EARLY COOKING – KITCHEN FURNITURE – FOOD

To witness the several processes of cooking in pioneer times, would alike surprise and amuse those who have grown up since cook stoves came into use. The first thing likely to attract notice would be the wild fire-place, already described. Kettles were hung over the fire to a stout pole, sometimes called *lug-pole*, the end of which were fastened into the sides of the chimney at such height as not to be likely to ignite from the head or sparks. The kettles were suspended on *trammels*, which were pieces of iron rods with a hook on each end. The uppermost one reached nearly down to the fire, and with one or more shorter ones, the kettle was brought to the proper height above the fire. For the want of iron, wooden hooks were sometimes used for trammels. Being directly above the kettles, they were safe from fire.

The long handled frying pan became a common cooking utensil. It was held over the fire by hand; or, to save time, the handle was laid on a box of back of a chair, the pan resting on the fire, while the cook was "setting the table." The pan was also used for baking short cakes. It was placed in a nearly perpendicular position before the fire, leaning slightly backward, with coals under or back of it to bake the under side. A more convenient article was the cast iron, three legged, short handled spider which was set over coals on the hearth, for frying meat. Its legs were of such length and so adjusted, that, when used for baking cakes or bread, being turned up towards the fire, to the proper slope, handle upwards, it would keep is position.

An early mode of baking corn bread, (cast iron ware being scarce) was to put the dough on a smooth board, about two feet long and eight inches wide, placed on the hearth in a slanting position before the fire, when the upper side was baked, the bread was turned over for baking the other side. When lard was plenty, the bread was shortened, and called *johnny cake*. But a better article for baking bread that either the pan or spider, was the cast iron *bake-kettle*, in some places called "Dutch oven," with legs and closely fitted cover. Standing on the hearth with coals under and over it, bread and biscuit were nicely baked. Bread for large families, was, in after years, usually baked in large out-door ovens built of brick or fire-proof stone. Turkeys and spare ribs were roasted before the fire, suspended by a string, a dish or pan being placed underneath to catch the drippings. Some of the inconveniences in cooking in these open fire-places will be readily imagined. Women's hair was singed, their hands were blistered and their dresses scorched. But framed houses with jamb fire-places measurably relieved the pioneer house-wives. In one of the jambs was fixed an iron crane, which could be drawn forward when kettles were put on or taken off. The invention of the cooking stove commenced a new era in cookery; and none, most averse to innovation, have intimated the desire to return to the "old way," which will hereafter be known only to history.

FARE OF THE EARLY SETTLERS.

Among the many hardships of pioneer life, not the least is the difficulty in procuring bread. For at least two years the settler in the woods must obtain his family supplies chiefly from other sources than his own land. This difficulty is enhanced by the remoteness of his residence from older settlements, where his supplies are to be obtained. Hence those who settled in this section within the first few years had a severer experience than those who came after a surplus of grain was produced and mills for grinding it were erected at accessible points. Rev. Dr. Woodend, in his centennial discourse, says:

"The people who settled this country when it was a wilderness are worthy of all honor and kind remembrance. A late writer has said: "A more intelligent, virtuous and resolute class of men never settled any country that the first settlers of western Pennsylvania; and the women who shared their sacrifices were no less worthy." They came here, many of them, in poverty. They found little but hardships for n=many years. They found the land covered with timber. There were for many years neither mills nor factories. With their own strong arms they must cut down the forest and fence the field and build log cabins. Some of the first settlers lived on potatoes chiefly, the first year of their coming.

Upon fish and game the prisoners relied for subsistence until they could raise vegetables and grain. Whole families for many weeks, even months, tasted not a particle of bread, subsisting upon game and other products of the forest. "Ramps" or leeks, with which the woods abounded, furnished to some extent food for man and beast. The leaves, which were in some regions, far advanced before the disappearance of the winter snows, furnished for cattle a valuable pasture ground; and the bulbs, later in the season, were, in time of scarcity, used by the settlers as a substitute for common articles of food. There are still living in this county persons who had eaten many a meal consisting in great part of cooked leeks. Families too, lived for weeks on hulled wheat and on meal from corn pounded out at home. For this purpose, one end of a large block was scooped out, making a cavity holding half a bushel or less of corn. A spring pole was

fixed over the rafters, or to something else of proper height. On one end of the pole a wooden pestle was suspended by a rope. It will readily be imagined that the principal use of the pole was to assist in raising the pestle; and that a small quantity of grain was pounded at a time. The pestle was not in all cases hung to a pole, but was sometimes used wholly by the hand of the operator. A corn cracker or hominy block was attached to some of the first saw mills and to these the settlers would resort for many miles, and wait sometimes two days, in order to get a chance at the hominy mill.