

Victoria: Recalling Our Heritage

Prepared by 20 Participants in a **Youth Service Canada Project (YSC)**

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The Town of Victoria

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Note:

The group does not assume responsibility for information that may differ from that of the reader. They also apologize for any history making event or story that was omitted or for any names that may be misspelled or inadvertently left out.

BEGINNINGS

One spring's day during the early 1830s, two men from Carbonear walked over "the ridge" and made their way down a rough path into the well-wooded valley. Most likely they were fishermen looking for a good source of timber. Legend tells us these two men were named Cole and Stephenson. As they picked their way long the path, they marvelled at the fine stands of timber they encountered. This valley would be a good source of timber to build the boats, barrels, flakes, wharves and buildings they needed in the fish trade. The forests of Carbonear had been cut and no viable stands of timber remained. These two men felt they were the only ones who knew about these fine trees growing so tall and thick.

Mr. Cole and Mr. Stephenson continued their exploration of the valley. Climbing a small hill, they could see small rivers twisting and winding their way between the trees to finally empty into the sea down at Salmon Cove. Yes, this would be a good site to cut timber. As the two men surveyed the trees and wondered at the wildlife that might live there, their attention was held by a tiny wisp of smoke rising from the trees about halfway down the valley. "It couldn't be smoke, could it?" they wondered. After all they were the only ones here.

They wound their way through the trees in the direction of the smoke. Finally they broke out into a small clearing. In the middle of the clearing was a sod house with smoke rising lazily from a makeshift chimney. Seeing or hearing no one, they walked quietly to the door and knocked softly. It was opened almost immediately by a tall man. He invited them inside for a cup of tea. It seems Mr. Cole and Mr. Stephenson had stumbled upon the King family who had lived in the valley for a couple of months. The Kings had followed the stream upriver from Salmon Cove and decided to make a new beginning in these virgin woods.

The Valley Just Over the Ridge Heart's Content Road becomes Victoria Village

From these humble beginnings the Town of Victoria grew and developed. Our history had begun word quickly spread up and down the shore that the valley just over the ridge from Carbonear was a fine source of timber. Fishermen from Carbonear, Crocker's Cove, Blow- Me- Down, Otterbury Freshwater, Flatrock, and Salmon Cove traveled the path that ran inland. They cut the trees, made the paths wider, and began clearing the land. In time the main path became a "road". Because it lay in the direction of Heart's Content, someone called it "Heart's Content Road."

As more land was cleared, more people moved to the area wood for flakes, stages, and boats was the primary reason people came, but as the settlement grew, land was cleared and small-scale farming was begun, livestock was introduced, and wooden houses were built to replace sod houses and tilts that housed the people when they first arrived. The

fledgling settlement of Heart's Content road grew rapidly. Heart's Content Road was not a suitable name anymore, and it was renamed Victoria – Victoria Village.

We know that the population had grown to 200 by the early 1860's. Sarah Powell, an enterprising woman for her time, decided the children of the Village needed to be schooled. In 1864 she opened a school in her home. Besides teaching, Sarah Powell also ran a small store from her home and she also became the post-mistress when mail service arrived in "the Village."

We now know the first child born in the settlement know as Heart's Content Road was Robert Stephenson. He was born in 1847. The first marriage was that of Susanna Ash (of the settlement) and Thomas Burke (of Carbonear). This happy event took place December 4, 1860. The first burials were those from the Baldwin family. Patrick Baldwin, aged 80 years, was buried on October 12, 1859. The next year, two Baldwin children were laid to rest. It is possible they were twins. The fourth (and the first female burial) was that of Mary Baldwin. This Marriage and these burials were recorded as being from Heart's Content Road.

The first recorded burial for Victoria Village was that of Nicholas Powell. He was accompanied to his final resting place by his family and friends January 4, 1864.

Victoria Village to Victoria

Victoria Village continued to grow. In 1910 "Village" was officially dropped from the town's name and it was simply Victoria. In 1971, Victoria was incorporated as a municipality and the people elected their first municipal government.

Why was the settlement called Victoria? When people began moving to take up residence on Heart's content Road, a packet (coastal) boat, the Victoria, ran between St. John's and Carbonear. The residents who moved over the Ridge from Carbonear may have named the settlement in its honour. Also, in 1837, at about the same time Heart's Content Road was beginning, a young princess was handed the crown of the British Empire. Like countless other places around the world, Victoria may have been named in her honour. Today, it is universally agreed that our town was named in honour of the young Queen.

THE FAMILY

In families of years ago, the father was head. Children referred to him as “Father.” They even called him “sir.” It was the father’s responsibility to make sure his wife and family were provided for.

