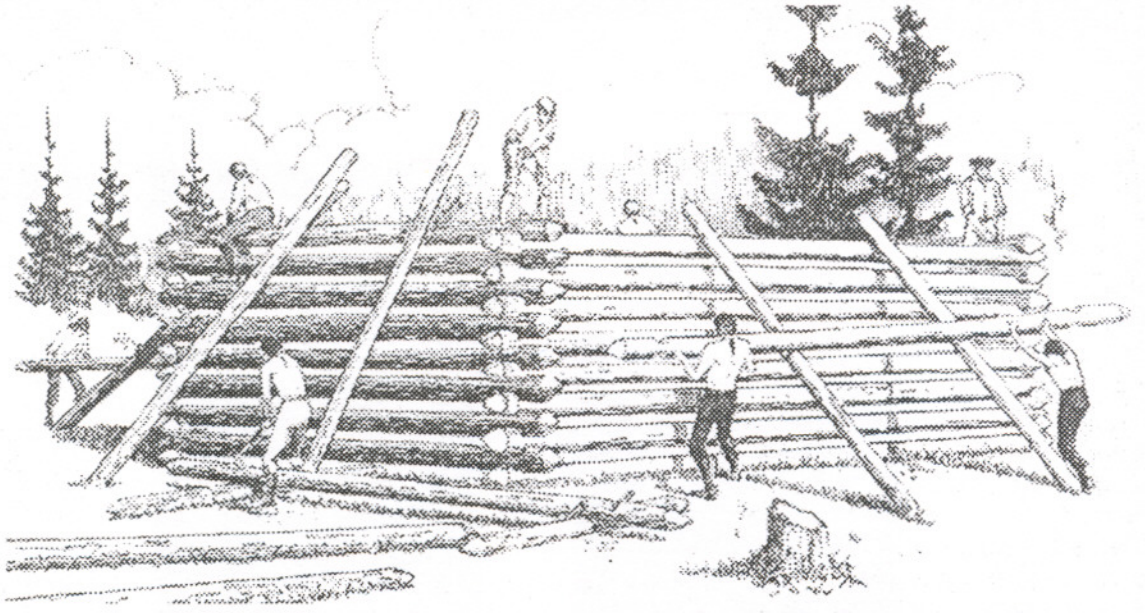
VIII HOME LIFE OF THE TIME



THE FIRST HOMES OF THE LOYALISTS

The British Army issued used tents to the newly arrived Loyalist refugees and these were their shelter until more permanent dwellings could be built. This was especially true for the New Brunswick Loyalists. Those who arrived after winter had set in had to endure the hardship of living in a tent for weeks and often for months. In order to avoid the arduous task of felling trees, the refugees often chose burned over areas, marshes, or interval lands for their homes.

Some of the group proceeded immediately to build themselves something more substantial than a tent to live in. One of these was Benjamin Ingraham, whose daughter Hannah, many years later, recalled the day they moved into their new house in New Brunswick.

> *"One morning we waked to find the snow lying deep on the ground all around us, and then father came walking through it and told us the house was ready and not to stop to light the fire then, and not mind the weather, but follow his tracks through the trees, for the trees were so many we soon lost sight of him going up the hill; it was snowing fast, and, oh, so cold. Father carried a chest and we all carried something and followed him up the hill through the trees.*
>
> *It was not long before we heard him pounding, and, oh, what a joy to see our gable end.*
>
> *There was no floor laid, no window, no chimney, no door, but we had a roof at last.*
>
> *A good fire was burning on the hearth, and mother had a big loaf of bread with us, and she boiled a kettle of water and put a good piece of butter in a pewter bowl, and we toasted our bread and all sat round the bowl to eat our breakfast that morning and mother said, "Thank God, we are no longer in dread of having shots fired through the house. This is the sweetest meal I have tasted for many a day."*

The Ingrahams soon had a door, a floor, a window, and a chimney and were as snug as they could have hoped for, under the circumstances. Others were less fortunate and were forced to live in their tents all winter.

The first homes were little more than rough sheds, no larger than 15 to 20 feet square. They were one-room structures whose only luxury was the four- or six-pane window glazed with pieces of seven-by-nine inch glass issued to most Loyalist families. The walls, generally eight feet high, were constructed of unsquared basswood logs crudely notched at the corners, the considerable gaps chinked with wood

chips and clay. The simple roofs were shingled with two-to-three-foot wide strips of basswood or elm bark laid on rafters of poles with enough of a slope from front to back to encourage most of the rain and melting snow to run off. Some builders took the trouble to make a crude wooden chimney lined with mud or clay, but many allowed the smoke to escape through an opening in the roof. When boards could not be sawed to make a door, a blanket might have to be a poor substitute. If a floor other than tramped earth existed, it would be of split logs, flat side up and cut as evenly as a hatchet would allow.

