Prairie Clothes: Woman's World

By

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Prologue

Pioneers knew how to survive. In our time, we cannot know the nuances of prairie life, or fully appreciate the effort and time that our ancestors spent on the basic skills necessary to get through the day. For the most part, the work was exhausting and demanding. Fortunately, the power of community undergirded their survival, assuring each family of support in time of need.

The indelible frontier experience created a sense of equality and liberation from the constraints of bias and social etiquette. Pioneers valued each other. They measured a person's worth by the standard of honesty, skill, and the contribution made to the community.

The prairie experience changed the settlers. Eliza W. Farnham came to Illinois in 1836, stayed about five years, married, and returned to New York. In 1846, she fondly recalled the experience in her book, *Life in Prairie Land*. She explained how people were struck by the breath-taking beauty of the prairie—the grasses, the birds, springing flowers, and the motion of the wind through the expanse of land. And she foresaw, and was elevated by, a vision of the "glory and greatness" that would develop there.

She wrote: "It is the enjoyment afforded by this kind of emancipation which so endears the Western country to those who have resided in it. It steals upon the heart like what it is, the very witchery of nature; so that those who are susceptible to it, feel the charm but not the inconvenience through which it is invoked. Such persons delight in the perfection and beauty of the natural, and these suffice them."[1]

Christiana Holmes Tillson lived on the Illinois Prairie during its first years as a new state. Later, when she was seventy, in about 1866, she wrote about the experience for her daughter. Her story was captured in an extraordinary book called *A Woman's Story of Pioneer Illinois.* She described a wide range of every-day occurrences, providing vivid details that would have been lost. When called upon to weigh the burden of those early years, she said that the "accumulation of comforts, and the luxuries and improvements [that] forty or fifty years have brought, and which are so liberally enjoyed, forbid the realization of frontier life to those who have not by stern experience passed through such an ordeal; ….Few would like to again pass through the bitterness for the sake of enjoying the remembrance of the few sweets."[2]

This four-part paper attempts to capture some aspects of the incredible burden that women bore during the early years of prairie settlement. It focuses almost entirely on the production of cloth. The research reveals a spectrum of labor that exceeds the imagination. It evokes an appreciation for the remarkable contribution made by the women who held our society together.

William R. Harshbarger, 2017.

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[1] Farnham, Eliza W, *Life in Prairie Land,* New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, of Cliff Street, 1846, vi.
[2] Tillson, Christiana Holmes, *A Woman's Story of Pioneer Illinois*, Milo Milton Quaife, Chicago: R. R. Donnelly and Sons Company, 1919, 3-4.

Contents

Prairie Clothes

In February, 1841, sixty-three-year-old John Richman, the first settler in Douglas County, Illinois, walked fifteen miles to a settler's sale on Brushy Creek, three miles southeast of Oakland. His remarkable appearance impressed Dr. Hiram Rutherford, who mingled with the crowd of buyers.

Rutherford, whose home still exists in Oakland, Illinois, described him: John Richman was "six feet tall, strongly built and in vigorous health. He carried a long rifle, a deer gun, with a leather guard over the lock. His rig and costume were unique and picturesque even for that day. He wore a knitted woolen cap of white, red and green bands, with a white tassel on the top. His hunting shirt was of walnut jeans fringed along the seams and skirts, and around the neck and cape. His pants, of the same material, were held up by a drawstring and secured at the ankles by deer leather leggings bound by cross thongs fastened to his moccasins. He wore a leather belt in which was stuck a small tomahawk. To his shoulder strap was attached a pouch, a powder horn and a small butcher knife in a sheath. His moccasins had sole leather bottoms fastened by thongs. He was clean shaved, and his shirt and clothing bright and clean."[3]

Deerskin clothing of Illinois Pioneer.

As the first prairie settlers sought to change the prairie, they discovered that the prairie changed them. It shaped their appearance, their work, and to some extent their character. John Richman, like all pioneers, wore clothes made at home by hand. When the first settlers arrived they had only the clothes they brought with them. They had to hack shelter out of the forest; gather food from the plants and animals around them, and they had to make new clothes from the flora and fauna at their doorstep.

The men and women of each household mastered a stunning variety of skills necessary for survival. That included making clothes. Both men and women participated in cloth production; but, women did most of the work. Women were important and respected: "There was no question of women's rights, because woman's duties filled her time, and her importance in the household was evident."[4] Women had very few legal rights; but, every pioneer household understood a woman's essential role.

Writing in 1903, Elizabeth Cynthia Barney Buel attempted to list the exhausting demands of women's work:

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[3] Rutherford, Hiram, "John Richman, A Typical Backwodsman," Part IV—Contributions to the State History, Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society for the Year 1907, Springfield, Illinois: Phillips Bros., State Printers, 1907, pp. 293-297. Ancestry.com, "John Richman genealogy," http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=jimjessee&id=I318 .

[4] Jones, Lottie E., *History of Vermilion County, Illinois,* Vol I, Chicago: Pioneer Publishing Company, 1911, 69-71.

"Every home farm supplied its own food and drink, medicine, fuel, lighting, clothing, and shelter ….Women's hands made all the supplies of soap and candles; they distilled all the medicines from the herbs of the field; they stocked the larder with pies and pickles, jams and jellies and preserves; they brewed the mead and metheglin, and all other household drinks; they churned the butter and made the cheese; they ran bullets, …; they spun into thread and yarn the flax and wool that was raised on the farm, and then knitted every pair of stockings and mittens, wove every inch of linen and woolen cloth, and cut and made every stitch of clothing worn by a family which generally numbered ten or a dozen…."[5]
Even though women gradually learned how to enhance survival, the time-consuming manufacture of clothing required a variety of sophisticated skills.

When pioneers set out for the prairie, they brought spinning wheels and handmade looms with them. Some had a few head of sheep. Whatever clothing they needed for the family, they had to make it from nature. They used animal skins, flax, wool, cotton, and other fibers to make clothes.[6]

BUCKSKIN and other hides.
Pioneers commonly used deerskin for clothes and cattle hides for shoes. The first settlers tanned their own leather. The women converted tanned buckskin into hunting shirts, pantaloons, caps, moccasins, work coats, and pants. Buckskin was readily available and it resisted nettles, briars, insect stings, and rattlesnake bites. The women frequently added a fringe to the lower edge of hunting shirts and capes.[7] Many men wore buckskin breeches and jackets. They also wore skin vests.[8]

While most families worked with hides, tanneries soon emerged and, as the community matured, leather production fell into the hands of a neighbor. [9]

Buckskin clothes had some disadvantages. One settler recalled that his pants got wet by running through the snow and water and, when dry, became brittle. The pants broke off at the knees, leaving the lower leg naked until he got another pair. During the early days, the men wore no underclothes. The women sewed the buckskin pants to fit close to the skin. When winter brought cold temperature into the house, getting into the buckskin pants was like putting legs into bags of snow.[10]

