmaster, Peter Moores, came to Elliston. The change-over between the boards of the Trinity and Bonavista Districts took place in the 1870s, doubtless soon after the Education Act of 1874 which stated that "all property held by Protestant Boards was to be appraised and the board of whichever denomination was in the majority in any one district was to take over the property".³² And Bird Island Cove [Elliston] where

³¹ *House of Assembly Journal*, 1870, Appendix, p.379.

³² F.W. Rowe, *The History of Education in Newfoundland*, (Toronto, 1952), p.87.

the Methodists had been in the majority since the 1840s, finally came under the jurisdiction of the Methodist Board for Bonavista District.

The old schoolhouse site was sold for £1 by Reverend John Reay, Methodist District Chairman, Bonavista, in 1878,³³ so apparently the Methodists made a fresh start in new surroundings. The school built at this time, and mentioned in the 1884 census, was probably the single storey building which was used until the two-story "Memorial School", now used as a church hall, was erected at the end of the First World War. It occupied nearly the same site as the latter building - a central one in the community - across the road from the present United Church. A folding partition divided the school into two departments. This partition was always folded back when the public examinations, established by the Council of Higher Education in 1895, were taking place.

It would seem from reports that some children belonging to the well-educated or "better-off" families in Elliston received much of their early education at home during the late 1870s and early 1880s. One of these, Mr. Ernest Tilly, born April 15, 1873, said in an article published in *The Newfoundland Quarterly* in 1958:

³³ Copied from Mr. N.C.Crewe's "Elliston File", Provincial Archives, St. John's.

By the time I was ten I could read all right by myself. About that time the first school was built, and the first Methodist school master came to Bird Island Cove. There had been a small Anglican school kept by Mr. Mark Chard in his house. I did not need to go there for I had my Aunt Nell.

It was the fall of 1883 and I was ten years old when the fall term of school opened and father decided to send me to Peter Moores for a year.³⁴

During the first day at school Ernest said something that riled the master, Mr. Moores. Instead of taking the punishment meted out for him, he ran away from school. However, strangely enough, his father did not punish him for his disobedience to the master, nor require him to return to school. Instead, he allowed him to continue his reading under his Aunt Nell's tutelage. She brought him along to long division in arithmetic, but he had to go to Thomas Tilly for his higher arithmetic studies. Thomas Tilly is listed as teacher for Bird Island Cove for the year 1874³⁵ and according to statements of residents he once taught school "over on the Point". When Ernest's father considered him advanced enough in his studies, he sent him off to Catalina (ten miles away) to attend school, where "he kept his end up" very well. Tilly's choice of Catalina instead of Bonavista for his son's schooling may have been governed by denominational reasons as

³⁴ Ernest Tilly, "Memories of an Old Timer", *The Newfoundland Quarterly*, Vol.LVII, No.1, March, 1958, p.39.

³⁵ *House of Assembly Journal*, 1875, Appendix, pp.618-9.

well as by business or family connections.

Anglicans did not completely relinquish their hold on schooling in Elliston. There was still a small core of "Church" people living in Elliston Centre [The Cove] whose children attended the Methodist school, but there were also quite a number of children in the Maberly section of the community two miles away where a small majority adhered to the Church of England. So, a school was established here a few years after the Methodist take-over in "The Cove". It was run by the Anglican Board for Bonavista District and served both Anglican and Methodist children from Maberly and the Neck, which was nearly one hundred per cent Methodist at that time and was only half a mile from Maberly.

Bird Island Cove [Elliston] residents sent many petitions to the government from the 1830s onwards on educational matters. They sent as many, if not more, on another important matter - roads. For road connections with the larger trading centres of Bonavista and Catalina were absolutely vital to them. Most of their trading had to be done through these nearby communities, because it was too difficult to bring goods in or ship them out from such an unprotected spot as Bird Island Cove [Elliston]. Only the nearness of rich fishing grounds accounted for its existence on this "wild" section of coast and its fortunes through the years have risen and fallen with the fortunes of the fishing industry.

A failure in the "inshore" cod fishery meant hardship for all. The Reverend Charles Lench writing in 1918 had this to say:

A number of circumstances militated against the rank and file of Bonavista for more than half the nineteenth century, yea, and nearly to the end of it. Poor fisheries and an occasional semi-potato famine brought the people into dire straits. Bonavista and Bird Island Cove were in those days synonyms for poverty. Two more independent places it would now be hard to find.³⁶

As with other fishing communities in Newfoundland after the initial phase of settlement by planters with their servants was over in the 1830s, the fishery became a family affair. But, dependence on a merchant-supplier remained. Instead of a planter employing seven or eight servants and sharemen to fish for him, these sharemen began to strike out for themselves. A man might go partners with another in like circumstances, or, if he were blessed with several sons, he might go as skipper, with his sons for crew. It is at this point in history that a capable woman became a real necessity to a successful fisherman.

During the period when the fishery was prosecuted by planters employing several servants, there was not the same need for women to work at the fish (i.e., splitting, salting, drying) though many undoubtedly did. There were enough men

³⁶ Charles Lench, *The Story of Methodism in Bonavista* (St. John's, 1918), p.17.

involved in the larger operation to take care of all the shore work, both in the stage and on the flakes. Women did not go to the fishing grounds, but they performed all sorts of chores on the land. They helped with the "putting away" of the fish (that is, the splitting and salting) and when it had lain in salt a sufficient length of time they helped "wash it out" and spread it on the flakes for drying in the sun. Indeed in a very small scale operation it was the women who were mainly responsible for "curing the fish". If the men were away fishing, the women spread the fish each suitable morning, though the men would help gather it up in the evening. Thus a skipper's wife had to have a keen weather sense for when the men were away, she was responsible for the direction of the "shore work".

The composition of fishing crews varied considerably. Many were essentially family groups, with the father as skipper and the crew his grown sons. On the death of the parent, the eldest son became skipper in his stead, and, provided there were not too many brothers and they could get along together, they would continue to fish as a unit. Sometimes it happened that a brother had several grown sons of his own. He might want to form a separate crew. Very likely though the relatives would continue to share the same fishing premises but having separate fish-storing facilities. Other crews might be made up of a couple of brothers, plus one or two sharemen, who could be related, perhaps by marriage,

but there might be no family connection.

Trap fishing crews were generally larger than those who did handlining. The latter rarely carried sharemen. Sometimes, even, one man might go handlining alone; fishing "cross-handed" they called it.

During recent years with the departure of many former fishermen for permanent employment elsewhere, and with the dying out of the older fishermen, the remnants of once rival trap crews have become one crew. Thus the composition of a fishing crew is certainly not a fixed one; it is dependent on circumstances.³⁷

Elliston has never been known as a farming community but nevertheless, since earliest days subsistence farming has been practiced. All but the poorest families kept animals - cows, goats, and sheep for milk, meat, and wool; horses and dogs for hauling. They made enough hay for fodder and grew enough vegetables to last all year long. Usually women were responsible for all gardening work except the ploughing of the land in the spring. "Making the hay" for the winter feed for the animals was their responsibility, too, after the men had cut it with scythes.

In the late spring "trapmen" would be busy in their

³⁷ Cf. Melvin M. Firestone, "The Structure of Crews", *Brothers and Rivals: Patrilocality in Savage Cove*, Institute of Social and Economic Research, M.U.N., St. John's, 1967, pp.45-61.

"store lofts"³⁸ mending the "linnet" (that is, replacing older, weak sections in the cod trap). This was a job for a single crew at its own pace and many a yarn and joke was heard as they mended. Refurbishing the motor boat and the rodney (small rowboat) and the construction of the stagehead (wharf) were also jobs for a single fishing crew, unless there were shared fishing premises. The "barking of the traps", however, was an operation involving several crews. A fire would be kindled on the beach and a huge container, often an iron pot, would be suspended over it. Tar and pitch would be heated and the traps dipped in the hot mixture. The "barked" traps would then be placed on a cart and taken to be stretched over fences and railings to dry out for a few days. The pleasant odour of a newly barked trap is not one a person easily forgets.

Building a fishing boat of any size was never a one-man operation. Lots of friends "pitched in". They helped with sawing the planks which was done with a huge, ten-foot long pitsaw. This needed two men for its operation. "Launching boats" was also done cooperatively, as was the "hauling up". If trouble befell any fishing crew during the fishing season, for instance if a trap were wrecked and had to be taken ashore to be mended, fishermen from all sections of the

³⁸ Storage area where cod traps, trawls, and other fishing equipment were stored in winter, and where dry fish was stored during the curing process in late summer and early fall.

community would turn up to help, not just the immediate neighbours. Said one informant [No.1]: "They got only a thank you and didn't even expect that. They were just doing their duty." Of course no one knew but that he might need help next.

In fact, the only thing certain about the "inshore" cod fishery was its uncertainty. Fish might be scarce during some seasons and even in those years when they were plentiful the fisherman might not receive a good price for his catch. Hence families were always seeking ways to bolster the income derived from the summer codfishery. Some other aspects of these activities will be mentioned in later chapters.

A valuable supplement to the fishing industry in Elliston during the twentieth century was the picking of wild berries each fall. When these berries - blueberries and partridge berries - were plentiful and a good price (i.e., \$.50 - \$1.00 per gallon), many families made enough to buy their food supplies for the winter. In addition, the wild fruits were preserved for winter use along with home-grown black currants and rhubarb.

The majority of men, in order to secure a decent way of life for their families, had to leave home during the winter months to work outside the community, going to the seal fishery, the lumberwoods, and in more recent times to the American military bases. Before 1900, and during the first decade or so of the twentieth century, many men went "to the

ice" each spring. Until the branch railway was extended to Bonavista, sealers from Bird Island Cove [Elliston] had to walk as far as Port Blandford in Bonavista Bay to take the passenger boat to St. John's, where most of the crews were "signed on".

Sealing was in its heyday around 1914, but there were two great sealing disasters that spring - "The Newfoundland Disaster" on the "Front" and the "Southern Cross" in the Gulf. Eight men from Elliston died on the ice in the "Newfoundland Disaster" and two came back badly frostbitten. Fewer men went sealing after that, but this might be partly because some went off to fight in the First World War and others became lumberjacks each winter, when the lumbercamps opened up to supply the paper mills at Grand Falls (1907) and Corner Brook (1923). The majority of men, for years, followed the pattern - common not only to Newfoundland, but also to the Maritimes - of summer fishing and winter lumbering. Because this woods' work kept the man of the house away from home for perhaps five or six months at a time, a greater burden of responsibility was placed on women during the twentieth century than before that time.

During the 1920s, many of the younger generation quit fishing for good. They emigrated, chiefly to the States where some had gone earlier in the century. The First World War did not disrupt the work pattern or way of life in the

community. Although many young men went off to war, enough fishermen remained to keep the fishery going and it appears to have been fairly prosperous in the immediate post-war years.

The Second World War was a different matter. Not only did many of the younger men go to war, but also older men gave up fishing to take jobs on the various American bases in different parts of the island, particularly Gander. Many of those earned a decent living wage for the first time in their lives and stayed with "base work" after the war. Yet, others could not resist the pull of the sea and went back to the fishing boat each summer even during the war years.

In the fishing industry the fisherman is the supplier of the product. Once he delivers the salt cod to the merchant he has nothing further to do with it. When the fish was "shipped" (that is, sold)to a local merchant, however, jobs were provided for a few men who looked after it until it was shipped overseas. And, when fish were packed in wooden casks, local coopers were kept busy for a time making these containers.

In fact, in the 1940s a number of Elliston men were employed handling fish for overseas shipment, for the local fish merchant handled not only Elliston fish, but also had fish brought in by truck and schooner from all over the Bonavista Peninsula and from the north side of Bonavista Bay. Other than this brief spell of "export" work, there has never

been any local employment except fishing. Unless he did well at the fishery, a man had to go elsewhere to make a decent living. Certainly since the beginning of the twentieth century, there has been a constant exodus of the younger people. This has been accelerated since the 50s with the establishment of the university and better educational opportunities for youths.

Only a handful of those who remain in the community are actively employed: a few small fishing crews, a half dozen government employees (e.g., teachers, and post office personnel), and a small group of sales clerks and managers of "branch" stores. The majority of people in Elliston are elderly and live on government pensions, and a number of families exist on government welfare. A few families manage to get by on seasonal work which the father manages to work at outside the community. But, in most of the chapters which follow, I ignore the post 1950 period and describe the way of life from 1900 to 1950.

PREGNANCY, BIRTH, AND BABYHOOD

This is a study of the woman's role in a fishing community and it is perhaps fitting to start, as life does, with pregnancy, birth and babyhood. In this chapter I take up in considerable detail a wide variety of traditional material on this important "rite of passage", including language, practices, beliefs, and customs. They are described in approximately the following order: the terms people used to describe a pregnant woman's condition, depending on whether she were married or unmarried; the beliefs that pre-natal influences might mark, retard, or cripple the unborn child; the treatment accorded the new mother; her special celebration with friends and neighbours some days after the birth; different christening practices; and the care of the baby - its food, medicines, clothing, and general comfort.

In the early nineteen hundreds pregnancy was not a state which was discussed as freely as it is today. A married woman was said to be "in the family way" or "that way again, you know." Rarely, if ever, was the term pregnant used. A girl who became pregnant out of wedlock, would be termed "knocked up" by the coarser element and said to have "got in trouble" by the majority. When a baby arrived fairly soon after a marriage, then everybody

knew "she (the mother) had to be married". If the child arrived before the girl's marriage such an illegitimate child might be referred to casually as "a merry-begot". Some neighbours would silence one inclined to be nasty or high-minded about the matter by saying: "Don't halloo till you're out of the woods. You have daughters of your own." Or, the commonest solace given the girl's parents was "She's not the first and she won't be the last." Generally speaking those who strayed were not discriminated against and might later marry successfully. Sometimes the child was reared by the mother's parents as their own offspring; other times he went to live with his mother and her husband, who might or might not, be his father.

It was generally believed that the actions, desires, and conduct of an expectant mother affected her unborn baby. So, she was expected to observe certain taboos connected with pregnancy, as well as take care of herself physically. In the latter stages of pregnancy she was expected to be extremely careful of how she moved. She was warned against raising her arms too far above her head, for fear she might "cord" the baby.¹ Too much bending was not good for her either, but no specific consequences were attributed to this action.

¹ Cf. Wayland D. Hand, *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions of North Carolina*, Volume Six, The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore (hereinafter cited as the "Hand, Brown Collection"), (Durham, North Carolina, 1961), No. 169.

One curious belief I encountered was this: A pregnant woman was not supposed to put anything to her nose to smell - a flower, for instance.² The woman who told me this belief used to do this very thing. She said she loved the perfume given off by "Sweet Rockets" a flower which grew in several gardens in the community. She would hold the flower to her nose and breathe deeply, and her child was not affected. Obviously she did not take this belief seriously and her conduct was not guided by it.

It was believed that "birthmarks" could come about for various reasons. If the mother were startled by some object's being tossed toward her and hitting her, or if she accidentally bumped herself, a "birthmark" might be expected to show up in the same place on the baby.³ However, they were believed chiefly to be the result of some unsatisfied craving by the mother during her pregnancy.⁴ At the very least an unsatisfied "craving" might cause the child to be fretful until he received the food his mother did not get.⁵

² I could find no parallel for this belief in the Hand, Brown Collection.

³ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.98, 99.

⁴ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.86, 96.

⁵ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.83, 84.

It was taken for granted that all women had "cravings" for certain foods when they were in "that" condition. And young fathers-to-be often went to great lengths to satisfy expectant wives' wishes for certain foods. No one wanted a marked child. Also, people outside the immediate family were usually careful to see that an expectant woman's cravings were satisfied. One informant [No.3] 82 years old now, told me of an incident which occurred when she was having her family. During one of her pregnancies she recalled that she was walking along the road in Maberly one day when she met a male neighbour. He was carrying a salmon. Salmon was a delicacy, a change of fare from codfish - and perhaps he did not wish to part with any. Fearful that she would crave some, he put the salmon down his trouser leg, out of sight till she passed by.⁶ However, when she heard about his fear some time later, she found it rather funny, as she had had no special craving during either of her pregnancies and did not believe that unsatisfied cravings caused "birthmarks". On another occasion, she said, an older woman brought her some fresh meat (only obtainable when someone slaughtered a cow, or goat, etc.) with orders to cook it because "I've been a dru it". (i.e., I've been through it myself and I'm sure you'd like a little

⁶ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.86.

of this). The older woman just naturally assumed that the pregnant woman would crave something special like fresh meat. Although this informant had had no cravings herself, she did know many women who reported having had them. She said a sure indication to the neighbourhood that one woman was expecting again was her visit to a neighbour's to obtain some pickled cabbage (cabbage kept over the winter in salt pickle). Another desired baked beans and brown bread. These women were always given the foods they desired as soon as their wishes were known.

A woman in her forties [No.23] told me that when she was born, she had a birthmark on her eye shaped like a black currant. Her mother told her that while she was carrying her she had had an unsatisfied craving for this fruit. Nearly every day she would pass by the garden where the black currants she desired grew, but she didn't feel like helping herself to any of the fruit, nor did she feel like asking the owner of the garden for some of the berries. However, after No.23 was born with the black currant-shaped mark on her eye, the mother confided in the woman who owned the garden and the latter said: "You'll have some if that'll do any good". And, said my informant "Mother went and got the black currants and stewed 'um. And she gave me the juice on a spoon, and afterwards the birthmark disappeared."⁷

⁷ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.87.

She added: "Even today I feel that as long as I've got jam in the house, I feel like well ... I've got everything there. If I get out of jam I'm always hungry."

If the child were not marked because of his mother's unsatisfied craving, it would more than likely be born with the same craving for that food, as seems to be implied in the previous paragraph. One informant [No.12], recalled how before her second child was born she visited a home where they were having blueberry cake for supper. She would have liked a piece, but wouldn't think of asking for it because it was considered "bad manners" to do so. And apparently the neighbour didn't think that something so ordinary as blueberry cake would be "craved", so she didn't offer her any. Later when her son was born, he cried a great deal for the first few weeks, and finally her mother-in-law with whom she was living at the time, asked her if there had been anything she had craved and had not got. Learning about the blueberry cake, she got some blueberries, stewed them, and gave the baby some of the juice. This cured him, for, from then on he began to thrive and did not cry without a reason.⁸

Apparently if the mother got what she craved before

⁸ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.84 & 87. I could find no exact parallel to this method of curing a "craving" - for curing "birthmarks" only.

the birth, the child would neither be marked nor have the same craving for the food his mother desired.⁹ Informant No.10 said that her next-door neighbour had a great desire for oranges before the birth of her first child. Oranges were hard to get at that time, some 40-50 years ago, but just before her "time" she got a half dozen. So ravenous was she, said my informant, that "she ate half a dozen, skins and all!" The boy had no particular desire for the fruit. This woman also told me about her niece who craved apples during her pregnancy. Since the niece worked in their grocery store, she could easily satisfy her craving and ate apples ravenously until her daughter was born. And the child had only a normal liking for apples.

The physical causes of birthmarks were harder to predict and often it was only after the child was born that the mother would think on what had caused the mark. I heard of one case where a birthmark on a child's face was explained by the fact of his mother's being startled by being hit in the face by a mitten that had been playfully thrown at her.¹⁰ Another child had a round black birthmark on the top of her head. Her family believed that it

⁹ I could find no parallel for this in the Hand, Brown Collection.

¹⁰ I could find no exact parallel in Hand, Brown Collection. Nos.98 & 99 are similar.

was the result of her mother's striking the top of her head on the oven door, before the child's birth.¹¹

Even such things as mental retardation might be blamed on something that happened to the mother during her pregnancy. It was believed that if the mother suffered a bad fright or a "turn", her child would be retarded.¹² And this was the case only twelve years ago when a pregnant woman was frightened by an angry dog's jumping on her. Her child, born a little while later, was badly retarded and the fright was believed to have caused it. Of course such an incident could not have been predicted. However, a woman need not purposely risk such a fate for her child by looking at a dead body, for, many people believed that a pregnant woman should not look at anyone dead as "she might get a fright, a turn. It'd give 'um something, they say that something 'd be into 'm you know, if the mother gets a bad fright." [No.10]¹³

Physical deformities might be caused by a physical act such as a fall or the cause might be a psychological one - punishment for bad behaviour. A fall, especially in the later stages of pregnancy, when a woman was "well on"

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² I could find no exact parallel in Hand, Brown Collection.

¹³ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.114.

was, of course, recognized as very dangerous. Informant No.10 said that her granddaughter "fell down and had a like to kill herself, before she had the youngster". The child died soon after its birth. "It had no brains". The grandmother believed this condition was due to the mother's bad fall.

More rarely, physical defects, like a crippled arm or leg, were said to result from the mother's mocking of an afflicted person. When I was a child I remember being told by my mother that it used to be said that a certain person in the community was badly crippled because of the terrible thing his mother did before he was born: she mocked (made fun of) a crippled person. Her own similarly crippled child was believed to be her punishment.¹⁴ Years later, I heard that the child had not been born a cripple, but had had an attack of infantile paralysis while just a tiny baby. To ridicule persons less fortunate than one's self was considered a terrible sin and children especially had to be thoroughly warned of the possible consequences. The older folk obviously took pretty seriously the commandment about "the sins of the fathers being visited on the

¹⁴ A full discussion of this belief is contained in Dr. H. Halpert's article "Legends of the Cursed Child", *New York Folklore Quarterly*, XIV, 233-241; also in *Whatever Makes Papa Laugh*, Warren S. Walker, ed., Cooperstown, N.Y., 1958, pp.73-81.

children."

People wise in such matters would judge from a pregnant woman's shape whether the newcomer would be a boy or a girl. If a woman were bigger in front she might expect a girl; if the behind had it, a boy.¹⁵ One informant [No. 10] said the signs were right in her case, but another, who bore eleven children, [No.8] said there was nothing in it.

Although some of my informants were quite voluble, others were almost Victorian in their treatment of the subject of pregnancy, especially if any male were present. For instance, they would make vague motions indicating where a woman might expect to "show" most, depending on whether she was carrying a girl or boy baby. None of them used crude language in referring to the matter. Perhaps such a "prim and proper" attitude is not so surprising when one realizes that when these women were having babies such matters were only discussed in guarded terms among women, and rarely, if ever, in mixed company. Men were banished from the premises while a baby was being born. No informant mentioned the man's being sent to boil water etc. as one finds so often in stories told elsewhere about home births. Perhaps this is because a good husband, or more

¹⁵ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.147.

likely some of the older children, would have attended to the necessary chores and would have lots of wood for the stove and lots of water.

Home confinement was the accepted practice well into the 1940s; the room used depended on home circumstances and the weather. Ordinarily the child was born in an upstairs bedroom as practically all the homes were two-storey structures. In some cases the birth might take place in the "inside place" (i.e., the parlor) or even in the kitchen. Mother and baby had to be kept warm. In those days before central heating and portable electric heaters, upstairs rooms could be extremely cold in the wintertime. Usually only the kitchen and parlor had a stove; sometimes just the former room. However, some households had smelly portable kerosene heaters that might be used in cold weather.

"Borning babies" was women's work. There might be a number of women around, but no men. Said one male informant [No.6], aged seventy-nine, father of eleven children: "Did they think we knew nothing about it, for gracious sake?" All the father could do was hurry off for the midwife and get her to the house in time. "And 'twas tough gettin' the old lady back and forth them times, I'll tell the world!" [No.6] In winter she might be brought on horse and sleigh or on dog sled; in summer perhaps by horse and buggy. Since few people owned the latter she often walked, in some cases two or three miles .

Children who were at the inquisitive age might be sent off to stay with relatives or neighbours till the new baby had arrived. One of my younger informants [No.20], a woman in her forties now, recalled that when a younger sister of hers was born, her mother was confined in the "inside place" which was underneath the room where she slept. There was a hatchway in the ceiling of the "inside place" to permit warm air to rise to the bedroom above. She said she lay down on the floor and glued her eyes to the opening in order to see what was taking place in the room below. However, she soon fell asleep and awoke to find that the baby had arrived. She belonged to the generation which believed that babies were brought in the midwife's black bag.¹⁶ When she got the chance she opened the bag and was disappointed to find it only held some scissors and a bit of string! The "put-off" my older informants received when they asked where they had come from was that they had been found "in the cellar".¹⁷ (A cellar was ordinarily a cave hollowed into the side of a hill. The outer walls were of rock. The roof was a wooden framework covered with sods. It was always dark and damp and cool, ideal for the storage of vegetables).

¹⁶ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.6.

¹⁷ I could find no exact parallel in Hand, Brown Collection though there is mention of "in the spring", "in the creek", and "in the well", in the note following No.6.

Children in the Maberly-Neck section of Elliston were told a particular cellar: "John Murphy's Cellar". Mr. Murphy's wife, Sarah or Aunt Sally was the midwife there when most of my older informants were born. One of them, at the age of five or six happened to go to this cellar, and after studying it for a while she came to the conclusion: "This is an awful small cellar for Aunt Sally Murphy to find all those babies in." [No.1] My informants from the main section of Elliston were simply told: "in the cellar".

It was a midwife who brought most of the children into the world. Sometimes there were two practicing at the same period and of course help was always forthcoming from older women if the need arose. None of these women had any particular training other than that supplied by experience. Speaking of them, one informant, mother of eleven, [No.8] said: "What did they know about it, Hilda, at all? They never had nar bit o' learnin' (i.e., medical training) did they? Suzy Randell had nar bit o' learnin' nor Jane Trask didn't." Then she reminisced on the time some twenty-thirty years before when she had "helped born" a young neighbour's baby. "If we hadn't done for X.... she'd have been dead when he came, [the doctor], he said so himself. He said, if she'd had to wait till he came she'd have been dead before he got here."

Another woman [No.5] remembered the midwives who

attended her as being kind old ladies. However, "when she [the midwife] was on a case, all hands went by the midwife. Her word was law. She did just the same as the doctor, you see, in her own way. Oh, they were good too, maid. They were good people, old ladies." Mentioning their equipment, she said: "They had their bit of twine in their bag, some sort of twine twas, wrapping twine or what it was, bit of white twine, and their scissors, in the little bag. That's all." The midwife did no housework. Her job was to attend to the baby and the mother and to:

get a cup of tea for the patient and a cup for herself. They'd stay in all night if you was sick in the night...Stay all the night and the next day. But if she came early in the morning probably she'd go back that night if there was anybody else...you know...expectin' to be sick [in labour]. She'd go back so's they...or the man'd come in here for her."

Often the midwives had to endure great hardship in reaching their patients, being sent for in raging blizzards sometimes. One woman discussing the birth of her first child recalled how she was then living with her in-laws, her husband being away working in the lumberwoods. She was young, about nineteen, and rather shy, and she didn't know how to convey to her mother-in-law how she felt. However, the old lady wasn't blind and seeing how matters stood, she dispatched her husband and a son-in-law, living

nearby, for the midwife who lived approximately two miles away.

Off they went with a dog slide and twas so rough, look you was not able to see a picket [paling fence] out there! [indicating a distance of about twenty feet] for the snow. And twas still gettin' worse you see. That was Saturday and they went off before dark and never got back till the mornin' nearly. Stark rough, couldn't see nothin'...Now I didn't know but that I'd want a doctor and no one didn't know. And if I'd wanted a doctor I'd a died.

Describing the midwife's arrival in the home, she said: "They came right in the porch with her, and she was nothing but a snowbank. Had her head and all covered right over, smothered! And I was all that night [i.e., in labour] till four o'clock in the morning..."

This was the sort of situation the midwife often faced. Should a doctor's services be required, an attempt would be made to get him, but he was five to seven miles away and getting him in time for a so-called "doctor's case" was practically an impossibility. If the midwife arrived early enough and foresaw a difficult birth, she would have the doctor sent for at once. This happened to informant number 10 whose only son was born in late December. She had the less experienced midwife in attendance, the chief one being involved with another case elsewhere in the community. Both she and her husband were thankful that they did have the junior because she was more fearful and "wouldn't drive

things out" as the more confident older woman might have. The midwife advised that the doctor be sent for and getting him from Bonavista to Maberly, a distance of seven miles, proved no problem, the weather was just marvellous that evening. By the time he was ready to leave, however, a howling blizzard was raging and when it was over the snow was well over the fences. Getting the doctor back to Bonavista exhausted all the young father's ingenuity. They used horse and sleigh, dog team and slide, and finally "shank's mare". It was a risk to be expecting a baby in mid-winter in those days! But, if the weather remained good, it was considered by many women the best time, for a woman would not be rushed with her many chores as she would be in the summertime and she might spend a whole month upstairs recuperating, as long as there was someone to handle the housework, and usually the new grandmother would be pleased to take care of this for her daughter.

In very early times it seems that in summer women worked to the very last minute before the baby was born. An informant [No.14], herself in her late seventies, spoke thus of her mother's generation: "They worked till the last minute. Aunt A... H... used to tell me that she had to leave the stage one time and go up and go to bed and have a baby, and she had the scales on her hands [i.e., fish scales]. She didn't have time to wash her hands!" The informant's husband added: "Lots of cases like that

when the child was born in fishin' time. Fishermen's wives you see."

Another informant [No.8] who reared eleven children during the depression period of the 1930s could speak for that period of time also. "... in the gardens and the children to do for, and I had to make bread and I was bad enough. And I made bread, maid, and I was lookin' about their clothes to see how they wuz, sewing all night long you know, fraid I would take sick [i.e., go into labour] in the middle of the night". And she spoke of "working down below" [i.e., at the fish on the flake and in the stage] with the perspiration rolling off her. "That's how twas. Now sure, there's no tear on nothing now. [tear, i.e., working at everything] Nobody has to work so hard anymore."

The midwives were very fearful lest their patients take a chill or get child-bed fever. One woman [No.8] related how crazy she would be for some cold water when she'd hear the rattle of buckets as someone prepared to go to the well for a "turn" of water. But, she wouldn't be given a drop. A cup of tea or some warm drink was all she was allowed. Neither did the midwives think too highly of the virtues of fresh air. One of my informants [No.2] whose first child was born in August in the 1930s, wanted her window open after the child was born. She succeeded in having this done, but the midwife warned her that she

wouldn't take the blame should anything happen because of this foolishness.

The normal time a new mother was expected to stay in bed was ten days. Some, whose families could not get along without the mother's services for so long, were at the regular grind just a few days after the birth. Others, with the first child especially, might not take up regular duties for a month, particularly if the birth occurred in the winter.

Traditionally in Elliston the tenth day after the birth was the mother's "Up-sitting Day". For this special occasion a relative, or someone in the house, made a special cake called the "Groaning Cake" and other dainty fare, if the larder could afford it. They tried to have something a bit different from the ordinary food, although sometimes just "raisin bread" served as the "Groaning Cake". Most certainly raisins had to be used. On the afternoon of the "Up-sitting Day" the neighbour women would drop in and the midwife would come back to the house. All would sit around the kitchen table and would enjoy a cup of tea and some of the "Groaning Cake". Some would get to see the new baby for the first time at this little social gathering, but usually the group was composed of women who had been present at the birth.

Both "Up-sitting Day" and "Groaning Cake" are definitely

English traditions. The former though seems to be equated with christening and according to the Oxford English Dictionary is a word peculiar to Exmoor (North Devon/West Somerset). It is interesting to note it is not listed in the *English Dialect Dictionary*. The Newfoundland Dictionary Centre has no reference in its files to "Up-sitting Day" but there are New England references to "sitting-up" visits being made and special cakes being eaten at the time.¹⁸

The custom of having a "Groaning Cake" after the birth of a child is widely reported from England, though the only West Country reference is from Cornwall. Reverend George Patterson indicates that in Newfoundland the "Groaning Cake" was prepared in anticipation of a birth, and after it has taken place distributed to those present at a feast.¹⁹ This does not agree with findings in Elliston where it was not made in advance. This would, I suspect, have been considered a presumptuous thing to do. Neither was the cake distributed soon after the birth, but was served at a special "get-together" on the woman's "Up-sitting Day".²⁰

¹⁸ Alice Morse Earle, *Child Life in Colonial Days* (New York, London), 1904, p.17.

¹⁹ Rev. George Patterson, "Notes on the Dialect of the People of Newfoundland", *Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 9 (1896), p.22.

²⁰ None of my informants mentioned the mother's taking "groaning cake" with her when she went to be churched. Only Anglican women went through the "Thanksgiving of Women after Childbirth" but women in Elliston of all denominations had "groaning cake" and "up-sitting day".

One woman [No.5], remembered the ritual of "Up-sitting Day". "They used to bake a raisin bread for the day you'd get up. They called that your "Up-sitting Day", see. You know, the woman'd get up and they'd always have a bread, and they had short cake baked and a pie, they might have had that, but the main "Groaning Cake" was raisin bread." She recalled her "Up-sitting Day" as being the third day after the birth rather than the tenth.

When the baby was born they'd come in that day for a cup of tea. All would sit around the table, five or six ladies you know, and Mrs. Trask or Mrs. Randell, whoever was there...Somebody'd tend table. My poor old mother most commonly 'd tend table for me, you know. Nice, maid, you'd never believe. Use'n have nothing special you see. Only the cup of tea and the raisin bread and the pie or old-fashioned tart, we'll call it. A few buns. Twas nice. A lot better than tis now. Twas nice, comfortable. Your labour was over, we'll say and your child was born ...Everything was okay. You enjoyed it and ...

It would seem that those women who observed the traditional "Up-sitting Day" thought of it as one way of expressing their thanks for a safe delivery. They were happy to have the travail behind them and wished to have their friends around them to rejoice with them. Besides it was a sort of "thank-you" to those women who helped at the birth.

The custom was not strong in all parts of the community.

Another informant [No.14] in her late seventies now, had only one child, a girl. She did not remember having a cup of tea with friends, but she remembered that her mother-in-law had made a special cake at the time though she didn't know what she called it: "I remember her saying to J... Go out and bring me in some raisins to make a cake for that maid."

By the time today's young matrons were having babies the custom of having a "Groaning Cake" had died out. Those who were older children from larger families, however, remember their mothers' cup of tea, although they are not too sure of the terms. One informant [No.20] said :

Mom and they had it. The tenth day they'd get up. They'd always have a bit of cake or something baked and ask in all the crowd around ... In those days they'd always have a cup of tea. The midwife she'd come in on that day. If she was gone home she'd come back that tenth day... They used to call it "Up-sit Cake" or "Sitting-Up Cake" or something like that. Somethinglike that they used to call it, cause Dad used to bake 'um for Mom. Dad was the real hand to bake cakes. He'd always bake 'um for Mom.

The "Groaning Cake" in Elliston was never the same thing as the christening cake, although apparently this was the case in a few sections of Newfoundland.²⁰

20

George Allen England, 'Newfoundland Dialect Items', *Dialect Notes*, vol. V (1925), pp.322-346.

Christening, the next major event for the mother, was kept quite separate from "Up-sitting Day" and took place according to the traditions of the different denominations in the community. By 1900 there were three of these - Anglican, Methodist (United Church), and Salvation Army. The few adherents to the Roman Catholic faith had either died, moved away, or become converted to the dominant church in the community, the Methodist.