When our grandparents were young, families were much larger than they are today. Back then, most families had 8, 10, 12 children. Some families even had as many 18 or 20 children. As they were growing up, boys and girls had many chores to do. Most of the chores had to do with keeping the household running.

Men and Boys

The men and boys did most of the heavy, manual work. They got up early each morning to light the fire and have the kitchen warmed before the rest of the family came downstairs. They worked at cutting wood, hauling it home, chopping it and storing it for winter. They helped tend the animals each day; they made hay with the rest of the family; they hunted and trapped animals and game to supplement the family meals; and, they went berry picking with their families in the fall.

Some of the men and boys went to Labrador each spring to fish. They returned home in the fall. Then they left their homes again to find work in the lumber camps of Central Newfoundland, or in the mines at Bell Island, Buchans, or Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. No matter what hardship or deprivation the family endured, it was believed that “as long as a man could clothe and feed his family, and owned his own house he could not be called poor.”

Men and Boys

Girls and women were responsible to keep the house clean and tidy, clean and wax floors, and make beds. Thursdays and Saturdays were usually cleaning days. Every Monday they washed clothes. Because there were no washing machines, all clothes were washed by hand on a scrubbing board with sunlight soap they brought at the shop. If the family couldn’t afford to buy soap, they made their own. All water had to be “lugged from the well” and boiled on the stove before it was used. While washing and doing chores, the girls also had to prepare the meals and keep the fire going.

Every spring the whole house had to be cleaned top to bottom. This was spring-cleaning. The rooms were aired and scrubbed after being closed up for winter months. Mats were taken to the brook and scrubbed. They were left out in the air for several days to dry. Usually after scrubbing mats, the children jumped in the brook to cool off.

Every spring vegetables had to be planted in the garden. Most families had at least one garden, while some families had several gardens. Vegetables gardens were located behind the house or up on the Ridge, up Swansea or Church Road and down the Neck. All the members of the family had to help plant the seeds. People planted potatoes, turnips, cabbage, carrot and parsnip. Some even managed to grow peas, beans and pumpkins. As the plants grew, they had to be weeded and tended. Usually the mothers, girls and boys did this.

Saturday night was a time to get ready for Sunday. Everyone had to take turns getting a bath in the washtub, shoes had to be polished and Sunday clothes had to be prepared. The girls had to peel all the vegetables for Sunday dinner as this was not permitted on Sunday.

Besides running the house, cooking, and cleaning and looking after youngsters, the women and girls also helped lug the wood and water when necessary. They helped tend the animals, made hay in late summer and they also accompanied the whole family to the barrens when it was time to pick blueberries, partridgeberries and bakeapples. If the family was involved in the fishery, believe it or not, the women and girls helped the men and boys clean the fish in the stage and when it was time to cure it in the fall, they helped out on the flakes. They also knitted socks; mitts, scarves and caps to keep everyone warm during the cold winter days. They hooked mats from brim bags and old clothes to make the house more comfortable.

Women and girls of generations past endured long hours of working and doing chores to make life a little more comfortable for everyone in the family.

Family Structure

The structure of the families of years past was different than it is today. Sometimes a husband and wife would care for all their children and their parents as well. Some families had uncles and aunts living in the household, too. Several advantages of this structure were: there were more people to help with the chores; children grew up knowing their closest relatives; and, the family bonded together to meet its needs in the absence of social agencies.

Having adults around kept children in line. Any adult in the home could discipline a misbehaving child. This is very different from what we have today.

Food and Clothing

Meeting the needs of large families could be very difficult. Providing meals was almost a 24-hour-a-day job. Families grew their own vegetables, raised their animals and generally went to the shop to buy things like flour, molasses, sugar and tea (stuff they could not make themselves).

Clothing was provided through hand-me –downs. New clothes were purchased once or twice a year – usually at Christmas and in the spring. Children taking part in concerts usually got new clothes. Women and girls learned how to sew and make clothing for everyone in the family. People who had no formal education were known for their ability to cut pieces of material, sew them together in the right size without using a pattern. It was all done by sight. If the family owned a sewing machine, clothing could be made and mended a little easier. Otherwise, all sewing was done by hand. Everyone needed clothing and there was no other way to do it, as most people could not afford to buy clothes from the shop.

Some clothing, especially coats and jackets, could be “turned” to make them like new. Turning a coat meant taking it apart and sewing it back together again with all the pieces turned inside out. This made the coat look new on the outside.