Some builders took an even more primitive approach to housing, opting to use living trees as the frame of the structure—one tree at each corner of a square cleared of underbrush—with bark roofs and walls of standing poles woven together with willow roots.

Needless to say, these early homes were meant to last only one or two years, for once a barn had been raised and a sufficient number of acres cleared for farming, the families returned to the task of housing and erected a more substantial residence, complete with foundation, stone chimney, plank floors and an upstairs loft that served as sleeping quarters. Although rough and seemingly fragile, the hardiness of the first dwellings was borne out by their continued use as chicken coops and pigsties, even as late as the turn of the 19 century.

THE LIVES OF WOMEN IN LOYALIST TIMES

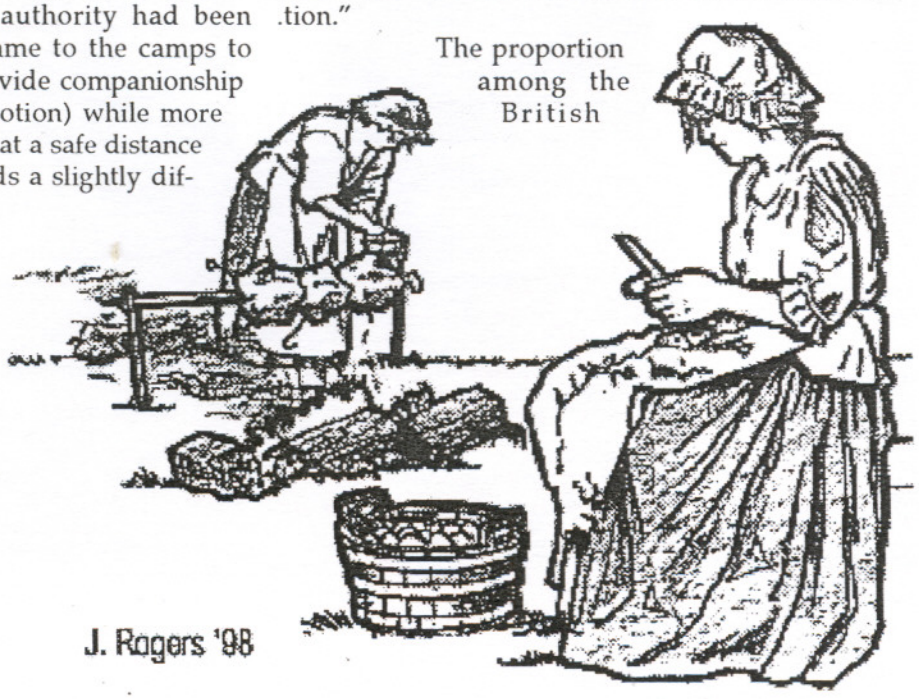
Based on part of a speech by Orlo Jones printed in The *Loyalist Gazette* June 1985

When one thinks of Loyalists and disbanded troops one tends to think of men, but in addition to married women who came with their husbands and children, a sizeable number of Loyalist women, eg. Sarah Palmer, Margaret Enman, and Sarah Bremble, came as widows with their children.

Loyalist women must have been a very special species; life was hard for women at best, but in wartime women played a very important but difficult role. It has been written that "There were women upon both sides of the conflict that followed the men into bloody battle lines and bitter winter weather." Some were drawn by love, others by hunger. At a time when hope was drained on the American side, and the imperial authority had been stopped on the other, they came to the camps to wash, to clean, to cook, to provide companionship (some in sin and some in devotion) while more comfortable citizens continued at a safe distance business as usual..." This sheds a slightly different light on the role of camp followers; we see they led very harsh lives during the Revolution, and had pathetically few or no material possessions.

The wives of the British troops and mercenaries were worse off. "There...was usually an allotted number of wives and alleged wives permitted to each British regiment by the military commanders, and transported overseas with these troops. No certainty prevailed as to the marital status of many, and the number of women so allotted was often exceeded by those subsequently gathered by the forces along the way and in garrison. Since these latter might not receive rations, such camp followers, picked up by detachments on the march or in encampment with the passing months, through the necessity of foraging, encumbered the army more than did those brought from overseas."