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[5] Buel, Elizabeth Cynthia Barney. The Tale of the Spinning Wheel. Litchfield, Connecticut. University Press. John Wilson and Son. 1903, 30-31. See also Emma Piatt's description for the Illinois women of Piatt County, Piatt, Emma, *History of Piatt County: together with a Brief History of Illinois from the Discovery of the Upper Mississippi to the Present Time*, Chicago: Shepard & Johnston Printers, No Date. (1881), 127.
[6] Eames, Charles M. *Historic Morgan and Classic Jacksonville.* Jacksonville, IL.: Daily Journal Steam Job Printing Office, 1885, 32.
7 Powell, Jehu Z. *History of Cass County Indiana From Its Earliest Settlement to the Present*, Vol. 1. New York: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1913, 49-50; Buck, Solon Justice, *Illinois in 1818*, 2nd Ed., revised, Illinois Centennial Commission, Clarence Walworth Alvord, ed., Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1918, 134.
[8] Scott, Hervey. "Recollections of Nicholas Stemen," *A Complete History of Fairfield County, Ohio, 1795-1876.* Columbus, Ohio: Siebert & Lilley, 1877, p. 169.
[9] *Op. Cit.*, Buck, Illinois in 1818, 133.
[10] Hervey Scott, "Recollections of A. Hathaway, of Canal Winchester." *A Complete History of Fairfield County, Ohio, 1795-1876.* Colubus, Ohio: Siebert & Lilley, 1877, 250.

SHOES

Sparsely settled forest communities usually supported a few, small tan-yards. The customer paid for the tanning service by giving the tan-yard half of the hides.[11] At Charleston, in Coles County, Illinois, David Eastin established the first tannery, which Richard and Thomas Stoddert later owned and operated until replaced by industrial tanning enterprises.[12]

Often one man in the household took up the task of making shoes from the tanned hides. No pioneer thought of shopping for clothing.[13] In some Coles and Douglas County communities, an experienced shoemaker, who may have learned the skill in Ohio or Kentucky, would go from one house to another and fit out the family with shoes while there.[14]

Pioneers took good care of their hand-made, animal-hide shoes. Each family member got one pair of shoes per year. The women usually wore shoes; but, the men and children went barefoot in spring, summer, and fall, unless they had to appear in public. During several winter days, because shoes were scarce, the pioneers often wrapped their feet in flax-tow to keep them from freezing.[15] The young people often went to meetings or church barefooted, carrying their shoes and stockings in their hands until near the meeting house. Then, they paused, sat down, and put on their shoes.[16] Boots were rarely seen, even in towns.[17]

In the early years, settlers shot the bears that approached the farms to carry off pigs. The family used the bear skin to make moccasins. They left the hair on the hides, turned it inside, and cut the boots for length—sock-high for men and stocking-high for women.[18]

CAPS

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[11] Graham, A. A., Comp., *History of Fairfield and Perry Counties, Ohio, Part III: History of Fairfield County Ohio*, Columbus: Ohio State Journal Printing Establishment, 1883, Reprinted by Higginson Book Company, Salem Massachusetts, 2004, Chapter VII, "Pioneer Life", p. 37

[12] Le Baron's, *History of Coles County*, Chicago: Wm. Le Baron, Jr. & Co., 1879, 252-253; See also, Perrin, W. H., A. A. Graham and D. M. Blair, and Judge William E. Adams., History of Coles County, Chicago: Wm. Le Baron, Jr. & Co., 1879, 303.

[13] *Op. Cit.*, Graham, A. A., *History of Fairfield County*, p. 37.; *Op. Cit.*, Buck, *Illinois in 1818*, 134.

[14] Jones, Lottie E., *History of Vermilion County, Illinois*, Vol. I, Chicago: Pioneer Publishing Company, 1911, 71.

[15] Hervey Scott. "Recollections of John See.." *A Complete History of Fairfield County, Ohio, 1795-1876*. Columbus, Ohio: Siebert & Lilley, 1877, p. 256.

[16] Wiseman, C. M. L., "Recollections of Thomas Reece," *Centennial History of Lancaster Ohio and Lancaster People*, Lancaster Ohio: C. M. L. Wiseman, Publisher, 1898, Reprint by Higginson Book Company, 1898, p. 280; see also, Harvey Scott, "Statement of Frederick Stites," *Complete History of Fairfield County*, 236. See also: Wolfe, E. A., transcribed by Ortman, K," Interesting Incidents in Early Crawford County History related by a Pioneer Citizen. *The Argus* (June 6, 1940) http://genealogytrails.com/ill/crawford/earlyhistory.html; see also, *Op. Cit.* Buck, *Illinois in 1818*, 134.

[17] Parrish, Randall, Historic Illinois: The Romance of the Early Days, Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1905, 299; Wolfe, E. A., transcribed by Ortman, K," Interesting Incidents in Early Crawford County History related by a Pioneer Citizen. The Argus (June 6, 1940) http://genealogytrails.com/ill/crawford/earlyhistory.html.

[18] Wolfe, E. A., transcribed by Ortman, K," Interesting Incidents in Early Crawford County History related by a Pioneer Citizen. The Argus (June 6, 1940).

Women wore bonnets and shawls. During the summer, men wore rudely platted and sewed-together, wide-brimmed wheat-straw hats and felt hats. During the winter, they switched to warm, knitted caps and animal-skin hats.[19]

When the cold season approached, men wore the popular coon-skin hats, made from readily available raccoon hides. The caps provided good protection.[20] They took that popular and very old idea from the American Indians who wore coonskin caps and leather clothing long before the settlers arrived.[21] Many of the migrant pioneers to Illinois came from Kentucky and Tennessee, where men commonly wore coonskin caps while hunting.

DRESSES

Although the ladies wore a variety of dresses made from linen, cotton, and wool, they also wore deerskin dresses. E. A. Wolfe said that the tanners removed the hair and dressed the skins "with deer's brains so as to be soft and pliable." He asserted that the dresses made a stylish looking outfit "when colored yellow with hickory bark and alum, or red with sassafras."[22]

LINCOLN and "Dog Skin" gloves

Harvey Lee Ross, an early Illinois historian, met Abraham Lincoln in 1832, when Lincoln was a clerk in a New Salem store owned by Samuel Hill. According to Ross, Lincoln was a popular store clerk, known for his honesty. Many customers sought his help, believing that he would tell them the truth about the products. One day Ross went to Hill's store and asked Lincoln if he had a pair of gloves that would fit him. Lincoln responded by throwing a pair on the counter, saying, "There is a pair of dogskin gloves that I think will fit you and you can have them for seventy-five cents."

At that time, prairie stores carried no factory-made gloves. Local people tanned hides. Neighborhood women made the gloves. Ross had never heard of such a thing as "dogskin" gloves. He asked Lincoln, "How do you know they are dogskin gloves?"