During the depression many families were destitute and times were difficult. Families, which were able to grow their own vegetables and raise a few animals, were better off than those who didn’t. Many people tried to exist on the government dole of 6¢ a day per person. To qualify for the dole, a policeman or some other official had to visit the house to make sure the family was as poor as they claimed. When it was necessary to get the dole, the family did not get any money. Instead they were issued dole notes. They took these dole notes to the shop and they were given foodstuffs like brown flour, sugar, molasses and tea. It wasn’t very much but it helped the family survive. Many people tried to make it on their own and they considered going on the dole a last resort.

Many people in Victoria learned to depend on each other when they really needed something. They learned to barter. For example, someone would trade a dozen or two trout for a piece of fat pork; or someone would barter a gallon of partridgeberries for some sugar to boil a bit of jam.

It was also during the depression that barrels of clothing were sent to Victoria from the U.S. The American government sent barrels of clothing to church groups and to the Lodge. These barrels went through customs in Carbonear and when it arrived at the Church Hall or the Lodge, it was put in bags and done up in bundles and given to people according to their needs. Large families received more than small families. This helped alleviate some of the hardships people were enduring.

During this time, Aunt Nell Larkham composed a song about the clothing distribution. It was called “ The Clothes Song.” While the exact date of the song’s composition is unknown, many people in Victoria memorized it. Aunt Nell may even have performed it herself at a concert one time.

THE CLOTHES SONG

It was a fine day when the clothes it did come.
And away to the College all people did run
The Ladies Benevolent they rolled up their sleeves
Saying we’ll give the cuttings to those on relief

There was Aunt Maggie Penney the chief of the aid.
She packed up a bundle of already made
She packed up her bundle and home she did come
With a nice little parcel for poor cripple Tom.

There was Aunt Annie Taylor the head of the mob
She chased for poor Rachel an old horse's rug.
She'll go to the church to sing and to pray
Saying I'm going higher, yes, higher some day

I would like to see Annie all climbing the top
And the wind from the westward blowing out her old frock
And Charlie behind her with his glasses so bright
Saying give this good dress stuff to Aunt Martha White

Aunt Jessie Penney from salmon Cove Road
She came up to the Village to pick up her load
She packed up her load and they sent her away
And it looked on her back like a quilt full of hay

And when she got down to the foot of the grove
She hollered and shouted and called out to Mosey
Saying Mosey, oh Mosey, aren't you glad I am come
With this lovely bundle for you and poor Tom

I didn't get the raincoat but I got just as good
I got a fine ear's cap to wear in the woods
O, Mosey, O, Mosey, do you think I did right
There was eight reels of cotton I put out of sight

Now big Neddy Penney sure he's not to sleep
With ten pairs of socks for to wear on his feet
He'll turn around and tell us he's got nothing at all
Besides a new raincoat and a new mack-an-hall

Sure Reuben came out and he sang like a lark
Saying put my name down I am poor Reuben Clarke
I want to get something in the bale
To distinguish my name it is Reuben's Pig Tail

Mr. Jolliffe is a strange man with not much to say
He stands up and watches them stowing it away
He stands up and watches and knows it's not right
Just one single garment for poor Martha White

Uncle Elihu says boys now that don't look well
There's Jack Lambert with his knees out and he rings the bell
We'll have to get busy do better than that
Here's a parcel for him one for Hoit and young Jack

Uncle Elihu says now I'm sure it's not right
Only one single item for poor Rachel White
Jimmy Cole bawls out put Rachel to rest
Til I gets my two bundles carried home to Aunt Jess

There's Aunt Fanny Pie she's as cute as a rat
She tore up the sweaters and put in a mat
No matter what you gives her it will never leak out
She'll say she got it out the Harbour for trout

HOUSES

Years ago, houses were mostly two-story structures with the living quarters downstairs and the sleeping quarters upstairs. On the ground floor there was usually a back porch, a kitchen, the parlour or the living room, and a pantry. Upstairs there were only bedrooms.

Porch

The back porch, called the porch, was used to enter and leave the house. Every house had a front door, but it was rarely used. In the porch you'd find the wood box, water buckets or water barrel, and hooks or nails in the wall to hang your coats and jackets.

Kitchen

The Kitchen was the most used room in the house. Most of the family's activities took place since it was the only room in the house that had heat. The front room was rarely heated. All the cooking and baking was done in the kitchen. The children did their homework by the light of the kerosene lamp. If company arrived, the kitchen is where they would sit and gossip and discuss the daily affairs of life.

A second wood box might be found in the kitchen, along with a day bed or small couch, table and chairs, and some cupboards or a sideboard or a dresser. Some houses had a sink for draining water but there was no running water in most houses.