The tradition with which I am best acquainted is that of the Anglican Church and it was from Anglican informants that most of my information about christening came. All Anglican children were taken to church to be christened. This, in normal cases, usually took place about a month after the child's birth. If the child were sickly, however, baptism would be administered at home by some responsible person, perhaps the local school teacher. Sometime later the child would be taken to the church or school chapel and "received into the congregation" but "no water would be used on him there if he had been privately baptised." A boy had two godfathers and one godmother; a girl had two godmothers and one godfather. Before the 1920s it seems there was no hard and fast rule in the Elliston Anglican church regarding who could be godparents to a child. One informant [No.3] told me that when her children were being baptised the godparents did not have to be "confirmed" persons (i.e., confirmed in the Anglican Church). In fact

one of her children's sponsors was a Methodist. Some of those godparents in the early days who were strict "Church" people took the baptismal vows they made very seriously and saw to it that the godchild was duly confirmed. Later on, although the rule became more rigid about who could be godparents, outside interference by the godparents in such private matters as the religious training of the child would not have been tolerated, and many children today, even those born in the thirties, do not know who their godparents were.

It was a common saying in Elliston as in other parts of the world that a child who cries at his christening will have a long life.²¹ One informant recalled that her daughter, normally quiet, kicked up quite a fuss. She cried till she was taken home. In spite of the saying about "long life" most mothers would feel embarrassed if their babies were noisy during church service. For, ordinarily, the christening took place about midway through the normal Sunday service, matins, or evensong, and there might be several babies to be christened. To keep the baby quiet during the ceremony mothers carried along a "sugar tit". This was some sugar wrapped in muslin and greatly resembled the "blueing rag" used on wash day. When the baby had a sugar tit stuffed in his mouth, he couldn't yell too loudly.

²¹ I could not find a specific parallel to this "long life" belief in Hand, Brown Collection. But John Symonds Udall, *Dorsetshire Folklore*, Toucan Press, (2nd ed., 1970), p.178 has the following: "It is considered a good sign if an infant cries at his baptism. If it remains quiet and passive it is said to be "too good to live".

Boys and girls were always christened in a special "christening dress". This was often made by hand of some "good white material", trimmed with hand-made lace and was very long. In some families the christening dress was handed down through the different generations and of course if one were made for the christening of the first child in the family it would be used for all other children in that family. Often those who had no christening dress borrowed from a better-off neighbour. Sometimes, I believe, the dress was further trimmed by having attached at the shoulders, a blue satin bow to indicate a boy or a pink one to indicate a girl.

In my own family tradition I am accustomed to a "get-together" on the occasion of the christening of the first child. Some of the wedding cake was saved for the "first" christening, or if the wedding cake had several tiers, the small top cake was saved in its entirety. I do not know how widespread the custom might be as none of my informants mentioned it. However, it is customary to have christening cakes in other parts of Newfoundland.

The subject of christening did not come up with my United Church informants. Perhaps this is because it was customary until within the last twenty-thirty years for Methodist (United Church) babies to be christened in their homes by the minister, the parents being their child's

sponsors. And, some of the older, very strict "Church" people might even argue that Salvation Army babies who were dedicated in the Army and not "properly baptised" with water, were not even Christians! Imagine the situation the Anglican priest in the community found himself in after conducting a full burial service for an adult worshipper in the Anglican Church who, as a baby had been dedicated in the Salvation Army and had never been baptised! If an Anglican child died before baptism he would be buried in the graveyard, but without the formal burial service. In the early nineteenth century, it seems such children were buried in unconsecrated ground, for I have been told recently that such a child was buried in a garden in Maberly, although there is nothing marking the site of the grave.

The name a child received at his christening in the old days was very likely a Biblical one. Mary, often nicknamed "Polly" was common for girls, and there were many double names like Mary Hannah, Mary Ann, Mary Jane, etc. Quite often it happened that there were several persons bearing the same name living near each other. At one time there were seven men bearing the name James Porter. To distinguish between them people called them by various nicknames, including Shoemaker Jim, Soldier Jim, Brook Jim, Little Jim, etc. Some religious people were not content with simple Biblical names like Joseph or Peter, or Thomas,

and chose instead strange sounding ones like Vashti, Tabitha, Nehemiah, Hezekiah, Gideon, Amaziah, Archelaus, and Nimshi. An old lady once inquired of my mother what another woman had named her twins, a boy and a girl. On being told: Adolphus and Anastacia, she exclaimed: "I'll never be able to tell Jim them names. I'll have to say she called 'um Duff and Stach."

Finding suitable names must have been a problem for most parents since big families were the rule. A dozen children or more per family was not uncommon in the early part of the century though by the 1950s such large families were no longer popular. Birth control methods were apparently frowned on. As one informant [No.14] put it: "They'd be having babies every two years. [It was] the Lord's will. That was their family. That's the way they looked at it then you know." Another woman, youngest in a family of six [No.1] also remarked on the size of families in the old days, saying that theirs was a small family by the standards of the time, the usual run being a dozen or more. Of course, with the great amount of work to be done, a large family was a necessity. Children were an important part of the economy for, as soon as they could handle jobs around the house, the garden, or "down below", they were expected to help. For the most part I suspect that as in the early days in New England:

These large families were eagerly welcomed. Children were a blessing. The Danish proverb says "Children are the poor man's wealth." To the farmer, especially the frontiersman [fisherman] every child in the home is [was] an extra producer.²²

The new-born child, however, meant extra work for the mother and older girls in the family. When he was not sharing his mother's arms or her bed, or being carried around by other family members, he spent a fair amount of his daytime hours in a "cradle". This was homemade of wood with sloping sides and perhaps a wooden canopy at the head. It was mounted on rockers. Inside it might be furnished with a small feather bed, but often there were simply heavy pieces of material folded up for a mattress, and there would likely be a small pillow. One of my informants [No.3] told me that she had a special "swinging cradle" for her children. Her husband made it.

Cribs, common in the community now, are a comparatively recent introduction. Most babies and toddlers shared their parents' bed at night, especially during the winter-time. It was the only way to assure that they would stay covered up and cosy when the frost sparkled on the window panes and could be flaked off with a finger nail. Besides, oft-times during the winter, the man of the house was away

²² Alice Morse Earle, *Child Life in Colonial Days*, p.13.

for several months working, usually in the lumberwoods. Then the younger members of the family always slept with mother, with some "sleeping at the foot of the bed".

An expression often used about young children was: "Pretty in the cradle, ugly at the table". Or, "Ugly in the cradle, pretty at the table".²³ The first could stop someone from gushing too much about a new baby, and the second could console a mother whose child seemed plain and homely-looking.

Although many homes kept cats as pets, most mothers were very careful of tiny babies when cats were present. They would never let a cat sleep in the baby's cradle for fear they said "that the cat would take the child's breath".²⁴

One informant [No.10] remembered how careful they were over the heads of newborn babies. "You're not allowed to do nothing with the skull, the soft part. Not allowed to do nothing with that or comb until tis solid...Even a brush or cloth...for three months." To prevent what they called "cradle crap" they would keep olive oil on this section and "go over it with a linen rag. Didn't comb there till twas hard. Soft, twouldn' growed together see."

²³ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.163.

²⁴ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.267.

Every newborn baby had to wear a "belly-band". This was a two-inch wide strip of flannelette which was bound tightly around the child's body covering the "belly-button". It was kept on for two or three weeks. "If they didn't, something wrong".[No.10]²⁵

Sometimes children were born with what was called "white mouth". The midwife's cure for this was to put molasses on the child's tongue. "They would use a little piece of clean linen and wipe the molasses around inside the mouth and the molasses would cut it all off." [No.10]²⁶

Babies did not get their hair cut until they were at least a year old and some mothers whose little boys had lovely curly hair might try to preserve the ringlets longer than that. Also some people in the community considered it unlucky to cut a child's fingernails during the first year, and to avoid this bad luck, bit the nails off. However, no one mentioned the common belief held elsewhere that the child might become a thief if his fingernails were cut off during the first year.²⁷

For difficult teething, there were no jellies or drops, as can be purchased nowadays. The commonest aid for babies

²⁵ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.322.

²⁶ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.320, which gives a different cure for "white mouth".

²⁷ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, Nos.227, 232 & 233.

cutting their teeth was "hard tack". This hard biscuit was in everyone's pantry and had the added advantage that it could be eaten. Hence nearly all teething babies would be given scraps of hard bread to chew on. Mothers whose children had an especially difficult time teething often resorted to special "charms" (amulets). One of these beliefs has survived down to the present day. The "charm" was a necklace made from some part of a lobster shell. My informants varied on exactly which parts were used. Some said the feelers; others said the small legs. But all agreed that the "charm" worked. A child who is just eight years old now had a difficult time cutting her teeth. A neighbour brought the mother the "necklace" her children had used. In this case the lobster shell was covered with some cloth. They put on some fresh material and put the "charm" on the child's neck. From then on "we broke no more rest because of her teething". [No.2] In earlier days, it was also a common sight to see a baby wearing a small silver Newfoundland five-cent piece attached to his wrist by a piece of ribbon or string. This could be rubbed on the gums said those who called it a teething charm.²⁸ Others said it was simply a good-luck charm.

²⁸ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, Nos.355-356, 358-354, 367-368, 370-374, 376-380. These all mention "charms" to be worn around the baby's neck, but none mentions lobster shells. No.375 states "the gums of a teething child should be rubbed with a silver thimble".

There was not the array of oils, powders, soaps, and lotions to choose from in the period 1900-1940 as there is today. Most of my informants used burnt flour to dust babies' bottoms with. To prevent the baby's buttocks getting sore, or to cure diaper rash, they would line the regular flannelette diaper with a piece of material that had been scorched on the hot stove and sprinkle on burnt flour for powder. One informant [No.12] mentioned that she kept this burnt flour in a can and sprinkled it just as we would baby powder nowadays.

Until the 1950s and perhaps later, most of the baby's layette - diapers, shirts, wrappers, sleepers, etc. - were made from soft flannelette. The mother and grandmother usually made these by hand, or by machine, if one were available. However, there were no printed patterns for any item; they had to follow the outline of some previous garment, or work "by guess and by God".

The clothing one had on hand for the newborn might affect its future.²⁹ Some women believed that it was quite all right to have everything ready beforehand, except any sort of head covering. It was considered unlucky to make a cap or any kind of bonnet before the child was born. [No. 10].

Newborn babies did not enjoy the freedom of movement that today's babies have. They could not "kick and fling"

²⁹ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.264.

as they wished. Then, winter and summer, children were bound up in "whittles"³⁰, night and day, for two or three months at least, though after this period they were given more freedom of movement during the day. Putting a child in "whittles" or "whetals" was also termed "dressing them up for the night". "They were like a stick night-time".

[Informants Nos.24 & 25]

First a baby was dressed in a triangular flannelette diaper. Over this went large "pieces", very much like quilts, thick and absorbent, so that no wetness could come through to the unprotected bed. Then "a great, big, long. night dress" and an outside "wrapper", the front of which was often worked in some bright yarn. The pieces and wrapper were doubled up around the child's feet and fastened at the waist. Even after he was "shortened" (i.e. didn't have the clothing doubled up over his feet), a baby was still dressed in thick "pieces" plus his diaper at night, until he was toilet trained. After the child was "dressed-up" for the night he was not unbound until the morning, and, of course, every morning the baby's "whittles" had to be washed. Drying such thick pieces

³⁰ This word variously spelled "whittles", "whetals", "whittals", "widdles" was, according to sources quoted in the English Dialect Dictionary, found in various parts of England - Warwickshire, Gloucestershire, West Somerset, Cornwall, Dorset, and North Devon, and was used to refer to a similar way of dressing a baby.

presented quite a problem when the weather was wet and cold. By the 1940s there was not the same need for these "whittles" for thin rubber sheets were available for the protection of bedding. However, this was an expense that few parents could afford during the Depression years, so the "whittles" stayed until economic conditions were somewhat improved.

Boys were usually kept in dresses till they were a year old at least, and some were three or four before they were put in rompers and short pants. Several informants said boys were dressed in this manner because "it was just the fashion". However, one, [No.10] said that it was believed that "if they were not kept in dresses it made them dirty." Hence, one reason for letting boys go around dressed in what to us nowadays seems a "sissy" fashion, was this practical one; it was a time saver for the busy mother or maid.

Almost without exception, children were breast fed. And some women were not very hygienic in their feeding practices. One woman said that when she herself was just a baby in the cradle, a neighbour woman picked her up and nursed her while her mother was out. She wondered why she did not catch tuberculosis, because the woman's husband was found to be a carrier of this disease. Even at the time she herself was having babies, during the 1920s,

conditions were not much better in some homes. She said: "Children were not cared for at all. Simply rocked in a cradle with perhaps a sugar tit to suck on." When children were given solid food, it was not an uncommon sight, she said, to have mothers chewing up the food to give to their babies, instead of letting it soak in milk. She was fiercely against this practice and tried to get those women to do otherwise. [No.3]

Another woman [No.18] also recalled that babies "were not looked after like they are now". Very few were reared on the bottle and they did not get solid food for a long time. She mentioned that "babies were fed with the fingers, and the old people were worse than that!" She did not explain this. Despite such treatment a surprising number lived, judging from the size of the families.

Only those women who were incapable of breast feeding their children resorted to bottle feeding, for, in the early days and even in the thirties, this was an intricate proceeding. The feeding bottle was of glass, "fitted with a big, long, glass tube and a glass quill on the end," then the nipple. This contraption had to be cleaned in salt and water. The milk given infants was usually the condensed, sweetened variety; Eagle and Purity were two brands mentioned. Cow's milk was also given. In some cases where the child did not seem to thrive on cow's milk

or if he had some childhood disease like measles, goat's milk was usually suggested as being better for him. Most of the goats in the community were kept first because their milk was recommended for the infants in the family.

Mothers varied on the times when they gave their children the first solid food. Some gave it at two-three months; others didn't give any until the child was at least a year old. Undoubtedly it depended, to a great extent, on the quantity and richness of the maternal milk supply. Baby food in tins, with which we are now so familiar, did not appear in markets until within very recent years, but cereals like Pablum and Cream of Wheat have been around for quite a while. One informant [No. 10] whose son was born in the 1920s mentioned that she used "Nestle's Food". This came in a "big, round can" and was sufficient for three-four months. This, like the tinned milk she used, was sweetened. Such baby food was only obtained through the doctor's offices.

Having a young baby to care for was not considered a reason for the mother to shirk her many outdoor duties. Watching over the baby became the responsibility of the older girl or girls in the family, or the child was cared for by a hired nursemaid. The latter might be the young daughter of a next-door neighbour who would come by day. People who were slightly "better-off" might employ a

"servant-girl" to care for the baby and be responsible for much of the indoor work. In the next chapter I take up the responsibilities a girl undertook at a very early age which prepared her for her future role in the community.

A GIRL'S CHILDHOOD

"Children are a poor man's wealth"¹ and the majority of children in Elliston were not long past babyhood when they began making a very real contribution to the running of the household. But, in spite of their occasionally heavy work load they found time to play games and just "have fun". In this chapter I deal with their work load, clothes, recreational activities and childhood beliefs, and schooling.

Both boys and girls had household chores to attend to; the boys, however, only did those which involved "outside" work, whereas girls had chores both outdoors and indoors. They early learnt the truth of the couplet:

"A poor man works from sun to sun,
But a poor woman's work is never done."

For, although the boys were kept busy they did not have the same multiplicity of duties as the girls. Most of a boy's work in summer was connected with fishing and should the crew have a poor day fishing or a "water haul" (i.e. the cod trap is hauled but it contains no fish), he would very likely have free time on his hands. Even the animals which were the responsibility of the bigger boys when they were stabled during the winter either roamed freely during the summertime, or became the responsibility of the women

¹ Alice Morse Earle, *Child Life in Colonial Days*, p.13.

and girls who did the milking of the goats and cows. Neither did the boys bring the vegetables from the root cellar during the summer. In winter this was often one of their chores. In fact, any chore which involved brute strength or physical hardship (which might be due to stormy winter weather) was considered within the males' sphere of activity.

Boys were not supposed to know about household duties and perhaps there was something of the same attitude towards the boys in the home, as Campbell found among the Southern Highlanders² in the United States. Inside the house, the girls were at the beck and call of the males. Even if one of the latter required a drink of water the girl was expected to fetch it. This was all very well when the request or order came from someone engaged in a task, or from an adult, but was rarely well received if it came from a young brother lolling at his ease in the kitchen. In fact in those homes where the girls did not have a tight rein on their tempers such an incident might lead to a fight.

Younger girls and boys would "run messages" for the older members of the family. This might be a variety of things - borrowing a cup of sugar for the mother, bringing

² John C. Campbell, *The Southern Highlander and His Homeland* (New York, 1921), p.124.

items that were needed, conveying information from one person to another. Both boys and girls would be asked to bring in a supply of wood for the kitchen stove, but it was the girls only who washed the dishes, set the table, swept the floor, rocked the baby, and did other similar jobs.

Perhaps it is not altogether strange that it is not these ordinary everyday tasks that my women informants remembered as being their first real "jobs" ("chores" was not ordinarily used in Elliston) in the house. The ones that stood out in their memories were those which were done either on a specific day of the week, or ones which required a special skill. The "milestones of activity" in the week included special Saturday chores, like scrubbing the outside threshold, polishing family footwear in preparation for Sunday, and cleaning cutlery for Sunday use. Making bread, which might be done on any day of the week except Sunday, required a special skill, and a little girl was highly commended if her first batch turned out well.

One informant said that she did her first "real" job in the house between the ages of three and four. She was set to scrub the outside threshold (doorstep) with sand, and a spruce-bough scrubbing brush. This was a very responsible job for one so young, when one considers that in the early 1900s and even in the 1930s, the cleanliness

of a housewife might be measured by the whiteness of her outside threshold. Most women in Elliston were so careful over their thresholds that they would not use the same cleaning water for them as they used for the rest of the floor. They got a fresh lot of water so that the bare wood would show white and not "muddly" (a tattle-tale grey colour). For, thresholds, although painted every spring or fall (sometimes both) soon lost their protective covering after weekly assaults from the scrubbing brush. Eventually, one would become so worn it would have to be replaced.

The women of a household were expected to see that everyone's Sunday clothes were in order by Saturday evening. To the youngest girls in the family, or the only girls as the case might be, fell the task of attending to the footwear, especially father's and brothers' boots. These had to be well-shined for Sunday, no half measures allowed. This tradition lingered into the 1940s for even then it was a girl's job to get the Sunday shoes ready on Saturday.

In the days before the introduction of stainless steel, girls were faced on Saturdays with another time-consuming chore: the weekly cleaning of the family cutlery. The knives, forks and spoons, were cleaned with a substance called "bathbrick". In the early days, this was a solid block from which portions were chipped off. A soft rag was moistened, dipped in the powder, and then applied vigorously to the cutlery. Knives were given extra special

attention, being rubbed on a special board to give them a high polish. By the 1940s "bathbrick" could be bought in powder form in a tin. The rest of the procedure was the same as in the early days of the century, except for the rubbing of knives on a board.³ The most frustrating side of this job was the knowledge that when the cutlery had been used once, it was almost as bad as ever. But, at least the housewife had the satisfaction of knowing that they had been polished for the Sunday meals.

Two of the above chores were considered Saturday chores in Oxfordshire, England, as well. In *Lark Rise to Candleford*, Flora Thompson says: "Even the wives of carpenters and masons paid a girl sixpence to clean the knives and boots and take out the children on Saturday."⁴

Nearly all my elderly female informants mentioned "making" or "mixing" bread when they were quite young. Usually for their first attempts they had to stand on a kitchen stool to be tall enough to do the mixing, and by the time they reached the age of twelve, most of them were as skilled as their mothers in bread-making.

The chores mentioned as being the first "real" jobs

³ I saw two examples of these knife boards during the summer of 1970. One in the Trinity Museum at Trinity, T.B., and one in the little "Folk Museum" in Bonavista, B.B.

⁴ Flora Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford* (Oxford University Press, London: 1951), p.158.

were all indoor tasks, but girls, at a very early age had outside duties to attend to during all seasons of the year, except perhaps on stormy days in winter when the boys did most of the "outside work". In early spring, before the grass had grown very high, children and women were expected to "pick" the grass-ground. They had to go over the meadow land inch by inch, picking up stones or any other debris that might have collected on the field during the winter. For, often, when snow covered the fields and fences, short cuts or "snow paths" were taken across anyone's land. After the spring "rock-picking" all this was changed. No one dared so much as disturb a blade of grass with a foot-fall; the men were very particular about the condition of the grass they had to cut. They did not relish the thought of scything trampled-over grass. Every blade counted if you wanted to keep several goats or cows over the winter, and oats were expensive. To my knowledge, no one grew oats, although the men were pretty certain to have a bag to take "in the woods" for the horse's mid-day meal. Even in the 1940s the attitude toward walking in unmown grass still prevailed, although the "picking" custom had died out. How fearful we children were when we crossed the "midder" to reach the spot where the "dewberries" grew, lest we place a foot out of the narrow path and be criticized by father or uncle. Said one informant [No.5]

"Dare the child to go into a garden after the ground was

picked! [i.e., a child did not dare]"

Gardening was mainly the responsibility of the women and girls. Long before she was a teenager, a girl worked alongside her mother and/or older sisters at the various tasks in the garden. Men attended to the ploughing or digging of the land devoted to potatoes, but smaller plots perhaps less than 20' x 20', used for the "small seeds" (i.e., carrots, parsnips, beets, cabbage etc.) were looked after entirely by the women and that included the digging.

One informant [No.1] remembered having to dig the cabbage patch in the evening after coming home from school. She was eleven or twelve at the time. She and her elder sister dug it twice over with their long-handled pointed shovels before it was considered in proper shape to receive the cabbage plants. Weeding was a chore they attended to as soon as they knew the difference between a weed and a vegetable. Rarely, in the early 1900s did men help with the weeding. This back-breaking job was for women. My informant recalled how she, her sister, and a girl friend, lightened their weeding in the potato garden one summer. While two of them weeded steadily, the third read a story book aloud to them. What their strict mother would have thought of this shirking of work, she did not add.

Another job, curing caplin, fell to the girls' lot

in mid or late June, because caplin which spawned at this time were widely used as dog food. During the first years of the century, nearly every household that did not have a horse kept several dogs whose chief function during the winter was to haul the year's supply of firewood. A few dogs might have been kept by the well-to-do as pets and for hunting and watchdog purposes, but the chief diet of all types in the winter was dried, salted caplin. These caplin were caught at the time they "struck in" (came ashore to spawn) in mid or late June, and were chiefly important for "bait". My informant [No.1] recalled that her brothers would catch the caplin, using castnets, before they left for a full day's fishing on the fishing grounds, taking what they needed for bait.

The little silvery-bellied, six-inch fish had to be cured in salt for a day or two and then spread to dry. When she was five or six years old, she worked side by side with her mother and older sister from early morning till late afternoon, spreading the salted caplin on the flake to dry. Her mother was very particular about how the little fish were spread too. They had to be laid out straight and flat on the boughs - no crooked caplin allowed. Yet, caplin were not usually eaten by humans. One season, she said, they cured four puncheons of caplin and since one puncheon equals four barrels and one barrel equals two hundred pounds (cured caplin), the number of caplin

that the women handled was stupendous. They also cured dogfish and "flatfish" (flounder) for the dogs. On no account would they eat either of these fish themselves.

As soon as they were old enough to follow instructions all children - boys and girls - were pressed into service on the flake when a storm threatened. Everyone available pitched in to get dry fish (i.e., codfish) taken up in "faggots" or bigger "piles" before the rain came. Besides, when young children were engaged in this work they were under parental supervision and were not in mischief or danger elsewhere. Children, at least some children, enjoyed the sense of being part of a work-team, a sense of satisfaction in working to defeat the elements. A child could not carry as many fish at a time but she could make more trips than an adult, and she could pile fish in a "yaffel" (i.e., armful), for the adults to carry to the round or square "pile" or "faggot" (small rectangular heap of dry fish), they were making which would be covered with spruce "rinds" (bark) held down with heavy rocks.⁵ At the haymaking, too, children worked as hard as they could and put their best foot forward, especially when an occasional word of praise or commendation was tossed their way.

⁵ The gathering of fish into "faggots" and "piles" and covering them with "rinds" was done every evening. Dry fish especially needed protection from rain and heavy dew.

Berrypicking (i.e., gathering wild berries) was a job children started when they were quite young, not much past the toddler stage. Young boys and girls accompanied their parents to the "berry-hills" or "barrens" for blueberries and partridge berries. When they grew older, girls would go berry-picking in groups of four or five, but boys tended to be more solitary and ranged further afield in search of a good "patch". Rarely did mixed groups of boys and girls go berry-picking unless they went as a family group. However, different groups might pick berries in the same area and might "boil the kettle"(i.e., have lunch together). While they were engaged in picking blueberries, everyone kept on the lookout for good "patches" of partridge berries as well, for these were picked later in the season than blueberries. A family group would work together to fill one or several large containers - 100 pound bags, 10 gallon boxes, buckets etc. All used "empers"(i.e., emptiers). These might range in size from a cup to a gallon can. When berries fetched a fair price (\$.50 - \$1.00) per gallon, and were plentiful, families could make additional money each fall to supplement their earnings from the fishery as I have mentioned in an earlier chapter. Thus, many older children did not attend school during September, but started in October, having earned enough "off the hills" to supply them with their winter's clothing.

Another job most young girls had to help their mothers with in the fall was "picking the wool". They were usually set to do this in the evening after their school work had been attended to. They were expected to go through the previously washed wool and remove all foreign matter - twigs, grass, etc. before it was carded.

By the time she reached the age of ten, a girl in most households was contributing to the regular round of work. She might even hire out in another home to look after small children while the mother was "down below" (i.e., doing stage and flake work). Rarely would she be expected to do much in the line of heavy household tasks at this age; her chief duty was to supervise the younger child or children so that the busy housewife might be free to do her many outside chores. Although in certain exceptional cases girls did women's work, for instance after losing a parent, it was certainly not true for Elliston, as it was for Oxfordshire, that

There was no girl over twelve or thirteen living permanently at home. Some were sent out to their first place at eleven.⁶

One informant [No.12], whose mother died when she was just a small girl, spent her winters (when her father

⁶ Flora Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, p.148.

was working away from the community) with either her aunt or her older married sister. The first job she remembered as special was "making bread" at her aunt's home. She was nine years old at the time and had to stand on a stool to do the mixing. Her uncle praised her first effort by remarking to his wife: "Far better than yours". She, very early in life, had to assume a woman's role for she was the only girl in the family left at home. Not only did she have to do the housework, but also she had to do a woman's work in the stage and on the flake. She was allowed to go to school during the winter till she finished Grade Two. At that point her father decided she was educated enough and kept her out of school, although she wanted to go badly. By the age of ten, she was working side by side with her aunt "down below", for her father and his brother fished together. One of her chores - which in some fishing crews was done by the men, it being considered too heavy work for women - was to carry the "washed-out" fish from the stage to the flake on a hand-bar. Her aunt held up one end of the bar and she the other. One morning the bridge to the flake was slippery and, in addition, there were too many fish on the bar. She fell and broke her wrist. A neighbour, using a piece of sailcloth for the bandage and hoops from a fish tub for splints, attended to her wrist. He did a good job. The Anglican parish priest, Canon Bayly, acknowledged authority on all matters,

pronounced it a good job. She never did see a doctor about it and the wrist healed perfectly. Her regular job in the stage at that time, and for some years, was "cutting throats". But, she had to take part in several other operations connected with handling the fish, including bringing them in "tub-bars" (200 pounds or more at a time) from the stagehead to the splitting area.

She usually got a break one day in the week during fishing time. It was customary for Canon Bayly to hold church services, winter and summer, on Tuesday evenings at seven o'clock. Although a Methodist, she tried to attend every service. If her father happened to have fish to "put away" on Tuesday evening, a boy from next door usually took her place, unless he himself were working on his father's stage. Hers, of course, was an exceptionally difficult childhood, but there were undoubtedly others.

Another, an eighty-one year old woman [No.7], lost a parent when she was quite young; her father was lost "on the ice" near Elliston when my informant was about ten years old. Her mother had her and her younger brother to bring up, practically without help. The widow's "mite" in those days was a "mite" indeed - \$4.00 every quarter! Before the girl had reached her teens she had started to work for a woman in the community who

was a practical nurse. The latter had no training, but she did have a "doctor's book" and a great desire to help others. Wherever there was sickness, she was there to render what help she could and her "servant girl" usually accompanied her on her rounds. My informant remembers standing on a block to do the family washing by hand and making bread before she was twelve years old. At twelve she was doing a regular maid's work which included bringing the daily supply of water for the household from the public well, one quarter-one half mile away, with an extra amount on washdays. In the summer, she was expected to work at the grass and weed the vegetables. She managed to attend school some days and reached Grade IV although she did not care for the teacher. It is little wonder that she married at seventeen.

Perhaps because they did not consider them household tasks, few of my informants mentioned knitting, sewing, and darning, when I asked about early chores. Yet nearly all girls could knit by the time they were seven or eight years old, and most of them started at four or five years of age, just as did the girls in old New England.⁷ In Elliston, one of the first items a girl would be expected

⁷ Alice Morse Earle, *Home Life in Colonial Times* (New York, London: 1899), p.261. "...girls were taught to knit, as soon as their little hands could hold the needles. Sometimes girls four years of age could knit stockings."

to knit (after learning "garter stitch", i.e., plain knitting, on a head band or garters) was a pair of long stockings for herself, or, she might do a "splitting mitt" for her father.

Very soon after she began knitting, a girl was taught how to handle a sewing needle. She was expected to be able to sew on buttons and sew up rents, etc., in clothing, especially her own. Unless they were extremely apt, it is doubtful that very young girls did much more than such necessary plain sewing, at least until they were teenagers.

Because they used wool from their own sheep, with no additives to lengthen the wearing period, items like stockings soon became thin at points of stress, i.e. at heel and toe. Hence, girls had to master the secret of darning fairly soon. Not only did they have to keep their own hosiery in a state of repair, but also they might, as they became more skilful, help to ease the mother's burden by looking after this side of the family mending. A girl who could darn well was said to darn a hole "as if it were woven"; there were no missed strands and the work was done neatly and evenly. A darn that was roughly and carelessly done was termed "just a brail" and was the sign that the darner took no pride in her work.

It was necessary that girls be instructed very early

in knitting and sewing for a great deal of the family's clothing was homemade. A mother of a dozen boys with no girl in the family to help her must have relied on outside help, for even knitting stockings and mittens was a monumental task besides the carding and spinning of the wool beforehand. Besides, on the fishing grounds in summer, fishermen wore heavy clothing just as they did in the winter, and for some this meant knitted underwear! My maternal grandfather, a man well over two hundred pounds, one of those who believed that "what will keep out the cold will keep out the heat" must have been feeling very warm one July day when he was heard to exclaim: "'Tis a thousand in the shade!"

A little girl of the early 1900s, like her mother and older sisters, wore dresses winter and summer. And, to protect the dress she wore a "pinafore" or a "bib apron". A "pinafore" hung from the shoulders with a yoke, the lower part gathered with ruffles at the armholes. Often they were made of pretty cotton. When they were made of shirting they were trimmed with lace. A bib apron was always ruffled and trimmed with lace. One informant [No. 5] remembered wearing "pennys" or "pinafores" over her dress when she went to school. She had two of them, so she had a clean starched "penny" for each school day. Another informant [No.1] said: "We wore pinafores as soon as we could walk."

A pre-teen's other clothing was very little different from an older girl's garments. However, she was not encased in "restrictive" clothing till she started to develop. In winter, up until about twelve years of age, she wore a flannelette chemise. This was a rather shapeless garment simply having round holes cut in a straight piece of material for the neck and the short sleeves. Then there were pants or bloomers, again of flannelette with elastic at the knees. Stockings were knitted from homespun yarn. These were done of fine white wool, but the finished item was dyed black. They reached way above the knee and were held up by knitted garters sometimes, but more often by a band of cotton as the knitted garters were not tight enough. She wore two flannelette petticoats and the top "undergarment" was a camisole, which buttoned at the waist. Winter dresses were of heavy cloth, perhaps flannel, or any other heavy material. The mittens, knitted of spun yarn, were dyed bright colours. Caps were woollen too. Said one informant [No.1]: "We did not feel the cold too much about our heads as we had lots of hair."

During the summer, girls wore sunbonnets, made from shirting, on weekdays, but had hats for church and Sunday School. Some of these were made of silk, but more often of straw, and unlike the other clothing, hats were not made at home. One woman [No.1] said: "I liked

the sailor hat with streamers down the back, nearly all had streamers." The footwear, of very heavy leather for wintertime and supposedly watertight, were made in Elliston, there being three practising shoemakers in the community during the early part of the century. The soles were put on with wooden pegs instead of nails. Winter coats were of some heavy material - "it seemed at least a quarter inch thick" said one woman. [No.1]. Around her neck a girl might wear a wool boa. This "was like a sheep's tail, but long enough to go twice around the neck and tied with a piece of ribbon below the chin". Said my informant [No. 1]: "It felt so cosy, [I] was quite dressed up when I got a new one about every two years."

In the summertime, all their home made clothing was of lighter material than the winter flannelette. Chemises, petticoats (still two in number) pants, etc., were usually made of shirting. Petticoats would be trimmed with lace and would have a ruffle or two. They wore stockings in summer, but these were of a light weight material. Said one informant [No.1]: "Mother bought machine knit lengths, cut the length desired and toes were knitted on them." Boots were worn; old winter ones for everyday wear but "laced boots made of lovely kid" for Sundays. Summer dresses were made of cotton for everyday wear but for "best" they chose lawn, a very fine material. Another

material used was "nun's veiling", it looked like chiffon. It was available in different colours but it was not practical for most people who demanded durability for "best" clothes. Ordinarily they did not have a coat for summer wear.

Every girl wore her hair long. Usually she wore a band or comb round it to keep it from falling forward at school, but at home it was braided and tied with a ribbon.

By the thirties and forties, although many things had not changed in little girls' day-to-day living, fashions in clothing had. She still wore some homemade flannelette under clothing in winter, but most underwear could now be purchased in the local stores. And, with the introduction of snow or ski pants in the forties, girls no longer had to wear the heavy dark-blue, fleece-lined, gym-style bloomers. Woolen stockings were still being worn, but cotton or lisle (even for winter wear) were being used and in summer, girls wore ankle socks. For everyday wear in winter, most girls, like their brothers, wore long, knee-length, rubber boots. But, for best wear, both girls and boys had rubber overshoes worn over regular shoes and boots. Shoes, usually the stolid laced-up variety, were worn most of the time during the summer and fall, although for rough playing, especially "in the beach", "shucks" (rubber waders cut off at the ankle) were favoured by many girls and boys. Cotton dresses were normal everyday

wear in summer and it was still customary for a girl to have a "best" dress for Sunday and special occasions. However, unlike the little girl who grew up during the first decades of the century, the girl of the forties was not hampered by the length of her skirt.

Hair styles varied in the forties. Not all girls wore their hair long. Often girls who had thick straight hair wore it cut short with a full bang over the forehead; this style was called locally "the French crap" or "crop". Others wore their hair over their shoulders held back by hair clips or bands, or else it was braided and tied with ribbon. The latter style was preferred during school hours for it offered less chance for a girl "to get something in her head" for, unfortunately, a few families did not consider lice to be dirt the way most families did. For special occasions, long straight hair was braided into numerous tiny plaits which were kept in overnight. Next day when they were unbraided and combed out, the child's hair was full of kinky waves.⁸

In spite of their restrictive style of dressing and their many daily tasks, girls still found time to indulge in many kinds of recreational activity. And for the chil-

⁸ The same style is mentioned by Sybil Marshall, *Fenland Chronicle* (Cambridge: 1967), p.163. She says: "Hair had been washed the night before and braided into dozens of tiny plaits so that the next morning it would be all frizzed and crimped."

dren of Elliston during the period 1900-1950, the roadside, the "drungs" (narrow lanes between gardens), under the flakes, the brooks and "steadies" (where a brook widens out and deepens), the cliffs, and the beach, were the playgrounds. Grass ground, enclosed by fences, was forbidden territory in summer.