Lincoln, somewhat irritated by the question that seemed impudent and a challenge to his honesty, replied: "Well, sir, I will tell you how I know they are dog skin gloves. Jack Clery's dog killed Tom Watkin's sheep and Tom Watkin's boy killed the dog and old John Mounts tanned the dog skin and Sally Spears made the gloves and that is how I know they are dogskin gloves."

"So I asked no more questions about the gloves," Ross related, "but paid the six bits and took them and I can truly say that I have worn buckskin and dogskin gloves from time to time for

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[19] *Op. Cit.*, Buck, *Illinois in 1818*, 134, citing in footnote 148, Patterson, "Early Society in Southern Illinois," in *Fergus Historical, Series*, no. 14:109-111,

[20] *Op. Cit.*, Jones, *History of Vermilion County*, 71; *Op. Cit.*, Buck, *Illinois in 1818*, 134

[21] *Op. Cit.*, Piatt, *History of Piatt County*, 127.

[22] Wolfe, E. A., transcribed by Ortman, K," Interesting Incidents in Early Crawford County History related by a Pioneer Citizen. *The Argus* (June 6, 1940) http://genealogytrails.com/ill/crawford/earlyhistory.html

sixty years since then and have never found a pair that did me the service of those I got of Mr. Lincoln."[23]

Another view of early clothing comes from descriptions of another Illinois pioneer.

Gurdon Saltonstall Hubbard, Illinois's famous fur trader, operated many trading posts in eastern Illinois, including one at Hugo, just east of Arcola. The man who established Hubbard's trail—now route 1—and one of the important founders of Chicago, described his clothes in his autobiography:

"My clothing during this winter and for the subsequent years of my life as a trader, consisted of a buckskin hunting shirt or a blue capote' belted in at the waist with a sash or buckskin belt, in which was carried a knife and sheath, a tomahawk, and a tobacco pouch made of the skin of some animal, usually otter or mink. In the pouch was carried a flint and steel and piece of punk. Underneath my outside garment I wore a calico shirt, breech-cloth, and buckskin leggin's. On my feet, neips[24] and moccasins, and sometimes in winter, a red knit cap on my head.

"I allowed my hair to grow long and usually went bareheaded. When traveling in winter I carried, and sometimes wore, a blanket."[25]

From one age to another, clothing changes. Today, if a pioneer couple entered your favorite restaurant to order a meal, their appearance would cause quite a stir. The clothing style might amuse; but, the revelation that the couple personally hunted the animals, skinned and tanned the hides, grew the plants, raised the sheep, spun every thread, wove the fabric, cut the pattern, and sewed everything—all by hand—would be astonishing.

Part 2 will explore flax and how pioneers made it into cloth.

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[23] Ross, Harvey Lee. *The Early Pioneers and Pioneer Events of the State of Illinois,* Chicago: Eastman Brothers, 1899, 95-97.

[24] Hubbard, Gurdon Saltonstall, *Autobiography of Gurdon Saltonstall Hubbard, Pa-Pa-Ma-Ta-Be "Swift Walker", introduction by Caroline M. McILvaine*, Chicago: The Lakeside Press,R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company, Christmas, 1909, 59-60.Footnote p. 60: "Square pieces of blanket which were folded over the feet, and were worn in place of stockings."

[25] *Ibid.*, Hubbard, *Autobiography*, 59-60.

Prairie Clothing--Flax

Putting clothes on one's back was serious business for pioneers. Making clothes and washing them took time and hard work.

Christiana Holmes Tillson, an educated woman from Boston, who married an Illinois pioneer and moved to the new state in 1822, told her daughter about those early years. In her famous narrative, *A Woman's Story of Pioneer Illinois,* she described the complicated process of washing clothes. It's paraphrased here:

Every Monday morning we washed clothes. A man had to help place the heavy kettle on the pot-hooks that fastened to a trammel that was suspended from a bar in the chimney. We had to put a small kettle containing ashes and water on the fire and boil it until the water became lye. Then, we removed the small kettle and poured in cold water to "settle" the boiling mixture. When the large kettle of water boiled, we dipped the small kettle into it and stirred until flakes, like snowflakes, came up. When that happened, we would say that the "water was broke." We took the scum off from the top. Next, we dipped the water into tubs to cool. A thick sediment fell to the bottom of the tubs, leaving the water clean and pure, ready for use. We had to repeat this process several times until we had enough wash-water. It took nearly one-half of the day to get ready to wash. Before the use of washboards, women washed clothes by rubbing with their hands or beating the clothes with a stick on a puncheon bench and wrung them out by hand.

When she finished washing, Tillson would hang her clothes on a line using wooden clothes-pins that she had persuaded a wood-working neighbor named "Loomis" to whittle for her. Her neighbors, however, knew nothing of clothes-pins or clothes lines, and hung their washed clothes over the rail fences that enclosed their gardens. The first time she put clothes on a line, it amused and attracted some of the backwoods neighbors who spoke in their Kentucky drawl and harbored deep suspicions about the habits of their Boston neighbor. "See here," they pointed and laughed, "ain't that, jest the last Yankee fixin's. Jest see them thar little boys ridin' on a rope."[26]

FLAX

Besides washing the clothes, women had to make them. They used plant fibers, including flax, which most Illinois households produced.

The Illinois pioneers grew and processed flax in the same way as Ancient civilizations. It provided both fiber and seed. Pioneers used the fiber to make linen. They used seed to make linseed oil.

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[26] Tillson, Christiana Holmes, *A Woman's Story of Pioneer Illinois,* Ed. By Milo Milton Quaif, Chicago: R. R. Donnelley & Sons Company, 1919, 25-26. See also Welker, Martin, *Farm Life In Ohio Sixty Years Ago.* Tract 86, Vol. 4, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio. Reprinted from Previous publication 1892. 1895, 51-52; see also: Hinrichsen, Savillah T. "Pioneer Mothers of Illinois," *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society for the Year 1904,* Fifth Annual Meeting of the Society, Bloomington, Jan. 27, 28, 29, 1904. Publication No. 9, 510-511.

Flax usually grows from 18 to 24 inches in height. It has slender, bright-green leaves and pale-blue blossoms. The plant has a single, slender stalk covered with a fibrous skin, or herl, from which the threads are made.[27] In Illinois soil, it grew easily and quickly.

Settlers set aside about one-half acre to plant flax in April or May.[28] Young women and children hand-weeded the flax-field by walking barefoot among the tender stalks when they were two or three inches high.[29] The men and strong boys harvested flax in August or September, when the flowers turned into brown seed pods and the stems matured into a yellowish color.

The pioneer family worked with the plant for months to transform it into cloth. They put it through several processes. It was pulled, rolled, broken, scutched or "swingled," and hetchelled before it could be spun. After the women spun it, they still had to weave it and make it into some final piece of clothing.

The harvest required the strength of men and boys. Women rarely helped.

