

By Nancy Whitaker

### LIFE AS IT WAS

In last week's Penny, we told of some of the food the early settlers cooked and how they lived before this country was settled. We also spoke of some of the ways they "made due" with various items.

The early pioneers were a hardy bunch, but they too, succumbed to disease and injuries. They did not know what germs were, so sometimes, they made up crazy ways to prevent getting sick.

They were also creative and innovative in finding so called "cures" for ailments. Today they are referred to as superstitions. My family had a bunch and I still practice some of them.

To cure the chicken pox, the early settlers suggested the following: get under the chicken roost and scare the chickens away; let a chicken fly over the victim's head before breakfast; go to a hog barn and lie down, roll over three times, get up, then walk backwards 33 steps. If anyone has tried any of the above remedies, let me know.

Another backwoods cure was for the hiccoughs. We all know of ways to try and get over a case of hiccoughs. The early settlers had their own ways also which included: think of a fox with no tail, take nine swallows of water and step back nine steps, look real hard into the middle of a glass and another one is to think of your lover and if he loves you the hiccoughs will go away.

The pioneers were a strong bunch, however, they had manners, especially when it came to courting. If a young man (or old man) saw someone he fancied, he would have a friend deliver her a note. The note was called a "compliment." The note might say, "Dear Miss Gray, May I have the pleasure of your company at the pie supper on Sunday night?"

He would fold the note and have his friend deliver it. The friend would wait for the young ladies response and deliver it back to his friend.

If Miss Gray agreed to go out with the young man, he would pick her up in a carriage with adult chaperones, of course.

A lot of times the girl would say “no” because she did not have any shoes or suitable clothes to wear on a date.

City courtship was a little different. Instead of notes they had their friend take the girl flowers. These bouquets had different meanings for the different flowers and were known as “tussie mussies.”

Fruit was also used to convey messages. Sending an orange meant you were happy; a cherry meant “good job” a grape means you were happy at home and if you sent someone a strawberry it meant, “you are delicious.”

Of course, pioneer women had a few beauty tips, too. They believed, “If you want to be pretty, eat cornfield peas (wonder what those are?) or 100 chicken gizzards.” (All at one time?).

They also believed that in order to prevent ugliness, do not drink coffee or let the moon shine on your uncovered face. (I must really be ugly because there is no way I could eat 100 gizzards, I used to drink coffee in my baby bottle, and I love the moonlight.)

The pioneer child also had their chores to do. They had to haul water, tend the fire, feed the chickens, milk cows, churn butter, help tend the garden and hunt and fish.

Sometimes the settlers would combine work and a party in the form of a quilting bee, taffy pulls,

bean stringing and corn shucking. Even though this was work, it still sounds like they had fun. It is told that if a boy found a red ear of corn, he could kiss any gal in the room.

Today, we have technology affecting every aspect of our life. We do not have events such as taffy pulling, corn shucking and barn raisings. It was good that the pioneers knew how to help each other out and make it a party at the same time.

Would I want to be a pioneer? I would like to observe their lifestyle for a day, but I am sure that would be enough for me. I am scared of chickens, the cows would probably kick and I don't think I could ever kill, clean and cook a critter.

Would you like to go back to the early days and live like our ancestors did? Have you ever been to a taffy pull, a barn raising or a corn shucking party? Did anyone find a red ear of corn? Let me know and I'll give you a Penny for your Thoughts.