Each generation in Elliston shared some of the same ideas about animals, insects, birds and plants, as did their counterparts in Britain and America. For instance, the belief that if a child lost a tooth outdoors and a dog swallowed it, a dog's tooth would grow in the child's mouth, persisted even in the 1940s. Consequently most children made very sure that all baby teeth were thrown in the kitchen fire. No child in the community had heard of putting one's tooth under the pillow so that the kind fairy would leave some money in exchange. Also, they shared the healthy respect accorded dragonflies. In Elliston the name dragon flies was unknown. These harmless insects were called "arse-stingers", horse-stingers or "hoss-stingers". Children believed that they could be badly stung by one of these.⁹ The beneficial reddish cen-

⁹ Sybil Marshall, *Fenland Chronicle*, p.196, says that in Cambridgeshire: [they would] "run squealing away at the sight of the long, blue, green, and red, 'darning needles' or 'sew-your-eyes-up' as we called the dragonflies." Alice Morse Earle, *Child Life in Colonial Days*, p.299 says: "We believed...that dragonflies flew with the sole thought of sewing up our lips - devil's darning needles we called them. To this day I instinctively cover my mouth at their approach."

tipe de was feared also. It was called an "earwig" or "yurwig" and no child liked to lie down for a nap outdoors in case one of these crawled in his ear.¹⁰ The fat, greasy, loathsome slugs that were abundant among the dew-dampened grass of early morning or after a wet spell were addressed thus:

Beaverthorn, put out your horns,
The cows are in your garden.

Beaverthorn or "baverthorn" was the local name for slugs.

In New England they said to the snail:

Snail, snail, come out of your hole
Or else I will beat you as black as coal.¹¹

Ants carrying eggs, which happened when their nest was disturbed, were termed "emnets with their puddings".

Birds were plentiful in the early days of the century when the woods came right down to the settlement. By the 1950s there were fewer birds, but one, the crow, was still very much in evidence. It, in the old days, was looked upon with dislike by most girls. Even today my informants say they do not like to see crows. They could give no

¹⁰ Alice Morse Earle, *Child Life in Colonial Days*, p.399: "We believed that earwigs lived for the sole purpose of penetrating our ears."

¹¹ *Ibid.* A Gaelic salute was: Seilcheag, seilcheag, cuir a mach do chluasas/Air neo narbhaidh mi thu. (Snail, snail, put out your horn/Or I will beat you to death.)

reason for the dislike but two informants [No.1 and No.2] said that when they were children, if they saw a crow about to cross their path, they would immediately turn their backs to it. Children in the 1940s had no special dislike for crows.

Plants and wild flowers were often used by Elliston children during playtime, for often they fashioned certain kinds of toys from them. In summertime, clumps of rushes grew by the brooks. These rounded green stalks could be twisted and woven together to make all sorts of items: handles, small baskets, etc. A broad iris leaf with its top bent back and held in place with a tiny stick, made a grand little boat to sail on the smooth surface of a pond or a "steady"; dandelion stems were just the thing for making chains to encircle waists and necks and wrists, and ankles, but they were rarely called dandelions. To many they were the "piss-a-beds" and to others less "vulgar" they were "totties". Even when dandelions had lost their yellow petals, they were still played with. A child would blow as hard as he could to send the umbrella-like seeds flying in the air. But, there was no saying or rhyme connected with this action. Buttercups, too, grew in profusion, but they were not played with as were the dandelions. "Sour grass" or sorrel leaves were nibbled occasionally; and a sharp, shrill, ear-piercing whistle could be produced by placing a broad blade of grass between the thumbs and blowing on it.

Girls often used the following formula when they picked the white field daisy or bachelor's button. As they plucked the petals they repeated: He loves me/He loves me not/A little/Not much/Sincerely/To the heart. Flowers were also used in some of their Midsummer ceremonies. It was the custom for two girls, working together, to gather "cliff flowers" which grew in profusion from the cracks in the sides of the cliffs. They planted three of them in a row in a special secret spot in Midsummer Eve. The middle flower represented the girl; those on either side were named for two boys she had a liking for. In the morning if one of these had drooped towards the middle flower it meant that that boy had a liking for her also.

All of this lore has its parallels in England and America as Sybil Marshall's *Fenland Chronicle* and Alice Morse Earle's *Child Life in Colonial Days* indicate.¹² But Elliston

¹² A.M. Earle speaks of the flower lore of New England children in *Child Life in Colonial Days* (New York, London: 1904) p.380. The making of dandelion chains; the plucking of the petals of the ox-eye daisy to the refrain of "he loves me, he loves me not"; the making of leafy boats from the broad leaves of the "flower-de-luce" with the added touch of pansies for crew; the nibbling of sorrel leaves or "sour grass"; the sharp whistling evoked by placing broad leaves of grass...between the thumbs and blowing thereon; And, in the Cambridgeshire fens, children used nature's materials. Sybil Marshall, *Fenland Chronicle* (Cambridge, 1967), p.195. "Feathery reeds stood above our heads and we used to pull the pointed leaves of 'em for two purposes. If you laid the flat leaf tight atween the palms of your hands, and blowed short and sharp on it in a certain way, you could make a piercing shriek of a whistle as could tear your eardrums, and if you knowed how you could make a real little boat that 'ould sail up the dyke, out of one of the leaves."

children did not have access to cultivated varieties like hollyhock or columbine or pansies for few families kept flower gardens. They had to play with wild flowers only.

Besides the flower rites little girls had other means of finding out who they were going to marry. The buttons on one's outside clothing would be counted thus: Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor, rich man, poor man, prodigal, thief. Some said beggarman instead of prodigal, but the rest of the rhyme was the same. Because this was a community almost wedded to the sea it is not strange that little girls were most pleased when their buttons worked out to "sailor". No one wanted a thief. Also, if a girl were eating an apple she might take three seeds and name each for a boy she liked. These she placed on the hot stove. The one that jumped first was the one who cared the most. Other love divinations were peculiar to Midsummer's Day and no other time. These were practiced chiefly by girls of marriageable age and will be mentioned in the next chapter.

In late spring and early summer before the grass grew high, many happy hours were spent in the "yard", "making gardens" with 3 to 4 inch high sticks for the "fence". These were laid out with lanes leading to gates etc. but nothing was planted in the enclosed area. Here they were imitating the adults having fences to protect their gardens and meadows. A play area used chiefly in spring and fall was a grassy clearing among trees in a "farm" (i.e., a

woodlot). Here one could gather spruce buds to mix with rain water for ink. Girls liked to have "playhouses" or "cobbyhouses" here and often while playing in one of these areas near the school they would ignore the bell signalling the end of the recess period and keep on with their play until dinnertime at noon and did not worry about the "caning" they were sure to receive from the teacher in the afternoon.

Most of the summer playtime, by both boys and girls, was spent on the beaches or around the cliffs. Fenced-in meadows were forbidden areas in summer, and open spaces, except for the roadsides, were found only on the outskirts of the community. On the beach children found all sorts of interesting items. One informant [No.1] said that when she was a child in the early 1900s she used to pick up "fairy handbars". These were sections of seaweed tossed up on the beach which, when dry, resembled the handbar used for carrying fish. In the thirties and forties children picked up "'oar's eggs", the prickly sea urchin which, when dry, lost its spines and made a nice round coracle-type boat. They also pried small shells less than an inch in diameter loose from the rocks at high water mark. These were shaped very much like Chinese pointed peasant hats, and were called "ol'domans". The gelatin-like substance inside the shell was forced out with a thumbnail and the empty shell set sailing in small salt water puddles among the rocks.

Of course girls also sailed boats in the salt water puddles but usually girls' boats were rough. Often they were just shaped with an axe. However they were content with this and faithfully, each spring, smeared them with paint when the family fishing boat got its new coat. Some boys, on the other hand, had very elaborate boats, complete in every detail. Such boats were rarely used in mere puddles. They were chiefly used in the "steady" where the boys had special mooring places and wharves etc. Girls often held their "copyhouses", "cobyhouses" (i.e., playhouses) in the rocks just above the dash of the sea. When the correct time for wading arrived they would dabble in the sea, holding their skirts just above their knees. For parents August first was the correct time for wading in the ocean, but children went any hot July day. Probably children stuck chiefly to the beach and cliffs play areas in summertime because here they were within call of the group working in the stage or flake and were ready to perform any task they were capable of, for example, "boiling the kettle" for a "mug-up"¹³.

Swimming, by girls, was unheard of in the early days.

¹³ A light meal, or "lunch" consisting of bread and butter and tea. Usually there was something for a "relish" like jam, cold fish, beans, cold meat, etc., also.

In Maberly the boys had their "swimmin' hole" but it was in a secluded part approached by a high cliff. Since no one possessed a bathing suit the boys probably swam in the nude. No girl would dream of going near the "swimmin' hole". By the 1940s, Sandy Cove, situated between The Neck and Elliston Centre, was becoming increasingly important as a swimming area for both sexes. How popular it was in the early days is a matter of conjecture for there were very few individuals who were in a position to loiter around the beach for a number of hours during the daytime. However, with the coming of the Americans to the small base in Mark's Path, during the Second World War, it became a favourite swimming spot. The soldiers spent many of their off-duty hours there during the summer. A favourite swimming place on the North Side of Elliston was a pond just behind the community but probably it was for boys only. Unfortunately I have little information about this particular area.

It was the children themselves who ran their playtime hours. No grown-ups interfered or set down the rules; it was initiated by the children, run by the children, and enjoyment of the playing was the key - not the winning or losing. Most of the games required no set number of players; hence children could choose to play whatever their collective fancies turned to. Generally though, those activities which required more than two or three participants, were only

carried on when children were attending school. Summer-time games usually involved only one or two people, for children had certain duties to attend to and had to be available when their help was required.

Other activities might be indulged in by an individual on his own and had no season except that being often practiced indoors were thought of as winter activities. Among these was "blowing bubbles". This wasted soap and was messy and so was not particularly popular with parents. But, it required no special equipment. No one had a special pipe for bubble blowing. Instead, an empty sewing-cotton reel (spool) was rubbed over the wet surface of the soap making a film over the hole in the centre. Then the child blew gently through the other hole and the bubble thus formed floated away, showing all the hues of the rainbow. A bit of whittling by an older brother or father produced an excellent spintop from an empty sewing spool, plus a small pointed stick. Some little girls had lovely dolls' cradles and most girls had at least one store-bought doll (straw body but china head and arms and legs). Usually it was not played with every day being considered too precious to be soiled by grubby little hands. It was for show purposes only. Some children also had tiny wheelbarrows and "flatcars" which were smaller copies of those used by older family members. A metal hoop was often used by young boys

for rolling. It was controlled by a piece of bent wire. And girls and boys attached paint can lids to a stick with a nail and rolled them around.

"Weighing butter" was a game which popped up now and then any time of the year and was more a physical exercise than a game. Two people stood back to back, hooking their arms together. Then, alternately, each bent, raising the other onto her back. Another favourite activity was for two people to sit on the floor or ground, the soles of their feet touching. Grasping each others' hands, they would rock each other back and forth. For "Goosie goosie gander" two girls would join hands facing each other. They would lean back with toes touching and would whirl around as fast as possible until one called out "stop". An individual might attain the same state of dizziness by holding onto an upright post with one hand and propelling himself round and round it as fast as possible. "Skin the Cat" was considered a boys' activity, but girls indulged in it when they found a spot free from prying eyes. A player had to hang head-down from a high bar or rail and hold on by twisting his legs around the bar. While hanging on he had to remove his outer jacket or sweater without falling from his place. A girl who played this game was rated an "out and out tomboy".

One feature that all children's games had in common

was that they could all be played without benefit of standard equipment. A short piece of rope, a stick, a rock, stones, buttons - these were the things employed. So, with the exception perhaps of the game "Pitch the Buttons", play could begin on a moment's notice. Buttons used for pitching could be of any size, ranging from a two-inch coat button to a small pearl shirt button, and players started their first game of the season (usually spring) using buttons raided from their mother's "button can" where all buttons cut from worn out clothing were placed. A rock would be chosen across which the button had to be pitched - this process was termed "through the door". A certain spot had to be pitched for and whoever came nearest was the winner, entitled to pick up all the losers' pitched buttons. It often happened that a skilful player would come home with his pockets bulging with buttons while the less skilful players might return home with many missing from their clothes.

A game that girls played from spring until fall was "skipping rope". My informant [No.21] did not mention "skipping rhymes" but she said: "And we'd have all kinds of games like that. I can remember about them. You'd sing, and while you'd be singing you'd be skipping. Perhaps you'd be washing your face, or combing your hair, or ironing your clothes. All sorts of actions you know."

"Jump the rope" was a favourite game of both sexes and was often played at recess time during the spring and fall. Two children would hold the rope stretched tightly between them at a certain height above the ground. Others would jump over this. The rope got raised higher and higher until all but one, who became the winner, was eliminated. Such jumping presented no problems to the tomboys of the 1940s with their short skirts, but girls of the early 1900s must have faced quite a problem with their long trailing skirts.

Another recess-time game was "Leap the frog". A number of children crouched down in a row. Each player had to go through the row jumping over the backs of the others and then herself had to assume a crouching position.

A game played at recess-time by young girls was "Little Sally Saucer". This was a ring game. One girl crouched in the centre and the others danced around her, hands joined. They sang:

Little Sally Saucer, sitting in the water
Weeping and crying for her young man.
Rise up Sally, wipe away your tears,
Point to the east, point to the west
And chose the one that you love best.

As the words "point to the east, point to the west" were sung "Sally" would choose one to take her place. "It

would go on from there until we became tired"¹⁴. [No.1]

Girls also played "Here we go round the Mulberry Bush"¹⁵. They sang:

Here we go round the mulberry bush, the
mulberry bush, the mulberry bush,
Here we go round the mulberry bush
So early in the morning.

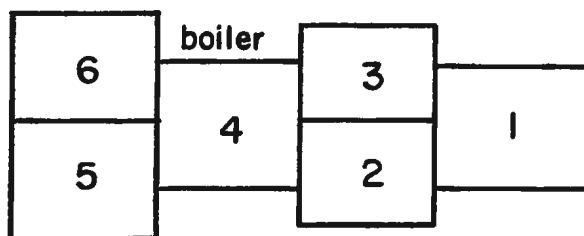
Then for each day of the week they chose an appropriate household duty and performed the action, singing for Monday for instance:

This is the way we wash our clothes, wash
our clothes, wash our clothes,
This is the way we wash our clothes,
So early Monday morning.

For Sunday they sang:

This is the way we go to church, go to
church, go to church,
This is the way we go to church,
Early Sunday morning.

Hopscotch was a "girls'-only" game, especially girls 8-13 years old. The playing area was usually outlined with a stick in the dusty road or in a gravelled section near the school. It looked something like this:



¹⁴ Alice Bertha Gomme, *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland, and Ireland* (New York, 1964), Vol.II, pp.149-179.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

First some small object (a flat stone or a piece of glass) had to be pitched to land in square number one. A player was "out" if it touched a line or rolled out and landed anywhere but in the block aimed for. Then, hopping on one foot, a player had to hop in each square except the one in which the thrown piece lay. There could be no stepping on lines. On the return trip the piece was picked up and that square hopped in. Round completed, the player turned her back to the diagram and tossed her playing piece over her shoulder. Whichever square it landed in was "initialed" and could not be hopped in thereafter by anyone. The player attaining most "initials" was the winner.¹⁶

"Jackstones"¹⁷ was a game played by girls during spring, summer, and fall. They usually played outside on a level grassy spot using five smooth rounded stones. Girls were warned of the dire consequences should they sit on the grassground before it had warmed up sufficiently in the spring. One mother, to back up her warning, would relate

¹⁶ *Ibid.* Vol. I, pp.223-227. Cf.Fig.3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* pp.122-129. Cf. "Fivestones".

Sybil Marshall in "Mam's Book", *Fenland Chronicle*, p. 187, says: "the girls played 'jinks' with five stones. And A.M. Earle in *Child Life in Colonial Days* says, p.376: "Jackstones was an old English game known in Locke's day as dibstones. Other names for the game were chuck-stones, chuckie-stones, and clinches. The game is precisely the same as it was played two centuries ago; it was a girl's game then - it is a girl's game now. There is also an excellent description of the game in Udall, *Dorsetshire Folklore*, p.327.

how a little girl had "caught her death" from sitting on damp grass playing jackstones. Said one informant [No.1]:

A great deal of our time was taken up, as soon as it was dry enough to sit on the grass, by playing marbles or jack stones, the latter chose from the side of the roads, nice round ones. Five were used. We would take the five stones in our hands and toss them up, try to catch as many as we could on the back of our hand. We tossed them again and let them fall on the grass, pick up one, toss it up and try to pick up one from the grass, without touching another, and catch the one which was tossed. We did that until we had all four.

Next the stones were scattered on the grass again. One was tossed in the air and the four on the grass were picked up in groups of two. This was called "twoes". "Threes" followed. A single stone was picked up and then three together. In "fours" all four stones had to be picked up while the tossed stone was in the air and this had to be caught also. The game could be made more difficult by spacing the stones a great distance apart during the toss-out. "We also drove the cows home; we spread our fingers apart and put a stone in the four spaces between the fingers. Tossed a stone and picked a stone from between the fingers and catching the tossed stone, something like juggling." When you had completed all these actions you had won a game of jackstones. A dropped stone or one missed in the picking up meant you were "out" and it was another player's turn.

Another singing game mentioned by my informants as

being played at recess time was "The Farmer in the Dell" but no one described it for me.

The game "cat" was played chiefly in the spring and fall. It was considered a boy's game but girls played it also. One informant [No.21] described it thus; "We had a stick or something. Then you'd have a big stick in your hand and then you'd pick up another one a small one, you know, and chip toward that and see who could beat it off or something. We used to call that 'Cat'".

Another informant [No.19] described it differently:

You'd dig a hole in the ground there and you'd go so far away and dig another one, and then you had a stick about that long [three-four feet], two hands [players]. And one hand 'd pitch the cat to them, and they'd strike 'n and the other fullor [fellow] 'd pitch 'n back and forth to the other fullor [fellow] and strike 'n that way. Back and forth. You had the hole and you'd run when you'd get "cat". Whoever 'd be to the hole first you'd be the game, get the game see. You'd run from one hole to the other see when you'd strike the cat you'd run and the other fullor 'd be watching the cat and wouldn't be watching his hole and you'd get 'n down in see, and you'd get the game.¹⁸

"Duck on the Rock"¹⁹ was also played by both boys and girls although it is generally considered a boys' game.

¹⁸ Versions of this game may be found in Norman Wymer, *Village Life*, London [1951], p.147, and in Udal, *Dorsetshire Folklore*, p.370-371.

¹⁹ Cf. Udal, *Dorsetshire Folklore*, "Duckstone", p.373.

Any number of players could take part. It stressed good marksmanship. A big rock was an essential feature and on top of it was placed another smaller rock or a piece of stick. Each player stationed himself at a certain distance from the big rock and tried to "bate 'n off" (i.e. knock off the small object) by throwing smaller rocks in turns. "Bate 'n off so many times you know, you'd be the beater see [i.e., win the game]"[No.19]

The game called "Old Daddy" or "Oh, Daddy"²⁰ was one which involved lots of running. Since any number of players could take part and it was open to boys and girls from toddlers to teens, it used to be a favourite activity for mixed groups especially when they gathered in the early evening, spring through fall. One player was chosen as "Daddy" and he was armed with a switch of some kind - a bough, a stick, or a piece of rope. One spot was designated as "Home" where all players were safe. All players would venture out from home and taunt Daddy who would give chase, lashing out at all and sundry. Once someone was caught and hit by the switch, he had to be the "Daddy" in turn.

In winter, snow was basic to outdoor play. "Riding" or "sliding" topped the list of play activities. Every sec-

²⁰ Cf. Gomme, *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland, and Ireland*, Vol.II, "Old Dame", pp.14-15.

tion of the community had its favourite "riding spot" or spots. Maberly provided several good areas for it is located in a small valley with a brook running through it. Hence there are several good slopes for riding on - the Lane, the Big Hill, the hill by Pearces, the Midder, the Head. Neck children were not so fortunate hillwise and often used a big hill located just behind this section of the community called "Government Hill". The main spots in Elliston Centre were located on the main road through the town. Henry George's Hill and Joe Baker's Hill were two which converged on "the Square" and if momentum were great enough one could carry on right along the main road to the Dock on the Point. The North side had some nice sliding areas too, but this section of the community is strange to me in that I never went there in my childhood, and I managed only one interview in this part of the community. In spite of the proximity of most sliding areas to the seashore, there is no record of anyone's ever riding into the sea.

In the old days and also during the 1940s, the "slides" used were homemade. Lucky children whose fathers were handy with axe and hammer had slides tailored to their size, especially for riding on. Others had to use "dog slides" (bigger, heavier slides on which firewood was hauled). Everyone wanted the fastest slide and every effort was made to get the steel shoes on the runners as

bright as possible. The hill would be crowded with girls and boys ranging from little tykes to gangling teenagers. The biggest or the bossiest was usually the steerer - he or she sat on the rear seat and guided the slide on its run down the slope by the pressure of feet only. This "skoating" was very hard on the footwear (generally long rubber boots in recent years). Three people or more might share a slide. There would be the steerer on the back seat, a passenger on the front seat, and someone else crouched in the middle of the slide, feet on the runners and holding on the front "horns" (i.e., in the "coocheying down" position). There might even be a fourth person standing on the runners behind the steerer. Often the course was made rougher by hollowing out ditches or pits over which the riders were expected to steer. Sometimes the level was raised in a certain spot so that a ridge went across the course. Either way the riders got a terrific jolt when crossing these obstacles, and there were even a few slides that "capsized" at these spots. Sometimes seven or eight slides were joined in a row and started off down the hill. For this the fastest slide had to be placed at the head of the line with the slowest bringing up the rear. Otherwise the result would have been a colossal pileup.

Sleds were used but they were homemade, often by the boys themselves, and fashioned out of barrel staves. The

sleek metal and wood ones only began to be used in the late 1940s. Few girls had sleds. If she were lucky, a girl might borrow her brother's sled for one or two rides.

Skating was not so popular in the period 1900-1950 as it is now. Few people had skates and until the late 1940s the commonest type in use was the runners which fastened to one's ordinary footwear. For most children, skating simply meant sliding, standing up, on an icy patch. Informant [No.21] stated that she and her companions went skating but "we had no skates, just nails in our boots."

Girls and boys enjoyed making snow houses. A drift by a hillside was considered ideal for a large house. Sometimes they cooperated on a big snowhouse and crowned their efforts with a fire inside the chamber. Snow forts were constructed too and fierce and furious were the "snow fights". Young children of both sexes enjoyed sliding over high snow drifts. Sometimes they sat on pieces of cardboard or smooth rocks, but often there was nothing but clothing in contact with the snow. This was hard on clothes and girls who took part in the sport, before the days of snowpants, must have been very uncomfortable in a very short time.

Often in March the Arctic ice packed in close to the shore. Then, in spite of parental objections, boys and girls went "copying pans" (i.e., jumping from ice pan to ice pan as it floated on the sea). In Elliston this was an

especially dangerous game. Aside from the fact that a "ducking" in very cold water was often the reward for the least clumsy move, a change of wind or tide could start the ice pack moving off shore pretty quickly and a "copier" might find himself heading for the open Atlantic! More than once a "copier" has had to be thrown a "longer" (sticks used to form the wooden platforms of the flakes or stages) to pole himself back to the shore.

Children spent much of their spare time playing together, but frequently there were fights and very rough ones too. Several older men mentioned fighting a lot as children in the early 1900s and I know the children of the 1940s (both boys and girls) spent nearly as much time fighting among themselves as they did playing together.

It might seem from most of the earlier part of this chapter that girls, because of their manifold household duties had an extremely rough, unpleasant life in Elliston. No doubt a few did, but the majority, like girls everywhere, had time for recreation too, and most important of all, they could attend school, for there is a long tradition of girls going to school in Elliston. Because of this I thought it fitting to take up the history of schools in Chapter Two along with physical features and economic changes, since the pattern of 1900-1950 was set in earlier days.

Authorities realized quite early the relationship between the amount of schooling and the need to have the child work to help support the family. Earlier in this chapter, I mentioned a girl who had to leave school with just Grade Two and assume the responsibility of running a home. Another, who entered "service" at age eleven, got as far as Grade Four. It was customary even for those girls who entered "service" at ages twelve or thirteen to attend school from November 1 to April 30. For they were usually in "service" for the six-month period between May 1 and October 31. Those who went to school full-time might put in two hundred days between September and June and most girls by the time they were 13 or 14 had reached the Grade Five reader. At that they dropped out of school, unless they were academically inclined and meant to complete the High School Grades. There was no general feeling that girls should not attend school. In fact "girls in some families went for something to do. They never learned very much".[No.1]

Since children were not compelled by law to attend school in the early days, the length of time they spent in the classroom depended partly on their own desire for an education, partly on their parents' attitude towards learning and partly on family circumstances. Many a child anxious to go to school was prevented from doing so because

he or she was needed at home. A widow with six or seven young children could not keep them all in school. The very youngest might attend, but those old enough to go to work would be expected to do so in order to help support the family. Even if both parents were living, extreme poverty following a poor fishing season might keep children from school. And, there were a few people who considered schooling unnecessary, especially for one destined to be a fisherman or a fisherman's wife. "A scattered one (boy or girl) didn't go and parents with no education themselves did not force their children." [No.1] Of course, stupid or slow learners soon became school "drop-outs" because, under the system still in force in the 1940s, all pupils were expected to know their lessons every day or be punished.

In the early days and in the 1940s, school attendance fluctuated considerably from day to day, as well as from year to year. The majority of those who attended were in the seven to twelve year age bracket, and it is interesting to note that the girls attending school generally outnumbered the boys. So, girls' schooling was certainly not neglected. It would seem from the early records and from local tradition that most girls had as much opportunity as boys to obtain whatever education was available locally. And, those who had the ability and whose parents could afford it, having completed the courses offered in Elliston before

1920, went to Normal School in St. John's, or to one of the St. John's high schools. Perhaps this attitude toward higher education for girls was in some measure due to the fact that there was a woman teacher in Maberly from the 1890s and through the early 1900s. Also around 1910, the high school teacher in Elliston Centre was a highly qualified woman for her day. Parents saw that if their daughters were smart enough to pass the required courses they could choose some other career than that of domestic servant. In fact some girls were the top scholars in their families. In one family the only girl was the one who went farthest in school, attended Normal School and became a teacher; her brothers were school dropouts. Still there were some people, even in the 1940s who might say: "What's the use of educating a girl, she'll only get married. Or, "what's a big maid (girl) like you goin' to school for?" Generally speaking though, the individuals who spoke thus were those who had very little or no education themselves and very often their own children were dropouts.

There seem to have been no upper or lower age limits for school attendance, nor was there compulsory attendance until 1943. Most children were at least four years old when they started school. One woman [No.21] youngest of a large family, went to school when she was a toddler of three. She found it lonely at home with all her brothers

and sisters in school; she had no one to play with. If she were in school her mother knew that one of the older children could "look-out" to her. And, children might start school at any time in the year. Promotion in the early grades seems to have been based, not on formal examinations, but on the teacher's knowledge of the pupil. One woman [No.12] recalled going home and telling her father: "I'm through me book". "No one was in a grade in those days", said another informant, [No.19]. If asked the extent of his education, a fisherman in the sixty-plus age group will likely say: "I was in number three", or "I got to number three".

Of course the above could apply to nearly every fishing outport in Newfoundland during this period. Early reports submitted to the government by the school inspectors give various reasons for the "moderate" advance of scholars in most parts of the island. The earliest report blamed it chiefly on the island wide practice of employing child labour in the fishing industry. Later reports cited the extreme poverty of the parents and also parental indifference. Certainly poverty seems to have had a bearing on the schooling of children in the Maberly-Neck area during the depression days of the 1930s. For, during the thirties, no one in Maberly-Neck completed high school, although quite a number had done so prior to that period. It was in the 1940s

before children from this section again finished the higher grades which they managed by attending the two-room high school in Elliston Centre.

The schools the children attended during this period, with the exception of the "Memorial School" built in Elliston Centre following World War One, were all very much the same type. They were peak-roofed, one-room, wooden structures, with four long narrow windows.

The Muddy Brook [Maberly] school was situated in the section of the community with which I am most familiar, and during the 1940s I attended school in the old peak-roofed, one-room building on the "Schoolhouse Hill". It was perhaps 25-30 feet long and about 15 feet wide. Across one end was an elevated platform from which one had an excellent view of the whole room and the one door at the back, which opened onto a small porch. On the platform were the teacher's desk, a reading lectern for the priest, and a table for communion services, for the school doubled as a church. The building was lighted by four long, narrow, diamond-paned windows, two on each side, and at night, for church services, there were six oil lamps hanging on the walls at regular intervals. Heat came from a big pot-bellied stove situated toward the front of the room, with several lengths of funnelling going from there to the chimney at the back: the funnelling helped heat up the room, hence the placement of the stove away from the chimney.

A heavy iron bar went through the building widthwise about seven feet above the floor. It strengthened the structure which was exposed to the wind from every direction, but the boys appreciated it most, for it provided them with a place to perform stunts on days unsuitable for outside play at recess time. The school was well-built, and, at its demolition in the late 1940s, was essentially the same as it had been when the first teacher, Annie Tilly, entered it around 1887.

Annie Tilly, daughter of Thomas Tilly Sr. spent twenty-five years teaching school at Muddy Brook [Maberly]. This lady was an excellent teacher of reading, writing, and spelling, but was not too proficient in mathematics. If her students wanted to learn ciphering past long division they had to go to her brother Tom for instruction at night. This night teaching he probably did without pay to help out his sister, because he loved the subject and was glad of an opportunity to display his ability and practice his work. Any students who went on to Elliston Centre from Muddy Brook to do Primary (the first grade for which they sat public examinations), found they were better than the Elliston children in the subjects "Aunt Annie" taught well, but were woefully ignorant in mathematics.

For as long as my informants can remember the books in use in the Elliston schools were chiefly the Royal

Readers which began with the "Primer" or, as it was generally known, "The Fat Cat", the first lesson being about this animal. The Primer and Number One Reader were both soft-covered books. Readers Two to Six had hard covers. Each of the readers had the most difficult words with their meanings at the beginning of each lesson. These had to be learnt. Scattered through the reader were pages of "useful knowledge". History was not handled in a separate text in the early grades and was first studied in the Number Four reader. Geography, a separate text, was introduced around Grade III. It began with "The first chapter of Genesis", how God made the world, etc. It contained a lot of general information and definitions of peninsulas, isthmuses, etc. After the introductory geography, they did Newfoundland Geography. Here they had to memorize in order, capes, bays, islands in the bays, etc., but though they had "to rattle them off as they came along", they had no rhymes to help them remember. Then they had to study Longman's *Geography of the World*. In this they were expected to memorize capitals of different countries, their industries and so on and had to be able to "draw maps by heart" (i.e., from memory).

A subject which was part of the curriculum in the early 1900s, and even in the 1920s, was Needlework for girls. There was a big expensive text book, but few could afford to have one; perhaps the teacher herself was the only one

with a copy. Time in school was not taken up with teaching this particular subject, but girls were urged to practice at home. The examination consisted of making certain items of clothing from special paper provided. Girls carried their own thread, scissors, and needle to the examination room. There was no needlework included in the curriculum of the 1940s.

Physical drill was also considered important in the early 1900s. One woman informant [No.1] said:

Our school inspector left some books on health [hygiene] and after that we were oh, so particular about brushing our teeth and exercising. Girls didn't wear slacks then and as the teacher was a man he wouldn't let let the girls perform some of the exercises because they involved putting up their legs. About twenty minutes a day was to be devoted to this physical drill'...

This physical drill by the 1940s was not taken formally by the teacher. The exercise a child got in those days was the running and jumping and fighting he or she did outside the school during recess and after school hours.

Religion was a subject for examination in the higher grades as late as the 1920s, but it does not seem to have been formally taught in Elliston. The first teacher at Maberly, a good singer, always opened and closed school with an appropriate hymn. Then they would read a chapter from the Bible, the pupils reading a verse or more each, or else the teacher read the whole. Finally, there were

special prayers for opening and closing read from a "prayer card". A later teacher, a man who had attended school in the Methodist school at Elliston Centre, had no formal religious opening and closing when he first began teaching at Maberly. On being told the custom of the school, however, he too had a religious period at opening and closing.

Arithmetic texts were labelled one, two, and three, with number three taking up long division. Following this, they used the "Kirkland and Scott" text. They did not have a separate text for English grammar in the early grades, in the early 1900s; all they needed was found in their readers. In later years in the thirties and forties, separate grammar texts were in use as early as Grades II or III, and arithmetic texts were used from grades I to Ten.

Primary, the equivalent of today's Grade VIII, was the first grade in which pupils sat for external examinations, the Council of Higher Education exams which were first introduced in 1895. In Primary the Number Five reader was the chief text book. No algebra or geometry was taught at this stage. Those who did not choose to sit the C.H.E. exams might go on to the Number Six reader, but those who passed their Primary examinations went on to Preliminary (Grade IX today). Here they took up algebra, geometry and French for the first time. Preliminary or "Prelim" was followed by Intermediate (Grade X), then Junior Associate

(Grade XI) and Senior Associate. The latter grade was not taught in Elliston although the community was fortunate in the late 1800s and during the first half of the 1900s to have fairly qualified teachers. At one point in the early thirties Grade XI was being taught in Elliston Centre when nearby Bonavista with a population three-four times as great, did not have a suitably qualified teacher.

Public examination results (the C.H.E.'s) were always eagerly awaited, even by those who had no children in school. The pupil who happened to come first in a particular grade was warmly congratulated and regarded as a celebrity, for a few days at least. To fail a grade was considered a terrible disgrace, but happily very few of those who wrote the public examinations had to face this experience in the period prior to 1950.

All my older informants who were born in the Maberly-Neck section of Elliston went to school to "Aunt Annie" or the "Missus". She must have been an extraordinary person to have been able to follow the course of action she adopted. For, during her entire teaching career, she shared the home of the man she married and, only after putting in the required twenty-five years of teaching for her pension, did she share his name. Had she married before the twenty-five years were up she would have forfeited her \$12 a quarter pension allowed by the government. My informant [No.1]

told me: "There was never a breath of scandal attached to her name. She always entertained the minister when he visited Maberly and, at the end of her teaching career in 1912, her wedding was a big affair." She would have been in her fifties at the time. Strong-willed and outspoken she regulated her school as she saw fit.

The "Missus's" conduct of school seems to have been sincere in some ways and lackadaisical in others. School started early in the morning, before 9:30, and all ages had to put in five hours a day in school. Recess period was usually half an hour, but if the teacher went to visit a friend in the community during this break she would stay for a "cup of tea" and by the time she got back it would be time to dismiss the school for dinner.