Ripple Comb

During "flax pulling time," the men and boys jerked the stalks from the ground by handfuls. They took root and all in order preserve the long fibers. They dried the plants on the ground. Then, they "rippled" the plants by pulling them through a ripple-comb—a heavy, iron-wire comb with great teeth mounted on a plank. The tool removed the seed pods ("seed-bolles" or "bobs"), which fell onto a sheet spread out to catch them. They made linseed oil from the seed. After rippling the dry stems, they placed them into bundles, called "beats" or "bates."[30]

Next, they stacked the "bates" and tied the seed end, while spreading out the base of stalks, forming a tent-shaped stack called a "stook."[31]

Then, they "retted" or "rotted" the flax. This process freed the fibers in the stems from the "glue" –made of pectin and lignin—that bound them together. Retting used three elements—mold, moisture, and warmth—to dissolve the "glue." Some pioneers "water-rotted" the bundles

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[27] Custer, Milo, *Pioneer Preparation and Spinning of Flax and Wool*, McLean County Historical Society. Bloomington: Illinois, 1912. Np. Heirloom Oganics, "How to Grow Flax," Retrieved on October 14, 2017 from http://www.heirloom-organics.com/guide/va/guidetogrowingflax.html

[28] Wright, John Ernest Thorrington and Doris S. Corbett, *Pioneer Life*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1940, 76.

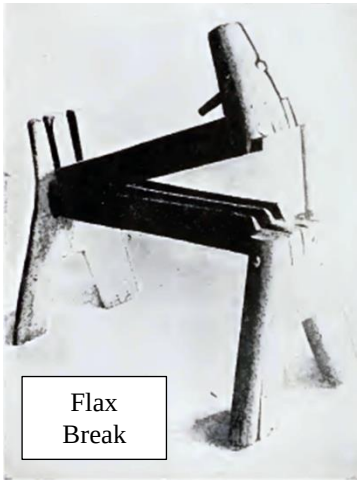
[29] Earle, Alice Morse, *Home Life In Colonial Days,* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917, 168.

[30] *Ibid.*. Earle, *Colonial Days*, 168.

[31] *Op. Cit.*, Earle, *Colonial Days, 169.*

in moving streams, not ponds, because flax poisoned the water. They set stakes in the water in the form of a square. Then, they arranged the bates of flax in alternate layers at right angles with the layers beneath. The pioneers held down the bates with boards and heavy stones. Water-rotted flax took only five or six days and left the stems bleached with a golden color.

The prairie pioneers often took three to six weeks to "dew rot" the flax. Using this process, settlers placed the bates in "flax pens" made of rails on four posts about four feet high with a rain floor and no cover. Or they placed the bates in flat rows on the ground. After each rain, the family would rush to the pen, or the rows, and turned over the flax. Dew rotted plants turned a natural, dark, more silver color.[32]


Flax Break

After rotting the stalks, the settlers thoroughly dried them on a wooden rack or over a slow fire in order to make it easier to "break" the stalks. They used a specially made flax-break to crush the plant's core. Craftsmen made the nut-cracker-like device with a stationary base and a moving lever with a handle that the operator used to crush the core. The stationary frame had a set of beveled, wooden "knives" that interlocked with the similar set of wooden knives on the moveable arm. The operator placed a bundle of flax in the device and used the moveable arm to "break" the stems. With each stroke, the operator moved the bundle until the entire length of the stems had been crushed. The pliable fibers in the stem would simply bend between the "knives" until the device broke the surrounding stem material.


Scutching board and scutching knife.

After breaking the flax, the cloth-makers "scutched" or "swingled" the fibers.[33] Women used a smooth, hardwood scutching-board and a thin, hardwood scutching-knife that varied from nine to twelve inches long. They placed the flax fibers in a notch at the top end of the board and vigorously worked the wooden knife on the fiber, loosening the woody waste materials.

Next, they put the fibers on a hetchelling-board. The hetchel featured long, comb-like spikes on a board much like carding machines. One hetchel was fine and the other coarse. They used

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[32] Roberts, Mike (31 January 2017), "Retting Flax," Retrieved on October 15, 2017 from http://www.wildfibres.co.uk/html/retting_flax.html , gives an excellent explanation of the plant and processing flax into spinning fibers. See also Earle, Alice Morse, *Home Life In Colonial Days*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917, 168-169; see also Custer, Milo, *Pioneer Preparation and Spinning of Flax and Wool*, McLean County Historical Society. Bloomington: Illinois, 1912. No pages.

[33] *Op. Cit.,* Custer, *Spinning*, Jones, Jones, Lottie E., *History of Vermilion County, Illinois*, Vol. I, Chicago: Pioneer Publishing Company, 1911, 70-71; Smith, Larry D., "The Domestic Art of Spinning: Flax Break" 2003, retrieved on October 15, 2017 from http://www.motherbedford.com/Museum301.htm .

the coarse fibers called "tow" to make rougher fabrics, such as grain bags and coarser kinds of clothing.[34] The women pulled the fibers through the spiked hetchel many times until the chaff and short threads had been removed, leaving silky threads.[35]

Next the women had to fan out the bundle of hetchelled threads which, at this stage, was called the "strick." By fanning out the threads of the strick on their laps or on the floor, the women prepared the threads to "dress the distaff."[36] The distaff was a cone-shaped device on a short pole. From the threads on the distaff, the women began to spin the fibers into a "hank" that was ready for spinning yarn.

Sometimes they used a "rock" –a five-pronged switch that was formed into a kind of reel upon which they could wind the hetchelled flax.


Hetchel

The best "rocks" were found in the tops of dogwood saplings. Hervey Scott relayed the story of Mrs. Rachel Young who encountered a bear while searching in the forest for a "rock." Fortunately, the bear and Mrs. Young both decided not to bother each other.[37] One of the women of the home would spin the hanks of flax on the "little spinning wheel"—a smaller version of the "large wheel"—so that it was ready for final assembly on the family loom.

For a video showing the complete, flax-making process see: http://colonialquills.blogspot.com/2013/09/linsey-woolsey-before-cotton-was-king.html [38]

For a video showing the "little spinning wheel" that was commonly used to spin flax, and an explanation of early spinning see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVdJUlJ1aUw [39]

After the women had woven the homespun linen, they had to put it through a bleaching process. Flax was usually more difficult to dye. It had a peculiar, dull, light yellow-brown color that was very common in pioneer clothes.[40] For more colorful clothing, the pioneers combined the linen with wool, which held dyes much better, and produced a cloth called "linsey-woolsey," or just, "linsey."