Parlour

The parlour, or sitting room, was located on the ground floor towards the front of the house. That is why it is called the front room. The front room was rarely used by the family. The door to the front room was kept closed and nobody would go in there. Children loved to sneak into the front room when no one was looking. The front room was used to wake the dead, or to entertain important visitors like the priest, minister, or pastor. This room usually had a chesterfield, end tables and maybe a coffee table and a few stuffed or hard-backed chairs. A large hooked mat would be in the middle of the room with canvas covering the rest of the floor. End tables sometimes adorned the room. There could be finely made furniture or hand-carved tables, or just tables made of orange crates or biscuit boxes covered with a cloth skirt. Pictures and photographs were hung on the walls. If the family was lucky enough to own a pump organ, it would be found in the front room.

Back Pantry

The back pantry was a room set aside from the regular rooms. It was usually located off the kitchen or the back porch. It was used as a storage area because there was not a lot of cupboards in the kitchen and there was no fridge or deep freeze to keep these things.

Groceries, flour, crates of biscuits, dried fruits, and molasses, jars of sugar, and meats could be stored in the pantry. Pots, pans, boilers, and iron boilers could be stored there, too.

Upstairs

Upstairs in each of the bedrooms, there was a bed, a dresser, maybe a washstand, and hooks for hanging clothes. Because there was no indoor plumbing, a pot was kept under the bed. It was used at night so people would not have to go outside to use the outdoor toilet. Bedrooms did not usually have clothes closets.

Heat, Light, Water

The house did not have electricity. Kerosene lamps usually provided light. A reflector placed behind the lamp produced more light. Sometimes candles were used, too.

Houses had no running water. People had to lug water from the well out in the garden. They tried to conserve as much water as possible. This way they would not have to carry much water from the well. Wash days and bath days required lots of water and most boys and girls had to carry many buckets of water before the day was over.

Heat for the house came from the wood stove in the kitchen. During cold nights it wasn't very comfortable going to bed. Both the room and the bed would be cold. To make it a little more comfortable, a beach rock, a brick, or a junk of wood would be placed in the oven and when it was warm it would be tucked under the bedclothes. It made the bed nice and warm.

Getting out of bed in the morning was not very comfortable, either. The room would be freezing cold and you could see your breath every time you breathed. Even the water in the kettle on the kitchen stove would be frozen.

When people went to bed, they tried to keep warm by cuddling into brothers or sisters with whom they shared the bed. Extra quilts were placed on the bed, too. With such a big family, no one could have a bed all by himself. Sometimes mats were taken off the floor and placed on top of the quilts for extra warmth. Some people woke in the morning to find snow on the bedclothes. It had blown in through the cracks in the walls and the window frames.

Many children would crawl out of the bed and run to the window. They would have to make a little peephole in the frost to see what the weather was like outside. Then they grabbed their clothes and ran downstairs to get dressed by the stove. It was much nicer going to be and getting up during the summer.

SCHOOL

All the boys and girls went to school. Victoria got its first school in 1864 when Mrs. Sarah Powell opened a school in her home. Her house might have been located in the vicinity of Powell's Brook and the Main Road. The following year, 1865, the community built its first one-room school.

As more people came to live in Victoria, and as more children were born, more schools were needed. A second school was opened in 1901. Later in 1909, the Church of England opened a one-room school for all grades. It was located where Victoria Lion's Community Center is now. In 1912, a two-room school was constructed on Church Road. This school was later renovated and expanded. It was known as the College Hall. This name was changed to H. Strong Elementary. It burned to the ground in 1974.

A school was opened on the Neck Road for children living down the Neck. It was known as the United School. After it closed, the building was renovated and it is still used as a house.

Children from all parts of Victoria walked to school, as there were no school buses. Some came by horse and cart in the warm months and by horse and slide in the winter. But most just walked.

When children went to school, they were all seated on wooden or iron benches in one room. One teacher taught all subjects in all grades. Everyone thought it was grand when a two-room school opened.

Lessons were written on a slate with a chalk pencil. After the teacher checked the lesson, the slate was cleaned with a rag dipped in water. Everyone was supposed to bring his own water, but sometimes people forgot or they used up their water. Then they used to spit on their slate and dry it in their sleeves. I wonder what the teacher would do if she caught them doing this?

In the higher grades, students wrote their lessons with ink in a scribbler. Everyone liked to use scribblers with a pretty picture on the front. The pens used were not ballpoint pens like we use today. They were fountain pens. The pen had to be dipped in ink before you could write with it. The ink was kept in a bottle on the desk. Desks usually had a small hole in the top where the inkbottle was kept. Boys loved to sit behind girls so they could dip the girls' pigtails and ponytails into their inkbottles!