Often, if otherwise engaged, she might employ some of her more advanced students to hear the lessons of the younger children. This system should have worked to the advantage of both, but some of those who were "taught" by such "student" teachers, reported that often their lessons would not be heard at all; instead they would be told all manner of nonsense and "blaggart", not stuff from the book. Not quite the sort of thing the school mistress would have sanctioned.

"Aunt Annie" was a good reader and if she read a particularly difficult passage, she would stop and explain it.

On every Friday afternoon in the school year, she would read a short story or a chapter or two from some book. This the pupils were expected to listen to attentively and then reproduce almost word for word from memory in writing. As a result, they were able to recount the stories orally to others outside the school and more people got pleasure from those stories than just those who listened in school. "Spelling Bees" or contests were unknown in the early days in Elliston schools and they were held only occasionally in the 1940s.

Most of the written work in the early schools was done on slates using a "slate pencil". Girls might carry a rag and a small bottle of water to clean their slates, but boys generally disdained this method of cleaning, preferring to spit on their slates and wipe them clean with a sleeve. The only paper which pupils wrote on was in their "Copybooks". These were used after they had learnt their A,B,C's. "The pages were lined, with two copies, usually proverbs, per page." [No.1] These copies were in "copperplate" writing and the pupils were expected to follow these examples as best they could. Most pupils found such writing hard to do, but there are several older people in Elliston whose writing is as "copper plate" and ornate as anything in the old copybooks.

Lessons in reading, spelling, history, geography, etc.

were taken orally, with children answering questions while ranged in a row before the teacher's desk. Although the slates were replaced by "scribblers" and "exercise books" (i.e., lined writing pads) and lead pencils by the 1940s, the "standing up" in class still persisted in elementary grades. Teachers moved pupils "up head and down last" according to their ability to spell or answer questions put to them. Position in class could be an ever-changing thing. In spelling class if a child spelt a word incorrectly it passed along the row until someone knew it. If that someone was not already head of the class he would move up the line past the first one who could not spell the word. In some classes there was keen rivalry for the top spot; in others, none at all. It depended on the individuals in the classes.

Pupils in the early 1900s worked at long wooden slanting desks with iron legs which might or might not be fastened to the floor. A bench having no back rest was attached and the whole could seat three or four pupils. Some "old desks" were still in use in Maberly in the 1940s for temporary seating when the registration was higher than anticipated. All of the schools in the Elliston area, except for those built in the late fifties and sixties were heated by coal and wood-burning pot-bellied Dixies. During the wintertime the bigger boys took turns lighting the morning fire. In the days when wood was the chief fuel, each

child was expected to bring along a "junk" (perhaps 20" long and 6" in diameter) for the fire each day. Speaking of her first day at school one woman [No.21] said: "With a junk of wood under my arm I went over to the school door and knocked." During the coal-burning era of the forties, children were expected to supply the splits for kindling the coal fire, the fuel being now supplied by the school board. Older girls from the beginning were responsible for sweeping and dusting the classroom every Friday afternoon after school. Periodically the schools might be closed early or for all Friday afternoon for "scrubbing". Then all the mothers, or older sisters, or older girl pupils, were expected to turn up at the school with a pail of water, soap and scrubbing brush, to give the place a thorough cleaning. In Maberly, church services were held each week in the school, but this did not happen in the Elliston Centre school.

My informants do not remember receiving marks from "Aunt Annie" for their school work. "It was a nip on the head if it was not done right or a word of praise if it was done well." [No.1] A "caning" was the usual punishment for misbehaviour and for failing to know lessons. "The 'Missus' had a big long stick. She would give it to you anywhere with the stick, saying as she did so, 'Take that, me dear!'" [No.19]

Discipline was strict in the early schools, but that

did not silence some rebellious natures. There was usually one pupil who just could not agree with the teacher and who would not submit to classroom discipline. His school career was usually brief. And there were times when the teacher had to admit to being mistaken. On one such occasion in an early teacher's career she kept the whole school "after school" because of one person's wrongdoing. A rebellious girl, not willing to be punished unjustly, jumped to her feet, ran to the door, and turning to the others shouted: "Come on, ya buggers!" They followed her and there was no later punishment for this unheard-of action. But, generally there was little to disrupt the school day. Both in the early days and well on in the forties, most children hated to "bring a tale from school" for, if it were known that a child had been punished by the teacher, he might get a worse "hiding" from his father. But, although all my informants grew up in an age in which parents believed that (to) "spare the rod (was) to spoil the child", none of the women mentioned any severe punishment meted out to them. Most remembered their fathers as stern, unyielding persons, and the threat that "your father will hear of this when he gets home" would ensure better behaviour during his absence. Father's word was law, but it was the attitude and personality of the mother which determined the tone of the household. Usually she was a bit more lenient than the father whose stern look or cross

word was sufficient to send most little girls sobbing to a corner. However, a widowed mother with several children to bring up alone might assume a sternness foreign to her nature. They had no guidebooks on child care to refer to so their individual temperaments and their own upbringing determined how a great many parents reared their offspring. Many parents used fear of persons outside the immediate family as a means of control. One of my informants [No.5] admitted that she was afraid of a certain old man when she was a child and she retained this fear even after she was a married woman. Boys were often "given a lacing", that is, whipped with a razor strop or belt, or rope, but girls rarely if ever received this punishment. The most bestowed on a girl was an occasional maternal slap.

Certainly, because of their way of life, very few children had to be admonished for being wasteful and what A.M.Earle says of colonial children was also true of children in Elliston:

Children...knew the value of everything in the household, knew the time it took to produce, for they had laboured themselves, and they grew to take care of the small things, not to squander²² and waste what they had so long been at work on.

²² Alice Morse Earle, *Home Life in Colonial Days*, p.323.

These qualities were further emphasized during teenage and young adulthood and I deal with teenage activities, courtship, and marriage in the next chapter.

TEENAGE ACTIVITIES, COURTSHIP, AND MARRIAGE

In the 1900-1950 period a girl might continue going to school until she was about fourteen. In the previous chapter I discussed her schooling along with other matters concerning her childhood, and in later chapters I will talk about work that girls shared with women both in the home and outside it. In this chapter I will deal with the role expectations for the teen-aged girl as they affected clothing, social behaviour, relationships with boys including courtship, and concluding with marriage and the folklore and practices connected with both.

For teen-aged girls in the early 1900s, the length of their clothes and the number of layers they wore did not differ much from their mothers' style of dressing, and stressed modesty - an essential characteristic. The body had to be covered.

A male informant [No.9], in his late seventies now, summed up the boys' attitude to the girls' fashions of his youth (before 1920) thus: "See a naked leg then you'd go crazy. Everything covered up. You were wondering..."

Mothers usually instilled the need for modesty in their daughters when the latter were very young. Under-clothing, even that of little girls, on washday had to be

dried"away from the men's eyes". [No.1]¹ This prudery continued until well into the 1920s and is present among some of the older generation to this day.

An informant [No.1] who was a teen-ager during the early 1900s said:

The young and old seemed to dress alike. By that I mean as soon as a girl started to develop she wore the same as her older sisters or even her mother in those years.

At the age of twelve or thirteen we wore corsets with bones all around, they came up to the armpits. Was formed to do the same as a bra does now. They came over the hips but not too far, not as long as the corsets of today. We hated to wear them but it was said to strengthen the back. I don't think so. We still wore our two petticoats but it was a corset cover, for the top, then. We always wore pinafores or bib aprons.

For dirty work outside or inside the house women and girls wore rough aprons of "brin" (i.e., burlap) or of "burney cotton" (cotton material sold cheaply by the pound because it had become discoloured or soiled).

Blouses and skirts were worn sometimes by women. The skirts were made of the same material [fine serge or a wollen cloth] as were the dresses. The skirts or bottoms of dresses would be flat at the front waist but quite full at the back. The waist would be tight fitting with tucks and frills up the front, a lot of work would have gone into it as the tucks would be so small and the stitches also. The sleeves would be puffed at the shoulders but tight fitting at the wrists. The collars would be high and in

¹ The same idea is expressed by Flora Thompson in *Lark Rise to Candleford*, p.513, "...Miss Lane's more personal intimate wear dried modestly on a line by the henhouse, 'out of the men's sight'".

order to keep them from wrinkling a bone on each side would be attached which would reach to the ears. Sometimes the skirts would be trimmed with braid. [the heavier material]. Since the skirts were quite long and the roads often either muddy or dusty, each woman would have to use one hand to lift her skirts from gathering a lot of dirt. Summer dresses which were made of lighter materials called "winsey" had quite a number of ruffles, looked very pretty. The coats would be tight fitting with a gathering at the back.

Hats worn at the time were very large with a place on the underside to fit over the bun. Hatpins about a foot long would fasten the hat to the hair. The heads of those pins were large and of different colours. The pins were also used by the young ladies as a protective measure against improper advances. When a lady went visiting or to church, gloves were a must. In summer these were in a white cotton fabric, but at other times of the year they were of black kid. Black and white were the only colours worn. The high shoes [boots] that were worn were laced and later buttoned. It seems that the same footwear was worn winter and summer as the boots were sturdy, or maybe the winter boots would be of leather and the summer ones of kid, as there were no overshoes at the time. Stockings were black knitted ones. [No.1]

In the early 1900s, older girls who had finished school wore their hair long, just as the younger school girls did, but, like their mothers, they often pulled it into a bun on the top, or at the back of the head.

Styles in young ladies' clothing were gradually chang-

ing through the 1920s, responding to the general trend although nearly everything else about a girl's life remained the same. By the thirties and forties, girls' styles were quite different from those of sedate older women. Skirts were up to the knee; corsets were unheard of, except for stout matrons; low shoes had replaced high buttoned boots; and most dresses and skirts varied in style, coming mainly ready-made from the stores in Elliston and Bonavista. Most girls and younger women cut their hair short in the "boy's bob" or had it tightly "permed" (i.e., permanently waved) at a beauty parlor in Bonavista, before "home perms" were widely used. Hats were still worn in church but otherwise, in fine summer weather, most women and girls went bare-headed. Some, more careful of their complexions than others, wore a "slouch" (i.e., sun-bonnet) to protect them from sunburn as they worked on the flake or in the garden. In recent years "bandanas" have been the standard head covering for girls and women during inclement weather. Prior to that older women wore "the cloud" (a heavy square scarf).

Yet, although they were especially strict with their daughters over their way of dressing and their dealings with boys, etc., mothers gave very little advice or information to their growing daughters on sex, and one in-

formant [No.8] said: "[we were] never told nothin'". They did not discuss "growing up" with them and menstruation would never be mentioned in the presence of menfolk. On no account must the boys of the family be aware that a girl was having "those" days, and before the 1940s they were difficult enough times, for girls had none of today's many products to serve their needs. Most young girls then got their information from other girls, often an older sister. In the 1900s they were further hampered by the fact that there was little or no literature on the subject available to them. The information they picked up came through their friends (who somehow were better informed about such "dirty" matters); from overhearing older women talking on such matters; and perhaps by asking a helpful married sister or older friend. This was one point on which I got very little information, for most older women were still hesitant about discussing such topics.

Generally, girls were supposed to be kept "innocent" and inquisitiveness about sex was almost considered a sin. No parent wanted a daughter "to get herself in trouble" but, in the early days, as now, some children were born out of wedlock. Usually though, if a girl became pregnant, marriage followed soon after. Of course, there were a few girls in the 1940s and, I suspect, in the early 1900s, who were considered fair game by adolescent boys. They were as willing as the boys to participate in sexual play.

Prudent girls hastily went elsewhere when they saw such a situation developing.

The upbringing a girl received in Elliston depended on her home and family. Some girls in the early 1900s, as in the 1940s, and now, were rough and coarse, shocking their more genteellybrought-up friends. Such girls "knew as much as the boys" and "dirty" songs sung or "bad" words used in their presence never bothered them. Other girls were "model ladies" at home where strict parents demanded propriety, but as my informants made clear, they were regular hoydens away from home, up to all sorts of tricks. And there were others, gentle and ladylike in speech and manners, at home and elsewhere.

During the period before 1920 "good" girls were expected to be home at a "decent hour" - by ten o'clock - even on Sunday evenings, the one night of the week when all the young people turned out for a stroll. Decent girls did not "beat the roads" till "all hours of the night". And even while strolling, with no adults nearby, young ladies had to behave properly. Although boys were expected to sing "out on the road" well-brought-up girls of the early 1900s were not supposed to do so, nor were they to talk or laugh loudly. To do so was considered vulgar and coarse. This same notion persisted in the 1940s. Even then "a girl who thought anything of herself" behaved as

correctly as did the young ladies a generation or two earlier.

In summer, weekday walks might depend on there being no fish to "put away" in the evening. A girl might have to work in the stage, or, if she were "in service" might have to "mind the house" while her mistress worked "down below". But, Sunday, after church service, winter or summer, was the accepted time for going for a walk or for going "over on the road", unless the weather was too disagreeable. Usually groups of girls would stroll along, followed or preceded by groups of boys. Often the boys would be seated along the roadside by clumps of rocks. Banter would be exchanged between the different groups as some girls did not mind talking back and forth or "carrying on". After a certain period of parading back and forth, groups dispersed, with couples going their separate ways. Other shy sweethearts, would leave the "road" separately, but the girl would not be far on her homeward way before she met 'not merely by chance', her fellow, or one who hoped to become her fellow. One cannot help wondering whether the short road named "Trick'ém" which is a short cut to the Maberly-Neck road, might not have taken its name from this practice among shy lovers.

This Sunday walking was often the only chance most older boys and girls had of being together. There were

no places to "hang out" for the stores of the community were mostly general stores run by older men and were the gathering place for adult males usually. Not until the 1940s was there a "restaurant" (i.e., a juke-box joint, since no meals were served there) and it was about this time also that movies were shown occasionally in the Orange Hall.

In the early 1900s dancing was practiced all through the year by a few - mostly Anglicans - who danced in their own homes. They were joined by their Methodist friends, some of whom travelled for several miles to enjoy the fun, frowned upon by their parents. A favourite gathering spot for dancing during summers in the 1920s was on the bridge at Sandy Cove. Here, to the music of accordion and mouth organ (harmonica) young people could dance away and bother no one, since the nearest house was more than a half mile away.

Of course there were "times" and "concerts" in the Orange Hall and in the different schools of the community, but these were usually held only around Christmas time. There was little public entertainment at any other time of the year. In late May or early June and in August, picnics were held by the different Sunday Schools in the early years. At the picnics everything was free and the chief entertainment for the older boys and girls was the

"rings"² - the closest most of them came to dancing - for most elderly Methodists considered dancing a sin.

During the late thirties and until the fifties, garden parties were held in the various communities during August. People of all ages patronized their own affairs and, in addition, the younger people usually went to those in near-by places. This gave boys and girls an opportunity to meet on a "week night". Also, "times" and "concerts" during Christmas would be attended by boys from neighbouring places. Through visiting relatives in some other community for a week or so, boys and girls got to meet new friends.

Parents, perhaps unconsciously, encouraged this mingling with young people from places other than Elliston, for many families in Elliston are related and "close relatives are not supposed to marry". Some parents strengthened this statement by pointing out that sometimes children born to first cousins who married were "feeble-minded" and would cite one or two examples in the community. Children of such marriages were also believed to be unlucky in life, sickly, etc. [No.1]. With this kind of advice, it is no wonder that a fair proportion of girls married outside the community entirely, although despite these strictures the majority of girls did marry boys from the community. So, marriage

² Rings - called "play-party" games in the United States. I have discussed the most popular of these in my chapter on "Social Activities..."

between second cousins was not uncommon. Boys who sought their brides outside Elliston brought new women into the community.

Courtships varied. Some couples "kept company" for such a short period of time before their marriage that someone would be sure to remark: "It must have been a case of 'ask and have'" The courting days of others were so long drawn out that the couple seemed like a permanent fixture "on the road". Most courting couples, in the summertime, and even during the winter, would parade up and down the main road during the early part of the evening. Then they might return to his or her home, or settle down in some sheltered nook for more serious courting. The neighbouring communities had the same custom of walking back and forth "on the road" and it was usual on Sundays for boys from Elliston to walk to Bonavists (5 miles away) to try their luck with the girls there and for Bonavista boys to come "over the Ridge" "after" Elliston girls. When bicycles became common, Catalina or Little Catalina (both approximately 10 miles away) might be the place for the Elliston boys' Sunday jaunts. Even by the 1950s cars had little effect on the courting pattern for there were just a few of them around and most of these were used as taxis by older married men.

In the early days and the thirties and forties

courting couples were apt to be "dogged". That is, younger people, usually young boys, would attempt to spy on their activities. Sometimes couples were unaware of such scrutiny and at other times the boys simply tagged along a few feet behind, teasing and tormenting the courting couple, giving them no privacy.

Of course boys and girls of marriageable age had to put up with a lot of joking and teasing in some houses and heard all sorts of sayings and superstitions concerning love and marriage. Both were warned about taking the last piece of bread or cake on the plate. If they did so it meant spinsterhood or bachelorhood.³ A girl who sat on the table "wanted a man".⁴ And falling upstairs meant a wedding in the family within twelve months.⁵

Girls and boys, in the early days, as now, varied in the amount of interest they showed in the opposite sex. Some girls were known "to be breakin' their necks for a man" while others were less obvious. A girl had various ways of finding out if a certain boy liked her. After eating an apple she might place three apple seeds on a hot stove, one named for herself, the others for two boys.

³ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.4665-4666.

⁴ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.4284.

⁵ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.4629. "If you fall up the steps, you won't be married for a year."

The first one that hopped was the one who cared for her.⁶ Also, two burning matches might be named for the girl and the one she liked. If the 'boy' bent toward the 'girl' then he cared for her.⁷ Another method a girl might use was to take a burning match and hold it between her thumb and forefinger till it burnt itself out. If in burning the match bent over toward her hand it meant the boy was "burning" with love for her.⁸

The above rites, which could be practiced at any time of the year, were done mainly for entertainment by the "sillier" girls and were not taken very seriously. Those divination rites which were carried out on Midsummer Day, June 24th, however, were believed by most girls to have special significance, and it is my impression these were practiced only when a girl became seriously interested in boys and wished to find out about her matrimonial prospects. Quite a number of different rites were performed. Most of them had to be begun on Midsummer Eve and events were noted until noon on Midsummer Day. Elderly fishermen might take note of the weather that day and so diagnose the weather for the rest of the summer, but young girls were interested in more than just the summer.

⁶The closest analogue I could find for this was Hand, Brown Collection, No.4404, which mentions chestnuts popping.

⁷I could find no parallel for this belief in Hand, Brown Collection.

⁸ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.4411-4412.

These Midsummer Day divination rites went under the general title of "trying your man" or "tryin' your fellow". For the most important one, a girl put the white of an egg in a glass of water on Midsummer Eve. She then placed the glass on a window sill to catch the first rays of the morning sun on June 24th. It was supposed "to rise with the sun". Just before noon she would examine the forms within the glass to see if there might be any clue to her future husband's work. Quite frequently a girl fancied she saw the sails of a full-rigged ship, especially if the fellow she especially fancied was a fisherman, as he was 99% of the time! Thus her future mate was connected with the sea and boats. Having studied the forms in the glass, she then took the whole and threw it on the main roadway at 12 noon and stationed herself in a position so ~~as~~ to see what person first stepped over it. The initials, or at least the initials of the surname of the future husband would be the same as his. One woman [No.20] under fifty, remembered that on one Midsummer Day she was very annoyed when she saw a widower, twice married, step over the egg which she had thrown in the main pathway. However, not just the initial but his surname (Pearce) was the same as that of the man she later married. Another informant [No. 2] in her sixties now, said that the first person to step over her egg on one June 24th became her husband a few years later though they were not "keeping company" at that

particular time.⁹

There were other divination rites practiced on Midsummer's Day. One traditional way of finding out about one's future mate was to put a silk handkerchief on the grass overnight. The dew was supposed to form the initial of one's sweetheart.¹⁰ However, since few girls were in a position to afford a silk handkerchief, it was probably not a common practice.

In Elliston, another method was to put a snail (i.e., slug) in an envelope and seal the envelope. The snail's crawling or moving about inside the envelope was supposed to trace out the future mate's initials.¹¹ I have no further explanation on how this was done.

One very common rite was this: A girl cut out the letters of the alphabet and turned them face down in a saucepan or some other container. She then sprinkled in a little sand and some water. The letters that turned up

⁹ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.4743. This has no mention of throwing the egg on the roadway.

¹⁰ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.4540, which mentions a snail tracing out the initials.

¹¹ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.4536-4539, which mentions snails tracing initials in meal or flour on May 1st.

overnight were supposed to be the initials of her sweetheart. One informant [No.23] in her forties now, tried this experiment when she was a young teenager and was quite annoyed when two letters came up that did not suit any of the local boys that she liked. However, the man that she married a few years later had the same initials as those that came up in the sand!¹²

One woman [No.2] gave another method for finding out about one's sweetheart. The girl had to go outdoors at precisely midnight on Midsummer's Eve and scatter oat seeds saying as she did:

Oat seed I set, oat seed I sow,
Whoever is my sweetheart,
Come after me and mow.

Since most women were extremely fearful of going outdoors in the dark, alone, even in the 1940s, it is doubtful that this rite was performed very often. This practice was widely known in England, but hemp-seed, not oat-seed, was mentioned.¹³

So important was Midsummer Day to young girls at or

¹² A very similar practice on Midsummer Eve is mentioned by John Symonds Udall, *Dorsetshire Folklore*, pp.46-47. Also see notes to Hand, Brown Collection, No.4304.

¹³ Udall, *Dorsetshire Folklore*, p.45, describes the rite and gives the following rhyme:

'Hemp-seed I set, hemp-seed I sow,
The man that is my true-love come after
me and mow.'

near marriageable age in Elliston in the early part of the century that it was called "Sweetheart's Day". On no other special day were similar rites performed. Girls still observed the old customs during the 1940s, but nowadays I doubt if many girls even know when Midsummer Day comes.

When couples who were "going together" decided to get married, they might inform their families and start preparing for the wedding, but there was no formal engagement. No ring was given until the wedding band was placed on the bride's finger. One informant [No.10] however, said she had a "sort of engagement ring". She wore "a heart and a half" ring which her "fellow" gave her before their marriage. Another woman [No.20] married in the 1940s, said: "No engagement ring. I didn't get mine till long after I was married".

It seems the majority of girls in Elliston in the early 1900s were married before they reached their mid twenties. Many of my informants were married between the ages of seventeen and twenty. There was no "proper age" for marriage. It depended on the individuals involved. One informant [No.1] when asked if people got married younger in the old days than at present, replied:

Well, it was the same then as it is now. Not many reached the age of twenty-three or twenty-four. Some were married at eighteen. On the whole perhaps it was in their early twenties they were married. It depended on

the circumstances. I think it was just the same then as now. I see changes. There's quite a change for each generation says: "I don't know what this new generation is coming to!" I don't find one generation any worse than another.

Weddings were more informal than they are nowadays. There was no attempt to have the wedding party dressed in any uniform fashion; all wore their best, the men their Sunday suits, and the girls their best dresses. Usually the bride tried to have an especially nice dress, plus other accessories and the groom invested in a new blue serge suit. The bride didn't worry about a "going away" outfit for there was no honeymoon.

Some of the brides in the early 1900s wore veils, but frequently they wore white hats instead. And, in very early days, it seems the brides wore special "wedding bonnets". One which was worn by a bride in the 1850s is of straw with fancy embroidery around the crown. It is very small and must have just "perched" on the crown of her head. Brides in the early 1900s usually wore white gloves, white stockings and white shoes even for a winter wedding, so they must have had some sort of feeling that it was right to have white at a wedding, even though the wedding dress was not usually white.

Dresses were street length and until the forties of course, this meant mid-calf , or even ankle-length. The material chosen for the dress depended on the bride's cir-

cumstances. Sometimes it would be made at home, but more often than not, such an important dress would be store-bought. It would be bought off the rack, perhaps in one of the Bonavista stores which had a wider selection of clothing than did the Elliston ones. If the bride-to-be were better-off than the average, she might send to one of the St. John's department stores for a suitable dress and accessories. A soft crepe material seems to have been the choice of most women for this important dress. However, one informant in her early eighties now, [No.3] for her wedding in 1914, wore white lace over robin egg blue satin. Her veil was shoulder length with a wreath of flowers on the forehead. This veil was a gift from the groom's brother who bought it in St. John's.

Another, a bride of the late 1920s, wore a mid-calf length, apricot-coloured crepe dress with long sleeves. Her veil was shoulder length and was attached to a circlet of wax orange blossoms. She wore a string of beads which exactly matched her dress.

The so-called "traditional" long white bridal gown was not traditional in Elliston in the early years, nor in the 1940s. Most brides favoured blue. "Married in blue, always be true" was the saying. Although most girls knew the rhyme:

Married in white, you have chosen all right.
Married in grey, you will live far away.

Married in black, you will wish yourself back.
 Married in red, you will wish yourself dead.
 Married in green, ashamed to be seen.
 Married in blue, he will always be true.
 Married in pearl, you will live in a whirl.
 Married in yellow, ashamed of your fellow.
 Married in brown, you will live out of town.
 Married in pink, your spirits will sink.¹⁴

it did not affect their dress choice. Generally they chose a dress that would serve them for "best" for a few years after the wedding. One informant [No.20] mentioned someone she knew who had been married in yellow. She remarked: "She was ashamed of him all right. She only lived with him for six months or so and then she left him".

The bridal bouquet of natural flowers has become fashionable in Elliston only in recent years. For there were few flower gardens and no "nurseries" near-by. Besides, weddings were rarely held in the summertime as this was the season for work. They might take place at any other season of the year and then natural flowers were unavailable. So, if a bride carried a bouquet, it was of artificial crepe-paper flowers made by some woman in the community. The men in the wedding party wore paper roses in their lapels. Often the bride carried a prayer book with ribbons instead of a bouquet.

¹⁴ Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.4801, 4802, 4803.

The wedding ceremony was never rehearsed beforehand. The titles "maid of honour" and "best man" were unknown. The chief attendants were the "father-giver" and the "mother-giver", and the other attendants, if there were any others, were dubbed "bridesgirls" and "bridesboys". The "father-giver" was a cross between the "father" and the "best man"; he performed both duties. On the one hand, when the minister asked "who giveth this woman" he responded, but he still stayed in his position and "supported" the groom. However, he did not carry the ring, the groom himself had this. The "mother-giver" had the same responsibilities as today's "maid of honour".

Although people were poor, the wedding ring was never handmade as seems to have been the custom in some parts of the United States, and the husband always managed to have a gold ring for his bride's finger. This plain wide band, costing \$10 or so, was in later years probably bought in Elliston or Bonavista, but in earlier days it had to be bought in St. John's.¹⁵ It was often the incorrect size and if it were a bit big, she might wear some cheaper ring to keep it from slipping off. It was not uncommon to see a woman wearing her wedding ring on the middle finger of

¹⁵ Cf. Wayman Hogue, *Back Yonder* (New York, 1932), p.98. A wedding ring, fashioned from a dime, was used in his community in the Ozarks when he was a lad.

her left hand when she was washing clothes or washing fish etc.

When both bride and groom came from the same section of the community, for instance, Maberly [Muddy Brook] and one of them was Anglican, the marriage ceremony would very likely take place in the Anglican school-chapel on the "Schoolhouse Hill". Bride, groom, and attendants - as well as the congregation - would walk to the ceremony. One couple [Nos.8 & 9], married some fifty years or more, recalled that for their wedding in December it snowed a bit, "just nice for walking". If at least one of the pair was Anglican and came from Elliston Centre, it was usual for the marriage to be performed in the little Anglican church located there. Then the couple and their attendants would ride to the church in horse and carriage (buggy) in spring, summer, and fall, but on horse and riding sleigh in the winter time.

A couple married in the Anglican church could not have a surprise wedding for their banns had to be published for three Sundays previous to their marriage. Neither could they be married during Lent. So, if they wished to marry during that time they had to ask a United Church minister or a Salvation Army officer to perform the ceremony.

Some United Church couples had big weddings in the church at Elliston, although quite often the marriage ceremony would be performed in the church parsonage or in some

private home. The number of people at the religious ceremony had little bearing on the number who attended the reception later. Most weddings were performed in the late afternoon or early evening: 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. were hours mentioned for afternoon weddings, while 7 p.m. seems to have been a popular time for evening weddings. People knew the rhyme: Monday for health/Tuesday for wealth/Wednesday's the best day of all/Thursday for losses/Friday for crosses/and Saturday no day at all!¹⁶ Few considered any day unlucky for a wedding, though one informant [No.10] had her reservations about Friday.

It was customary for men to "fire off" guns along the route taken by the wedding party after the ceremony.

No informants could recall any runaway marriages, but there were cases of quick or surprise marriages. These people slipped off to Bonavista or Catalina and were married there with no fanfare at all. But such cases were few and were a favourite topic of gossip for months afterward. There was also considerable gossip if there was a great disparity in age between husband and wife. Usually such marriages were between older widowers and young girls, rather than between an old bachelor and a young girl, and

16

Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.4771.

although people gossiped they recognized the necessity of the man's marrying. In a fishing community, a fisherman had to have a woman to take part in the operation, if he were partners with someone, and not just an ordinary shareman. If his mother or a sister could not perform the necessary work in the stage or on the flake, he had to look around for a suitable helpmate - one who could pull her weight. A man who was skipper certainly was expected to have female help as he very probably got the lion's share of the "voyage" (proceeds from the sale of cod).

Up until the 1940s, a wedding was thought of as a community social occasion. Invitations were given orally by family members and people would sometimes come to the reception even if they had somehow been overlooked when people were being asked to the wedding.

Everyone liked to contribute in some way, especially if the couple were well-liked in the community.

Cakes, pies, and pastries - all manner of sweet delicacies - would be brought or sent to the reception by the women of the community. Often the dish on which a cake was brought to the wedding was the wedding gift. Wedding gifts were ordinarily brought to the reception instead of being sent to the bride in advance, as is the custom nowadays. An area was set aside for the display of the wedding gifts and guests might see what the young couple had re-

ceived. There was no set rule as to where the reception would be held. Sometimes it was held at the home of the bride's parents, sometimes at the groom's parents, and not infrequently in the new home of the bridal pair. But, until the 1940s, all receptions were held in private homes. Guests crowded into every room in the house and took up all available space. There was not much room for many kinds of games, but there was a lot of talking, joking, and "carrying-on". If the bride and groom were to sleep in the house where the reception was being held, some guests would be sure to play a few tricks on them. Chief among these was fixing the bed so that it would collapse when the pair got into it.

The reception would carry on late into the night, and often a wedding reception was a two-night affair. Those who could not make it the first night tried to get there on the second. The second night guests were usually the older, more sedate members of the community and things would not be so boisterous as on the previous night. Perhaps because of the temperance movement, which was strong in the community during the first decades of the century, there were no drinks served at weddings.

There was always a special "wedding cake". This was usually a rich fruit cake, very similar to the traditional Christmas cake. Everyone at the wedding had to have a

piece of it. A young unmarried girl never ate her piece of wedding cake though. It was carefully wrapped up and when she went to bed that night, she placed it under her pillow "to dream on". It was believed by many that if a girl slept with a piece of wedding cake under her pillow she would dream of her future husband. This folklore is widespread and was a common practice in Dorsetshire, and was followed in other English counties, as is noted by Udal in his *Dorsetshire Folklore*.¹⁷

An informant [No.1] described a wedding reception around 1910 in this fashion:

They didn't send out invitations then. It was all after the bride and groom had their cup of tea. They went around to all the houses in the immediate vicinity and asked them to come. After the bridesmaids and boys had their tea, they would leave them and go around. Just the bride and groom would go. Several weddings around that time were conducted in this fashion. They have more means now for doing things but even in those days everyone had a large reception. Everyone in the community was invited. No matter how poor you were. For they all brought a contribution to set the table.

The length of time the newlyweds had been "going together" and their ages would determine what material effects they had to start married life with. Some brides who were older, or who had been courting for a long period, had chests full of bed clothes - sheets, quilts, pillow slips, pillows, etc.; tablecloths, often decorated with fancy stitching; dresser sets in knitted or crocheted

¹⁷ Udal, *Dorsetshire Folklore*, p.191.

lace; colourful hooked mats; cushions already stuffed with feathers and so on. Others, barely eighteen, perhaps just getting by on a servant girl's wages, would have less to contribute. A youthful husband would rarely have a home of his own to take his bride to. So, the couple would live with relatives for a while at least. Here they would not need the items required for maintaining a separate household. They used what was already in the home and both fitted into the work team of the household as best they could.

Most young men, however, did not do serious courting until they felt they could afford to keep a wife as well as she had been accustomed to, for "sensible" girls looked for a "good provider" and he had to be able to make a living for a family. There was nothing in the way of government assistance to fall back on, and many in the earlier years, unlike now, were too proud to rely on such assistance. The men felt at a disadvantage, for example, if he was a fisherman and the girl he was courting was a teacher. For not only was she supporting herself on her salary, but also she was often helping out at home as well. He would have to be very sure that they could live comfortably on his earnings before he asked her to marry him. A man courting a "servant girl" in Elliston certainly did not have this obstacle in his way, for her wages were

very low and she may have been in "service" by the time she was twelve years old. If she married young, she would be working just as hard or harder perhaps, but at least she would be working for herself.

In spite of the teasing they had to put up with, many young men began building their own homes when only in their teens - sometimes years before they were thinking about marriage, or had even begun serious courting. For, building a house was a slow process. It might take years. Often the man himself, if he were handy with tools, did most of the work. That meant he could only work at it out of fishing season - in the late fall or early winter - and then only when weather prevented him from going the five to ten miles in the "woods" for fuel. Some young men, perhaps better fixed financially, preferred to have a qualified carpenter build the house. There was, however, very little discussion on the shape and style of the house and no blueprints. The carpenter built the type of house he himself fancied and was responsible for all aspects of building. He had free rein, for often the owner was away in the lumberwoods earning the money to pay for the house. Wives or women in the family had no say in how a house was to be laid out. This followed the customary pattern. (This standard house type is described in the next chapter.) It is doubtful that the woman's choice would have deviated

much from the norm anyway, unless she had spent some time elsewhere and had become used to another house layout that she liked better. Most wives had no more say in how their new homes were to be built than the girl who married a man from Elliston who had built his house long before he married. His favourite answer to those who teased him was, "You got to have the cage before you can get the bird".

LIVING AND WORKING CONDITIONS IN ELLISTON HOMES

In this chapter I shall discuss Elliston homes - their layout, furnishings and decorations of various rooms - and women's household tasks - daily, weekly, and annually - necessary for keeping the home and family clean and tidy.

Within living memory, people in Elliston have lived in the same house all year round, unlike many in the neighbouring community of Bonavista (five miles away), where "transhumance" (the movement from winter to summer quarters and vice-versa) was quite common even in recent times.¹ For, fishermen in Elliston, unlike many in Bonavista, lived comparatively close to the shore and their fishing premises. It seems likely though that, in the early days of settlement, some families may have moved away from the exposed coast during the winter, but I heard no tradition about this winter movement inland.²

¹ Some fishermen in Bonavista, even in the 1940s, maintained fishing premises "down on the Cape, but lived in Bonavista three miles away during the winter. They moved to their summer houses for the duration of the fishing season. Other Bonavista residents lived in permanent homes in Bonavista except for two or three months of the winter, when they went "in the Bay" or "up on the Line" where wood was plentiful. Here they lived in small, one-room, rough timber shacks, called "tilts". During the two or three month period they cut their firewood for the year as well as wood for building purposes.