After the Battle of Ticonderoga, the Hessian General Griedrich Von Wurmb wrote from Newport, "...The fact is that this corps has more women and children than men, which causes considerable vexation."



troops was about one woman to every 4½ men while the mercenaries had one woman to every 15 men.

Women camp followers nursed their men. (It was another 70 years before Florence Nightingale started having nursing sisters to take care of the wounded.) These Revolutionary women were ordered to serve at so-called field hospitals as occasion might require although the overseas military mentality did not value a soldier's life It was said to be cheaper "to buy a recruit than to cure a soldier."

"Throughout the struggle, the companionate wives and others of the British soldiery cooked, washed, and mended for their men as best they could. They were a recognized and mayhap needed element of the camps as then constituted." Hannah Winthrop wrote to Mercy Warren in a letter dated 11 November, 1777, "...Last Thursday, a large number of British troops came softly through the Town (Cambridge) ... on Friday we heard the Hessians were to make a Procession in the rout...I never had the least Idea that the Creation produced such a sordid set of creatures in human Figure—poor, dirty, emaciated men, great numbers of women, who seemed to be the beasts of burden, having a bushel basket on their back, by which they were bent double, the contents seemed to be Pots and Kettles, various sorts of Furniture, children peeping thro gridirons and other utensils, some very young infants who were born on the road, the women with bare feet, cloathed in dirty rags, effluvia filled the air while they were passing, had they not been smoking all the time, I should have been apprehensive of being contaminated by them. After a noble looking advanced Guard, Gen J-- y B(urgoyn)e headed this terrible group on horseback."

Women helped make musket balls from their pewter dishes and melted their leaden statues to make pellets. They spun and wove cloth. carried supplies to the troops. They took over farm work, made bread and carried supplies to troops. They kept their homes and husbands' businesses intact. They made hospital supplies, ministered to the sick and wounded and brought comfort to prisoners.

Among the American militia and the Continental line there were "...far fewer camp wives or other women than with the enemy." W.H. Blumenthal, in the book *Women Camp Followers of the American Revolution*, has written that the reason the American troops were so ragged and unkempt in appearance was there were not enough women with them to do their washing and mending. It was an established tradition of that era that men-at-arms needed women-at-arms to fight and survive.

We can tend to glamorize the Loyalists and forget just how difficult life frequently was for them then. We read little of those who died of hunger and exposure or of the babies and children who perished for lack of nourishment and warmth. At first many of the Loyalists in the Maritimes used some of the deserted houses which had been abandoned at the time of the deportation of the Acadians and they farmed the land which had been cleared by the French. Later the Loyalists built their own homes, often of logs with the chinks filled with mud and moss, and heated them with a central fireplace. Some of the finer, larger frame homes built by Loyalists in areas such as Shelburne and Saint John were beautifully finished and heated luxuriously by a fireplace in each room. However, these homes were very cold by our standards and the amount of work preparing a winter's supply of wood was no small task! The fireplaces shed some warmth in their immediate proximity, but they belched smoke and fine ashes throughout the whole room. Live coals on the hearth and sparks ignited many a woman's long dress as she worked about the kitchen, or burned many a young child who came too close to the open fire.

Beds were cold—a straw or feather tick provided some insulation but children slept several to a bed or in bed with their parents not only because beds were scarce, but also to keep the children from freezing to death. Boards, stones, and, for the fortunate few, bed warmers were heated in the fire and placed in frigid beds to remove some of the chill. These, too, were a source of many accidental burns.

Hot water was scarce and precious because heating it was difficult. This meant that bathing and shampooing were infrequent. Perfume was used to cover the body odours which tended to form from lack of sanitation, as we know it.

All clothing had to be completely made by

hand: the affluent copied Parisienne styles and used brighter colours, while the poorer people were glad to have even the simplest garments. The working class used sober colours which did not show dirt and grime so quickly, since laundry facilities were practically non-existent. Often the style of dress depicted the trade of the wearer. Clothing was valuable and was carefully mended and patched and passed down as hand-me-downs. Sometimes we find reference to certain items of apparel in wills, where the testator left a cherished item to a special child or friend. Shoes and boots were very precious. Leather was scarce and all workmanship was done manually.

Many Loyalist women came to Eastern Canada feeling that the future could not possibly be any worse, or even as bad, as the experiences they had recently encountered. A widow, Sarah Palmer, for example, was one of the ten women in a party which came from Shelburne to settle around Bedeque Harbour. She brought her two children with her, one of whom was under ten years of age. Her son, Jonathan was apparently older than ten, and on 15 June, 1786, he was given a land grant of 200 acres.