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[34] *Op. Cit.*, Wright, *Pioneer Life*, 76.
[35] *Op.Cit.*, Jones, *History of Vermilion County*, 70. See Also, *Op. Cit.*, Roberts, *Flax*, website; *Op. Cit.*, Buel, *Tale of Spinning*, 32-36; *Op. Cit.*, Earle, *Colonial Days*, 171-172.
[36] *Op. Cit.*. Earle, *Colonial Days*, 169, for a detailed description of the thread fanning process.
[37] Hervey Scott. "Recollections of Mrs. Rachel Young." *A Complete History of Fairfield County, Ohio, 1795-1876.* Columbus, Ohio: Siebert & Lilley, 1877, 259.
[38] Marvin, Debra E. "Colonial Quills," (September 27, 2013) retrieved on November 17, 2017 from http://colonialquills.blogspot.com/2013/09/linsey-woolsey-before-cotton-was-king.html .
[39] Hood Dendy Demonstrates How to Use a Spinning Wheel at Early Texas Pioneer Days, *YouTube*, retrieved on November 18, 2017 from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iVdJUlJ1aUw .
[40] *Op. Cit.*, Wright, *Pioneer Life*, 78.

Today, we cannot accurately measure the exhausting demands on pioneer women. But we can get help from Savillah Hinrichsen. Writing in 1904 about the strength and character of the "Pioneer Mothers of Illinois," she explained how an artist might represent them:

"Let some ambitious woman who models in clay, or who puts her dreams on canvas, create for us a portrait of these women in a typical face and form that shall embody our ideal, as a composite photograph might do. Give to her face strength and gentleness, make her nurse and comforter, make her strong and patient under hardships, make her fierce against selfishness, wrong and oppression, make her courageous against danger, give to her the steadfast hope and faith and the grand motive of her life—"the love that casteth out fear."[41]

Part 3 examines how pioneers processed wool.

Harvey Dunn (March 8, 1884-October 29, 1952), "The Prairie is My Garden," featured in Gentile, Mannie, "Combat Helments of the 20th Century," (May 2016) "The Doughboys of Harvey Dunn," Retrieved on November 22, 2017, from http://combathelmets.blogspot.com/2016/05/the-doughboys-of-harvey-dunn.html

[41] *Op.Cit.*, Hinrichsen, "Pioneer Mothers of Illinois," *Transactions*, 512-513.

Part 3: Pioneer Clothing--Wool

The pioneers made clothes from their environment. Their every-day work conditions seemed primitive to Charles Bliss of the Hillsboro News, who wrote in 1904: "There were no fly screens, no cooking schools," he wrote. "The housewives leached their own lye, and kept off the flies with a tree branch. There were no carpet sweepers, no yeast cakes, no baking powder, no canned fruit, no shoe buttons, no Chautauqua, no sewing machines, no rubber shoes, no toilet soap, no clothes wringers, no washboards, or clothes pins."[42]

Before the prairie communities matured, most of the household and clothing work was done by women and by hand. As new arrivals settled the area, the essential community businesses evolved—flour mills, blacksmiths, prairie-breaking, tan-yards, weaving, and carding machines.

Before the Civil War, cotton became "king" for making clothes; but, it was not a prairie crop. The early frost in the north prevented cotton production. Illinois farmers could only grow cotton in five counties in the extreme southern part of Illinois.[43]

However, most prairie pioneers brought a few sheep with them.[44] In the early years, the new settlers vigilantly guarded their prized animals. Prairie wolves foraged for food during the night and preyed upon sheep at the edges of rail fences that farmers built to protect their animals and garden patches.[45] To solve the wolf problem, community governments paid a bounty for wolf ears and organized wolf-hunts during the winter.[46] Wolf scalps were legal tender for paying taxes to the county.[47] Because clothing was more valuable and harder to produce than meat, the families with sheep kept them for wool rather than for the mutton.[48] Many farmers had Merino sheep that came to Ohio during the early 1800s and produced better quality wool.[49]

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[42] Hinrichsen, Savillah T. "Pioneer Mothers of Illinois," *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society for the Year 1904*, Fifth Annual Meeting of the Society, Bloomington, Jan. 27, 28, 29, 1904. Publication No. 9, 511.
[43] Evans, J. A., J. C. Hackleman, and F. C. Bauer, March, "Cotton Growing in Illinois," 1924 University of Illiois Agricultural College and Experiment Station, Urbana, Illinois, Circular No. 279, 1924, 2-3
[44] Fisher, Joy, History of Edgar County, Illinois, Edgar County, IL Archives, Part II, 1879. http://files.usgwarchives.net/il/edgar/history/1879/edgarcou/historyo22gms.txt . np.; Le Baron's, History of Coles County, Chicago: Wm. Le Baron, Jr. & Co., 1879, pp. 252-253;
[45] Eames, Charles M. *Historic Morgan and Classic Jacksonville.* Jacksonville, IL.: Daily Journal Steam Job Printing Office, 1885, 44; Davis, James E. *Frontier Illinois*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998, 108; Gresham, John M., *Historical and Biographical record of Douglas county*, Logansport, Indiana: Wilson, Humphreys & Co., 1900, 17; Perrin, W. H., A. A. Graham and D. M. Blair, and Judge William E. Adams., *History of Coles County*, Chicago: Wm. Le Baron, Jr. & Co., 1879, 334; Blane, Capt. William N. ,*An Excursion through the United States and Canada During the Years 1822-23 by an English Gentleman*, London: Baldwin, Craddock, and Joy, 1824, 186.
[46] Perrin, W. H., A. A. Graham, and D. M. Blair, Com., *A History of Coles County Illinois: Containing a History of...* Chicago: William Le Baron, Jr.,. and Co., 186 Dearborn St., 1879. Reproduced by Windmill Publications, Inc. Mt. Vernon, IN 1990, 474-475.
[47] *Ibid.* Perrin, *History*, 460.
[48] Bateman, Newton, Paul Selby, eds., Illinois Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois, "History of Kendall County," Vol. II. Chicago: Munsell Publishing Company Publishers, 1914, 718.
[49] Hurt, R. Douglas, The Ohio Frontier: Crucible of the Old Northwest, 1720-1830, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996, pp. 224-229.

Wool production began in the early summer. Settlers called it "sheep washing time." They plunged the sheep into a nearby stream and gave them a rough rubbing. This action partially cleaned the fleece in preparation for shearing. Usually neighbors helped each other with the back-breaking work. They competed to see how fast each expert could remove the fleece, while holding the sheep with one hand and the shear in the other. The best shearers made very few nicks on the hide. A skillful shearer could peel off the fleece so that it lay on the ground with the inner, whiter side up, lying in one blanket-like piece. When finished, the men rolled-up, or folded, the fleece with tow (flax) string on a wool-tying table. They tried to press the fleece into the smallest possible bundle.

Pioneer Sheep Shears

CARDING

Next, the cloth-makers had to clean, comb, and straighten the matted and tangled fleece-wool, using a carding process.