² Since there is a "Tilt Path" about three miles up the shore from Maberly and about two miles inland, in a very sheltered area, there must have been a "tilt" or "tilts" there for the spot to get such a name.

Most of my informants were of the opinion that while the majority of the early houses in Elliston were small, nearly all were two-stories. No one could remember any sod roofs or any mention of them. All gable or peaked-roof houses had wooden shingles and the flat-roofed ones were covered with "felt" (i.e., "tar-paper"). All early homes were built of studs (i.e., 2" x 4" timbers, roughed out with an axe.) These were placed upright, side by side, to form the walls. The narrow spaces between were "chinned" with moss or wood shavings - anything that would keep out draughts. Some of these studded houses were clapboarded outside and the inside was boarded up or "ceiled" with very wide boards, sawn by means of a "pit-saw", since there were no saw-mills in the community. The clapboard was painted if the family could afford paint. If not they whitewashed the clapboard, but painted the "corner pieces" and windows, usually red or brown.

The commonest old-type house that most of my informants remembered was the one known in New England as the "salt-box".³ This had a gable or peaked roof with a short side

³ Alice Morse Earle in *Home Life in Colonial Days*, p. 21, describes such New England Houses thus: "A later form of many houses was two stories or two stories and a half in front, with a peaked roof that sloped down nearly to the ground in the back over an ell covering the kitchen, added in the shape known as a lean-to, or, as it was called by the country folk, the 'linter'."

toward the front and a long side sloping down to just a few feet above the ground at the back. Homes built in this fashion were still common in Elliston in the 1920s, but they were fast disappearing. Today only one remains, inhabited by an elderly woman. Another type mentioned was the "cottage roofed" house. This was also two-stories, but the roof had four equally sloping sides. In nearly all houses the ceilings were low by today's standards, no more than six or six and a half feet high, and upstairs ceilings were affected by the shape of the roof, being very low at the back of the house under the long roof.

During the first decade of the twentieth century, roof styles changed. Carpenters who built peaked roof houses at this time made both sides of the gable roof the same length. Now ceilings upstairs could be of uniform height and, in addition, there was an attic, or "top loft" directly under the roof which could be used for storage. The idea caught on, and when a man needed to repair the roof on his old-style house, he frequently changed it to a roof having gables of equal length. Another roof style in common use from about 1910 onwards was the "flat-roof". This, along with the "gable-roofed" houses, are house styles that have persisted till the present day. It is only within recent years that the modern one-storey "bungalow" has been built. Of course at all times there were some houses

that differed markedly in style from the majority. Some of these were built with "mansard" roofs. Others had gable or cottage roofs with dormer windows, and in others the windows at the front were protruding or "bay windows". The majority of older homes, however, had the same style windows.

These were small to the standard now with nine panes in each window. The window shades were made of white material called shirting which had to be washed often and starched; they were rolled by hand, no springs. [Sometimes] there was a valance at the top of the window. [No.1]

Apart from roof styles and kind and number of windows, houses varied in other ways also. For instance, the majority had only one chimney, built at one end, but some homes had chimneys at both ends. Usually the better-off families had much larger homes than other people.

Only one of my informants, [No.4], could remember an open fireplace; the one in use at Thomas Tilly's place. "I remember the open fireplace", he said, "the flue with the crooks and crottles for hanging pots on." The "crook and crottles" was shaped not unlike a walking stick with a hook which went over the iron bar that stretched across the open fireplace. It had one straight side and the other side was notched. The whole hung down from the horizontal iron bar and could be slid along it. Pots could be raised or lowered on the crottles according to the housewife's

desires. "They'd start the pot boiling near the open fire then they'd shift it up a notch".[No.4] Cooking would then continue at a normal rate.

Some of the older poorer houses, built just after stoves came into use (perhaps 1870s), had no chimney. Instead a stove pipe went up through the roof. This was in three or four foot lengths and could be taken apart for cleaning. Then there was a length of pipe attached to a flange which was nailed to the roof. The stovepipe warmed the bedroom upstairs through which it passed. Behind the stove downstairs was a piece of heavy tin to keep the wall from scorching. In some homes the chimney or flue which had accommodated the open fire was modified to suit stoves. Several of my informants remembered the big wide chimney which was built of rock to the roof. However, this part of the chimney was referred to as "the back". Only the part projecting on the roof, built of brick, was the "chimbley".

Every house had a "bridge", often two, one at the front door and one at the back, but they varied from house to house. A bridge might mean a wooden platform extending from the doorway and ascended by a step or two, or it might simply be steps leading up to the door. Some of the "better" homes had "galleries" (verandas) which ran the full width of the front of the house. Nearly every house in Elliston by the 1900s had a front door and front steps.

Unlike many Newfoundland communities Elliston homes did not have the "mother-in-law" door. (This is a front door which is several feet above the ground with no steps leading from it.) Front doors although tightly closed in the winter were occasionally used during the summer months, especially when the minister came to call. A point which was often mentioned about Canon Bayly indicates that this was the case, for I was told that when he paid a visit to a parishioner he always made sure that he went out by the same door he had entered by. He considered it unlucky to do otherwise and should he start to go out the "wrong" way he would come back and go out the "right" way.

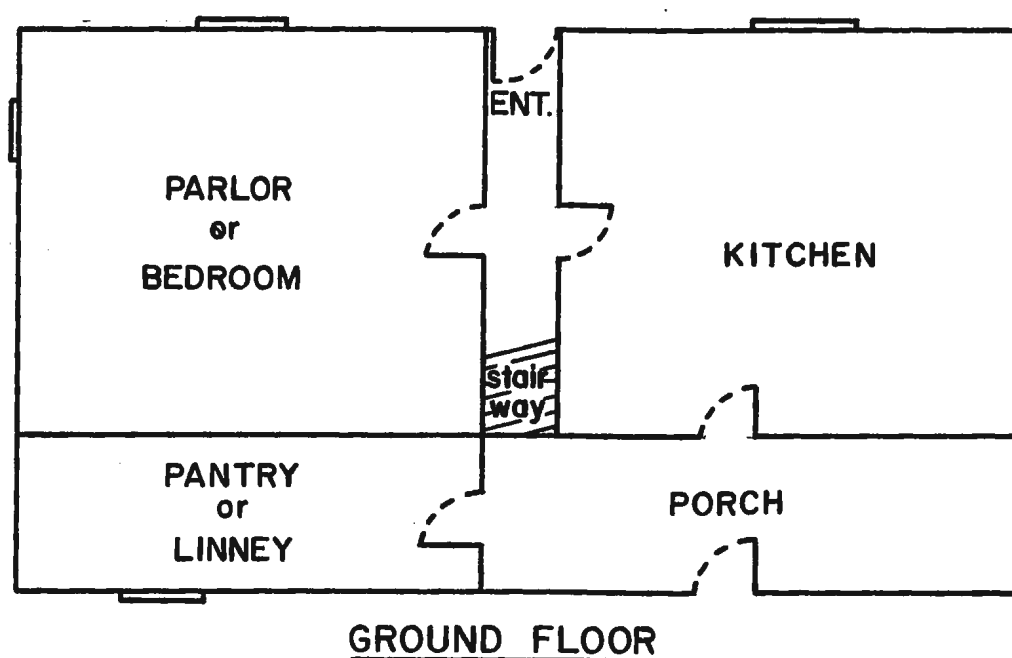
In the old days, no houses had basement though some were laid on stronger foundations than others. The majority had rock walls cemented together for the foundation; others just perched on columns of rock placed at regular intervals. Usually though this space was filled in because it made the house warmer. The house site was generally a spot that was of little use for gardening purposes as good land was scarce. Little attention seems to have been paid to the view or to the direction in which the house faced. Not infrequently the front door faced away from the main road and it was the back door which was nearest the road. The main consideration was closeness to the man's work.

In spite of exterior variations, the floor plan up-

stairs and down was the same in most older Elliston houses. There were two main rooms downstairs, plus a pantry and porch. The most important of these rooms was the kitchen; the other downstairs room was usually a parlour, but sometimes it was used as a bedroom. A few homes had separate dining rooms in addition to the parlour or "inside place". Generally a small hallway separated the parlour and the kitchen, and from it the stairs, usually "box stairs", ascended to the four small rooms above. When there was no front door, this hallway was called "the staircase". When there was a front door it (the hallway) was called the "entry". Ordinarily, entrance was through the rear via the porch to the kitchen.

Most Elliston houses seem to have had the kitchen placed at the front of the house, with the parlour (or bedroom) there also. The back of the house was usually taken up with a long entrance porch and a walk-in pantry or storeroom often referred to as the "linney" or "linnay". This storeroom might be half as big as the kitchen itself. Some families also had a separate outbuilding or "store" holding the winter's supply of flour, salt herring, turbot, beef, etc., especially if their pantry was small. Lots of space was needed for storing the winter food supply, much of which was bought "in bulk" when the head of the household "settled up" with the merchant each fall.

The porch which occupied approximately half of the back section of the house, was, in wintertime, a cold cheerless place, and little better in summer. Here the snow would be swept off outer garments and footwear, or muddy feet would be wiped clean in a rough mat (perhaps just a burlap sack), because no casual visitors ever removed their footwear before entering the kitchen, nor did they remove any other articles of clothing either. The porch floor was in early times just the "bare wood". Few housewives wasted a colourful hooked rug on this floor. The "gully" (water barrel) and the water buckets would be placed there both winter and summer. The family washtub, the washpan for the washing of face and hands, usually on its own stand, the pail for holding dirty water, the broom, and the scrubbing brush would all have a place here.



The kitchen, the heart of the home, was undoubtedly the most comfortable room in the house, certainly in wintertime. The first stoves, and those in use till the 1940s in the majority of homes, were wood-burning. They were for cooking and heating. The commonest type in use was the iron cook stove named the "Waterloo".⁴ The cooking area with four removeable "tops" (stove lids) was supported on four legs, and there was a longer leg at the back to support the oven. Because these stoves were rather low, they were often placed on a raised area in the floor called the "hearth". Another iron cook stove in common use in Elliston up till and after the 1940s was the "Improved Standard". This differed from the "Waterloo" in that the oven was attached directly to the main stove instead of being separated from it by a short "neck". Also some people had what they called "coalburners". These were rectangular box-like stoves on four legs, with the oven underneath the cooking area and the firebox in front, as in the others. It was very similar in form to the early wood and coal burning "ranges" which preceded the oil-burning ranges in general use today.

Some early kitchens had the "planchen" (floor) covered

⁴ There is a "Waterloo" stove in the "kitchen" of the museum at Trinity, Trinity Bay, Nfld.

with tar paper, except for about a foot around each side which was left bare. This border was kept clean by scrubbing with sand, soap, and quite often with a brush made from dried spruce boughs from which the needles had fallen. This "felt" was tarred once a year. Sometimes sand was sprinkled over it. But usually a "tarred" floor was polished with a mixture of tar and oil. "The smell got into your clothes, but you could see yourself in the floor". [No.6]. Often too, the kitchen was simply of wood with sand sprinkled over it - no protective covering at all. But, kitchens were not cheerless places for there were usually several "hooked" mats, in all manner of gay colours and designs, placed around the room. These hooked mats were still being used in the 1940s, though by then most houses had some sort of "canvas covering" (cheap linoleum) on the kitchen floor. Usually this was a thin felt-backed type, from which the enameled surface was soon scrubbed off and had to be replaced at least once a year, but some older homes had "Grand Falls canvas". This was very thick, strong, linoleum and was painted every year with a special floor enamel, the usual colours being dark green or dark brick red. The painting of such a floor caused a minor upheaval in our home when I was a child. For two or three days we had the delightful experience of "living" in the dining room until the floor dried properly.

I have no idea how people with only one chimney and one stove managed this matter. (Today, linoleum and tile floors are usual in the newer homes.)

The kitchen was simply furnished, often with home-made pieces. A large table, frequently the type with two leaves which could be let down when the table was not in use, was usually located by one of the two windows. A long and wide "settle" or "couch" as it was sometimes called, was placed along one wall. The "settle" had a back and a covered "head" at one end. Sometimes it was uncovered, but more often than not, it had a long feather-filled cushion stretching the length of it, or else there were several smaller feather cushions scattered along its length. Enough ordinary chairs for the family were positioned around the room. One of these might be a high-backed rocking chair. Besides, some housewives liked to have one or two "barrel-chairs". These were made from a barrel with a section cut out, the remaining section forming the back. A hinged seat was placed about halfway up the barrel, so that there was a place for storage under the seat. Perhaps a bit of colourful cotton and a cushion might add to the comfort of the barrel-chair, but in poorer homes it stood naked except for paint. In addition to being comfortable seats, barrel-chairs were valuable storage areas for items used every day - mittens, "vamps" (the short, ankle-length socks

worn over longer stockings), scarves, etc. Some housewives found them a good place to store the week's supply of potatoes on winter nights, for, unless well covered, things could and did freeze inside the house on a frosty night, as there was no fire on during the hours of sleeping.

Many homes had long benches or stools in the kitchen. These fitted into convenient corners under windows or shelves or in the chimney corner. Most kitchens had a "dresser" or "sideboard" which usually occupied the space between the chimney and outer wall. Sometimes it was free-standing; other times it was a "built-in". The wide counter-like top was open and here most of the dishes were stored. Often there were higher, narrow shelves which held special dishes or "nicknacks". Some homes had the top section of shelves enclosed by a glass door, if it were built into the wall. The space underneath was closed and might be used for the storage of items for table use, or it might simply be a storage area for unmended clothes, or those which were in daily use.

Since all stoves were wood burning in early days, the wood box, situated in the corner near the stove, was an important feature of all kitchens. This the children of the family were expected to fill up daily, especially during the winter. The cooking utensils, nearly all of iron or tin, were stored either in the closet under the stairs, or in the "linney".

The kitchen walls in every home were decorated with calendars supplied by the various businesses in the community. Dr. Chase's and Dodd's almanacs usually shared a nail or small hook in a corner. Often there was a small mirror and several pictures of varying types including the "Orange Chart"⁵ prominently displayed. Nearly every home had a "mantel piece" in kitchen and parlour, the shelf, placed three-quarters up the wall above the stove. The woodwork for this was often very fancy and difficult to dust. Here small ornaments and "treasures" were placed. In homes with small children, matches needed for lighting the fire, were also placed here to be near at hand but out of reach of the children.

In some of the larger, older houses, there was in addition to the regular kitchen, a "back kitchen" for summer use only. The hurried housewife looked upon this room as a time saver, for her regular kitchen stayed spick and span, the "dirty" work being confined to the summer kitchen. Some very houseproud women even used an outside store (i.e., shed) for summer cooking and eating, but the majority felt that kitchens were put in homes for use. "Show" was what the parlour was for!

⁵ A colourful chart depicting various Biblical events. Most members of the Loyal Orange Society possessed such a chart and its being on a wall indicated that some male in the family was an "Orangeman".

One informant [No.1], said "Our kitchen was also living and dining room". And another, [No.6] remarked: "There's people had what they calls parlours them times never hardly went in 'um. That's the funny people. Build a house and have a room and never go in 'n." His wife, [No.5] added: "Perhaps it might be used at Christmas time or a birthday. Not very often a birthday cause probably have a little bit of birthday cake 'twouldn't be worth asking anybody to it, lots of times. But, Christmas, most commonly Christmas time, they'd have their little fire in there."

As may be seen from the above, the parlour or "inside place" was used very rarely. All entertaining, except for very special occasions or when important guests were present, for example, the minister, was done in the kitchen.

How people outside your immediate family furnished their "inside" rooms and "upstairs" was a deep mystery during the period 1900-1950. When you visited you got no further than the kitchen. There you sat down and did not wander around. Although the kitchen was public, in that you did not knock but walked right into the room, the rest of the house was very private. Rarely did a child get to see a neighbour's "inside place". You might get an occasional glimpse of the hallway and the "inside place" through an open door, but you never ventured through that door no matter how great your curiosity. Only women who

helped at childbirth or "laying out" invaded the sanctity of the house outside the kitchen.

What parlours and other rooms were like and how they were furnished depended on the family's means and its size. A man with a big family to support on what a shareman could earn could not furnish his house in the style that the owner or part-owner of one or two cod-traps could. Most "inside places" seem to have had a "parlour stove", an upholstered sofa, some better quality chairs, perhaps an organ, and inevitably family portraits in heavy ornate frames. And in later years it might have "pretty flowerdy canvas" on the floor as well as hooked mats. Family members would be laid out in the parlour when they died. Perhaps this is why people avoided using these rooms. They were more "dead" than "living" rooms.

In the early days some of the better-off "planters" and the merchant's family had items imported from England. Luxury items like Grandfather clocks and musical instruments were brought from the Mother Country and they also imported furniture like dining tables, chairs, sofas, and desks as well. But the majority of the residents relied on their own skill or that of recognized local carpenters. In the early 1900s and during the forties as well, most of the furniture in the majority of homes was still locally made, but in this period those who wanted "better" furniture

ordered it from St. John's through some company's agent.

By the 1900s most of the homes had four bedrooms upstairs, where much of the furniture, except that in the "best" or "spare" bedroom, (found in a few homes) was locally made. Ordinarily bedrooms were furnished with a bed, usually a double one, a bureau with an attached mirror, and perhaps a smaller "washstand" sometimes equipped with pitcher, bowl, and commode, a hard chair, and perhaps a trunk or chest for storage. Few bedrooms had built-in closets and until moveable wardrobes became common, clothing was hung on hooks behind the bedroom doors with perhaps dust cloths for protection. Of course in the poorer homes there would be little furniture in most bedrooms except one or two beds.

Many of the early bedsteads were homemade of wood and instead of springs, there was a network of rope, tightly knotted, to hold the bedding. Later bedsteads were of iron. Sometimes these had elaborate designs at the head and foot and one informant [No.1] said that as a child she got great amusement out of the four brass knobs that were on the bedposts. "They could be screwed on and off". The first iron bedsteads were fitted with "laths". Three or four flat metal strips went lengthwise and fitted into protruding knobs at the top and foot of the bed. Five or seven went crosswise. The whole formed a web of metal on

which the bedding rested. Later "laths" were replaced by "springs". A heavy wooden frame with a network of wire was laid on the iron frame of the bed. Often an iron bar spanned the middle of the bed underneath the laths or the spring. These iron bedsteads were bought in the local stores and probably had been brought in from St. John's. In the early days, everyone had feather beds which were encased in a special striped blue material called "bed ticking". Beneath the "bed" was laid a separate "bunk". This was a coarse mattress made of wood shavings covered in flour sacking or "cotton duck", a heavy canvas-like material. Store-bought mattresses did not come into general use until around the 1940s.

Feather beds were covered with flannelette sheets usually. These were often homemade as flannelette material could be bought cheaply by the pound. Several quilts were on every bed in most homes for all housewives believed that the weight of bedclothing was a guarantee of its warmth. Blankets have been in use only during recent years. Pillows in the old days were the big bolster feather-filled type which went "fore and aft" the bed. In addition some adults used smaller pillows on top of the bolster, perhaps because they wanted more height, but I suspect that women encouraged their use in order to "save" the big pillow slip from becoming too stained, since men

did not shampoo their hair very frequently, if at all, and oily stains were difficult to get out with ordinary washing. The old style pillows may still be found in some homes, but the majority of housewives now use the smaller individual size pillows either feather or foam rubber-filled.

In the old days, no bed was properly "made" unless it had a "bed strip" or "valence" attached to the bed frame and going round the front and ends of the bed. This was a strip of white material, usually shirting, which was trimmed with handmade lace. It was a great dust catcher because it touched the floor, but it did hide whatever was under the bed - often a "johnny" pot (chamber pot). When women put away the bed strips, around the 1930s, they found that their beds looked awfully bare, for, although they had "counterpanes" for covering the top of the bed, they were not as long as the present day bedspreads and there might be a foot or more of space between the bed clothes and the floor.

Floors upstairs in the old days had no protective covering, but by the 1900s most people had some sort of thin "canvas" on their floors. Everyone of course had hooked mats and some people had sheepskin or goatskin rugs, the

⁶ "Valence" is mentioned by Sybil Marshall, *Fenland Chronicle*, p.243.

latter being very common. When a goat was slaughtered in the fall, the man of the house would take the skin, scrape off any fat and stretch it on a frame which he nailed onto an outbuilding until it had cured properly.

Walls, upstairs and down, were papered in the early 1900s and the custom still persisted in the 1950s, though women did not need to paper as frequently then as formerly. Said one informant [No.5]: "They looked real well too. Paper it spring and fall, see. You'd paper it in the spring and then for Christmas you'd put a bit of paper on again. Paper wasn't so very dare [expensive] then. There was a lot of work to it though but [we] didn't mind the work."

There was indeed a lot of work to papering a room. For the rolls were narrow, only seventeen to eighteen inches wide for the ordinary wall paper; the more expensive variety might be thirty inches wide. It was not pre-pasted. Housewives had to make their own paste, a mixture of flour and water and this had to be the proper consistency so that the paper would stick well. Bare walls in a new house were first of all covered with "shadin'" (sheathing) paper. This was a sort of heavy construction paper about a yard wide, and cream-coloured usually. To insure this heavy paper stuck to the board, women often added lye to the paste which meant they had to be extremely careful with the paste container and the paste itself.

In rooms outside the "living" area papering and painting would not have to be done every spring and fall, but the kitchen would have to be done by every conscientious housewife if she could afford it at all. For, the walls would have become spotted with children's fingerprints, discoloured with smoke, and in summer the ever-present flies left their spots everywhere. Screen doors were unknown till the 1940s. Some housewives in early years used thin muslin to screen upstairs windows and succeeded in keeping down the fly damage there. Downstairs though, in hot weather, the back door stood wide open and the flies just poured inside. Sticky flypaper suspended from the kitchen ceiling was unsightly and not too effective and a fly swatter was a messy tool. So, people just lived with it. Several of my informants remarked wonderingly on how they ever managed to put up with having so many flies around.

So there was a great deal of "paintin' and paperin'."

Get your bit of paper with the roses⁷ on it. The rosier the paper 'd be the better, you see. Some people liked striped paper. A stripe 'd go down the roses and some more wouldn't get that 'fraid their homes would'n't fair [i.e. plumb] and it'd be too much trouble to put that on, tryin'

⁷ Roses meant any sort of floral design the wallpaper might have.

to get it fair. But with the roses all over it, the paper, if twas a little bit asquish [out of line], you wouldn't know it. [No.5]

Many housewives, of course, did have better surfaces to deal with than others, but the truth of the matter often lay in the women themselves. It is a fact that some women were much more capable paper-hangers, took more pride in their work, and made sure their patterns matched perfectly every time, while others thought that all they had to do was cut and paste, and these never did master the art of papering a room properly.

In some houses the kitchen walls had the bottom part finished in "beaded" lumber. This was grooved three inch wide board which had a raised pattern on it and was the usual type used for ceilings. All ceilings, windows, and doors were painted. Kitchen ceiling were often light blue or a pale cream (buff). Window frames were often white or were painted the same colour as the ceiling, and doors varied. Some householders painted them a solid colour - cream, blue, brown, or green; others liked to have the panels one colour and the frame a darker colour. One elderly couple told me that doors might have white panels and be painted yellow or brown "out around". Since it was only in exceptional cases that one went past the kitchen in a neighbour's house, I cannot say how rooms, outside the kitchen, were painted and none of my informants mentioned this. I was

familiar with white paint being used on all woodwork - the stairs, ceilings, window frames, thresholds, "skirting" (base boards), except in the kitchen and porch.

None of the early homes had running water. There were only one or two homes that boasted this convenience during the thirties and forties. In fact there were very few private wells in Elliston Centre until comparatively recent times. Most people got their water supply from the various brooks flowing through their community which were deepened in spots forming "wells". People in Maberly were better provided with water than were their neighbours on the Neck, just half a mile away. For years there were two or three private wells in the former section of the community and two public wells. On the Neck there was but one shallow public well which went dry nearly every summer. Then the inhabitants were faced with the task of bringing water from Maberly or from the running brook at Sandy Cove, which like Maberly was a half mile away though in the opposite direction. Most homes kept their daily water supply in a "gully" (water barrel) placed in the back porch. It was a common sight in summertime to see five or six women or older girls heading for a well with hoops (circular or square wooden frames which rested on the rims of the buckets and kept the buckets from hitting the person's legs) and buckets on their arms. They would carry home about five

gallons of water each at a time and would need to make five or six trips to fill the "gully".

Most homes, especially if they were situated a considerable distance from the sea, had outdoor toilets or "privies". Poorer, or less sanitary conscious people, had pits, some distance from the house on which they also threw their daily buckets of wood ashes. Many housewives simply emptied their "slop pails" over a nearby cliff into the sea. This emptying of pails was a chore that had to be done early in the morning so people, especially the men, would not see it being done. Dishwater and wash or scrub water was simply thrown into the backyard. There might or might not be a drain to carry this away. Male members of the family rarely made use of inside facilities (pail or chamber pot) except perhaps in wintertime. The "trunk-hole" (a hole about one and half feet square in the floor through which a bucket was lowered to bring up sea water) in the stage was their toilet seat.

Before electricity came to the main part of the community in the 1920s, other daily jobs included the trimming and cleaning of lamps. There was usually a large one used in the kitchen and at least one small one for upstairs use. If there was only one "upstairs" lamp, it might be left burning in one of the children's bedrooms until the parents took it to their room when they retired. The lamp stand

and the part which held the kerosene was usually of glass, although some lamps had iron stands. The kitchen lamp was often mounted on a wall in an iron bracket with a reflector behind it to direct the light on any special area where a better light was needed. In some kitchens the lamp was placed on the kitchen table at night, and on a corner shelf in the kitchen during the day. The kerosene supply had to be replenished each day, the chimney or lamp "globe" had to be polished and the wick had to be trimmed so that the flame burnt evenly with no "snookers" (the little jibs of flame which smoked up the lamp chimney).

In summertime, if there was much nightwork in the stage, the women had to see that the "stagelamps" and lanterns were trimmed as well. These "stagelamps" were simply tin kettles holding perhaps a pint of kerosene. There were two spouts through which the wicks were pulled. The flames from the wicks were not covered and the light given off was a reddish-yellow glow. There was a handle attached to the rim so that the lamp could be suspended above the working area by means of a wire..

Although many homes were provided with electricity in the 1920s, there were very few appliances used until after World War II. Electricity was for lighting only. There were no irons, kettles, mixers, refrigerators, washers or dryers. And, because housewives during this period lacked

the many conveniences which modern housewives in the community deem essential, they had to put in long hours at chores which have disappeared today.

Before they could even begin a major chore like the weekly wash, they had to make proper preparations. First of all the housewife had to make sure she had lots of water on hand and she might have to bring this from a distance of half a mile or more. The water had to be heated in containers, usually iron pots or kettles in the old days, on the stove. Badly soiled garments would be put in a boiler along with some wood ashes tied up in a bag and the clothes boiled until the dirt "boiled out" of them. But the greater part of the family wash - underwear for the different family members, the men's and boys' best shirts, men's workshirts, girls' and women's work dresses or blouses, aprons, handkerchiefs, sheets and pillow cases etc. were washed by hand. Washing was done either in the kitchen, or in the porch, more often in the latter when the weather was not too cold.

Wooden washtubs were being used by the majority of housewives even in the 1940s. "You were high up if you had a galvanized tub and a scrubbing board".[No.8]. Great care had to be taken of these wooden tubs both winter and summer. In summer, water had to be kept in them continually so that they would not split and fall apart in the heat;

in winter they had to be kept inside the house lest the frost "draw them apart". Usually these tubs were fashioned from the bottom of a flour barrel, with two portions protruding for handles, or else two hand-holes were cut just below the rim. By the 1940s most women were using scrub boards, either an all wooden type with a ribbed surface for scrubbing on, or else one with a wooden frame and ribbed glass on which to scrub. Some women would not use scrubbing boards at all. They contended that rubbing on the boards was hard on clothes, so they used hands and knuckles only for eradicating stubborn spots. Rare indeed was the housewife who was content to hang out a dirty, dingy wash. It would be considered a disgrace by most women. And women in grandmother's day had no commercial bleaches or detergents to clean and whiten the wash.

Usually in the fall, Elliston women made their own "blubber" soap or "soft" soap, as it never really hardened properly, although they cut it into bars. Housewives in many parts of the world made their own soap in the old days, but usually they saved the household fats to combine with lye. In Elliston, the majority of the women used rotted cod livers called "blubber" instead, hence the name "blubber" soap. Blubber and wood ashes were boiled together in a pot until stringy like "lassy candy". Then it was poured out, cooled, and cut in bars.

In the thirties and forties, housewives no longer made blubber soap and today's bleaches and detergents were very rarely used. For washing and scrubbing they used Bibby and Sunlight soaps. To make this "bought" soap go farther, housewives cut the long bars into short pieces, placed them in a paper bag and hung them up beside the chimney to harden. Women did not use wood lye in the forties, but they used a commercial product, Gillet's Lye, instead. Badly soiled clothing was still boiled in an iron pot on the stove in a lye solution, but this lye had to be treated with care. Clothes boiled in lye were lifted out of the pot very gingerly with a long stick and then plunged into tubs of cold water. Clothes got several rinses before they were deemed safe enough to be handled with the bare hands. This procedure would be carried out in the yard, not in the porch, where the washing was generally done, for lots of water got slopped around.

Many items that just needed a little bleaching would be laid on the grass for a day or so for the sun to act on. These were then rinsed and hung on the line to dry properly. Blueing was always used in white things. Women always preferred to dry clothing outside, if at all possible, even in freezing weather. Many women felt that clothes dried in the house dried "drenty" (not a bright clean white). Few people in the old days had long clotheslines. Twenty

feet was usual. Usually the best things like sheets and pillowcases and delicate items would be dried on the line in the backyard, but heavier things would be put on the fence.

Monday was the washday for most housewives, though some were not tied to any particular day, but chose the first suitable one for the weekly washing. In winter a woman might be able to stick to a fairly rigid schedule and get her washing done on Monday, but, in summer, if the fish were plentiful, her schedule was altered to fit the conditions.

As one informant [No.5] put it: "You might put your clothes in soak, but that's as far as you'd get sometimes. Perhaps they'd have to lie in water for a couple of days before you got around to it. The water'd go sour on you." Another one said:

The wash might be in soak all Monday if a lot of fish. Otherwise it would be finished on Monday. First the wash was put on the grass or low trees to bleach and then on Wednesday it was taken up and rinsed over. Blueing and starch were put in at the second washing. Really, washing and ironing was a week's work."
[No.1]

My informants on the Neck told me that sometimes during a dry summer they would wash their clothes in the pond over at Sandy Cove, and would rinse them in warm water when they got back home.

Much starch was used in the early 1900s, but not so much later on. In the early days, men favoured heavily starched shirt fronts, and the white apron which every married woman put on, after finishing up her dirtier household chores, was heavily starched also. Even then, housewives used store-bought starch principally, though sometimes, they used to make their own "flour starch". This was made very like the thickening for gravy, simply flour mixed with a large amount of water. In earlier days, around the 1840s, housewives used starch made from potatoes. Philip Tocque gives a full description of this "potato starch" in his book *Wandering Thoughts*:

Most of the inhabitants of Bird Island Cove make their own starch from the potatoes. A quarter of a bushel will make a pound; the process is very simple. The potatoes are just peeled, then grated over a tub of water, into which the potato falls. When a sufficient quantity is grated, it is well stirred about the tub with the hand; it is then taken and strained through a piece of fine calico or muslin, and let remain in a dish for a day, after which the starch is found in a thick, white coat on the bottom of the dish, and the water floating on top; the water is then thrown off, and the starch taken and put in a small bag and hung to dry.⁸

Most of my informants can remember when ironing was done with a "box iron". This was wedge-shaped and hollow.

⁸ Philip Tocque, *Wandering Thoughts* (London, 1846), p.323.

Special heaters were placed in the fire till they got red hot. Then, by means of tongs, they were placed in the box iron and the shutter which could be lifted up and down was closed. There were generally two heaters with the box iron. While one was being used the other was getting hot.⁹

Another early iron was the "flat iron" which was heated on top of the stove. This was in one piece, wedge-shaped, handle and all, so that it had to be removed from the stove with great care, using something to protect oneself from the hot handle. The next type of iron, the "sad iron", had removeable handles. They were pointed at both ends and came in a set of three irons of differing weights. These, too, were heated on top of the stove. Many housewives tried to schedule their ironing while they were baking bread (which could be any day of the week except Sunday). Then the stove was extremely hot and the irons heated up quickly. However, in summertime this was equal to ironing in an inferno.

Women had to keep up with their mending and darning at all seasons unless they wanted their children to be referred to as "rag molls" (children whose clothes were often getting torn and were left in that condition, unmended).

⁹ Informant No.14 showed me the "box iron" which her mother used in the early 1900s. There is also a "box iron" on display in the Provincial Museum, Duckworth Street, St. John's.

In summer, of course, there was only time for the bare minimum of mending. Outside chores had priority. Lucky indeed was the housewife whose mother, mother-in-law, or other elderly relative, would help with the family mending. And it seems this was often the case for, according to one informant [No.1], "Old women always did mending, knitting, making quilts. Took a lot of work off the young wife."

Many household chores which were done weekly, like ironing, might be done any day of the week, but Saturday was synonymous with "Scrub-Day", winter and summer, at least till the 1940s. In summer, a "good" housewife would have to rise very early on "scrub-day" if she wanted to get her "work" (i.e., scrubbing) done before being involved with outside chores connected with the fishery. Of course, if she employed a maid, or had a daughter old enough to do the "work", it would be different. Even in winter, most housewives tried to finish their scrubbing in the morning.

First the kitchen stove, an iron cook stove, had to be "cleaned". Ashes were removed every day, but "cleaning" meant polishing. Early in the century, stove-lead or "blackening" was used. This was smeared on with a rag and polished with a brush. After the polishing "you had to be able to see your face in it," [No.1] for, a well-polished stove was one of the recognized marks of a "good" housewife.

Because this stove polishing sent black specks of polish everywhere, and because flies were not careful where they left their marks, it followed that nearly every surface except the ceiling and the papered walls, had to be washed. The mantel piece, the windows, the doors, the "skirting boards" (baseboards), the furniture - all the "paintwork" was washed off first with soap and water, carbolic soap or "blubber" soap in the old days, Sunlight and Bibby soaps later on. Chairs were nearly always painted every year, but after a few scrubblings they lost their protective coating. Informant No.6's earliest memory of an old neighbour woman was the whiteness of her kitchen chairs.

Following the "paintwork", the floors in kitchen and porch were cleaned. If it were "canvas-covered", a simple washing with soap and water would be sufficient. If it were "bare floor", it had to be scrubbed with a brush as well as being washed. Thresholds got special treatment; they were scrubbed with a "fresh drop of water" so that they did not acquire a dirty grey cast after the paint wore off.

A major chore was scrubbing the wooden "bridge" which led to the backdoor of every house. This got extremely dirty in muddy weather and had to be scrubbed frequently. Those few who had concrete steps were saved from this chore.

Another "once a week chore" was cleaning "upstairs". Friday was generally the day for this. Here, windows, doors, and furniture required only a light touch-up, for dust was the chief enemy. Floors were washed, as were the stairs, which being usually painted white, had to be given special attention. The "inside place", which was little used, would only need a thorough cleaning every two weeks, though a light dusting would be in order in between times.