For books, children learned how to read and write, how to do sums, and they learned geography, history and spelling. They memorized most of their lessons. Friday afternoons were the time for a spelling bee. Most people liked spelling bees, as it was a change from the usual classroom routine.

At Christmas, there was a concert children were given recitations and parts in plays. They memorized their parts and just about everyone in town came the night of the

concert to see them perform. Most boys and girls got new clothes because they were taking part in the concert.

In the school, heat came from a potbelly stove. The stove was usually located in the middle of the room. Every boy and girl had to bring splits or a junk of wood to school each morning. This wood was burned during during the day to keep the school warm. Some of the boys would go to school without their junk of wood. They would get sent home to get it. Maybe they wanted time off from school!!

The school was comfortable during warm days, but it could be very cold during the winter. Children sitting close to the stove would be warm but those sitting by windows or down in the back of the room would be very cold from the drafts coming in. Some people used to wear their coats and mitts to keep warm. It was not easy doing your lessons with your coat and mitts on.

On May 24, the school went on a picnic. At the United School on Church Road, students would go to school at the regular time. After doing their lessons for a while, the teachers would line them up and march them up to the Big Rattles by the brook for a picnic. They would spend most of the day up there playing games. The teachers would boil the kettle and they would have a lunch before coming home.

During the days of commission of Government, all school children got cocoa malt for recess. Coco malt is a drink something like hot chocolate. At recess time, recess time the teacher would boil the kettle and each student would line up to get their coco malt. Coco malt had vitamins and minerals added. It was given to children free of charge to make sure they were getting something nutritious to eat during the day. During the Depression many children in Newfoundland didn't have nutritious food and as a result they got diseases like rickets and beriberi. Coco malt would help prevent them from getting these diseases. Besides coco malt, children were also given bottles of cod oil to take home. Cod oil contains vitamins and it, too, was given free of charge. Many children did not like the taste of cod oil and some of the m threw it out in the river on their way.

In 1958, the first Pentecostal School was opened. It was used for almost 30 years. In 1987, a new Pentecostal School was opened further down the Neck. Persalvic High School was opened in 1966. Persalvic Elementary was built after H. Strong Elementary burned. It opened in 1975.

CHURCHES

Church was important in the lives of the citizens of Victoria many years ago. Many social activities centred around the church. Just about everyone went to church on Sunday. There was catechism at 10 o'clock, a service at 11 o'clock, on Sunday School at 3 o'clock and an evening service at 7 o'clock.

For the morning service, the father would usually go with the children. Mothers stayed home to cook the Sunday dinner. If a grandmother or older lady lived with the family, she usually cooked dinner and the mother went to church.

Both adults and children attended Sunday School. After Sunday School, adults either went visiting or had a nap, while the children went for a walk. Light housework and tending to the animals was the only work that could be done on Sunday. It was the Sabbath and work was frowned upon. Everyone enjoyed a day of rest from all the arduous work performed during the week.

Sunday supper was leftovers from dinner or salads and cold meats. Jelly and custard or blanc mange was served for dessert. Dessert was not usually served with the meals during the week – unless it was a slice of ‘lassy bread or jam bread.

Some churches had family pews. For an annual contribution to support the church, a family was given their pew. Smaller families had less seats than larger families. Anyone who attended church for a full year was given a certificate in recognition of their faithfulness.

To keep the church warm, families contributed the wood and splits needed to keep the fire burning in the stove. The women of the church got together every once in a while and gave it a thorough cleaning. Volunteers from the congregation acted as ushers and took up the collection. Sometimes when there was no minister, someone from the congregation would lead the service. People were willing to help out whenever there was a need or something had to be done.

When it came time to build a new church, the men would get together and go into the woods and cut the wood. They would volunteer to saw it, and then they would give free labor to build the church.

Church was very reverent. Children were expected to sit very quietly with their parents in their seats. Turning around in the seat, whispering, talking, and moving around the building were all frowned upon.

Every summer the Sunday School would have picnic. This was usually held on the church grounds or down the track. The Sunday School picnic was an important event in peoples’ lives. For one day, it gave them a chance to get away from all the chores that had to be done. It gave them a chance to get together with their friends and neighbors and have some fun. Summertime was when the people worked the hardest and they really enjoyed the Sunday School picnic.

At the picnic everyone participated in the races and games. Candy would be thrown in the air and scattered all over the ground for the children to run after and pick up. Swings were erected for the children. People who had cars gave rides to the children. They took them all the way to Carbonear and back. What a treat!!

Some churches had a garden party. This was also held during the warm days of summer. People went to the garden party and paid a few cents to take part in the activities. This way they helped raise money needed to run their church for the coming year. It gave people a chance to get away from their everyday routine and have some fun.