Before they could card the wool, they first had to thoroughly work grease into the wool. They used rape oil or melted swine's grease—three pounds to ten pounds of wool—and rubbed it into the wool to clean and ease the carding process.[50]

Then they used two, duplicate wool-cards made from wood and leather. Each had a handle and a paddle with bent wire teeth, all turned back toward the handle. The woman placed a handful of matted wool on one carder, spreading it out as evenly as possible. Then she drew the other carder across the wool fibers, causing them to untangle in much the same way as brushing hair. By doing this several times, it caused the fibers to line up with one another. A magnified view of wool shows that wool fibers have scales, which interlock when twisted with other fibers.

Wool-cards

When she finished straightening the fibers, the carder removed the wool by drawing one carding paddle backward, making a roll of untangled wool, called a "sliver." To make the roll more compact, women could roll it between the backsides of the carding paddles, or they could

[50] Buel, Elizabeth Cynthia Barney. The Tale of the Spinning Wheel. Litchfield, Connecticut. University Press. John Wilson and Son. 1903, 52-53.

lengthen the rolls by stretching them and rolling them between the palms of their hands. The slivers were stored in a basket to be spun.[51]

In addition to mills and tan-yards, the carding machines appeared in the early development of communities. The more efficient and faster mechanical carding machines replaced slow and tedious hand-carding work. The women gladly relinquished the task. A "drum carder" made the process more efficient. (see a video at: https://woolery.com/selecting-a-carder).

In 1830 or 1831, soon after settlers laid out the town of Charleston, John Kennedy set up the first carding machine in Coles County. Daniel Evinger built a carding machine on Parker's Prairie, just north of Charleston at about the same time.[52]

Women added color to their clothing by dying the wool, which held color much better than flax. They used many kinds of flowers, including goldenrod, which, when mixed with indigo, produced a beautiful green, or when mixed with onion skins, produced a soft yellow.

Blue in all shades was a favorite color. So great was the demand that indigo-peddlers travelled over the country selling it. The women kept a blue dye-pot in the corner by the chimney.

They sometimes combined copperas and indigo with the bark of trees to produce color. Farmers used butternut bark to color their clothes, producing a dull yellow product that was characteristic of pioneer dress. Sassafras produced a yellow or orange color. The leaves of balsam also made a yellow color. Weavers also produced yellow from the root of the barberry, the leaves of the devil's-bit, the petals of Jerusalem artichoke, and St.-John's-wort plants.

They produced a red color from cochineal, imported from Mexico, or they made it from madder roots—an ancient source of red dye from a creeping, invasive, perennial plant that takes about five years to produce a suitable root and makes a brighter red with the aid of lime in the soil. They also made a crimson dye from the juice of the pokeberry boiled with alum.

Early settlers also dyed with tea or crushed walnut shells to produce a brown color. The women found that Queen Anne's lace could produce a soft green. Blueberries would produce a faded blue color.

The dyers used chips from the logwood tree or the black walnut hulls to produce a black color for their best-wear clothing. To make a black color, they also boiled the cloth with a quantity of common field-sorrel leaves, and then boiled it again with logwood and copperas. The copperas, when available, made a better tint for the black. People, who lived in coastal areas and made hats and other woven cloth, used the leaves and berries of the gallberry bush to produce a good black color.

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[51] Greenwood, Barbara, *A Pioneer Sampler: The Daily Life of a Pioneer Family in 1840,* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1998, [Illustrations by Heather Collins] 94-98; *Op. Cit.*, Buel, *Daily Life*, 52-53; Custer, Milo, *Pioneer Preparation and Spinning of Flax and Wool*, McLean County Historical Society. Bloomington: Illinois, 1912, np.
[52] Le Baron's, History of Coles County, Chicago: Wm. Le Baron, Jr. & Co., 1879, 252-253, 303.

To make a delicate, light purple tinge to the wool, they boiled a violet juice from the petals of the iris, or "flower-de-luce" that bloomed in June. Often, though, they dyed the woven cloth, not the wool.

The dyers needed about two pounds of flower heads to dye one pound of wool. They boiled the blooms in water until the liquid reached the desirable shade. Then they simmered the skeins of well-washed wool in the dye bath. Next the dyer simmered the wool in a mordant—a dye fixative containing acid, which, for early settlers, was made from urine—to set the color and prevent it from washing out.

After they had colored the skeins of wool, they stored them in cedar baskets to keep them free from moths.[53]

Alexander Hugo Bakker-Korff, "The Seamstress'" from the Saint Louis Art Museum.

According to Savillah Hinrichsen, writing in 1904, the frontier women expressed their artistic abilities and love of beauty in their cloth, but they also preserving it in their person. She wrote:

From the strain of the work, "the maids and matrons of Illinois had all and more exercise than they needed, …[Yet] they valued their looks and took far better care of their complexions than the belles of today. They realized that a skin once coarsened by sun and wind, never regains its delicacy, and they wore deep shading bonnets, or wide hats with thick veils, and kept their hands from the sun and wind, as well as their faces; wool washing they did not mind, since the oil in the wool kept their hands white and plump." Their struggles in life involved more than delaying the ravages of age: "The struggle for existence was a hard one and, [when] the weaklings went down, their places were filled with others. Daughters were blessings in those days, and there were no superfluous women."[54]

Part 4 explores spinning and weaving.

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[53] *Op. Cit.*, Buel, *Spinning Wheel*., 52, 99; Buck, Solon Justice, Illinois in 1818. 2nd. Ed., revised. Illinois Centennial Commission, Clarence Walworth Alvord, ed., Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1918, 134; *Op. Cit.,* Fisher, *Edgar County*, np; *Op. Cit.,* Bateman, *Historical Encyclopedia*, 718; Wright, John Ernest Thorrington and Doris S. Corbett, *Pioneer Life*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1940, 77-78; see also Ellis, Asa, Jr., *Country Dyer's Assistant,* Brookfield, MA: Marriam, 1798, from a colonial expert on dying.; *Op. Cit.,* Earle, *Colonial Days*, 193-194.

[54] *Op. Cit.*, Hinrichsen, "Pioneer Mothers", 511.

Part 4: Pioneer Clothing—Spinning and Weaving

When the pioneers moved to the Illinois prairie, they had to extract shelter, food, and security from the wilderness. But they were not amateurs. Every settler—man and woman—knew a great deal about survival. And they worked together.

Upon arrival, however, women realized that it would take time before they could make clothes. They had to save every scrap of cloth and wait patiently for the gathering of raw materials. As the flax and fiber crops grew and after they gathered wool from sheep, the women could make clothes again. Once they got their hands on the harvested fibers, they still had to clean, scutch, hetchel, card, dye, and process the threads in preparation for the big tasks of spinning and weaving.

SPINNING

Pioneer mothers made sure that their young girls learned the rudiments of spinning yarn.