There were other household tasks that only needed to be done once a year, but they were major chores. The greatest washing test of all faced the housewife every spring. In late May, or early June, all the heavy winter quilts had to be washed and stored till they were needed again in the fall. Wringing the water out of these thick quilts was a gigantic task, but some women could perform this chore magnificently. Since quilts were usually too heavy to hang on the clothes line, they were spread over the fence in the backyard with ends pinned together with clothes pegs so they would not blow away when they got drier. Summer quilts were washed in the fall, but there were fewer of them and they were of lighter weight, hence were easier to wash.

Every spring, and sometimes in the fall, the whole house was given a very thorough cleaning. Painting and papering would be done around this time too. On a bright,

sunny day in May or early June, all the "beds and bunks" and hooked mats were brought outside and aired for the full day. Feather "beds" and "shaving bunks" were punched and pummelled every which way to get rid of winter dust and dirt.

Mats and any other rugs were swept and beaten free of dust every Friday, but, during spring cleaning the hooked mats got their annual scrubbing. Those who lived near a brook with a wooden bridge over it, found this an ideal spot for "scrubbing out" their mats. They would arrive at the bridge with perhaps a dozen or more hooked rag mats. The mat would be spread out on the bridge and the woman or girl, standing perhaps on a stone in the brook, would slosh water over the mat and then work up a lather with some soap and scrub vigorously. When one side had been "scrubbed" to her satisfaction, she turned the mat over and did the same to the other side. When all the mats were scrubbed, they were taken to the sea and dunked in the salt water. This set the colours so that they wouldn't run, and also got rid of any soapy film. The dripping mats were then taken to the fish flake and laid on the wooden "longers" to dry in the sun. In two or three days they were ready for use once more. Some people also scrubbed their mats in the fall, but the majority of housewives were content with a spring cleaning for upstairs mats.

Downstairs, where they got dirty fairly quickly, they might be scrubbed whenever the opportunity arose.

Although a woman had to spend a great deal of her time in keeping her family clean, this does not mean that she neglected to feed them. In fact, because she spent so much of her time in preparing food for her family and in looking after their health needs, I have devoted a separate chapter to her feeding and caring for the family.

FEEDING THE FAMILY AND HEALTH PRACTICES

During the period 1900-1950, much of a woman's time indoors was spent in the preparing and serving of food. The content and number of meals, and how they were served, differed according to the season, and the woman's workload outside the house.

In winter, there were fewer meals per day than during a busy fishing season. Four meals - breakfast, dinner, tea, and a "mug-up" or "lunch" before bedtime - were standard in most homes. The homemaker had a greater variety of foods to use in winter, for store supplies were purchased in "bulk" in the late fall, and there were home-grown vegetables, homemade preserves, dry salted cod, fresh meat, and salt water birds. Meals might be eaten in a more leisurely fashion and women could spend more time in preparing them. Dinner was always a big meal, winter and summer, but supper in winter was a substantial meal also, and might consist of baked beans, potato scallop, or rice pudding.

In summer, especially if it were a busy trapping season, there would often be seven meals - the men's light snack in the early morning, breakfast around 7:30-8:00 a.m., mug-up at 10:30-11:00 a.m., dinner at 12:30-1:00 p.m., mug-up at 3:30-4:00 p.m., tea at 5:30-6:00 p.m., and a "mug-up" before bedtime at 10:30-11:00 p.m. or earlier.

Summer meals on weekdays were prepared, served, and eaten in as short a time as possible. They were generally less substantial than winter meals. For, by the end of the winter, many vegetables, carrots, turnips, cabbage, would have been used up by a large family and even the basic vegetable, the potato, might be in short supply. In summer, there would not be much to "bring round a meal" except fish, and bread.

Before discussing standard meals, most of which used bread, I will talk about bread making. Since bread was so essential, it deserves special treatment. Baking, that is bread baking, was, in large families, done every day, sometimes twice a day. For bread was indeed the "staff of life". In some homes, bread and butter and tea might be eaten at every meal, except dinner, and if vegetables were scarce, it might be eaten at this meal also. One cogent expression I heard in my childhood showed how one young boy felt about such fare. Asked by an older brother what there was for supper, he replied: "Nuttin' but 'chaw and glutch'!" A bit of questioning revealed that supper was the bread and tea variety, which he found unappetizing and difficult to swallow.

In the old days, it seems that women in the community used hops in making bread, and many of my informants can remember when hops were grown in some backyards. However, those women with whom I talked, used yeast bought in the

stores when they first started making bread back in the early 1900s. The brands that were popular in the forties were Lallemands' and Royal. The former was sold in round, one-ounce slices, five or six in a cardboard container. Royal yeast was in square one-ounce blocks, with again five or six in a container. Yeast cakes were kept covered in their containers in the pantry. The yeast cakes had to be soaked apart in lukewarm water with sugar; a small amount of flour was then added and mixed to a pasty consistency. This "barm", or sponge, was left to rise in some container in a warm place. Often a tin, three-quart, "boat's kettle" was used. (This was a high, narrow pot with a tightly fitting cover and a hanger so the mixture might be suspended from a hook over the warm stove.) When this "barm" had risen sufficiently, it was added to about a gallon of water and sufficient flour in the "mixing pan". Few women used shortening, or butter, in the old days, and the salt added was often the coarse fishery salt. During the depression days of the thirties, women, if they had lots of potatoes, would boil some of these, mash them up and add to the flour mixture to "make the flour go farther". Potato grounds were also used for leavening when the housewife was short of regular yeast.

Women, used to bread-making, could mix up a batch in ten to fifteen minutes. But, of course, the finished pro-

duct was not ready for eating till hours later. It took several hours to rise, then the dough was kneaded down and let rise again. Finally, it was "put in the pans" and let rise again before it was put in the oven for baking, which took about one hour. Many women preferred to make their bread at night, especially in the summertime. Then it would rise during the night and baking could be done before the "heat of the day". In summer, the kitchen at bread-baking time was extremely hot, with every bit of furniture nearly as hot as the stove itself.

One of my informants [No.5], mother of ten children, certainly mixed a lot of bread. She "made up" one and a half barrels of flour during one month in the spring when they ran out of potatoes early in the season. She would make the bread at night and bake it next morning. Often she said there would have to be two "mixings" a day. Then she might pinch off a small bit of dough and use this "leaven" for the second batch. "Had to be careful because bread could easily go sour when you used 'leaven'".

Housewives, when at all possible, tried to "bake ahead". No woman liked to cut freshly baked bread. It was difficult to cut properly and you wasted a lot. So, if she was short of bread any day, she would bake "buns off the bread". That is, she would take a portion of her bread dough, make small buns (rolls) and put them on a

cookie sheet in the oven to bake up quickly. These were usually eaten while still hot and the regular batch of bread was saved until it got cool.

Some families that were very badly off, perhaps with no mother to look after them, or one who was a poor cook, might even have to make do with "nochers". This was chiefly flour and water mixed to a dough consistency, formed in a flapjack and cooked on the top of a hot stove without benefit of a cooking utensil. Fortunately, such cases were few, for the knowledge of breadmaking was one skill which all marriageable girls were expected to possess, and this was emphasized again and again by my women informants, all of whom recalled "mixing bread" at a very early age, often standing on a stool or block to reach the "mixing pan".

Today's cooks use instant yeast for bread making, and many still make their own bread in Elliston, although bakery products are available. Most of the menfolk refer to "baker's bread" as "baker's fog". They prefer the more substantial homemade variety.

The men's light meal, taken in the early morning hours during the fishing season, was chiefly bread and butter with tea. Perhaps they had a little jam or marmalade to "tow the bread down". The women would set the table before they retired for the night and would lay a

white cloth over everything to keep out the flies. The men would boil their own kettle and make their own tea for this early meal. This was the only indoor household chore most men performed.

The regular breakfast, eaten around 7:30-8:00 a.m. in the summer, often saw codfish, either hot (i.e., just cooked), or cold, being eaten. Bread was always placed on the table. Sometimes it was toasted by being laid on the red-hot stove, or by being put in a hot oven, since there were few toasters in use until recent years. In the winter, porridge, usually oatmeal in the early years, but from the early 1900s on rolled oats, was served. Sweetening in the early days was generally molasses. Eggs were not commonly eaten for week-day breakfasts, but they were frequently eaten on Sunday mornings, except in winter when eggs were usually scarce. For, though housewives tried to keep a stock of eggs, preserved in salt or flour for their winter baking - they couldn't spare any for breakfasts. Even in the forties, eggs were still very scarce in winter. In fact, breakfasts, winter and summer, had not altered very much from what they were in the early 1900s, except that sugar had replaced molasses as the chief sweetener.

The mug-up, held several times a day in summer, was a light meal - always bread and butter and tea and anything that was available for a "relish", in early days left-over

fish or some home-made jam, in later years, cold meats, tinned beans, jam, etc. The mug-up before bedtime was a must in the majority of homes, winter and summer.

Dinner, the most substantial meal of the day, was served around mid-day. During weekdays in summer, it consisted chiefly of potatoes and codfish. Potatoes were always boiled, but the fish might be cooked in a number of different ways. If the backbone were left in it, the housewife would either stew or boil it. A "stewed" fish was placed in a small amount of water in a pot on the stove. Onion slices and small cubes of salt beef were added to the water and fish. It would be ready for eating in half to three quarters of an hour. Boiled fish was simply and quickly cooked. The fish was placed in a little salted water and boiled in a pot. After it had boiled, it was strained and chives were mixed with it for flavouring. Salt pork would be cut in small cubes and fried out - the grease and the pork were then poured over the fish.

If the cod was to be fried, it was split, i.e., the backbone was removed. Then it was cut into suitable pieces, rolled in flour and placed in hot pork fat in the frying pan. No matter how the housewife cooked her daily fish, it never took up much time, usually half to three quarters of an hour before a substantial meal was ready for serving.

Fish, for the noon meal in summer, was obtained daily. A woman whose husband was fishing would either get it from the stage herself, or have someone in the family get one for her. But, if a woman happened to have no one fishing, she would then have to send one of her children along to someone's stage while they were "putting away the fish". Rarely did the child ask for a fish. He or she simply stood there until some member of the crew asked if he wanted a fish. When he said "yes", or nodded in reply, he would then be asked: "Does your mother want to fry it?" If the answer was again "yes", they would remove the backbone. If "no", they would just take off the head and "insides" before giving it to the child. Salmon was a delicacy which most families might have four or five times during the summer. It, like cod, was either boiled or fried.

There were no fresh fish of any kind eaten during the winter, but, fish was still served once or twice a week. There were salted herring and turbot, kept in pickle, as well as cured salted cod. Salt beef formed the core of most winter dinners and in the earlier days "Hambutt" pork was also cooked for a bit of variety. "Hambutt" pork differed from "fat back" pork used for frying purposes in that "it had a bone in it".

In late fall, most families could enjoy fresh meat or fresh pork at dinnertime for a little while, if they

slaughtered a cow, or goat, or pig. The carcase was hung from a beam in some outbuilding while the weather was cold. But if there were a large amount, it would have to be salted down in order to keep it for any length of time. There were no professional butchers in Elliston, a man would do the slaughtering himself, perhaps with help from a neighbour. Carcasses were cut up with no regard for special cuts.

In the old days, sea birds were quite plentiful and the men would shoot these during the fall and winter months. These meant a nice change in the menu and their feathers were saved for pillows and beds. If they killed more at one time than they could use up, they would salt them for later on.

With every "cooked" meal, i.e. dinner, in winter, there were always potatoes, plus two or more other vegetables, usually turnip, cabbage and carrots. In summer, most people considered themselves lucky even to have enough potatoes to cook.

Tea, served around 5:30-6:00 p.m. was more substantial than a mug-up, but less substantial than dinner. Since most housewives cooked more than enough vegetables for dinner, there were always left-overs. These were usually all mashed together and heated up in a frying pan, perhaps with onion added, for the main supper dish, "hash".

The table was set in the same way for every meal but dinner. Usually a tablecloth (made from flour sacking or some cheap cotton material for weekdays) was laid over the oilcloth-covered kitchen table. At every place was put a cup and saucer, a tea plate, and a knife, sometimes a fork. Spoons were placed in a glass spoon holder on the table. Butter was in a covered butter dish and most housewives liked to have pretty covers for their butter dishes. Sugar, when used, was in a covered sugar basin (bowl) and molasses in the old days was put in a special molasses bowl with a cover. Milk was served in a small jug (pitcher). Bread was piled high on a special bread plate and was there for every meal except dinner. If jam was being eaten, there might be a special "jam dish" at each place. For dinner, bigger "dinner" plates replaced tea plates and water glasses were laid instead of tea cups. Rarely did people have a cup of tea after the main course on weekdays.

Sunday meals, all through the year, differed from weekday meals and were as special as the larder could afford. Since in the early 1900s Sunday was not a workday, Sunday's meals had to be cleaned on Saturday and some older women do this even today. So strictly was the rule adhered to in the early days that if unexpected company turned up for Sunday dinner in some households, the visitors would have to make do with what was already prepared. Informant [No.21]

said: "I don't know if Father'd go to the cellar to get anything else."

A favourite Sunday breakfast, winter and summer, was "fish and brewis". In summer the fish would be fresh; in winter it would be cured. Brewis was made by soaking "hard tack" or "hard bread" (sea biscuit) overnight in cold water till the hard cakes were reduced to a pulpy consistency. This was brought to a boil. Over the gluey mass was poured "grease and scrunchions" (small fried cubes of salt pork and the hot fat). Sometimes the fish and the brewis (pronounced brews) were served in separate portions; on other occasions the fish and the brewis were mixed together before serving (i.e., "fisherman's brewis"). One informant [No.21], was very emphatic about the difference. Said she:

Not fish and brewis. We used to have 'fisherman's brewis'. All put together. Fish cooked in one pot, brewis in another, that's fresh fish now. And then when it cooked all put together with hot fat and scrunchions, we call it, and onion. And we'd have that on Sunday morning for breakfast. Everybody up Sunday morning for breakfast. And the next Sunday morning, instead of fisherman's brewis, it would be eggs. Everybody had plenty of hens. And...you had to listen to father readin' the Bible after breakfast. No getting out.

Sunday dinner was always the best dinner of the week. Even if there was no "fresh meat" or chicken - and frequently before the days of refrigeration there was none - there would be an extra lot of salt beef and plenty of vegetables - potatoes, parsnips, turnips, cabbages, carrots,

and beets. Sometimes in late spring and summer if supplies of most home-grown vegetables had run out, people cooked dry beans and peas which could be bought in the local stores.

A pudding always "finished off" the Sunday dinner. This was usually a "boiled pudding" or "figgy" pudding, containing soaked bread, flour, spices and raisins. Over this pudding most women used "cody" (sauce). Said one informant [No.21]: "My mother used to make it with sugar, butter, water and vinegar. She'd cook it until it got thick. That was the cody she used to make...I make cody now, on times. And I make it with milk and sugar, a little water, vanilla and cornstarch." Other possibilities were vinegar and sugar mixed on the plate. In early days, molasses was frequently used.

Sunday tea was a lighter meal than the dinner at mid-day, but it was a substantial meal. Most housewives liked to have two courses on Sunday. In winter, salt codfish, watered carefully (i.e., soaked overnight) and then boiled, was the main course, along with home made bread. During the summer, a "scrod" was often Sunday night supper. "Scrod" was the name given a cod prepared in a special way. It was sprinkled with a little salt and left overnight. In the morning, it was washed and dried and perhaps hung on the line to dry. When it was ready for cooking, it was put in a pan in the oven with salt pork over it. It was cooked in

has become the main dish only within recent years. Vegetables were the same as those for an ordinary Sunday dinner and the dessert likewise. Perhaps the pudding might contain a few more raisins and there would be "suet" (fat from a goat or cow) included with the spices, flour, bread and molasses.

Christmas tea or supper might feature some of the leftovers from dinner for the main course, but for the second course the table was crowded with as many kinds of "sweet cake" as the housewife might have in the house. Certainly "the Christmas Cake" was always cut at this time. This cutting of the Christmas Cake was the high point of the meal in most families.

"The Christmas Cake" in most homes was a rich, dark fruit cake, but there were as many different recipes followed as there were housewives and much variation in quality and taste. In fact, some women over the years built up reputations for making delicious Christmas cakes. In grandmother's day, none of the women in Elliston had cook-books and few followed written recipes. In the old days, they did not have "prepared" fruit, but some managed to get citron and lemon peel for their Christmas cake. This was bought in long strips and it was the job of the young girls to cut it into small pieces. Said one informant [No.1], "the flavour seemed nicer then, than now". They used raisins, too, but the big seeded kind had to have the seeds removed. Currants were in common use, but housewives rarely used nuts

a moderate oven for three quarters to an hour. It was eaten with bread.

For the second course, people might have custard or jam, or in later years, "jelly" (a gelatine dessert). Usually too there was raisin bread and many people tried to have "sweet cake" (layer cake, jam tart, etc.) to provide a finish to the meal.

Sunday meals were special all through the year, but the most special meals of all were served at Christmas, no matter on which day of the week it fell. The Christmas Eve supper was very much like the usual Sunday supper. People tried to have "watered fish", i.e., salt cod, and raisin bread at this meal.

The Christmas breakfast was nothing very special, particularly since children would have little appetite for food. They would have gorged themselves on apples, oranges, grapes and candy - goodies rarely seen during the rest of the year - for in the early 1900s and during the Depression days of the thirties, they were considered luxuries. In fact, once during the thirties, a small boy found green grapes in his stocking on Christmas morning. He had never seen green grapes before and, at first, refused to eat them, saying: "Santa Claus put 'pratle buds' in my stocking".

From 1900 through the 1940s, fresh local meat or pork was the main course on the Christmas dinner table. Turkey

in their baking until the 1920s.

In mother's day, cookbooks were becoming more common in the kitchen and woman also tried out recipes given on the "Homemaker's Page" in the *Family Herald* (a weekly newspaper).

Housewives in the thirties and forties, if they could afford it, could obtain the same candied fruit as are available today - cherries, lemon, citron, and orange peels, raisins, seeded and unseeded, currants, dates and walnuts were widely used. Both in the early 1900s and later, housewives used a variety of spices along with molasses, flour, eggs, etc. Most women used the artificial lemon or vanilla flavourings, but others used a small drop of wine, or even rum.

Other Christmas delicacies might include a light fruit cake, several plain "layer cakes" with jam between the layers, a light loaf cake with raisins, "patties" (small bun cookies), raisin bread, and "barksail" bread (molasses flavoured bread with no raisins), and only in recent years, chocolate cakes and a bewildering array of cookies. Most housewives - the good cooks - even today, try to have plenty of fancy baked goods on hand for the entire Christmas season.

On New Year's Day, the meals, especially the dinner, were almost as good as those served on Christmas Day. But, supper on New Year's Day was often taken out of the house,

at the "Orangeman's Time", mentioned more fully in the chapter on social activities.

For many people, especially those with very large families in the old days, and during the Depression, "sweet cake" was a luxury of which there was only sufficient at special occasions like Christmas. Most women, unless they were extremely poor, did "Christmas baking" and tried to bake enough goodies to last for the twelve days of Christmas, for anyone might drop in during that period. And "in the old days, some people tried to get a slice of Christmas cake from twelve different houses to ensure twelve months of happiness",¹[No.2] No visitor could leave the house without a "bit of Christmas" - a sampling of the Christmas cake, plus other lesser kinds, and a drink. The drink might be tea or hot peppermint, or even cold syrup during recent years. Few women took anything stronger, though some would sample the home-brewed wine - blueberry, dogberry, or dandelion. The "home-brew" (i.e., beer) and the "drop" of rum was only served to the male visitors, though both the wine and the beer were very likely brewed by the women.

Dogberry trees [*pyrus americana*] were found in many

¹Cf. Hand, Brown Collection, No.2834.

house yards, and they also grew wild near the settlement. So just about anyone could have dogberry wine and most people did. Winemakers liked to gather the berries after the first frost, so as to have the most flavourful wine. Dandelion wine was not so common. This was probably because it had to be made in the summer when the dandelions were in full bloom. Women were far too busy with other tasks at that time of the year to go wine making.

There were other seasons of the year when special foods were eaten, but often eating practices differed according to religious affiliation. For instance, in Elliston on Shrove Tuesday (also called Soft Tuesday), everyone ate pancakes for supper. In some of these, the mother would hide, if there were young folk in the family, the ring, the money, and the button. Some also added thread and a nail. The finder of the ring would be the one to marry first, the money indicated future riches, and the button meant bachelorhood or spinsterhood. The thread and nail indicated future work, tailoring or carpentering.²

When I was a small child I once asked why we always had pancakes for supper on Shrove Tuesday and was told: "to use up the grease before the beginning of Lent." United

² I could find no parallel to this in Hand, Brown Collection.

Church and Salvation Army people gave the same reason for having pancakes, but it did not have the same significance for them, for they did not refrain from eating grease on Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent. Instead, many of them made a special point of having "hash" (boiled potatoes and other vegetables fried in salt pork) for one meal on Ash Wednesday. Informant [69-17: 88 MUNFLA] suggested that the custom may have arisen because of the adding and dropping of H's common in the community. People would refer to Ash Wednesday as "Hash" Wednesday. Mr. J.D.A. Widdowson tells me that this is common in folk etymology in English dialects. For words in dialects with initial H's omitted or added, sound the same. Thus Ash Wednesday becomes "Hash" Wednesday and because of this mistake in etymology people felt they should have "hash" on "Hash" Wednesday.

Lenten dinners in Anglican homes always featured fish on Wednesdays and Fridays, and all meals on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday (the first and last days of Lent) were the most meagre of the whole year. Strict Anglicans fasted till noon on those days and dinner at noon consisted simply of salt herring or salt turbot, boiled, and potatoes - no sauce, no other vegetable, no dessert. Supper was simple also, no "luxuries". A United Church woman [No.5] told me they always had "jam doughboys" for supper on Good Friday. They never bothered about having fish.

On Easter Day, food, after the restrictions of Lent, seemed especially rich and delicious. Breakfast on Easter morning was, without exception, the most satisfying breakfast of the year. Eggs (hard-boiled) were a must. Often they were the first "fresh" eggs for the year. Candy and chocolate eggs were unknown in Elliston until fairly recently. Dinner and supper on Easter Day were very similar to those served on Christmas Day.

Of course, fancy baking was limited to Sunday treats and special holiday periods like Easter and Christmas or for "times".

One item present in many homes was the "vinegar plant" and vinegar was widely used in cooking. One of my informants, a man [No.6], said: "...that's what we always had while we reared our family, till on the last of it. The vinegar was stronger than what you get now, just as strong anyway."

My informants were not sure how the vinegar plant started, but No.6 said: "usually you'd get a drop of vinegar from somebody and if you'd keep it long enough then a plant'd start and grow in it after a while..." His wife [No.5] said that she wasn't sure, but she believed that

In olden days they'd get a little piece of bread, you know, about that big [two inches square] and a part of a cake of yeast, not the yeast we use now, but the dry yeast, the square, and put that in the bottle and leave it alone and after a time the plant'd grow there.

And it 'd grow that big! Sometimes you'd have to take it out and clean 'n. Take the skin off 'm, you know. Like a rind.

The compared the shape of the vinegar plant to a "squid-squaw" (i.e., a jelly fish). But:

It was not white like the "squid-squaw". Twas tough. I used to take out the one we had in the bottle and take the little bit of top skin off it. Peel it over. It couldn't grow so well. You'd peel 'n over a little you know. Take 'n out on a plate and take the peel off with a knife and then it'd grow.

The vinegar used to be lovely. Better than we buy now. You'd use all your vinegar till you'd have a couple of spoonfuls, no more than that, down in the bottom of your crock, whatever you'd have it in. And put sugar and water in that. A week from the time you put it in, you were able to drink that.

In addition to her other household duties, the health needs of her family were the woman's responsibility, and often she became involved outside her immediate family. Anyone who had been sick for a long time would be sent hot soup, special tidbits, a share of a special meal³ - anything the neighbouring cooks felt would tempt the invalid's appetite. And if a person were bed-ridden and the family could not cope with the situation themselves, the neighbourhood women "pitched in and helped".

Probably the woman was usually the one responsible for the health practices, because many of the old time cures

³ Flora Thompson, *Lark Rise to Candleford*, p.442.

used common household items, or things that the housewife grew in her garden, or which grew wild in or near the community.

People in the old days were great believers in tonics. Those obtained by steeping "wild cherry bark" [*prunus pennsylvanica*], or from "ground juniper" [*juniperus communis*], were taken to insure general well-being. The roots of the "dock" [*heracleum maximum*] (burdock, a nuisance plant in most meadows) were steeped out and taken as a cure for boils. "Chucky plums" [*prunus virginiana*] and "sasprilla berries" [*aralia hispida*] were both mentioned as cures for eczema. Most gardens held mints, both peppermint and spearmint. Women stored these for winter use. They steeped the dried leaves as they would tea. This "mint tea" was used as a tonic and also to cure indigestion, and for colic in babies. And black currant jam was always kept for use when someone had a sore throat. A "shallot" or a garlic placed in the ear was a common cure for earache. As one of my informants [No.4] said: "They believed in the Bible saying: 'In the leaves of the trees shall be the healing of the nations.'⁴

⁴ Revelation, XXII, v.2, "In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

Common food items and other necessities found in every home figured in a lot of cures and preventives. Bread was used in several cures. For boils, bread poultices made by soaking stale bread in boiling water, were applied to the affected area, and held in place by gauze or a clean rag. Splinters that had caused an infection were "drawn out" with bread poultices. And when they used linseed meal poultices to treat pneumonia, the hot linseed meal was placed between two layers of bread, so that the flesh would not be burnt.

Molasses was another household staple which figured in a variety of cures. A mixture of molasses and soap was often put on boils to "draw the core". Molasses in its pure state was used by some people to cure cuts, and several informants spoke of having big cuts healed with molasses. Such cures were also known by the men, as the following indicates:

We was plankin' a boat up there see, and I was spillin' the plank with the drawin' knife and had me hand like that, spillin' and he [his brother] took holt and give it the pluck, and the knife went along and took me finger and sawed 'un down there...There's the mark there now where I cut it...And it didn't seem to be gettin' well and this old man, Dicky Tucker, he came in and he done 'n up in molasses and he told me not to open 'n for I believe it was a week without opening 'n. When I opened 'n he was pretty well well. Nothing but the pure molasses, plenty of it. [No.6]

Sore throats were also treated with molasses, and it

was used in the candy that many women gave their children who had colds. They mixed molasses, kerosene, pepper, etc. together and boiled the mixture on the stove. This was removed from the heat and allowed to harden a bit, after which it was formed in balls and then rolled in butter. For those children who ordinarily got little candy, it was a treat to have a cold, as one woman [No.20] told me. Most mothers also believed in the early 1900s that children should take "something to clean the blood". So they administered "sulphur and molasses" over a period of nine days each spring. Some of my informants had to take the mixture nine days running, but others took it for three, stopped for three, and then took it for three more days.

Snow blindness was treated with tea leaf poultices. One informant [No.5] said:

I've seen my brother do that, Take a pot-ful of tea and strain off...he'd take the leaves out of the teapot, all he could get and make a poultice with a cloth and put on his eyes and lie down for so long. And then take that off and put on another one. The only thing he could find to cure his eyes when he'd get snow blind. Take the burn out.

For night blindness, a common ailment, people were given cod liver, either raw or roasted. This cure was often administered by the men.

Ordinary baking soda was used for treating hives, insect bites, stings, and burns. Oatmeal water was used to take the heat out of a sunburn, and brown paper or a cloth

dipped in vinegar was the common treatment for a headache, the saturated paper or cloth being placed on the forehead. Someone troubled with "gas" drank hot water, or hot water with a little peppermint added. Cold water was thrown over a person who had fainted, and a frostbite was rubbed with snow.

Olive oil was used in the treatment of burns, and for earache some women put warm olive oil on "tow (cotton wool) and placed it in the ear. Some women, to cure an earache, simply blew in the child's ear, but others enlisted help from the men. Several informants, among them No.6, said that blowing smoke into a child's ear nine times was a cure for the earache. Hiccups stopped if you drank nine mouthfuls of cold water. And stys on the eye were rubbed with a gold ring for nine successive mornings, or else the child had to look through the keyhole in the door, nine times, for nine mornings.

Another item found in all households was widely used - yarn. Blisters were pricked open with a darning needle and then "spun yarn" was pulled through to soak up the water gathered inside. Since women used no hand lotions in the early days, and their hands were often exposed in cold weather, especially when hanging out the family wash, they were often bothered with chaps in their fingers. They eased the pain caused by these by putting "spun yarn"

treated with a little vaseline in the chap. Yarn was also used for treating sprained wrists, being wound tightly round the wrist. And to prevent "water pups" when they were fishing, men would have yarn wound around nine times where the oil clothes chafed their wrists.

Household items also figured in "charms" (i.e., amulets) which were worn as cures. Green ribbon was mentioned by several of my informants as being a "present cure" for nosebleeds. This had to be given by someone other than a family member, and the donor could not be thanked. The nosebleed sufferer wore the ribbon around his neck, or pinned to some article of clothing near the neck. Informants [Nos. 5 and 6] were discussing someone they knew who used to suffer a lot from nosebleed:

That fellow had a good lot out of his nose. All the time subject to bleedin'.

Yes, yes. I had to give him a piece of green ribbon. That's a cure for nosebleed. I went to the store and gave it to Nina to give to him. And he never bleed the nose for years. And one time he went away in the lumber-woods and he forgot the piece of ribbon and his nose would start to bleed after he went away. Said he'd never forget his green ribbon no more.

Potatoes were worn around the neck, or carried in a pocket as a cure for arthritis, rheumatism, etc. And a nutmeg, wrapped in some cloth and worn round the neck, was a cure for boils, provided it was given by an outsider and the sufferer did not know what the charm consisted of.

Both men and women "put away warts" and there was a variety of different methods practiced, according to my informants. They ranged from putting the same number of stones in a package as you had warts, and leaving the package where someone else would find it, to tying the same number of knots in a string as you had warts, and putting the string where it would rot away. Every method suggested was known to have worked.

Men attended to any major cuts, and they often made use of "murre" or the turpentine "bladders" found on the bark of fir trees to dress the cut. Men also set any broken bones. But, looking after small bruises and cuts was mainly the woman's responsibility. The majority of women did not extend their nursing activity beyond their own households, but there was at least one woman in the community in the early 1900s who acted as a practical nurse. She had no training, but she had a great desire to help others, and more free time than most women. She travelled all over the community, giving what help and care she could.

This chapter and the preceding one show clearly, I believe, that a woman's usual indoor tasks were enough to fill a normal day for most of the year. In the next chapter, I will deal not only with the outdoor activities, which from late spring to early fall added to the considerable burden she already had to bear, but also with seasonal indoor activities.

THE WOMAN'S TRADITIONAL ROLE AT DIFFERENT SEASONS OF THE YEAR

In Elliston, in the period prior to 1950, the women were full participants with their menfolk in wresting a living from the sea and land, and were directly involved with all social activities in the community. The role of the fisherman's wife was completely intertwined with that of her husband. As one seventy-nine year old male informant [No.15] put it:

The woman was more than fifty per cent. In some cases there was more push in the woman than there was...if there was fish, to get fish, than there was in the man. The woman was more for fishin' even though she stopped on the land. She was the driving force. And they all took... I should say, a woman, in a fisherman's work, was half of the procedure....

The concensus among my older informants was that if a man married a lazy woman: "he was finished, he'd get nowhere". [No.15] One person [No.14], even went so far as to state: "The woman was the mainstay of the family." Other elderly male informants admitted: "Couldn't have been done without the women". In some cases as [No.11] said: "Women worked just as hard or harder than the men. All is in it they didn't break as much rest as the men." (i.e., the women could sleep a bit longer in the morning.) But the women worked after the men were through. Men could also sleep during the day if occasion arose, e.g., if during the trapping

season they had a "water haul" (i.e., no fish at all in the cod trap.) .

It is true that women did not rise as early as men, for men who were "hand-lining" might get up at two or three a.m., but some women began their household chores very early in the morning, at dawn if it was a good trapping season and if they expected to be working at the fish all day. And dawn comes very early at that time of the year. Besides, every night before retiring, the women laid the table for the menfolk to have a light breakfast before they left the house. Also, they often laid out the men's workclothes in orderly fashion for their convenience.

No woman in Elliston went catching cod, but this was the only part of the operation in which she was not involved. On shore she might do any job, for in the preparation of fish for market, or home use, "men's work" and "women's work" might be interchangeable. The work a woman did depended on the size of the fishing crew and the men's attitude. With a large crew, the many tasks could be spread around, and she might have one specialized job, but with a small crew, she might be required to do more of the jobs, even those generally thought of as being "men's work" because they required considerable strength or a particular skill.

Bringing approximately 200 pounds of fish at a time in

a "tub-bar"¹ from the "stagehead" (the wharf onto which the fish were thrown from the boat) to the "splitting tee" (a temporary hut covered with tar paper and thatched with boughs); putting the fish, weighing five to ten pounds each on the "splitting table" (where the cutting-open process began); "cutting throats" (slitting the fish's throat and belly nearly to the tail); "heading" (breaking off the head and taking out the stomach, etc.); "splitting" (taking out the "soundbone", i.e., the backbone); washing, prior to salting; "laying away" (putting fish down face up, one by one, in rows in barrels or rectangular piles); "salting" (throwing on sufficient coarse salt to cure the fish); - any of these operations performed in "putting away" a boat-load of fish might be done by a woman. However, "heading", which required brute strength, was generally done by a man; and "splitting" was usually done by the skipper himself. Splitters took great pride in the speed and precision with which they could do their work.

In summer, fishermen's wives were expected to combine homemaking with long hours of work outside the home, either at the fishery or at the gardens. All the men who fished were in the "inshore fishery" and either went "fishing",

¹ A half-barrel carried by two people by means of two poles used as handles.

that is used hook and line and/or trawls, or operated cod traps (i.e., fixed nets). The "trapmen" too went "fishing" early in the season (early June), or after the trapping season (which only lasted from late June to late July), was past. Before 1900, all the fishermen worked with "hand lines" or trawls, or cod seines, and the routine at that time differed somewhat from the one followed after they began using traps in the first decade of the twentieth century.

A woman's workday in summer was governed largely by whether her husband was "handling" or "trapping". If her husband were a "handliner", the crew would likely be a small one, and each member might be required to attend to several jobs in the curing operation, but there would, at the most, be only one boatload a day to "put away", and she would not have to spend all day working at the fish. Hence the wife of a handliner could do her housework at a more leisurely pace than the wife of a trapman when lots of fish were being caught.

It usually happened that women had more to do with the final curing processes than did the men. "Making the fish" (i.e., looking after the drying) on "flakes" (open elevated wooden platforms built of round sticks covered with boughs) was entirely the women's responsibility, if the men were still catching fish when the drying process began. In the early days, most "hook and line" fish were cured "in pickle"

which meant that they had to be "washed out" and dried on the flake after being in salt for only a short period, perhaps two weeks. "In the old days", said one informant [No.11], "they were often 'fishing' and 'making' it at the same time".

One woman whose husband fished "cross-handed" (i.e. , alone), did all the work with the final curing of the fish herself. "Her husband had an outfit made so that she could "carry out"² his fish. It was a frame [probably a yoke across her shoulders] and two containers."