At one time, people in Victoria belonged to seven different religious denominations. Some of the religions had enough adherents to build their own church.

The first churches were built in 1884 by the Wesleyans. It seems as though most people residing in Victoria Village were mostly of the Wesleyan faith as they built, not one, but two churches that year. In 1897 the first Methodist Church was built and opened for religious services. In 1901, it blew down in a gale of wind but the congregation rebuilt. Their new building was opened in 1902. By 1913, a manse was built for the minister. With the formation of the United Church of Canada in 1925, the Methodist Church became part of the United Church.

During this tenure, Rev. Johnson discussed the idea of erecting a new building to serve the congregation, and work started on a new building. The cornerstone was laid on August 23, 1961 and the building was dedicated "To the glory of God" on Sunday, April 15, 1962. This is the present building used by the United Church congregation in Victoria.

The Pentecostal message came to Victoria during the early 1920s and in 1924 the first Pentecostal Tabernacle was erected. A new Pentecostal church was built and opened for services in 1946. On June 18, 1967, the present Bethel Pentecostal Church was dedicated.

Pastor Eugene Vaters, a native of Victoria, was a co-founder of the Pentecostal Assemblies of Newfoundland. He later became General Superintendent of the PAON, a position he held for many years.

In 1931 there were two Pentecostal churches in Victoria. Some members quarrelled and formed their own church in 1931. In 1933, however, they reconciled and were reunited. There was also a Church of England here at one time. This church was located in the area of the Lion's Den. Possibly due to a declining congregation, this building was either torn down or sold.

COMMUNITY GROUPS

Before the turn of the century, all activities within the community were associated with the church. People participated in the church services, Sunday school, picnics, and garden parties. There were church organizations for women, such as the Ladies Aid Society. Churches sometimes sponsored activities and groups for young people.

In 1902, the Loyal Orange Lodge No. 80 (LOL) was established in Victoria. They erected their building in 1903. The LOL provided the men an opportunity for social interaction. The brass band and the Orangemen's parades on New Year's Day, May 24, and on Orangemen's Day in July, gave the people of the town another opportunity to meet and have fun. The LOL also had concerts and "times" for the whole community. The concerts were organized by Uncle Sammy Dean and became known as "Sammy Dean's Concerts". Apparently he was an excellent organizer and could put off quite a concert. The Orangemen also sponsored a picnic in the summertime. Shortly after the formation of the LOL, the Orange Young Britons was established for the youth of Victoria. The Orange Lodge was practically the first social organization in Victoria that was not associated with a particular church.

In later years, other groups were organized. The Victoria Recreation Commission was begun in 1972; the next year the Victoria Lion's Club was established. In 1974, the Victoria Lioness Club was formed. With the coming of the Victoria Volunteer Fire Department, a Ladies' Auxiliary was formed.

Church organizations are still strong and vibrant and give people a chance for social interaction and community service. But, today, there are also other organizations for people to join and perform community services.

EMPLOYMENT

From the 1830s when Victoria was first settled, many of its residents were involved with the fishery. Some people fished in the small coves and bays around Carbonear. Others became floaters and livyers on the Labrador. Others stayed at home and became farmers.

With the opening of the iron ore mines on Bell Island in the 1890s, many men from Victoria crossed the bay to work underground. Others chose to mine the coal on Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. Still later, men from Victoria moved to Buchans to work in the mines.

Sometimes when the men left to go to work, they would take their wives and families with them. But, more often than not, the men left home and the family remained behind. The wife and children had to look after everything without the aid of "man around the house".

In 1935, during the height of the Great Depression, 35 families from Victoria moved to Markland. The Commission of Government was running an experiment to see if farming in the Markland area was feasible. The experiment was not successful and most of the families from Victoria returned two years later.

In 1941 the American Navy began construction of a huge naval base at Argentia. Many people from Victoria found employment as carpenters and later as truck drivers, heavy equipment operators and cooks.

For a long time, it was felt that women should not go to work outside their home. Over time, however, women became postmistresses, clerks, domestics, and teachers. The first schoolteacher in Victoria was a woman. It became very popular for young girls to go into “service”. They would be paid a few dollars a month for such tasks as cooking, cleaning, dusting, and baking. Young girls aged 12 and 13 often went into service.

In 1878, the business firm of George Powell & Sons was formed. In 1909, the firm R & W Clarke was begun. These businesses grew and enlarged over the years. They offered employment and provided many services to the residents of Victoria.

Over time, more shops and stores were opened and services provided. Archibald’s Farms, Swansea Road, provided many jobs for both men and women for years.