Margaret Enman, widow of Loyalist Jeremiah Enman, fled to the Island of St. John with her small sons. Fortunately, she married James Laird, a Loyalist from Carolina, soon after she arrived. Laird readily accepted his already-made family.

Widow Baum/ Ballem came with her little son, Peter. Her husband had been killed in battle. About 1783 she married Nicholaus Henchell /Jenkins, who had two motherless children at the time.

Other remarkable women included Mrs. George Price, who, with her two children, accompanied her husband as he transported farm produce from St. John's Island to Mirimachi, N.B. They were there one October evening in 1825 when the awful Mirimachi fire broke out. They soon found they were trapped by the fire and to save their lives they had to spend the whole night almost immersed in the cold river. The parents held the two children up so they would not drown while George covered them with wet blankets for added protection. Mrs. Price died one and one-half months later from the combined effects of the fire and complications of childbirth.

Loyalist women were strong and determined. They had withstood many rigours and tests in the colonies during the Revolution, and on the long trek to their new homeland. Once they arrived, their struggles continued. It is amazing that many of them lived long lives, in many cases surviving their husbands.

Overcoming Hardships and Obstacles

Loyalist settlements developed in the wilderness, far from established colonies. Although many of the families had come from somewhat similar situations, they needed support to help them survive in the early years. This support came from three main sources: the native people who were already in the area, the British government, and each other.

Until June of 1786, the British government provided a few basic tools, and rations of food, clothing and seeds. Accounts mention the abundance of fish and game in the forest and streams. This was augmented by the food, shipped in barrels from Halifax. The amounts were based on a private soldier's daily ration and consisted of flour and pork, with small portions of beef, butter and salt. Clothing consisted of shoe soles, blankets and bolts of coarse woollen cloth and linen. Seed for spring wheat, peas, corn, and potatoes was also part of the government provisions. Travellers through the Loyalist settlements refer to the happiness and prosperity which they observed everywhere.

To finish the back-breaking or boring tasks which were a part of life for the Loyalists more easily and quickly, and to have fun at the same time, neighbours organized "frolics" to which everyone came. The men would work together to clear land or move rocks or build a barn or complete some other task which was impossible for one or two. The women would prepare the meals and the children would have a chance to play with friends who lived at a distance. Women also had frolics to make quilts or card wool or shell corn. In this way, families had a chance to visit with one another as they were working. Loyalist narratives make many references to neighbours helping each other in times of sickness, accident, and childbirth as well as attending gatherings for weddings, funerals, and church services. Thus the community provided support which made the difficulties and loneliness bearable.