The routine followed by a "trapman's" wife was very different from that of the "handliner's" wife, when fish were plentiful. As a member of a large "trapping crew", she would have a specialized job to attend to, but she would have to handle thousands of fish in a single boatload and there might be five boatloads to "put away" in a single day.

The latter's family expected "mug-ups" or "lunches" before beginning work on each boatload of fish. A hearty breakfast had to be ready for them when they arrived in the kitchen at 7:30-8:00 a.m. They would have already moved the first load of fish from the boat to the "splitting tee".

² "Carry out" - move the washed salted fish from the stage to the flake for drying.

Breakfast over, all would head for the stage, the wife or mother slightly behind as she would have to tidy her kitchen before leaving it.

After each boatload had been "put away", the men of the crew headed for the trap again, while the women hurried to the kitchen to prepare a quick meal and get some household chores done. These "mug-ups" were often just bread and butter with tea, but the fourth meal of the day, served around noon, was a substantial one, consisting usually of fish - either fried, boiled, stewed, or baked - and potatoes. Trapmen's wives had to serve seven meals a day, on days when there were five or six boatloads of fish to "put away".

In order "to boil the kettle" quickly, they needed fuel that burnt easily. Most women liked to use "blassy boughs" (dry, blasted, red branches of fir trees) for a quick, hot, fire. In the early 1900s, women were expected "to keep the stove going" during the summer, and they brought bundles or "loads" of boughs tied up with rope on their backs from areas several miles away from the community. In the 1930s and forties, although "blassy" boughs were still a favourite summer fuel, women rarely collected them. In those years, men and boys would "go for a load of boughs" when they got a "slack moment". But women and girls cut them into suitable pieces and kept the wood-box filled.

It was indeed fortunate for trapmen's wives that they

had to maintain a hectic pace for a short period of three to four weeks only. No person could have stood the long hours of standing at heavy work in the stage, plus all the many household duties performed without benefit of today's modern conveniences. "Stage work" was a communal activity and was lightened by a yarn, a song, a joke. Laughter helped the work along. Even though she knew it meant much extra work for her, the fisherman's wife was always pleased to see that the "rodney" (the small rowboat) had been left behind with the "bagged fish"³ and the motor boat was steaming towards the land - water touching her "gunnels" (gunwales) - she carried such a whopping load. Plenty of fish meant "good living" during the year - provided the price of the finished product were a good one.

Trapping crews usually put most of their fish in "salt bulk" (i.e. dry salted in big rectangular piles) and worked as a unit - men and women - to "wash out" the salted fish. This was put in "water horse" (the washed fish, back up, in rectangular piles) overnight till the water pressed out of it. Men generally moved the washed out fish from the stage to the flake by "handbar" loads. Everyone in the

³ If the trap contained more than one boatload of fish, the remainder was "bagged", that is, channelled into a "net bag" which was then attached to the stern of the small boat or "rodney". This was left at the trap site. Second or third boatloads or more could be "dipped out" (using dipnets) very easily.

crew worked on the flake if they were ashore; but if they were handlining, the flakework was left almost entirely to the women.

The skipper's wife took charge of the "flake work" if the men were away fishing, and she had to be a good "skipper" herself, as well as a good judge of weather. She had to decide on whether they would wash out fish, how much fish they would spread in the morning, and what lots were not to be spread out, because usually the fish being cured were at various stages of dryness.

There was a certain pattern to be followed in spreading and "taking up" fish at different stages of cure.

It was first taken up with a small fish placed over a large one, both back up. Care had to be taken with big "pickle" fish when taking them up for the first time, especially if it were a Saturday. Sunday might be hot and the big ones might sunburn if left unshielded. Next evening we put four fish together, heads and tails. The small "faggots", then larger "faggots". [i.e., rectangular piles nicely rounded on the top] When the fish dried hard they were put in a big round pile. [No.1]

Only one or two of the adults would be allowed to put fish in the pile, for this was a skilled task. Those building it had to lay the fish straight and flat, and had to make sure to put enough fish in the centre to keep the pile even. The rest of the people working on the flake were kept busy bringing "yaffles" (i.e., armloads) of fish to those making the pile. Both "faggots" and "big piles"

in the early 1900s and in the 1940s, were covered with "rinds" (i.e., twelve to fourteen inch wide strips of tree bark, length about four to five feet) to protect from rain and dew. These were held down with heavy rocks. When fish had dried to a certain stage, it was stored in the "fish store" or "fish loft" for a few days, "to work".

On a dry, sunny day in late August, the flakes would be filled with very dry fish and "shipping" would begin. Shipping fish meant to sell it to the local fish merchant at a given rate per quintal (112 pounds). Until the 1940s, all the fish was carted to the merchant's premises by horse cart. In later years, it was moved in trucks. Now and then during the summer some women, if they needed something special at the local store, would take three or four cured fish and barter them for what they needed.

Most of the "flake work" was done during August when the main season for catching fish was finished. By the end of September, if the catch was mostly "light salted", work with the fish would be just about over. However, if the fish had been "heavy salted" or in "salt bulk", the crew would be busy curing a large catch during October, or even into November. But to be busy with fish so late in the season was rare indeed in Elliston.

My informants spoke highly of the woman's contribution to the fishery in the period before 1950, but they were

well aware of the other aspects of her outdoor work: "Women took a major part in raising vegetables. The garden was the woman's responsibility, weeding and looking after it. The woman played a major role in that, see, you understand." [No.15]

Every fisherman in Elliston had, or could have, sufficient land on which to raise the necessary vegetables for his family's use and grass for his animals. If a family did not grow its own vegetables, it would have to do without, for, unlike today, vegetables were not obtainable from the local grocery stores. And people had to keep their own animals - cows, sheep, goats, and horses - if they wished to have meat, milk, wool and hauling power. Families had pieces of land, of varying shapes and sizes in different parts of the community. Some of these might be entirely in grass and within the main "grass garden", there might be plots about 18' by 20' for carrots or turnips, and a 200' by 500' plot for potatoes.

Stable manure was used as fertilizer on both grass ground and vegetable patches, but the latter was also covered with "kelp" (i.e., seaweed) in late fall. Men and boys, working with horse and plough, or with sharp pointed shovels, ploughed or dug this fertilizer into the potato ground each spring. Women and girls had to prepare the ground for all other vegetables.

Women's first work in the garden for the year began in the meadow in early spring. Women and children were responsible for "picking the ground", i.e., collecting all the debris that had accumulated on the grass land over the winter.

Women might help with the "potato cutting", cutting a whole potato into several pieces suitable for seed, but if the men had no other pressing work to attend to, they often did this job in one of the outbuildings. Potatoes were sown by both men and women. The seeds were set in raised "beds" separated by deep trenches. Each sower wore a "pratie" (potato) bag, a sort of pouch, tied around his middle, containing a supply of seed. Using a square-tipped spade with an ear attached, either on the right or left side, the sower made a hole by forcing the spade into the soil through pressure on the ear. Pushing it slightly forward, he dropped a seed in the slit, the spade was lifted up, and the soil dropped back into the slit covering the seed. In some families, once the potato seed had been sown, the men had nothing further to do with the garden until the crop was harvested in the fall.

The vegetables were fertilized during the summer with materials from the sea, but always by the women: caplin, in quantity, for potatoes; cod's heads with the "putticks" (i.e., stomachs) attached for turnips and cabbages; and "soundbones" (i.e., fish's backbones) or caplin for carrot

and parsnip. One woman [No.1] told me that after the cod's heads, placed on the cabbage patch, rotted, the skeleton or bony part was taken off, and the soil underneath was shovelled around the cabbage roots, but they left the whole thing around the turnips. In many families, the men did the difficult job of "trenching" potatoes. This was done after the fish fertilizer had been placed on the potato beds by the women. The men dug up the space between the beds and placed the loosened earth on the fish. The trenching covered up the fish fertilizer, thus cutting down on the bad smell and also reduced the number of weeds.

Several of my informants remarked that there were no insects to bother crops in the early years. One man [No.6], said that he believed it was because there were lots of birds then to eat up the insects. "It was hard to keep the plants in the ground when the birds were after the insects." They grew "wonderful" cabbages - "big as kettles". But they did not grow the same crops in the same spot year after year. Said informant No.6, "need to change over for good results" (i.e., practice rotation). The older people believed, said informant No.7, that "home-grown" seed was better than "bought" seed. Another [No.1], echoed this sentiment when she said:

They thought if they bought cabbage and turnip seed from the store the flies would eat it. They felt their own was much better. Besides a

woman was considered lazy if she did not grow her own seeds. Usually she kept back the very best of her turnips and the very best cabbage which she planted in a special spot for them "to go to seed". Most people grew their own seed.

Weeding the potatoes; sowing, thinning out and weeding all other vegetables, was always the woman's responsibility until the 1940s. Weeding the potatoes - the staple crop - was often a long job and a back-breaking one. It was a job that had to be done correctly too. There could be no weeds left, no broken-off weeds, and no tumbled beds. A poorly weeded garden was a sign of laziness on the part of the women in the household. This was probably why most women preferred to do their own weeding; outsiders would not take the same care with the job. This I remember very vividly, for my mother, one summer, employed two women who were not involved with the fishery, to weed her potato garden. They did it so poorly, that pressed as she was for time, because of her work with the fish, she weeded it over again herself. She couldn't have her garden looking so messy. Most weeding was done early in the morning before tasks connected with the fishery had begun. Sometimes, it was a job which got done in "dribs and drabs", sandwiched in between other chores on a day when there was little doing with the fish. To keep the mosquitoes away in the days before fly repellants became common, women tucked tansy into a scarf tied around the forehead. Its odour kept the flies off

fairly well. Although weeding was hard work, it seems one woman did not think it so. She was heard to remark one summer's day, sometime in the 1930s: "Think I'll go out and weed me garden while I'm havin' a spell"[i.e. rest]. Perhaps she believed in the saying, "A change is as good as a rest".

Because the fishermen kept animals, they had to provide winter feed for them. Hay was the staple diet, though the horse, the favourite of the stable, had his diet enriched with oats now and then. However, these were not grown locally, though some did spring up and grow wild. During July, the men cut the grass with long-handled scythes (sives). In smaller areas, they might also use sickles or "rip-hooks" (reaphooks). "Making grass" was frequently a family affair, with everyone available helping, but it was the women who did most of the work with it. First the grass was scattered free of the long scythe swards. After the first day of drying, the grass was raked into rolls using wooden rakes. The next evening, it was placed in tiny "pooks" (i.e., stacks) all over the garden; next day larger "pooks" were made, and finally one large "pook" located in the middle of the cut-over area. Those who were raking up the grass were expected to get every straw, the ground could not be left in an untidy condition. Besides, the hay "pook" had to be as symmetrical as possible. One family's "pooks" (Thomas Tilly's)

were always so well made, they were objects of admiration for everyone in the community. Wet or damp grass was never stored in the "loft" for "fear of fire". If the men were on shore, when it was time to store the hay, they always carried it in bundles, often on their backs. If the garden was a long way from the storage area, the hay was moved with horse and cart. Often women would store small amounts themselves, but only if the men were not around.

A great many families kept goats or cows. Those who kept the latter often made butter for their families. One woman [No.16] said that during two or three summers they kept two 'milch' cows. One cow she remembered was an exceptionally good milker. "She'd come home and she'd have her udder draggin' on the ground." [The milk was rich in cream and she always made butter]"

Two or three pounds of butter at one time. And do it up in little prints. I had a printer with a cow on it. I'd stick it on and when it'd print it on...the printer on the butter...you'd see the cow on there, her tits stickin' off! Twas grand.

Most of her butter she "put in a butter tub, used to be going then you know. I'd put it down in the butter tub and put a bit of salt on it and keep it there for months and months."

Women who kept goats did not have such a great supply of milk. They "scalded" - heated to boiling point - each day's milk every morning and had just enough to last through

the day. Milk was never drunk straight from the animal; this was not considered clean. It had to be strained, i.e., passed through a thin cloth to remove any foreign matter, and then scalded.

Fortunately, the work pattern in summer was not a rigid one; it varied to suit the kind of fishing and the weather. One day might find a woman working in the stage, on the flake, in the garden, at the grass, and of course in the house; another might be more slowly paced, for if it were a rainy or foggy day, work on the flake or at the grass would be eliminated. On such a day she might get a chance to do important jobs in the garden like weeding or "thinning" out vegetables.

There were many days, though, when a woman seemed to be needed in a dozen places at once. It was just such a day which caused one informant [No.7] to say to herself, as she moved from one task to another: "Killing ourselves, working like this and when we clues up we won't have a copper to put on our eyes". She had reason to complain that year, for there were lots of fish, but it was "no price", that is, had to be sold very cheaply, leaving them with hardly enough to pay expenses. Another [No.5], too, spoke of working "in the stage, on the flake, in the house, at the gardens, at the grass, no let up, the women worked harder than the men".

Gardening, for most women, meant tending to vegetables or hay-making. Few families "wasted" good ground in flower gardens. There were a few housewives, however, whose families were perhaps a bit better off in terms of land than others in the community, who did have flower gardens. And here along with the sweet rocket and columbine, lilies and daisies and roses, they grew herbs like tansy, mints, and chives, used in medicines and cooking. Here, too, was found the rhubarb patch and the black currant bushes. The latter was important, because every good housewife kept a little black "curn" (currant) jam on hand to ease sore throats.

Although nearly every house in Elliston was "fenced in" and had a front garden, as well as a back yard, many of the front gardens held vegetables like carrot, beets, cabbage, even potatoes. For, a man with a large family and little land needed every available inch, either to grow vegetables for the family, or grass for the animals. Consequently, as I have mentioned earlier, houses were frequently perched on the rockiest section - land that was no use for gardening.

By late July, or early August, the hay would be made and there was nothing to be done in the vegetable garden till mid-October. The housewife, however, still had work connected with the outdoors, for this was the season for gathering bakeapples [*rubus chamaemorus*], which grow wild on marshland. There was no market for bakeapples until re-

cently, but everyone tried to have bakeapple jam for the winter. Non-Newfoundlander~~s~~ can never understand why natives like this seedy jam so much. Sometimes, the soft juicy berries were packed into jars and liberally covered with sugar, but usually the berries were jammed, that is, boiled with lots of sugar, and then put in glass jars. These jars had to be as tight as possible, otherwise the jam would quickly spoil, since housewives used no paraffin to seal the jars.

Blueberries [*Vaccinium ovalifolium*] were the first wild berries gathered for sale, but their season was short, and they were never overly abundant. In early years, there was no sale for blueberries at all, so they were picked for home use only - for jam and wine, but the jam did not keep well. It was not till comparatively recently that women put them in mason jars and steamed them. So blueberries for home use were used chiefly for making wine. Most women liked to get the berries for wine just after the first frost, as they were best for wine making then. Everyone liked to have some blueberry wine for Christmas, unless they were very strict teetotalers. Since the thirties, the sale of blueberries has provided a valuable supplement to the family economy. Women, picking blueberries for sale, went to the berry grounds or "barrens" carrying perhaps two water buckets and a hoop, as for water. Each one also had a smaller container, a quart can, saucepan, perhaps even a gallon can.

As this "emper" or "emptier" was filled, its contents were transferred to the buckets till these were filled to the brim, that is, if the berries were plentiful. Women usually went in groups of two or three for blueberries, sometimes taking along smaller children who picked berries as well. Rarely did family groups go blueberry picking.

The men frequently went on their own, or they might take the older boys in the family. Often they went farther away from the community and travelled over more difficult terrain, where the women with their buckets and hoops, would find it difficult to go. Men usually carried their blueberries in a "berry box" holding about six or seven gallons. This was a rectangular wooden box, fitted with a hinged cover and having two rope loops about one-third the way down, through which the man thrust his arms. Often there was an additional loop at the other side, or at the back of the box, through which he thrust a stick or pole which lodged on his shoulder and thus made the load easier to carry. It was carried very much like a knapsack would be.

Partridge berries [*vaccinium vitis-idaea*], usually abundant, were the easiest of all to preserve, and would keep indefinitely. Women preserved gallons of these and put them away in glass jars ready for eating at any time. Some berries they "jammed down", that is, boiled them up with a little sugar. Before these berries could be used, they

had to be cooked again with extra sugar. This boiled-down mixture was also stored in glass jars. A third method was simply to put ten or twelve gallons of berries in a small wooden barrel or keg and add a little water. The housewife could take out berries and cook them as needed. Water and freezing did not alter the taste of the partridgeberries very much.

Partridge berries sold for a higher price than blueberries. Some families picked many barrels of them during a season. (One barrel = twenty gallons.) One person might pick over twenty gallons per day at the start of the season. Most people, even children, could easily manage ten or twelve gallons per day. When they sold for only ten cents a gallon, it was hard work for very little return, but in the forties when they might range in price from 50-80¢ a gallon, it was a godsend when they were abundant, especially after a poor fishing season.

Family groups often went partridge berry picking together. People always carried "lunches" to the berry grounds and "boiled-up" around mid-day. The container or "emper" in which partridge berries were gathered was often bigger than that used for blueberries. And the men often used "berry pickers"(scoops with wire teeth) to gather them if they struck a good patch.

The berries were always cleaned on the barrens. People

did this by slowly pouring the berries from a height into a tablecloth or a bucket, so that the wind would blow away the twigs and leaves. All rotten and unripe berries were spotted at this time and removed. Sometimes when the berries were picked on a very wet day, the leaves stuck to them and did not blow away. Such berries would have to be cleaned again at home by the mother. Since partridge berries were firmer than blueberries, at least early in the season, everybody carried them home in 100 pound flour bags or bigger burlap sacks. Later in the fall, when the berries became juicy and scarcer also, they were carried home in buckets and boxes, in the same manner as blueberries, and for the same reasons.

Berries were "shipped" or sold to the local merchant or merchants, who were agents for St. John's-based firms. No money changed hands until the 1950s at least. Those who sold berries were given a "berry note" indicating the amount of berries "shipped" and the price per gallon. The value of the note had to be "taken up" in goods in the store where the berries were shipped. A family of five or six good berry pickers could, in a good season, provide the family with some necessary food items purchased from the store - flour, margarine, sugar, molasses, beef, pork, etc. and get winter clothing as well. Berrying would be carried on sometimes till November, but the majority of

people, certainly the women, would have stopped by mid-October.

After the berrying season was over, the basic crop, potatoes, was harvested. This work involved the whole family, but if the father were away in the lumberwoods, the mother and children got the vegetables in the best they could. If the men were at home, it was usually they who did the digging. Children, or women, hauled stalks, and one informant [No.1], told me that when she hauled stalks as a child, she had to be very sure to leave every potato in the bed; the diggers did not want the potatoes scattered around the bed. Women usually "picked up", that is, gathered the potatoes from the ground after they had dried off a bit and put them in "brin" (burlap) bags. As they gathered the dried-off potatoes, they graded them, leaving the very small ones in piles on the ground. These were gathered later and stored separately, as they were fed to the pig, or to the chickens during the winter. Men usually carried the potatoes from the garden to the root cellar, but if they were absent, women did this in smaller loads. All other vegetables were lifted by the women. Again, men might carry them to the cellar as this was heavy work.

Most vegetables were stored in root cellars and the only one that needed special attention was cabbage. Usually the best heads were "pickled", that is, salted in a barrel

in a manner similar to the way fish were treated. A layer of cabbage was laid down and then a layer of coarse salt. Sometimes a little beef pickle was added to give a special flavour. Kept tightly covered "salted cabbage" could last a long time, but the housewife had to remember to soak it thoroughly overnight before cooking it. Otherwise, it would be "like the brine", i.e., too salty to eat.

Usually, when the husband "settled up" in the fall, that is, settled his debts to the merchant and received any cash coming to him, after the purchase of winter supplies, he gave this money to his wife. Likewise any money earned "away" was given to the wife to look after when the man returned home. The woman handled the cash and managed the day to day running of the household.

After the potatoes and other vegetables had been harvested in the fall, women had normally no further outside work to attend to. Chores, like taking care of the stock, getting vegetables from the cellar, bringing in the firewood, bringing the daily supply of water - women's work in the summertime - were done by the men and boys in the winter. Perhaps this changeover in winter resulted from the fact that winter was a slow season for men. If they were at home, they were mainly responsible for getting the year's supply of firewood from the "country", whereas the women were extremely busy indoors with carding, spinning, knitting,

sewing, mat hooking, etc. About the only job a man did indoors was the "knitting of twine" (netting to replace worn-out sections in the cod trap before it was placed in the water for another fishing season) during late winter or early spring. Women and children helped by filling the shuttle-like needles with the twine.

If, however, her husband were "away working" during the winter months, a woman and her children would have to look after the necessary outdoor chores. But, if it was a "young family", a neighbour who did not have a job away from home might be asked by the man of the house to look after some of the outside jobs, especially during stormy winter weather.

Women did not ordinarily go to the woods for the firewood in wintertime. This was men's work, but I was told of one exceptional woman who did it.

I believe she was the only one in here used to do it. She used to go in the woods, see maid, you see her, she was like a man, a boy. She used to take the slide and the dogs and her whip and go in, you'd see her goin' in and comin' out with her slide. George was only two years old, young see, so she used to say she was his boy. George was always sick see. And I was the oldest and I used to be sick. I wasn't able to do nothing hardly, cause I was sick. But poor Sare Ann was a proper boy. They used to call her Uncle Tom's boy. And she used to go in the woods with her slide and dog every mornin' in the week, goin' it, haulin' out the wood. [No.8]

The wood, of course, had been cut by her father earlier. This unusual woman did other jobs generally considered "men's

work". For example, when seals were killed on the ice near the community, she went off on the ice with her father and towed (i.e., dragged) back two seals at a time to the shore.

In most households, carding and spinning wool and knitting it into garments, "fancy work", sewing (making clothing and "joining quilts"), and hooking mats (rag rugs), were considered women's late fall and winter occupations. But, the preliminaries to knitting, for example, spanned the seasons. Sheep were sheared in the late spring, usually in May, and someone would be sure to note that the weather turned cold for a few days after the majority of sheep had been shorn. In some families, the mother and daughters did the shearing; in others, husband and wife co-operated on this job. Some people tied the sheep's legs; others simply held them down. Shearing was done with ordinary household scissors. It was a job that most women loathed because sheep invariably had "ticks" which sometimes bit the shearers.

After the shearing, the wool was washed. One woman told me that she always put hers in "brin" bags and placed them in running water in the brook weighted down so that they would not float away. Then the "fleece" was rinsed and often hung on the fence to dry. The wool was usually stored during the summer. Sometimes, if a woman had a little "slack" time during the summer she might "pick some wool", but this job, removing twigs and any other foreign matter from the

wool was usually the children's job later in the fall. After "picking", the wool was ready for carding.

Carding⁴ was generally a late fall occupation. The "carder" worked with two "cards". These were two rectangular thin pieces of board, perhaps 8" by 4". Short wooden handles were attached to each at the back and the front was filled with fine wire teeth, something like a scrubbing brush. A small portion of matted wool was placed on the toothed face of the cards, and the other was drawn across it two or three times, catching the fibres in its teeth. The carder pulled the "cards" backwards and forwards through the wool until she got a nice smooth rectangular roll, slightly rounded in the centre. This was then placed in a pile for spinning later. An informant [No.8], was careful to make this point: "You take them off 'roundy'. Some 'd take 'um off flat, but they're not so good. Take them off on the back of your card and do that with your hand see [a deft smoothing motion] and you'd spin that out as good again."

Not every woman in the community could spin and there was a great deal of difference in the quality of yarn produced by different spinners. Some were "expert with that

⁴ Alice Morse Earle, *Home Life in Colonial Days*, pp. 194-196, has an excellent description of "carding" as done in old New England.

wheel",[No.9] Informant [No.1] said her mother varied the size of the wool she spun so that she had the type she needed for different items. She made bigger yarn for the heavy work mitts, smaller for the men's stockings, and for the girls' stockings she spun it as fine as the three ply wool which can be bought nowadays in the stores. Others, who were poor spinners, turned out yarn very uneven in texture, but the majority seemed to have turned out a suitable product to serve their family's needs.

It was strange indeed to find a woman who could neither spin nor knit, but one woman [No.8], an excellent spinner and knitter herself, did not learn at home. Apparently her mother could neither spin nor knit. She did not explain why her mother lacked these very necessary skills of a "good" housewife. Perhaps her mother was orphaned when quite young and had no one at home to teach her. But, if so, she lacked the talent and desire to learn that her daughter possessed, for the latter learnt from the neighbours. Here is how she described her way of learning:

I'll tell 'e how I got that now maid. In the evenings whend go around - I was never no good to learn - I mean the education [school book], but I'd go around anyone's house and see 'um cardin' wool. I was only small and I'd see what they'd do. And when I'd see 'um then cardin' I'd say: "Why can't I do that?" And I'd take up the cards when they'd put 'um down. I'd take 'um up and try 'um and I learnt carding. And I'd see 'um with the spinnin' wheel. I used to always go to Aunt Polly's and Polly'd go out in the stable some-

where and I used to say: "I wonder can I run her wheel?" And I'd give it a try. So nice, and I said "I can spin..."I was all there for that. Go in anyone's house and see them sewing on the machine. I could knit sweaters, and stockin's and mitts, gloves, do anything. My mother never showed me cause Mother never knowed how to knit. I learned meself now, like that. I could do anything.

Apparently this woman never thought to ask any woman to teach her how to do any of these things. She, like most of her generation, was probably too shy and hesitant to make such a request. But she watched every move they made in spinning, carding, knitting, sewing, etc. and then imitated them in her best fashion when there was no one around to criticise her first attempts. For instance, she did not touch the spinning wheel until the woman using it had left the room on some errand.

Some women flatly refused to let their daughters learn to spin, because "if you learn, you'll have to do it". Obviously such a woman hoped that her daughter would become other than a fisherman's wife. Other girls did not learn to spin because they went farther in school than did the majority. At the time in their lives when most girls would be learning how to spin, they were attending school and studying for examinations. When I mentioned to one of my informants [No.9] that my mother did not spin, he simply said: "But she was a teacher!", in a tone of voice which seemed to indicate that there were some occupations a

teacher did not have to take up.

After the wool was spun, it was "twisted" - two of the spun threads were twisted together to make a two-ply wool. Then it was put in "hanks" (i.e., skeins) and washed carefully. It was rolled loosely into balls from this stage. Then it was all ready for knitting. Women in Elliston did not dye their wool, but sometimes for variety, they might mix black and white strands together. The finished woollen garment might be dyed however. For instance, girls' long stockings were knitted of fine white yarn, but when completed, were then dyed black.

All the females in a household, from the youngest schoolgirl to the elderly grandmother, did knitting. A stock of knitting was required not only for use by all family members during blustery winter weather, but also for the summer use of the males who went fishing. All woollen garments had to be handknit and people wore lots of woollen garments, both inner and outer. Many men wore knitted underwear in the early days. This was lined with "fleece calico" which kept it from being itchy and irritable next to the skin. Some women and girls wore at least one knitted petticoat in winter for greater warmth.

Long stockings, above the knee for women and girls; below the knee for men and boys; "vamps" (ankle height

socks) for everyone in the family, as these were worn over regular stockings, especially in the rubber boots (waders); "cossocks" (a sort of helmet which covered the whole head and most of the face except the eyes), especially welcomed by those who went in the country ten to twelve miles for wood on snowy, frosty days in winter; mittens (these had a thumb and fore finger); cuffs (all fingers together with thumb only separate); gloves (for dress wear); possibly a "splitting mitt" - all these were basic items that most women had to knit. Each family member needed three or four pairs of stockings, mitts, and cuffs, for snow got into winter boots and mitts and cuffs were easily mislaid.

The biggest garment that most women knitted from the 1920s onward, was the "spun-yarn" sweater or "guernsey". Fishermen wore these, winter and summer, even in the late 1940s. Women followed no written patterns, yet they turned out garments that fitted perfectly. I failed to ask how they managed to do this. They did not even use a measuring tape, and I recall my mother using her middle finger as a measure and giving the length of a stocking leg as being so many "fingers" long instead of inches.

Unattached younger women did a great deal of knitting for the family, but they also had time to do "fancy work". Embroidering cushion tops on "huckaback" (a material with raised loops available in the early 1900s), crocheting,

and knitting lace, were fashionable occupations in the early days. In the 1930s and 1940s members of this age group were more interested in working with coloured thread, embroidering pillow slips, table cloths, aprons, and bedspreads. Nobody said they had embroidered any item. They simply said: "I worked it".

Nearly every woman, unless she was hopeless with a needle, made most of her family's clothing, even as late as the thirties. Children's clothing especially was practically all home made or made by local seamstresses. There were a number of women in Elliston, capable sewers, who were classed as dressmakers. They were in great demand for doing such tricky jobs as cutting over an adult's cast-off garment to make something for a child, or for "turning" a coat for any family member, so that it might last another season (that is, they reversed the garment entirely, putting the faded part inside.) They did their work without benefit of any "bought" patterns. Few of them could have followed written instructions very well anyway.

Men's suits were either made by a tailor in Bonavista in earlier days, or were bought ready made. Women rarely attempted to make men's suits, although nearly every other article of their clothing was handmade at home in the early days. For instance, men's top shirts, during the depression years of the 1930s were sometimes made from bleached flour sacks and were dyed the desired colour with "dolly dye"

(store-bought dye) .

Most of the material used for clothing - broadcloth, flannel, serge, cotton, etc. could be bought in the local stores or at Bonavista. Sometimes too, in the early 1900s, pedlars called at the door with material suitable for skirts and dresses. One informant recalled that on one occasion, when the pedlar called at her home, an old man from the North Side was there too. His home had already been visited by the same pedlar, and he said that he had bought some material from the pedlar "to make a 'tail' for...." (that is, a skirt).

No matter what material she used, the sewer tried to make the finished item as nice as possible. Little girls' clothes, especially had "deckers" (several rows) of ruffles. Flour sacking, used by poorer families for clothing, was widely used in all families in Elliston for pillow slips, aprons, table cloths, dishtowels, and even sheets. Much bleaching made the material linen-like in appearance. All of these flour sack items were brightened by embroidery, and the women who grew up during the late twenties and early thirties were more adept with the embroidery needle and coloured cottons than they were with the crochet hook used by an earlier generation. The coloured thread was inexpensive and with a bit of skill and a few hours' work plain flour sacking was made very attractive.

Quilt-making or "joining quilts" was also considered a "winter" job. Sometimes women managed to buy "burney" (i.e., shop soiled) cotton material cheaply and cut this in suitable pieces to make the quilt with. Often though they just cut up any old garment or garments they had at home, and any remnants. They chose an old flannelette sheet or blanket to "join the quilt on". Sometimes pieces were joined to (i.e., sewn to) both sides of the sheet. Then the quilt was reversible. Othertimes they lined the quilt with a different material. Often "they used damask cotton, like they used for the big aprons worn then." [No.5] Most women made their quilts on their own. It was not the practice in Elliston to have "quilting parties" as are described elsewhere in the United States and England.

Hooking mats was another occupation reserved for winter-time. Sometimes a woman might hook several during the course of a winter and might "have one in the frame" to work on as a variant to knitting, sewing, etc.

The "mat frame" on which a mat was hooked consisted of four pieces of wood about 1" thick, 2" wide and any desired length. These pieces were joined together in a rectangle, but the fourth piece was moved into different slots in the side pieces as the work progressed. The mat was worked in sections, and as it was done, it was rolled up so that the uncompleted portion stayed taut in the frame.

A piece of "brin" (i.e., burlap) was used for the backing, and as there were no transfers or ready bought patterns available, any design had to be drawn free hand in pencil. The variety of designs they made was astonishing - geometric, scrolls, flowers, animals - I remember one in our kitchen that featured a big black dog. A woman who was good at sketching would help a less skilful neighbour who could not draw so well. Very likely the neighbour reciprocated by doing something else for her. They used scraps of material or "rags" to form their patterns. Material was cut in long narrow strips and wound up in a ball. Good hookers tried to keep the size of the "rags" uniform. No old garment was ever thrown away. For if it could not be used in a quilt, it found a place in the rag rug. If a housewife did not have enough of a certain colour, she would dye white or light material the colour she desired. In the old days, they made use of natural dyes for colouring rags. One informant [No.6] said: "I can remember when they used to go down and pick the rock moss and render it out and get the colour for the mats. They used to do that for to "fill 'em out" you know." [i.e., the background colour] The rock moss used was the greyish-green scaly lichen which is found in abundance on the big rocks in the area. "They'd boil it away till it steeped out good..." [No.6] and "then they put their rags in". [No.5] The colour obtained by this process

was a "barky" colour (i.e., a light rust-brown). In later years, women used the dye they could buy in the shops. Informant No.5 said: "We used to dye to get the right colours for the flowers in our mats, but they don't do that now. They gets the right colours."

For hooking the mat, that is drawing up the rags through the spaces in the "brin", they used a "mat hook". This was a straight piece of metal (sometimes copper) about 2" long, set in a wooden handle. There was a small crook at the end for drawing up the loops. As with other crafts, women varied in their ability to hook mats. Some were acknowledged "experts" and took great pride in their work. Their loops were drawn up evenly and the inner side of the mat was free from blemishes. Such a mat could easily be reversed and few would notice the difference.

In the early days, when many families had dogs for hauling firewood, the dog's "tackling" or harness was often made by the women of the household. Rope, string and cloth were used in making such a harness.

Even some of the woman's indoor work in late winter was directly involved with the fishery. Many women made sails in the days when all fishing boats were sailboats, and sails were made and used up to and after World War One. Men usually "cut out" the sails and roped them after they

were made (i.e., attached the rope necessary for raising and lowering the sail), but women did the necessary sewing. One of my informants [No.11] remembered his mother making sails by hand for their fishing boat. For working by hand, there was a special "sailneedle" (triangular instead of round) and a "sail palm" made of leather with a round metal section for forcing the needle through the heavy material. Sails were made of cotton duck - a heavy canvas-like material. The finished sail was "barked" or "tarred" to strengthen it and increase its ability to hold the wind. His wife [No.10] remembered her mother making sails, too, but she used a hand machine for the job.

It was a rare man indeed who did any work for his wife in the house, even though women often did "men's work" outdoors. A man would say, and truthfully, that he "never knew where anything was in the house." And, if his wife did not put out his clothing for him to wear, he would not know where to find it.

To be a good wife for a fisherman, a woman had to be versatile and be prepared to work hard. Her day - in summer - could take her from house, to stable, to garden, to meadow, to stage, to flake. In fall, her days were taken up with picking berries, harvesting crops, making preserves, house cleaning, and Christmas preparations, and preliminary work at wool. In winter, there was carding, spinning and

knitting of wool, sewing of clothes, joining of quilts, hooking of mats - all done indoors. She had little leisure time, for in addition to having to pull her weight at a variety of jobs, she had to see to it that her family was properly fed and cared for. A man whose wife was competent in all these areas was rich, not only because she managed her household well, but also because of her very real contribution to the economy of that household.

SOCIAL ACTIVITIES, DEATH AND FUNERAL CUSTOMS AND PRACTICES

In previous chapters, I have described the social activities of children and teenagers, and surveyed the kinds of work the women did in the house and outside it throughout the year. In this chapter, I shall take up various aspects of social life, some of which were touched on earlier. I shall begin with religion, because of its effect on the social life, for example, the comparative suppression of dancing which led to "rings" and "ring games".