Young girls started their training by learning to spin smooth, strong thread with a hand-held, drop-spindle—a stick about eight inches long with a wooden disk at the end, acting as a weight. First, a girl used her fingers to make a short thread that she attached to the end of the spindle. Then she spun the device, much like spinning a top. At the same time, she stretched the wool fibers. The combination of spinning and drawing out the fibers produced a fine, even thread. When the spindle reached the floor, she would stop and wind the newly spun thread around the spindle.

A Drop Spindle

Once a girl had mastered the drop spindle method, she moved on to the large, spinning-wheel, sometimes called the "walking wheel." This large wheel drove a small device, which looked much like a drop-spindle that was, instead, mounted in a housing. A belt from the large wheel drove the small spindle that was attached to a bobbin or broach. The spinster used a corn cob, a stiff roll of paper, or a corn-husk to make the bobbin. The spinster attached the wool to the bobbin to be spun. She turned the large wheel with her hand or with a stick called a "driver" or "wheel-peg"—about nine inches long and one inch in diameter with a notch in the end to catch the spokes in the wheel.

As she turned the wheel, she walked three or four steps backward, holding the twisting yarn in her left hand, sometimes high above her head. Then, with a quick, forward movement, she let it wind around the bobbin. She repeated the back and forth process until she had produced a skein of yarn.

An active spinner could spin about six skeins—480 yards of thread—a day. Those familiar with the process estimate that her backward and forward steps covered a distance over twenty miles. This process called for alertness and required graceful movements. Some say that it produced a dignified and poised carriage among the pioneer women.[55]

The spinning wheel operators wound the yarn on a hand-reel, a two-headed tool, called a "niddy-noddy." Forty lengths around the niddy-noddy frame made eighty yards, or one "knot," or one "skein" of yarn. The woman who operated the spinning wheel carefully measured the skeins, so that the weaver knew the exact amount of yarn available. Over time, the hand-held niddy-noddies were replaced by winders which had their own stand and clicked loudly, when forty turns had been reached. Some craftsmen made the reel to "check," or click, when completed—at fifty yards, at one hundred twenty yards, one hundred forty yards, or at one hundred sixty yards.[56]

"Niddy-Noddy," two heads and one body.

As one might expect, with constant attention to their skills, women compared their abilities to other spinners. Those women who could spin the finest yarn earned the highest praise. A Connecticut woman, Mary Prigge once spun a pound of wool into eighty-four thousand yards of yarn—nearly 48 miles. In 1772, in Goshen, Connecticut, the young married ladies, who gathered at Nehemiah Lewis's house, proposed a contest at the foot-wheel in spinning linen. The contestants would spin for twenty-four hours. They could prepare their distaffs beforehand. Others would reel the yarn as it was spun. Initially Mrs. Tuttle won. She spun five runs of yarn—the equivalent of two and one-half day's work. Her competitors could only spin four runs.

However, Lydia Beach rose to the challenge. She prepared her distaffs, had her yarn reeled, and arranged to have someone put food into her mouth. During her twenty-four hours, she spun seven runs—the equivalent of three and one-half days' work. She took the winner's wreath from Mrs. Tuttle's brow.[57]

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[55] *Op. Cit.*, Buel, *Tale of the Spinning Wheel*, 53-54; Greenwood, Barbara, *A Pioneer Sampler: The Daily Life of a Pioneer Family in 1840*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 1998, [Illustrations by Heather Collins], 94-96; Welker, Martin, *Farm Life In Ohio Sixty Years Ago.* Tract 86, Vol. 4, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio. Reprinted from Previous publication 1892. 1895, pp. 50-52; Jones, Lottie E., History of Vermilion County, Illinois, Vol. I, Chicago: Pioneer Publishing Company, 1911, pp. 69-71; Earle, Alice Morse, *Home Life In Colonial Days*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917, 198.

[56] *Op. Cit.* Buel, *Tale of the Spinning Wheel*, 53-54; *Op. Cit.*, Greenwood, *Pioneer Sampler*, 97. Custer, Milo, *Pioneer Preparation and Spinning of Flax and Wool*, McLean County Historical Society. Bloomington: Illinois, 1912. Np;

[57] *Op. Cit.*, Buel, *Tale of the Spinning Wheel*, 40-41, 54. Earle, Alice Morse, *Home Life In Colonial Days*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1917, 184. *Op. Cit.*, Earle, *Colonial Days*, 202;

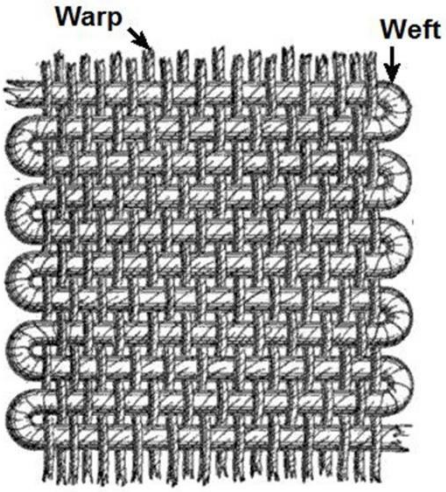
While prairie spinners had little interest in competition, they recognized, and often praised, the skilled spinster.[58] Their focus trended more to socializing and entertainment. The spinster often kept at her work while talking to neighbors who happened to drop in. In much the same way that women can multi-task today, the spinster could keep her flax-wheel moving with her foot, control the thread, hold a sleeping baby on her knees, and talk to her visitors at the same time. She could also operate the great wool-wheel, spinning fine yarn, walking back and forth, and carrying on a conversation with her drop-in company.[59]

The women had to bleach the yarn that they produced for knitting. The women carried many buckets of water to put the yarn through a washing, wringing and rinsing process.[60]

They also had to process yarn suitable for weaving. The women soaked and bleached the threads many times. Initially, they used hot water with ashes. Then they transferred the yarn to clear water for a week. Finally, they applied a seething, rinsing, beating, washing, drying process before winding the yarn on bobbins.[61]

WEAVING

After the harvesting, cleaning, carding, scutching, hetchelling, dying, and spinning, the women (and men) still had the task of weaving the thread into cloth. The concept of weaving involves two simple components: the weft (sometimes called the "woof") and the warp. Weavers placed the warp yarn vertically, under tension, on a frame (loom) which remained stationary. The weft was then drawn horizontally, over and under, each thread of the warp. A single thread of the weft that crosses the warp is called a "pick."



A prairie home loom covered 18 to 20 square-foot of floor space. A verbal description of the weaving process, with its esoteric and arcane vocabulary, tends to bewilder, rather than clarify. One can understand the activity much easier by watching. However, a simple, verbal explanation reveals that the process involved three basic motions.

First, the weaver pressed a foot-treadle to move a harness (heddle) that held the warp-thread. This separated the warp threads, creating what was called a "shed." Second, the weaver threw a "shuttle" from one side of the shed to the other. The shuttle contained a revolving quill from which the weft-thread unraveled as it passed through the shed. Third, after the weft-thread passed through the shed, the weaver pressed the "batten," which forced the warp-treads into place. This action produced a distinctive "thwacking" sound that everyone recognized when someone was weaving.