CLOTHING OF A PIONEER WOMAN 1770-1790

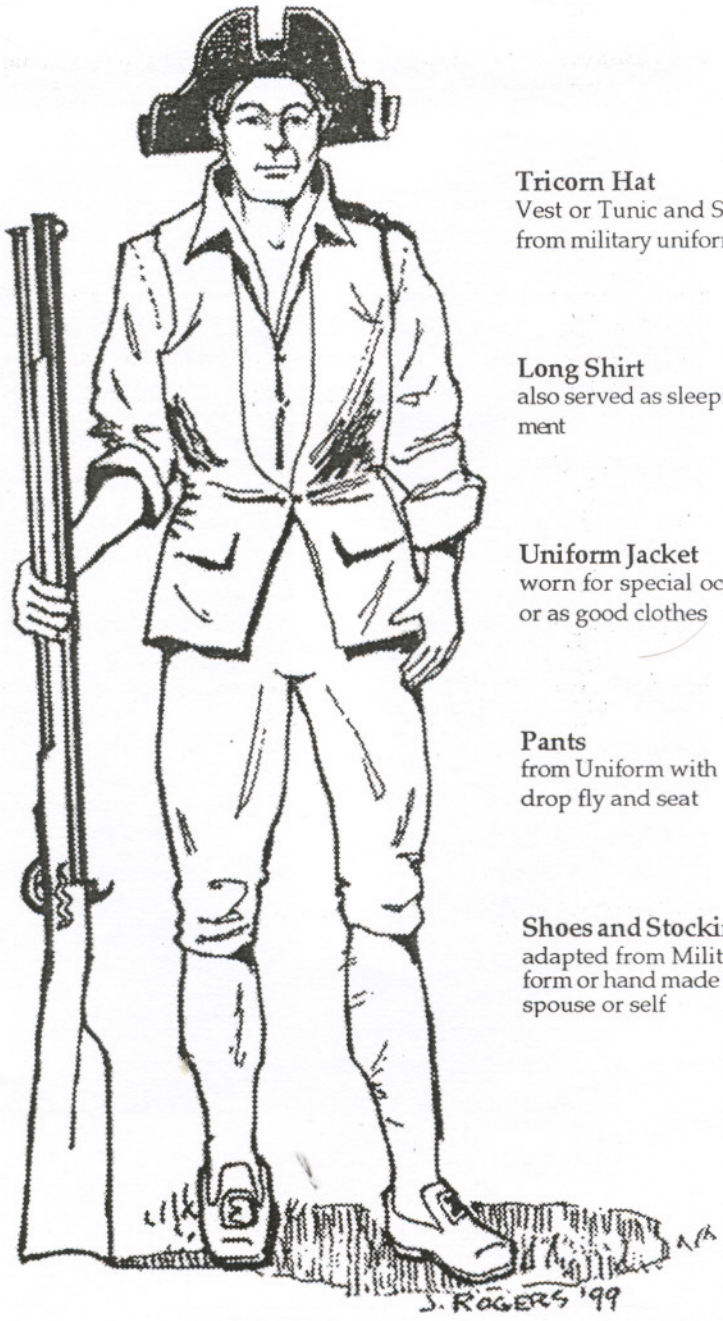
CLOTHING OF PIONEER CHILDREN

Boy
The boy's clothing was hand made by his mother and styled after the father's standard dress—only smaller.

Girl
The girl's clothing was also made by the mother with the girl's help and was styled after the mother's. It would be as she would wear as a adult.

Clothing was usually handed down from older children or from family to family.

CLOTHING OF A PIONEER MAN



Tricorn Hat
Vest or Tunic and Shirt
from military uniform

Long Shirt
also served as sleeping garment

Uniform Jacket
worn for special occasions
or as good clothes

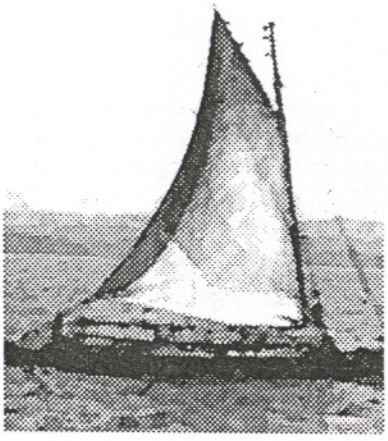
Pants
from Uniform with
drop fly and seat

Shoes and Stockings
adapted from Military Uniform or hand made by
spouse or self

TRANSPORTATION

Loyalists were greatly restricted in the choice of places to settle by the lack of roads and bridges. New-comers realized that they had to settle on or near river banks so that they had at least one way to move around.

CANOES and **ROWBOATS** were the most common types of boats used by the settlers. There were also **bateaux**—wall sided, flat-bottomed boats which the French introduced. A bateau ranged from 20 to 40 feet long and was sharp at both ends. Three to six tons of goods could be moved in this way.



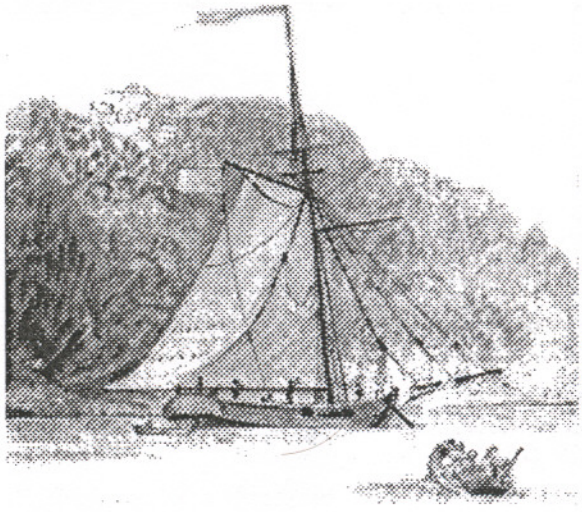
The bateau, a kind of flat bottomed skiff, was the main transportation along the St. Lawrence River. 40 ft and made of cedar or spruce , it could haul a cargo of several tons.

PIROGUES, or **DUGOUTS**, were made from large cedar logs. The boat-maker shaped an Indian canoe on the outside—then dug out the entire centre leaving the sides 1 to 1½ inches thick.

