

Pioneer Glossary

Abacus: A metal frame with beads threaded through wire, which children used as a tool to learn arithmetic

Adze: An ancient, hand-held cutting tool similar to an axe, but with the blade set perpendicular to the handle rather than parallel

Anvil: A heavy cast-iron block that blacksmiths use to shape metal on

Apothecary: A shop and or person who prepares and sells medicine

Apprentice: A person who works under a master to learn a craft (masonry, shoemaking)

Arithmetic: The foundation of basic math

Artifact: An object made or used by humans that holds cultural or historical value

Auger: A spiral screw blade used to drill into the ground or wood

Barber: A person who cuts hair and who also performed minor medical procedures

Barter: A system of using trade rather than currency

Bellows: A device that stokes air into a starting fire

Blacksmith: A person creates objects made of iron or steel.

Bloodletting: A medical practice where a barber will cut into the skin and let the patient's "old blood" out

Bolt of fabric: A large role of fabric usually between 6 and 40 yards

Bonnet: A head garment worn by women and girls

Breeches: Pants or trousers extending to or just below the knee

Broadaxe: A specialized woodworking tool with a wide, heavy blade used to square round logs into rectangular beams

Butter churn: A device with a barrel and plunger used to convert heavy cream into butter

Buttermilk: The thin, slightly sour liquid left over after churning butter

Canoe: a lightweight, narrow boat used with paddles to travel through water

Carding: A combing process that cleans, untangles, and aligns raw wool fibers to prepare them for spinning into yarn

Carriage: A transportation system that uses wheels and horses to move passengers to their destination

Cellar: A cold room used to store produce, alcohol, and other goods

Chamber pot: A metal or ceramic pot used to hold human waste

Chewing tobacco: A smokeless way to consume tobacco through chewing a piece and spitting it out once done

Chores: Tasks that are done daily and or weekly by all members of the family

Cobbler: A person who makes and fixes shoes

Colony: A territory controlled by a foreign power, or a distinct community of people settling in a new area

Copybook: A schoolbook containing printed models of handwriting for students to copy and practice their penmanship

Cornmeal: A coarse flour made by grinding dried corn kernels

Cotton: A plant grown and harvested to make textiles

Covered wagon: A horse-drawn or ox-drawn vehicle featuring a large canvas top stretched over wooden bows, typically used to move families.

Crocheting: A way of creating fabric by using a crochet hook to join a single strand of yarn into itself

Crops: Plants grown in large quantities for food, fuel, or other purposes

Cup and ball: A toy made from wood and string, where the objective is to land the ball in the cup

Cutter: A lightweight sleigh with only one seat, usually pulled by one horse

Dry goods: Consumable products such as flour, oats, barley, sugar and more

Dunce cap: A tall, cone-shaped paper hat that schoolchildren in the past were forced to wear as a form of punishment

Embroidery: The art form of taking colourful string and sewing it through cloth to create patterns, letters, and images

Emigrate: Leaving one's home country to live in another

Export: The act of creating goods and or services and selling them to other countries

Ferrier: A blacksmith who trims, balances and shoes horse hooves, and makes horseshoes

Flatiron: A traditional, nonelectric heavy metal tool heated on a stove to press and smooth clothes

Flax: A slender flowering plant (*Linum usitatissimum*) grown for its textile fibers and nutritious seeds

Forage: To search for food and or supplies

Forge: The hearth of a blacksmith

Fur trade: The historical industry of European hunters acquiring animal pelt in Canada

General store: A place where fresh/dry goods, home supplies and more could be purchased

Graces: An outdoor game where two players use pairs of handheld wands to toss and catch a wooden hoop, usually decorated with ribbons, back and forth

Hairwork: The process of transforming human hair into decorative items, keepsakes, or jewelry

Harvest: The act of collecting a bountiful amount of crops

Hatchet: A short-handled, one-handed ax often with a hammerhead

Hay: dried grasses used as animal food

Hearth: The fireplace of the home. It was a natural heater and in some cases a

Heirloom: A precious item that has been in a family's lineage, passed down each generation as a keepsake

Hemp: A plant that was used for textile making

Herbs: Plants that were used for their medicinal properties and were added to food as seasoning

Hide: The dried skin of an animal. Used as clothing and other items

Homestead: A home and surrounding land that is occupied by a family

Hoop rolling: A game in which a large hoop is rolled along the ground, usually pushed by a player using a stick

Hornbook: An educational tool used from the Middle Ages through the 18th century to teach children the alphabet and basic prayers, typically in the form of a wooden paddle

Hudson's Bay Company: A dominant global fur-trading enterprise for over two centuries before transitioning into a mainstream department store retailer and closing in 2025

Hunting: The act of using weapons and traps to catch animals as a means to feed their family and use the material to make items like clothing

Immigrate: To move to live permanently in a new country after leaving the home country

Import: The act of buying products and services from another country

Ice box: Invented in 1802, typically made of wood with a tin or zinc lining packed with straw, sawdust, cork. Would hold blocks of ice to be used as cold storage.