Children went to school until they were old enough to go to work. Young people, as young as 12 years old, went to work. Teens quit school to help out in the fishery, to help out in the vegetable garden and to help out with other jobs around the house. Boys usually accompanied their fathers to the mines and to the lumber woods. Every cent was needed to provide for the needs of the family.

ENTERTAINMENT

Despite the hardship and privation the people endured, they still had time to get together and meet with friends and relax. Of all the days of the week, Sunday was a day of rest and no work was done.

Christmas

Christmas was a special time of year. It came during the long, cold days and nights of winter. Not many chores had to be done that time of year, so the people had time to enjoy themselves.

Christmas was celebrated as a religious holiday. It was kept for 12 days. Preparations were made several weeks before Christmas Day. The women and girls made cakes and put them in the pantry until they were needed. The house had to be cleaned and tidied. When it became popular to have a Christmas tree in the home, the boys would go to the woods, chop down a fir or spruce tree and bring it home. It wasn’t put up and decorated until Christmas Eve. Apples, oranges, strings of popcorn, rose buds, and some paper decorations were used to make it look pretty. Coloured lights were not used as most people did not have electricity. Only the “rich” people had lights on their trees.

Children hung their stockings. They were filled with apples, oranges, maybe a few grapes, some candy and perhaps a little toy or two. Fruit was expensive and children did not have it very often during the year. When they got fruit in their stockings, they were especially happy. For presents, they got a scribbler with a pencil, a hair bow, maybe a hand-knit pair of mitts or socks.

The best part of Christmas was the jannying and the concerts.

Each school would have a Christmas concert. Boys and girls would slick back their hair, put on their best clothes and go to the schoolhouse to “say their part”. Everyone clapped for them whether they said their lines correctly or not. Everyone had a good time. Sometimes they got presents at the concert, too. Usually it was a scribbler or a pencil or a small toy.

Some of the church groups or the Lodge would have a time. Everyone looked forward to a time. It was a chance to meet friends, have a nice meal, enjoy a concert and have a good laugh with some nice, clean fun.

Everyone dressed up and went jannying at Christmas. By dressing up in old clothes, bed sheets, old curtains, and things like that, people went from house to house acting silly and foolish. They changed their voices, sang songs, played the spoons and accordion and frolicked and danced. When they knocked on a person’s door, they had to ask, “Any mummings ‘lowed in?” You had to disguise your voice so people would not know you. They were to guess who you were. If you had dirty or muddy boots you weren’t allowed in.

Once all the jannies were in the kitchen, the people of the house were supposed to guess who they were. If they guessed correctly, the janny had to reveal his face.

Once everyone was recognized, the mother of the house got a glass of syrup and a piece of Christmas cake or cookies for all the jannies. Some jannies got homemade blueberry or dogberry wine as a treat. After an hour or so, the jannies would go to another house. This way they could visit several houses in a night.

Mummings from Victoria often walked to Freshwater, Flatrock and Blow-Me-Down for a time of jannying.

Christmas dinner was held at home or sometimes with relatives. Vegetables (potatoes, cabbage, turnip) were cooked. There was no turkey. In Newfoundland, turkey became popular for Christmas dinner during the second World War, when American Servicemen brought the tradition from the United States. Before that, a piece of fresh meat, a piece of goat meat, or a few birds shot by the men of the house would be served.

For the twelve days of Christmas, the tree would be up in the front room. When it was time to take it down, all the decorations would be removed – except one apple. One apple would be left hanging on the tree. All the children would be given a chance to bite the apple. That wasn’t so easy for it would be hanging on a string. Some people even got sore lips from trying so hard. Whoever could bite the apple could have it. The tree would then be taken down, taken out to the wood-horse, sawed up into junks, and burned as firewood.

Christmas was a very special time of year and many people have many happy memories of precious moments spent with their families many years ago.

Summer

In the summertime there were picnics to go on. Up the track, across the barrens, down the track, and up the brook. Picnics were fun no matter where they were held. During the warm days of summer, boys and girls liked to go swimming and playing in the water. Powell's Brook, Big Rattles, Pug Hole, and the Goat's Head – all were favorite spots to spend an afternoon with friends.

Children did not wear bathing suits back then. Girls wore an old dress and boys wore an old pair of pants, which they sometimes cut off as bathing suits. It was necessary for one or two people to watch everyone's clothes when they went swimming. What would happen was that people went to the swimming holes and changed their clothes. They left their good clothes in the bushes so they could change when they were finished swimming. If they didn't watch their clothes, someone might come along and hide them away or throw them in the brook. So, it was necessary for someone to watch them.

MEDICAL CARE

When people got sick, they couldn't go to the hospital. The nearest hospital was the old General Hospital in St. John's. If anyone had to go there, they had to take the train. This meant they would be away from family and friends.