As already mentioned in Chapter III, "The Geography and History of Elliston", the community's first permanent settlers, who came during the first decade of the nineteenth century, were members of the Church of England. Only a handful of the residents belonged to the Established Church by the 1880s. Roman Catholicism all but died out when the practice of getting "youngsters" from the Mother Country and Ireland ceased, and only one Roman Catholic family remained in Elliston at the turn of the century. The Salvation Army had gained some "converts" in the community by the end of the 1890s, but it never attracted a large following - perhaps a dozen families at the most. So, from the point of view of this dissertation, dealing as it does

chiefly with the period 1900-1950, a time within the memories of my informants, we can think of Elliston, after the 1880s, as being a predominantly "Methodist", or, after 1925, a predominantly "United Church" community.¹

There was close harmony between the different denominations. I was brought up in the Anglican tradition, but I attended the United Church High School. More than half of my informants are adherents of the United Church also. I was never aware of any animosity between the faiths, though there were certain people who held very biased views and were intolerant of anything that differed from what they believed. Perhaps this tolerant attitude on the part of the majority is a carry-over from the early days of the community. Then, Anglicans and Methodists worshipped together, with Anglicans helping out in the choir by supplying the "music"² (i.e., playing bass viol, violin, flute, etc.)

This worshipping in each other's churches was still common among the Anglicans and the Methodists during the early 1900s and later. Methodists, especially the young people, would attend the service in the Anglican church in

¹ In Elliston, United Church was simply a new name for the Methodists. There were no Presbyterians, Congregationalists, etc. to join with them, as was the case in other parts of Canada.

² "Music" always refers to instrumental music rather than to singing.

the afternoon, and Anglicans would attend the United Church service in the evening, unless, of course, there was an evening service in the Anglican Church. Then both groups attended their respective churches. Also both Methodists and Anglicans attended the Salvation Army "meetings" and families helped the Army materially by donations of food, fuel, etc. to the "officer". However, only a handful became "soldiers" (i.e., adherents of the Army).

Church-going in the early days had a strong social function as well as a religious one. After church most young people would "go over on the road" and older people went visiting friends and relatives, or had them come to their own homes.

My United Church informants in Maberly spoke in the warmest terms of the Church of England minister in the early 1900s, Canon Bayly. They told me they tried to attend all his Tuesday night services in the Maberly School-chapel and one man [No.11] said: "We were full of joy to see him".

Because Elliston was a "Methodist" community, the prevailing attitude towards social activities was affected by their ideas. The early "Wesleyans" frowned on dancing. In fact, a common saying which referred to a person who couldn't dance was "He's got Methodist (or Wesleyan) feet." Because they did not permit dancing, there were never any

formal dances held in the public hall. This does not mean that people, especially the young, did not dance elsewhere "on the sly". In the early 1900s, young people would gather in some Anglican home, since Anglicans did not have this prejudice against dancing, to dance and sing accompanied by an accordian, harmonica, and in later year, a wind-up gramophone. Sometimes, in summer, they danced outdoors, away from where people were living, as I have mentioned in the chapter on courtship.

At public gatherings, like the Sunday School picnics, and the "times" (social gatherings arranged for the purpose of making money for church, school, or fraternal organization), young people took part in "rings" as a substitute for regular dancing. Younger children also played "rings" at school recess-time, and at the picnics. But the teenagers, and the older marriageable youths, were the main participants at the picnics, and the "times". Two "rings" my informants remembered playing were "King William was King George's Son" and "Jolly Miller" and a popular "ring game" was "Catch the Third".

For "King William", all those taking part joined hands, forming a circle around one person, either a boy or a girl. Then, singing the following verses, they danced around him or her:

King William was King George' son,
 And all the royal race he won,
 And on his breast a star he wore,
 Point me to the Governor's door.

Come choose to the East,
 Come choose to the West,
 Choose the very one that you love best.
 If she's [he's] not there to take your part,
 Choose another one with all your heart.

Down on this carpet you must kneel,
 As the grass grows in the field.
 Kiss your partner, kiss her sweet,
 You may rise upon your feet.

At the words "Come choose to the East"etc. the person in the centre of the ring chose a girl or boy as his [her] partner. Kneeling in the centre of the ring, they kissed. Then the person that had been brought into the ring chose another for his partner, and so the game continued, until most had had a turn in the centre of the ring.³

For "Jolly Miller", there was an uneven number of players. All the participants, except one, formed couples, arm in arm, one behind the other, forming a double ring, with the odd one in the centre. As they sang the following verse, they moved around the person in the centre:

There was a jolly miller and he lived by himself,
 By grinding corn he made his wealth.
 One hand in his pocket, the other in the bag,
 The wheel went round and he made his grab.

³ Cf. Alice Bertha Gomme, *The Traditional Games of England, Scotland and Ireland*, pp.302-304.

At the word "grab", they let go arms and grabbed for another partner. The player in the centre (the miller) tried to secure a partner and a place while they were changing places. If he managed to do this, the odd person became miller in his stead.⁴

"Catch the Third" was a popular game, especially with young adults. It required an odd number of players. They formed themselves in pairs in a ring, one pair behind the other. In one place there were three in a row, the one standing on the inner side, towards the centre being the "Third". This was a running game, for the "Third" had to leave his place and be chased by another member of the group, usually a person he himself chose, one he liked especially. If he eluded capture and got back in his place, he might be chased again by someone else. If caught, he had to take his place with those who remained standing still while the "catching" was going on. Ring games which included singing and those without it were acceptable to Methodists, as there was no "music".

Picnics in the early 1900s all started in the afternoon, and in Maberly they were preceded by a parade of Sunday School pupils around the community, the boys carrying

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.289-293.

flags, the girls, wreaths (i.e., flowers fastened to a circular or square wooden frame and fastened to a long stick for a handle). When they reached the place where the picnic was to be held, the children took part in various competitions, for example, racing and jumping, and those who won received small prizes. Candy was always thrown up in the air by the handful and every child scrambled for his share. A shy, timid child got few indeed.

Parents and other adults would come later in the afternoon to serve and eat some picnic food. Anyone who cared to could attend. So the group giving the picnic had to be very sure they had lots of food baked (cakes, cookies etc.) so that everyone who came might be given a "cup of tea". There was never any charge for the food served at a picnic. One woman mentioned baking "trunks of cakes" for one such occasion. [No.3]

Picnics were still being held in the thirties and forties, but they were not exactly the same as those held in the early 1900s. During the later years, they were strictly children's affairs. The only adults that took part were the minister and the Sunday School teacher or teachers. Serving lunch was not the big event it had been. Children just carried enough for themselves.

The old-type Sunday school picnics, involving the whole community, were replaced in the late 1930s by the Garden

Party which the Anglican and United Churches held annually until the 1960s. Here patrons paid for their meals and for the entertainments. There were different games and competitions - games of chance and skill, such as bowling, pitching pennies, fish pond, and guessing, with prizes designed to tempt a person to participate. All prizes were donated by business firms in the area, or by interested persons.

Sometimes these affairs were kept up for two nights. On the first night, a substantial "cold plate" would be served. Meat would be served on individual plates, but salads of all sorts - potato, tossed greens, jelly, etc. - would be in serving dishes on the table. Likewise whole cakes, pies and tarts, would be laid on the table in front of the diners, so that they could help themselves. Dishes of different cookies would be placed at convenient intervals. Most of the interested women of the congregation would be involved in catering, and there would be keen, though unspoken, rivalry as to who set the best table, as each woman was responsible for a certain section of the table. People in the know always wanted to sit at Mrs. So and So's table, because her food was always delicious and they would avoid another woman's, because hers was the opposite. Sometimes to get around this, those in charge of the affair had contributions from different women all mixed together and

the woman responsible for serving "tea" on a certain table might have none of her own cakes on it.

On the second night, instead of a "cold plate", the women might serve hot soup - a substantial vegetable kind - along with tea and cake and cookies as on the previous night. Never did a Garden Party in Elliston end with a dance, yet in neighbouring communities a dance always ended the Garden Party.

Although the women were the most important workers at the Garden Party, having to serve and prepare the supper, for most people attended just for a "good feed", yet the men had important roles to play as well. It was they who erected the rough dining tables, collected the admission tickets at the door or gate, boiled the water for the dish-washing, and managed the outside entertainments - the bowling, fish pond, darts, etc. Without the cooperation of both sexes, a Garden Party could not have been held.

The same cooperation was necessary for the annual Orangeman's "time" held on New Year's Day. In Elliston, the majority of the men were Lodge members, and it was their wives, or sisters, or mothers, who supplied and served the supper, working under extremely difficult conditions. The area reserved for the kitchen in the Orange Hall used to be a room, not more than ten feet square, furnished with one iron cook stove. Its top would be packed with kettles for boiling

water for tea, and there would be a roaring wood and coal fire going underneath to keep the water hot. If soup was being served, pots of soup would have to be placed on or about the stove as well. Dishes were washed in pans at the counter in the same room, but there was no running water, hot or cold. Hot water for dish washing was heated in a big tank over an open fire, kindled on the grounds just outside the building. How they managed to serve hot tea or anything else hot is hard to imagine, and it is certainly to their credit that they managed admirably.

In fact, if food was to be supplied at any social gathering, women were essential, for men had no contact with cooking or serving food. But, it was not until the 1940s that a woman's branch of the Orange Society was set up in Elliston. The majority of women who joined this organization had husbands and/or sons who were Orangemen. The women were known as the LOBA (Loyal Orange Benevolent Association). In contrast, most of the men had been going "to the Lodge" (Orange) once a week for years, and some men were also members of the "Fisherman's Society" with its lodge in Bonavista. In the early 1900s, the "Good Templars" was another strong men's organization of which the stated aim, temperance, paralleled Wesleyan tradition, so it had strong church support. But women in those days had no such organization. Obviously they had enough to do to keep them occupied at home. And the women's lodge was established

only when carding and spinning had all but died out. Women suddenly found themselves with free time on week nights.

Although the majority of women were not organized in a society, some Methodist (United Church) women did belong to the Ladies Aid, started in the early 1920s. This group organized events to raise money for the Church, looked after the "Parsonage" (i.e., the minister's residence), welcomed new ministers and their families to the community, and saw that everything at the parsonage was in readiness for the new occupants. Some Anglican women were responsible for the "church housekeeping", that is, the changing of the altar cloths with the changing church seasons, weekly dusting etc. and these were usually interested Church members, or else they belonged to the Church warden's household. The church got a thorough cleaning once a year. A certain afternoon, usually in late spring, was appointed for cleaning day, and all the women of the congregation were expected to turn up at the church with their cleaning equipment - scrubbing brushes, buckets, soap, water, cleaning rags. Anyone unable, or unwilling to do her share of the scrubbing, was expected to pay another woman to clean for her, whereas participation in the picnics and garden parties was expected, but voluntary.

Women in Elliston were certainly involved in churchwork and I learned one very odd bit of information from Mr. N.C.

Crewe's "File on Elliston".

Elizabeth (Mrs. Mark Way), the eldest sister of Arthur Tilly (daughter of Robert Tilly) first married to James Baker, outliving both her husbands, lost both her children in childhood, a woman of natural refinement, was *licensed to conduct services in the Anglican Church at Elliston*, the only female lay reader I ever heard of.⁵

Women, in the early 1900s, were involved in other public social events as well. For instance, "getting up" and "putting off" concerts (consisting of dialogues, skits, individual and group songs, instrumental music, and recitations). These "concerts" were generally performed during the Christmas season or at Easter. Money earned went toward something for the school or the church.

Women were, of course, deeply involved in all events of the Christmas season. Their part in providing festive foods, homemade wines, and in readying the house for visitors has already been mentioned. But Christmas would not have been Christmas before 1950 without "mummers".⁶ It was the mother's responsibility to help provide a suitable costume for each member of the family that decided to go mummering

⁵ N.C. Crewe, "Elliston File", Provincial Archives, Colonial Building, St. John's.

⁶ For a full discussion of "mummers", see: Herbert Halpert and G.M. Story, *Christmas Mumming in Newfoundland*, Toronto, 1969.

and this probably every night of the holiday period, except Sundays and Christmas Night.. Costumes were changed each night, unless they planned to visit a different section of the community than that covered the previous night. Trunks and storage boxes were checked for old garments, and bed quilts were in great demand.

Rarely did middle-aged or elderly married women go mummering, but younger marrieds and unattached girls went out. It was true for women, as for all mummers, that once disguised they tended to take on whole new personalities. They would dance, "carry on", talk incessantly and loudly - in fact, act quite the opposite of their usual well-behaved modest selves. "Mummering" provided a welcome outlet for many to let loose for once, and was perhaps the only chance some got to go visiting at night for the whole year. In the main, the woman's role was to be a good hostess to all mummers who came to her door, and she could not be too fussy about the amount of snow and water they tramped into her kitchen.

There used to be a lot of visiting done in the old days, but married women rarely visited at night. They did their visiting in the afternoon, when the children were in school, and the men away working. Young unmarried women visited around the neighbourhood at night, but they always brought their knitting, crocheting, or embroidery with them, and

worked as they joked, chatted, told or listened to stories. The nightly visit to a neighbour was almost a ritual with some men, but this began only after the "fall closed in", not during the hectic summer season.

In the early days before radio was introduced, men would gather at night at those homes where a family member would read books aloud to those assembled. Young and old (chiefly male) would attend these reading sessions, which were conducted under difficult conditions, for a small oil lamp might provide the only illumination. In Maberly the chief reader was a women, the school mistress "Aunt Annie". Her audience was made up of mature men and youths. One of the boys who listened to her read many books was informant [No.9]. He recalled her reading *Ben Hur* and *Salome* and could sketch their plots for me. Aunt Annie's stories travelled farther than her kitchen, because her audience listened with attention. My aunt remembered my father and two of his friends retelling some of her stories. They did the job so well "it was almost as if they were reading it". Another informant [No.15] remembered being present at book-reading sessions in my grandfather's house in Elliston Centre. He said that sometimes whoever was reading would have to stop till some member of the audience vented his rage against the villain, or said what he would do to help the hero or heroine.

On Sunday mornings, during the late spring, summer, and early fall, even during the forties, all the men of the community gathered in a group. Maberly and Neck men generally got together in Maberly "over on the Gaze"; some others might gather on the "Bum Rocks" upon the Hill. Men in Elliston Centre and the North Side had special meeting spots also, for example, the "Square", "Over on the Dock", near the Old Methodist Graveyard, etc. In those spots they chatted, joked, yarned and argued. Topics covered included boats, the amount of fish and the prices, the weather, personal experiences in the inshore fishery and on the Banks, work in the lumberwoods and on the railway line. Young boys might sit beside the men and listen in on what was being said, but girls and women never came near the men's groups. If the men had not dispersed by dinnertime (noon), a child would be sent to inform one of the group that his dinner was ready. Once a man started homeward, all the others followed suit.

There were, in fact, very few neighbourhood events from which women were excluded. Unlike the men, who were excluded at the time of a birth, women were involved both at birth and death, indeed with all the events called by Van Gennep the "rites of passage". When a death occurred in the community, women were as much involved in the last social event as the men. Traditionally, men were responsible

for certain tasks and the women for others.

As soon as possible after a death occurred, the deceased was "laid out". This duty was usually performed by next-door neighbours, though some people were called upon regularly to help. Women "laid out" a woman and men looked after a man. In the old days, after the body was washed, it was attired in special "graveclothes". Most people, especially in the old days, were quite concerned with cutting a good figure at the last, even though they were "lay figures" in this final social activity. Some people had their "grave clothes" ready for years before their deaths. For women, they consisted of chemise, bloomers, stockings, and white nightgown; men were buried in their best clothes - usually their Sunday suit. My great-aunt Annie, who died aged eighty-four in the thirties, had her outfit ready for so long that the white nightdress had been washed twenty or thirty times to keep it from yellowing. The idea of having graveclothes was still present in some families in the thirties. My aunt told me of a young teen-aged girl being given some article of clothing as a gift. Sometime later, when her mother was asked if it fitted all right, the mother replied: "Oh yes, but it was too good for her to wear. I put it away for her grave clothes."

Those who laid out the corpse closed the eyes and sometimes laid large Newfoundland pennies on them. Also they

would tie a white cloth or napkin around the jaws and head of the corpse to keep the mouth from falling open.

Once the body had been prepared for burial, it was laid out in the best room in the house, the parlour. Generally, the body was laid on a table in the centre of the room, feet pointing toward the East. If the table were not long enough, three or four boards would be placed under the body on the table. Sometimes a door would be pressed into service; sometimes a wooden settle. They used the best available item. A white sheet was placed over the body and under it. Most housewives in the old days kept these sheets, made of linen or shirting, specifically for "laying out" members of the family. They were set aside for this purpose.

The "laying out" would take less than an hour to complete. Members of the immediate family would be in another room until it was finished; then they might come to view the corpse. For the "staying-up" period, the house, especially the kitchen and parlour, was given a thorough cleaning by the women nearby. One old lady in Elliston, about 30 to 40 years ago, did not let her neighbours perform this task for her. Her husband died one day in the fall, when all the neighbours were busy digging their potatoes. She not only "laid him out, but she also gave her house a good cleaning". When she had finished all this, she

walked to the nearest of the gardens and informed those working there that her husband had "passed away" that morning.

Neighbours came to "stay-up" voluntarily and women, as mentioned earlier, readied the house for the "staying-up." Even ordinary household tasks would not be attended to by the bereaved, these were looked after by friends and relatives. Meals would be cooked and brought to the house; domestic animals would be cared for; and wood and water would be brought into the house.

It was generally the more mature people in the settlement who "stayed-up". Very old or sickly people would come to offer sympathy, but they would not make a protracted stay. They usually visited by day. Children were not involved, unless the death was "in the family". And children might be sent along to the house of mourning during the day with a flower for the coffin. All who visited would be asked if they wished to view the corpse. It was a widespread belief that if you viewed the corpse, you would not think about it later.⁷

Both men and women "stayed-up" in the house of mourning and, although generally it was a very solemn occasion, the atmosphere of the home varied according to the age of the

⁷ Cf. Udall, *Dorsetshire Folk-Lore*, "Corpse Superstitions", Numbers v, and vi, p.185.

deceased, length of illness, personalities of those present - the latter perhaps being the deciding factor. Officially, quiet conversation was the only way of passing the time, but occasionally the group was noisier.

People would reminisce about the deceased - what he had said or done, anything funny concerning him. There was no singing, but they might tell jokes, or short stories and anecdotes concerning the dead person. And although there were no amusements, there were some amusing incidents. For instance, on one occasion, two of my Mother's aunts were "staying-up" in a home where an old lady had passed away. Her husband was a bit odd and partway through the night, he went into the room where the corpse was lying, and removed the pillow from under her head. He came back to the kitchen, placed the pillow on the hard wooden settle, and proceeded to go to sleep. Those present were shocked beyond measure, and perhaps, a bit frightened. He reassured them by saying: "Martha, pore ol' soul, can't hurt me now, she's dead. Anyway, she'd rather for me to have it." Off he went to sleep, but there was no sleep for the others in the room. This was just as well, anyway, since someone was expected to stay awake all through the night.

All who stayed up were given a cup of tea and something light to eat during the night. This was served in the kit-

chen where all the people were gathered. No one stayed in the room with the corpse, but a light was left burning there.

In the old days, and until quite recently, the coffin was made in the community. It was made of wood purchased at the local merchant's. Older models were made with plain flat covers, but later ones were made with raised covers. The outside was covered with a brocade-style material. There was a wide variation in the colour chosen for this covering. Old people would have a dark purple; middle-aged, a deep blue; young adults, pale blue; children, white. For members of the Orange Society, the coffin would be covered in a colour which distinguished their "degree" in that society. All coffins were lined inside with shirting or sateen. Around the rim, where the cover was thrown back, it was trimmed with "full mountain", a gold or black material, heavier than present day tinfoil. It was fastened to the rim with tacks. Children's coffins were often trimmed with lace instead of full mountain. My great-grandmother Tilly did not want "full mountain" around her box, for she said it made a coffin look too much like a trunk. When she died her coffin was trimmed with lace.

The acknowledged carpenters in the community, who were asked to make the coffin, did so without charging for their services. The family, of course, supplied the materials.

Poorer families might not have so costly materials as those better off. For instance, rope handles might have to serve instead of bought ornate metal handles. But if a person were especially well liked, the coffin would be covered with flowers. Some real in summer, but always artificial. Certain women in the community were skilled in making crepe-paper flowers which they made up into "sprays" and sold very cheaply. Other women who had flower gardens, made wreaths from flowers if in season. These were arranged and then sewed on heavy cardboard circular frames. Women friends or relatives of the bereaved family would fasten the floral tributes to the coffin with tacks in the old days, but in recent years, these have been fastened with tape.

During the period between the death and burial, white linen bands would be made up by the women who were looking after matters in the house of mourning. These would be delivered to the head of each household, and the men wore them pinned above the elbow on the left sleeve. The "bearers" also wore white scarves, but they were longer, with the ends flowing free.

The funeral normally took place on the third day after the death, unless for medical reasons the period was shortened.

In Elliston it is customary for men and women to attend funerals. Women do not ordinarily act as pall bearers,

men are chosen for this task. And, in the old days, this was no light job. Coffins were (in summer) carried by the bearers by means of the handles affixed to the sides of the coffin. Those who had to move a corpse a long distance, e.g., from the bottom of North Side or from Maberly $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 miles from the church, received help from the men in the funeral procession. They would step forward in twos and take their turns bearing the corpse. This changeover was effected without any stoppage in the onward movement of the procession. In winter, the coffin would be drawn to the church on a "slide".

My informants remembered one occasion when little girls acted as pall bearers. A tiny girl of two, buried by the Salvation Army, was carried by four little girls dressed in white.

The size of a funeral was, in a way, an indication of the popularity of the deceased. For some, the church would be crowded; for others, there would only be the immediate relatives. Weather conditions, too, affected attendance at funerals. In the old days, people were expected to attend a funeral.

All who attended a funeral in the old days were soberly dressed and members of a family which had experienced a bereavement, wore a black band on the left sleeve for months after the death. A woman never attended the funeral

of her husband, or of any of her children, in the old days, but a man would attend his wife's or children's. During the service, the chief mourners sat all the way through, and it was the custom for families to attend church, as official mourners, for three consecutive Sundays, when they again sat all through the service.⁸ Widows wore black for months, and even years, after their husbands died.

It is, I believe, fitting, that I should bring this chapter dealing with social and other activities to a close with this brief account of death and burial in Elliston. For, in Elliston, much of the social activity was, and still is church-dominated. This is not only the last church-oriented activity connected with a person, but also the last great social event as well.

⁸ Cf. Udal, *Dorsetshire Folklore*, "Funeral Preparations and Observances", number iii, p.187.

TWENTY YEARS LATER

In the foregoing chapters, I have surveyed the woman's role from the cradle to the grave, emphasizing the 1900-1950 period. But, my collecting was done in 1970, and the reader has a right to ask: What happened in the interval? What is it like today? What is still viable? The outward changes I can easily describe, but I do not feel qualified to comment on the extremely interesting matter of beliefs. So, in this chapter, I am limiting myself chiefly to describing the physical contrasts and only occasionally can give some insight into what may be far more interesting problems. I do not know, for instance, how today's young expectant mothers feel about "marking". But, just this past summer, a young mother-to-be craved rhubarb before her baby's birth and my informant [No.2] said: "I had to try to get it for her maid when she asked for it. Wouldn't want the baby to be marked!" Whether the young mother held this belief, or whether it lay with the older woman only, I do not know. Certainly, practices connected with pregnancy and childbirth have changed greatly in recent years. In the early 1900s and during the thirties and forties this was "women's business". Men were banished from the scene. Rarely was there a doctor in attendance, for midwives brought most of the babies into the world, and, the woman was always "confined" at home. Today, expectant mothers pay regular visits

to the doctors at the Cottage Hospital in Bonavista and the majority of babies are born in the hospital. Instead of the social hour with her friends and the "Groaning Cake" on her "Upsetting Day", today's mother is tendered a "baby shower" prior to the baby's arrival. Instead of there being just three or four close friends present, she may be showered with gifts from dozens of women who are merely acquaintances, mainly interested in the chance for a social evening with cards and bingo - a shoddy replacement of a charming old custom, in my opinion.

Today's babies are looked after as are babies elsewhere in Newfoundland. No longer are they put in "whittles", for modern plastics have made things easier on mother and baby alike. Most clothing for babies is bought ready-made, the possible exceptions being hand-knitted sweaters, bootees, caps, etc. Few babies are breast fed nowadays in Elliston. The majority of mothers prefer to put their babies on formula and baby foods may be bought already prepared in packages and tins.

Families tend to be smaller nowadays - two or three children being the normal-sized family. Quite a change from the ten to twelve, or more, common just a few decades ago. Today's women practice birth control and do not believe, as their grandmothers and mothers did, that "It was God's will. That was their family."

This reflects, perhaps, the change in the community generally. It has changed from a community where the people were self-supporting to one where the majority live on some form of government support. Few families now take part in the fishery, or grow their own vegetables, so "many hands [to] make light work" are not required. The many little jobs a child was once required to do have disappeared, and a frequent complaint from a bored child is, "There's nothing to do!" A girl no longer has the same responsibilities which fishing and gardening gave. Only in some families is a girl required to do housework. No longer is it considered essential that she develop the once extremely important household skills.

A few mothers teach their daughters to knit, but they knit for pleasure, not out of any real need for the finished product. Boys are even more at loose ends than girls, as they seem to be able to find nothing constructive to occupy their time.

Schooling has just about come full circle. Elliston residents all through the 19th century, strove to establish suitable schools in the community to serve their children's needs. They succeeded, and Elliston's students acquired an enviable reputation in the period 1900-1950. Today, there is no school operating at Maberly, Neck, or North Side and only four rooms are in operation at Elliston Centre. The

reason lies with the decline in population in certain areas. The Neck has only one or two children of school age, and Maberly two or three families; both small communities are almost deserted. High school classes are no longer taught in Elliston and the pupils have to go outside the community, to Bonavista, for these grades.

In common with trends in education elsewhere, educational methods have changed with the years. Both in the early 1900s and in the thirties, school was a place you went voluntarily in order to learn. If you did not want to do so, you either left on your own initiative, or were kicked out. Memorization and rote learning were encouraged, but pupils were also taught to think out answers on their feet and to analyse material. Discipline was strict and the school teacher was respected. Some of today's children, according to several of my informants, are poorly disciplined; kept in school because they are paid to go; they have little respect for anyone, teacher or parents.

Courting patterns have changed somewhat from those of twenty years ago. Today's young people cluster in "restaurants" (juke-box joints) dancing to the latest hit records and drinking pop. Cars are plentiful and today, 80 to 90% of the courting is done in the boyfriend's car. Parking in a secluded spot has taken over from sitting on a favourite rock, or leaning against a fish store. In recent years,

there have been an unusual number of early teen-age marriages. Sometimes both bride and groom are still in school.

People aspire to being modern and up-to-date. As one of my older informants [No.4] said to me: "They'll throw out their worthwhile things and replace with baubles". The latter, I might add, are bought on the instalment plan.

House styles have altered drastically in recent years. Today, homebuilders tend to follow the trend in cities and towns to one-storey bungalows with full basements. People rarely speak of the parlour these days; it has become the living room and although the kitchen is still the chief living area in any home, the living room is used, not kept shut up except for special occasions.

Clothes no longer have to be washed by hand and fewer people have to bring water for washing and drinking purposes. Quite a few homes have water and sewerage facilities and nearly all women use electric washers. Thus a few more jobs have been eliminated from the woman's workday. Other electric appliances in common use in most homes are kettles, toasters, mixers, irons, refrigerators and freezers.

No longer is it necessary for people to go in the woods to "keep the stove going", for there are very few wood stoves in use in Elliston today. Most people have oil ranges in their kitchens and oil-burning heaters in their

living rooms, if they do not have central heating. Many women have chosen to follow the lazy road in meal preparing and families today are more apt to eat storebought cakes and cookies than they are to have homemade ones. Picnics and garden parties have died out, partly I feel, because women do not have the same feeling of pride in preparing a huge supply of cakes, pies, etc.

Eating patterns have changed with the times - not always for the better. Today it is difficult to get a meal of fresh codfish - once the basic food in summer. Fresh frozen meats are available in the stores at all seasons of the year, and tinned and bottled foods are basic to every woman's grocery list. It is not just at Christmas time that children now get apples, oranges, bananas, candy etc. These items are available all year round.

The way of living has changed drastically for the majority of people during the last twenty years, for the women especially. Elliston during 1900-1950 was a fishing community and ways of doing things in the fishery changed very little in the fifty-year period. Handling the fish after it had been landed was a cooperative family effort, the women working side by side with the men. In the fifties, fishermen were encouraged to sell their fish "green" (that is, fresh) to the fish-filleting plants in Bonavista or Catalina. The work pattern changed when a fishing crew no longer had

to be responsible for every stage in the curing process. Women's help could be dispensed with when fish were simply "gutted" and sold "head-on" at the fish plants. Flake-work disappeared for there was no fish to "make". Today there is hardly a flake to be seen in Elliston.

Gardening, which had consumed so much of a woman's time in the period 1900-1950, has almost ceased since the fifties. Today, very few people grow such vegetables as carrot, turnip, cabbage, etc. The majority prefer to buy their supplies from Bonavista Bay farmers who sell produce from door to door, or if they do not want to buy in bulk, they get their weekly supply from the local grocery stores. Potatoes are still grown by families with young children, but few people of retirement age bother to "put in" potatoes nowadays. They maintain that it is cheaper for them to buy what they need from the stores than to fuss with sowing, fertilizing, weeding, etc.

Cows, goats, and sheep were plentiful in the early 1900s and during my childhood. Today, hardly anyone keeps any of these animals. There may be a dozen such domestic animals in the whole community. A few goats are kept, but the owners never bother to milk them. This, in the old days and in the thirties, was the chief reason for keeping goats; their milk was considered richer and safer than cow's milk. Also today women have nothing to do with sheep. No

shearing, no washing wool, no carding, no spinning. These last two operations were disappearing during the forties because then women began sending their wool to mainland centres to be made into yarn and dyed different colours. Although knitting is still practiced, it is no longer vital to the family's welfare. It has developed into a pastime now, in a class with embroidery and crocheting. Today, most sweaters, scarves, caps, socks, mittens etc. are store bought. Some women still hook an occasional rag rug, or join a quilt, but nowadays, they are apt to use a factory stenciled design and materials bought especially for the pattern - not remnants found around the house.

Sewing is no longer the necessary skill it once was. Today, most of the family clothing is bought ready made. Women only need to know how to sew on a button, or sew up a rent. Nor are new clothes an occasion for rejoicing any longer. In the old days, and during the depression years, children in many families relied on "hand-me-downs", either from older children in the family, or from kind, better-off relatives or neighbours. Now there is no demand for second-hand clothes and children and people generally dress "in style".

The many changes in communication systems has contributed greatly to the changes in people's attitudes. The branch railway had been extended to Bonavista during the

early 1900s, but the fastest way of moving goods from the railway station was by horse and cart, or by horse and slide. In fact, a group of men in Elliston opposed the extension of the railway to Elliston on the grounds that they would be deprived of a means of livelihood (hauling goods from the station to the community). Roads, suitable for horse traffic, connected Elliston with the neighbouring communities of Bonavista and Catalina by the early 1900s. They were but little improved, and still very narrow, during the thirties and forties, for most traffic, even then, was horse drawn. There were only three or four cars in the community at that time, and one or two trucks. Goods were either moved by horse, dog, or man power. Even the mail was brought from Bonavista twice a week, by horse and cart in the summer, and horse and slide in winter. It was only when the volume of mail increased, because of the increased traffic with mainland mail order houses (Eaton's and Simpson's) after 1949 that any changes were made in the system.

People were accustomed to the telegraph and the telephone from the early 1900s, and during the twenties there were pay telephones at certain points in Maberly, Neck, Sandy Cove, Elliston Centre, and North Side, so that people could send messages back and forth. But the children of the depression years, the thirties, hardly knew what a telephone looked like. In recent years, however, telephones

have been installed in most of the homes in the community.

Few people had radios during the thirties. In fact, when the Second World War broke out in 1939, there were not more than a half dozen radios in the entire community. People would visit those homes with radios and sit in the kitchen, or even outside the kitchen window, to listen to the "war news". By the late forties, nearly everyone had a radio and now (the seventies) every household has a television set as well. The coming of TV at first did not change the visiting pattern. People clustered in homes with TV sets, as formerly they clustered in homes where a book was being read. Then more people got sets and hated to be interrupted during a favourite program. "Dropping-in" on somebody for an evening's chat fell off. Today, very little house-to-house visiting is done except perhaps among relatives.

One of the greatest changes I have noted in recent years is the community's attitude towards "unwed mothers". Girls in such circumstances a generation ago generally felt they had brought disgrace on their family. No so today.

It seems the majority of people do not attach the same importance to religion that their elders did. One of my informants [No.14] said that in the early 1900s, and also during the forties, "the Church was the centre of everything". People held strict notions about what could or could not be done on the Lord's Day. Vegetables for Sunday dinner had to

be cleaned on Saturday, and in some homes only those dishes needed for the next meal were washed after the Sunday dinner. Unneeded pots, the pudding cloth, etc. (boiled pudding used to be the standard Sunday dinner dessert) would be put aside to be washed on Monday. Today only those who retain the habits instilled in them in childhood clean Sunday dinner on Saturday, and I doubt if any housewife in Elliston will leave dirty pots around after Sunday dinner.

In fact, as one informant [No.9] said: "Sunday has become the real sport day now. Not like when we were growing up." In the "we" he could include those of my generation also, for during the forties as during the early 1900s, many of the things thought of now as being typical Sunday occupations were strictly forbidden to us.

Yet, certain things have not altered as drastically as one might expect. In spite of many factors - exposure to radio and television since babyhood; being taught by more highly qualified teachers and by teachers coming from other parts of Newfoundland; parents' insistence on the use of "correct" English; and the dying out of the fishery and the gardening, with the subsequent loss of many terms - the speech of Elliston's youth has not been completely purged of its dialect. Certain words, figures of speech, expressions used with a special meaning, words pronounced a certain way, are still retained.

Another change is obvious. The landscape itself is slowly changing. Because animals are no longer kept, except by a few families, there is no longer any need to make hay. Grass now grows waist-high in meadows in which during the early 1900s and during the forties, a child dared not tread lest he bend down a blade of the precious stuff.

The woods that before 1900 came right down to the settlement had disappeared because of forest fires and the use of wood for fuel. Today, if forest fires don't get them, the woods may reestablish themselves. Even now many old wood's paths have become impassable. And animals, like beavers, which were never seen in the area in the forties are now building dams in the ponds and streams behind the community.

Another noticeable change in the community is the disappearance of many flakes and stages that used to cover so much of the shoreline.

The foregoing then are some of the obvious changes in Elliston during the last twenty years. My informants were all aware of these changes and spoke of them. The women, who are fifty or sixty years old now, who participated fully in the business of making a living from the fishery, have a certain sense of loss when they think of their lives right now. They have all the "modern conveniences" now, yet they accomplish less in a day than they did years ago.

My informants did not minimize the hardships endured during the period 1900-1950. "It was one drop of sweat pushing another", but as one [No.16] said: "It was hard work, but we enjoyed it. Everyone was into it." Today, that feeling of camaraderie and good fellowship has all but disappeared.

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