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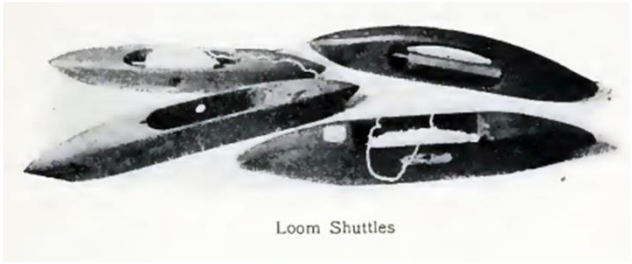
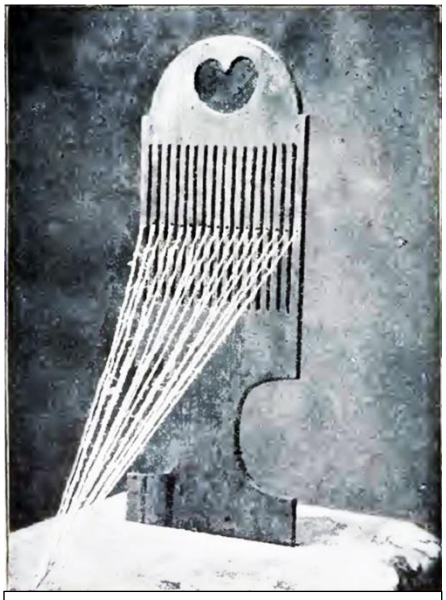
[58] Jones, Lottie E., History of Vermilion County, Illinois, Vol. I, Chicago: Pioneer Publishing Company, 1911, 69.
[59] *Op. Cit.,* Buel, *Tale of the Spinning Wheel,* 38.
[60] *Op. Cit.,* Earle, *Colonial Days,* 202.
[61] *Op. Cit.,* Buel, *Tale of the Spinning Wheel,* 37.

In the next cycle, the weaver pressed the other foot-treadle, forcing down the other warp-threads which passed through a second set of harnesses, creating another shed, through which the weaver threw the shuttle in the opposite direction.[62]


Loom Shuttles

The shuttle was a wooden, boat-shaped container that held a quill full of thread—the weft-thread. Craftsmen usually made them from apple-wood or boxwood and proudly placed their name on their creation, indicating that the tool was also a work of art. Because weavers had a limited throwing range, they restricted the width of the woven cloth. In a day's work, producing a close woolen cloth like broadcloth, the weaver could only create about a total of three yards of material. To accomplish that task, however, the weaver threw the shuttle over three thousand times and pressed the treadles and swung the batten the same number.[63]

Women often did the weaving. Every girl learned how to weave. But, men also became weavers. As communities grew, a weaver became one of the craftsmen who made it successful. The universally respected weavers set up a loom in their homes and acquired more yarn from those seeking their skills. Some of the craftsmen, however, would dismantle their looms and travel among the community homes. Since they spent time sitting in one place and because they frequently visited most homes, they passed along the news and gossip. While the weaver worked, the household members often gathered around. Children loved to go to the door and beg for bits of colored yarn—"thrums"—with which they played and made shoestrings, hair laces, and other things.[64]


Tape-Loom. From Alice Morse Earle,*Life in Colonial Days,* 226.

Women also did hand weaving on a variety of small looms—tape-looms, braid-looms, belt-looms, garter-looms, or "gallus-frames." In her 1917 book, Alice Earle explains that these small looms were common and widely used: "Narrow bands such as tapes, none-so-pretty's, ribbons, caddises, ferretings, and inkles, were woven on these looms for use for garters, points, glove-ties, hair-laces, shoestrings, belts, hat-bands, stay-laces, breeches-suspenders, etc."[65]

In large part, the life-changing, industrial revolution of the 1700s in England centered on processing thread, cloth-production, and clothing. The inventions of James Hargreaves's "spinning-Jenny" (Lancashire, England, 1764), Richard Arkwright's "Water Frame" (Cromford, Derbyshire, England, 1770), and Samuel Crompton's enormously

[62] *Ibid.,* Earle, 221-222.
[63] *Op. Cit.,* Earle, *Colonial Days,* 222, 224-225.
[64] *Ibid.,* Earle, 213.
[65] *Ibid.,* Earle, 225-226.

productive "Spinning Mule" (Lancashire, England, between 1775 and 1779), industrialized spinning. As machines replaced the work of spinners and weavers, prairie residents bought more of their finished cloth from "dry-goods" stores and focused more on sewing clothes and producing raw materials and food. By the early years of the 20th century, most of the original, cloth-making skills and tools were gone. However, the skills still persist in traditional societies and among hobbyists and small-craft artisans.[66]

The pioneer women shared equally with the pioneer men in creating the foundation for today's community achievements. Bateman and Selby express an appreciation for women's contribution to society in their 1914 book:

"The week days of the pioneer woman were full, each household being a factory, and each house mother was the executive head and managing partner in the business connected therein. The wool was raised on the farm by the men, but this passed in its raw state into the hands of the women by whom it was spun and, in some instances, the clothing for the entire family was made by the one woman, who was also cook, laundress, nurse, and gardener, as well as housekeeper and wife.

"She also made her own soap, bleached, pressed, and trimmed her own bonnets, braided the palm leaf hats for the men, pieced the quilts, made the preserves from the wild fruits, and, in the intervals of resting, knit all the hosiery for a large family."[67]

Today we can only wonder at their bravery and endurance. It is impossible to measure what they did for civilization.

"Time, fierce spirit of the glass and scythe,"[68] stamps his final seal on the fading race of man. Our brave predecessors passed away with only a tale to be told and the enduring marble that points to the spot where the pioneers sleep. Their magic touch changed this land from a howling waste to curried fields and paved streets. In our time, looking through the lens of distant sunshine and shadow, we can see only the traces of their lives and

Schaap, J. C. "Basement Stuff," (March 21, 2014)Bryant Baker's *Pioneer Woman,* Retrieved on November 22, 2017 from http://siouxlander.blogspot.com/2014/03/blue-highways.html

[66] Wickipedia, " Hand Spinning," (October 28, 217) Retrieved on 11/14,2017 from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hand_spinning .
[67] Bateman, Newton, Paul Selby, eds., Illinois Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois, "History of Kendall County," Vol. II. Chicago: Munsell Publishing Company Publishers, 1914, 1039.
[68] ZQuotes, "George Dennison Prentice Quote," (2017), retrieved on November 11, 2017 from http://izquotes.com/quote/374525

the changes from pole cabins to palaces, from the plodding ox to space ships, and from the raw, sprawling, untamed prairie to the blooms of the garden rose. Only the hard-hearted will refuse to look back and silently, in gratitude, pay homage to those on whose shoulders we rest.