Doctors

Dr. A.D. Boyle had a surgery(clinic) at Carbonear at the turn of the century. In 1901, a 24-year old assistant came to work with him. Many people still remember this young man as Dr. Stanford.

George Leonard Stanford was born November 17, 1877. He came to Carbonear as a medical assistant. In 1907, he went to England to complete his post-doctoral medical studies. The next year, Stanford returned from England and opened his own surgery. He served all the communities from Carbonear to Perry's Cove.

Dr. Stanford's surgery was opened on Water Street, Carbonear. He spent three hours of each day seeing patients in his surgery. Then he would make house calls. This was a noble feat as he had to travel by horse and cart or horse and slide. Eventually he purchased a car that he could only use in the summertime as the roads were not plowed during the winter.

Dr. George Stanford continued his medical practice in Carbonear until his death August 16, 1948. He was interred at a cemetery in Carbonear. After his death, the medical needs of Victoria were served by Dr. Kennedy. Dr. Kennedy still resides in St. John's.

One person remembers how Dr. Stanford visited her daughter who was sick with asthma. She said, “The doctor would drive in the road with no lights on because all the people would come looking for him. He wouldn’t turn on the lights until he saw my girl first because she was so sick.” Sometimes in an emergency, if the doctor was not available in Carbonear, a doctor would come from Harbour Grace or Heart’s Content.

The doctor was called for serious medical cases. If people needed medical attention that was not serious, they came up with their own remedies and medicines.

For a cold or flu, the mother or grandmother would boil molasses mixed with kerosene. Friar’s Balsam was bought at the store. It was mixed with hot water, placed in a pan, and the steam inhaled. Of course, you would put a cloth over your head and around the pan so you would get most of the steam as it rose from the hot water.

Cuts would be treated with chewing tobacco, Mercurochrome or iodine. Iodine was painful, but it disinfected the cut. Deep cut were treated, not with stitches, but with frankum. Frankum would be picked off trees, chewed, and applied to the cut. Turpentine from trees could be boiled and placed on the cut. Both frankum and turpentine are very sticky. Before applying, the skin along the cut would be drawn together and the frankum applied. It would keep the skin together, help prevent bleeding, and when the cut healed there was virtually an invisible scar.

Fishhooks, cod jiggers, and pieces of glass sometimes got stuck in people’s fingers and hands. A piece of sewing cotton and a sterilized needle was used to stitch up the wound. No anesthetic was used. Now that hurt! One 12-year old girl drove a piece of glass into her finger while she was in service. The doctor was called. He lanced it without anesthetic while the little girl watched.

Mid-Wife

Babies were born at home. Doctors were called only for emergencies. When a woman “got sick” (went into labor), the mid-wife was sent for. Mid-wives were women in the community who were experienced at birthing babies. They were affectionately called “granny” by the people in the community. Most mid-wives learned mid-wifery from an older, experienced mid-wife. In this way, necessary knowledge and skills could be passed on from one generation to the next.

The mid-wife would come and any men around would be driven out of the house. They usually went into the woods for the rest of the day. With the mid-wife in attendance, the baby would be born. After the mother’s needs were met, the granny would take the new-born down to the kitchen or into another warm room and dress it.

The new mother had to stay in bed for nine days after the birth of her child. For each of these nine days, the mid-wife would visit both her and the baby. She would prepare the meals for the mother and she would see to all the baby’s needs. The baby needed to be bathed, dressed, and umbilical cord had to be carefully tended. They used a “belly band” to prevent unnecessary chafing. Also, babies were usually tightly bound with a blanket

or sheet. They did not do much kicking during their first days. No one is sure why this was necessary, but most people speculate that it may have had something to do with the prevention of certain diseases prevalent then such as rickets. Binding the baby tightly may have been seen as a form of prevention of the disease.

In payment for her service, the mother paid the mid-wife a fee of \$5.00. Some women could not pay the fee right away, but most could not. For weeks, even months afterwards, the mother saved her pennies, nickels and dimes until she had the full \$5.00. The mid-wife was not paid by instalment nor was she paid in kind. She was given the full \$5.00 as soon as the last penny was saved.

Over the years, Victoria has had some well-known mid-wives. Aunt Phoebe Rose, Aunt Betsy Ann Clarke, Aunt Sophie Clarke, Aunt Alice Gear, Aunt Lou Burke, Aunt Lottie Parsons, Aunt Lizzie Snooks and Aunt Lil Cole were all mid-wives.

Life in the Past

Although life was difficult and most people lacked material wealth, the people we interviewed could tell of many happy memories of a simpler life style in the early days of Victoria.