Jacks: A game played by tossing a small rubber ball into the air, picking up small metal pieces called jacks, and catching the bouncing ball with the same hand before it hits the ground

Jacobs ladder: A toy consisting of wooden panels attached to strings. The panels would drop down like a ladder when held in the air

Knitting: The process of interlooping yarn to create textile fabric made of interconnected loops

Land grant: A gift of land from a government to individuals as a reward for service, or an incentive for development

Livestock: A farming term used to describe the animals on someone's farm land

Loft: an upper room or space directly beneath a roof

Log cabin: A small, rustic house built from horizontal tree trunks stacked and notched at the corners

Logging: The process of cutting, processing, and moving trees to clear land or use the wood

Loom: a device for weaving used to create rugs, blankets, and other textiles

Lower Canada: A former British colony corresponding roughly to the southern portion of present-day Quebec and existing from 1791 to 1841

Lumber: Wood that has been cut into boards, planks, or beams used for building

Lye: An alkaline compound made from fermenting wood ash and water. It is a main ingredient in soap

Mason: A tradesperson who builds structures using stone, brick, or concrete

Merchant: A person who manages and sells goods

Morse Code: A method of telecommunication that encodes letters, numbers, and punctuation into standardized sequences of short and long signals, known as dots (dits) and dashes (dahs)

Mortar and pestle: A bowl and blunt stick used to mash food into a paste or powder for cooking

Oil lamp: a light source created by burning oil using a thick wick

One-room schoolhouse: A school building with one teacher who would teach grades 1-8.

Outhouse: A small building, separate from a home or main building that contains a toilet, usually involving a bench over a deep pit

Pasture: A piece of land covered with grass or other plants where farm animals eat

Pedlar: A traveling vendor who walks from place to place or door to door to sell small goods and merchandise

Petticoat: A skirt worn under a woman's top-layer skirt. Multiple petticoats could be worn at one time

Pinafore: A sleeveless, low-necked dress or large apron that people wear over other clothing

Pioneer: An person who migrates and settles in a new region

Portage: Carrying a boat, canoe, or supplies over land between two bodies of water or around an obstacle

Post office: A place where one could receive and mail letters, often times located in general stores

Pot-belly stove: A cast-iron wood-burning or coal-burning stove that has a large, round chamber

Preserves: Food items that are dried, frozen, canned, salted, sugared, or fermented in order to extend their shelf life

Printing press: A machine used to manually print words onto paper

Quill: a writing tool

Rifle: a type of gun used primarily for hunting

Root vegetables: Edible plant parts that grow underground. They were staple crops that could last a long winter when stored properly. They sustained the majority of a family's calories.

(potatoes, carrots, radishes, turnips, beets)

Sampler: A needlework sampler is a piece of embroidery or cross-stitching produced to demonstrate the creator's abilities

Sawmill: A location where raw logs are cut into usable lumber, planks, and boards

Scythe: A curved blade that was used to cut grass and grain in large quantities

Settlement: A community or piece of land where people from another country have created a home or colony

Settler: People who permanently move to a new region or country to live, build homes, and establish communities

Shear: The act of cutting wool from sheep

Shinny: An informal game of hockey played on the ice or on the ground, usually without proper equipment, possibly originating as a game played by Indigenous Peoples

Slate: A small handheld tablet that students would write on, similar to a chalkboard

Spile: A small wooden or metal spout used to drain sap from a tree

Spinning wheel: A device that turns raw material such as cotton and wool, and spins it into thread or yarn to be used for making textile

Squaring off: A technique used when creating log cabins to turn round logs into rectangular planks

Stagecoach: A four-wheeled, horse-drawn vehicle that was used to carry passengers and mail along regular fixed routes

Stereoscope: An optical viewing device that combines two slightly different flat photographs into a single, realistic three-dimensional image

Strap: A leather band used as punishment, typically in schools

Straw: Stalks that are left over after grain is removed from crops like wheat, oats, or rice. Used for animal bedding

Summer kitchen: A small outdoor building located next to a house, used to cook food in the summer

Sweet water: Sap that flows through the trunks of maple trees in early spring

Tallow: The fat of an animal that can be rendered down to make candles, soaps, or to cook with

Telegram: A Morse code message sent using a telegram, which uses electrical and radio signals

Telegraph: A device that sends a Morse code message, also known as a telegram, using electrical or radio signals

Thaumatrope: A small optical toy that uses a card or disk with different pictures on each side. When spun the pictures appear as one

Three sisters: Corn, beans, and squash crops when they are grown together, originating with the Iroquois People

Tinsmith: Tradespeople who work with sheets of tin to create a variety of housewares such as cups, kettles, lanterns, and more.

Trading post: A remote store or small settlement where people buy, sell, or exchange goods

Trapping: The act of hunters setting out traps to hunt for animals

Treaty: A legally binding written agreement between two sovereign states

Typewriter: A machine with a keyboard that prints letters, numbers, and symbols directly onto paper

Union jack: National flag of the United Kingdom, used by Canada until 1965

United empire loyalist: An American Loyalist who stayed loyal to the British Crown and moved to British North America during or after the American Revolutionary War

Upper Canada: A former British colony corresponding roughly to the southern portion of Ontario and existing from 1791 to 1841

Wares: Goods, merchandise, or products that a person or company offers for sale

Weaving: The process of making fabric by interlacing two sets of yarn or threads at right angles on a loom

Well: A deep hole dug in the ground to reach and bring up groundwater from an underground layer of rock and soil called an aquifer

Whirligig: A toy made by threading a piece of string through the holes of a large button or flat disc which spins when the string is pulled on either side

Wool: A natural fibre obtained from shearing the fleece of sheep

Yoke: Crossbar used to carry buckets of water on the shoulders

Zoetrope: A device that creates the illusion of a moving picture when spun