CATAMARANS were made by splitting 3 to 5 large logs in half and notching out both ends on the round side. These logs were placed round side down in the water and bound together. They were propelled by oars in deep water and a pole in shallow water. Sometimes a small sail was raised.

GONDOLAS or **SLOOPS** were used for carrying supplies and, by 1786, the schooner *The Four Sisters* was sailing regular trips from Fredericton to Woodstock.

A daily ferry service was established in 1784 running from Digby to what is now Saint John.



A Sloop, the common transport vessel of the time when The United Empire Loyalists fled the new United States. They came to the new colonies in ships of this type.

New Brunswick passed an act in 1786 providing for the construction of roads. The settlers along the road path were required to work on the roads for a certain number of days per year, but progress was slow. Tow paths along the river banks were cleared and improved and gradually became wide enough for teams of horses.

In winter, travel became difficult. Ice roads were used to carry goods to market but this could be dangerous when it thawed.

All three Maritime provinces were engaged in ship-building, not only for local use but also for sale abroad.

Loyalist Children's Games

Games

Since toys were scarce, Loyalist children had to amuse themselves with simple objects that were available around their houses or yards. Large families guaranteed an abundance of playmates but time free from work was limited. Sometimes work and play had to be combined and toys were made from materials left over from everyday tasks.

Toys

DOLLS were made from corn husks, and carved pieces of wood. Their clothes were made from scraps of material left over from dressmaking, or from worn-out clothing.

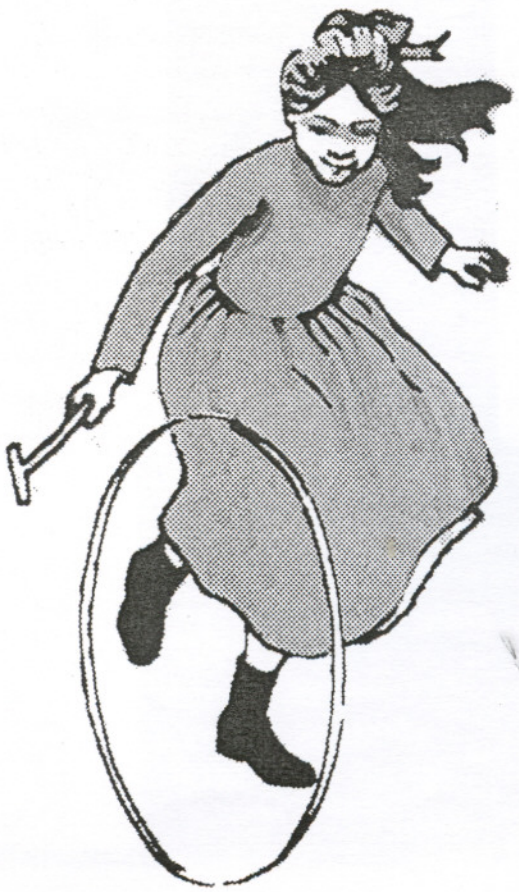
TOY ANIMALS AND WAGONS were also whittled from scraps of wood.

WOODEN PUZZLES could be manufactured from wood chips left after trees were felled. Chips often provided interesting shapes.

TOY BOATS were made from leaves, birch bark to imitate native canoes, and twigs bound together with thongs or willow withes to form rafts.

WHISTLES were made from poplar wood. The bark was carefully removed from a small 4 to 6 inch long piece of wood and a groove was cut from a V nick at the top to the opposite end. When the bark was replaced it was possible to make a whistling sound by blowing into the groove.

HOOPS were made from willow branches fastened into a circle. Children would run beside the hoop propelling it with a stick to see how far they could run before it fell over.



Outdoor Games

Loyalist children played many of the same games that modern children play. They jumped rope, skipped stones across water using the same techniques as if tossing a frisbee, played hopscotch, and tug-of- war. They also played tag, hide-and-seek, and leap-frog.

After a snowfall was also a good time to make snow angels or to play fox and goose. Children also imitated their fathers or older brothers who served in the militia by marching back and forth carrying sticks instead of guns.

Singing games, such as *Ring-Around-the Rosy*, whose words referred to the Great Plague of London in 1664-1665, *London Bridge*, whose words date back to the 11th century when troops of Norway 's King Olaf destroyed one of London's bridges while Britons were standing on it, and *Drop the Handkerchief* were popular among Loyalist children.