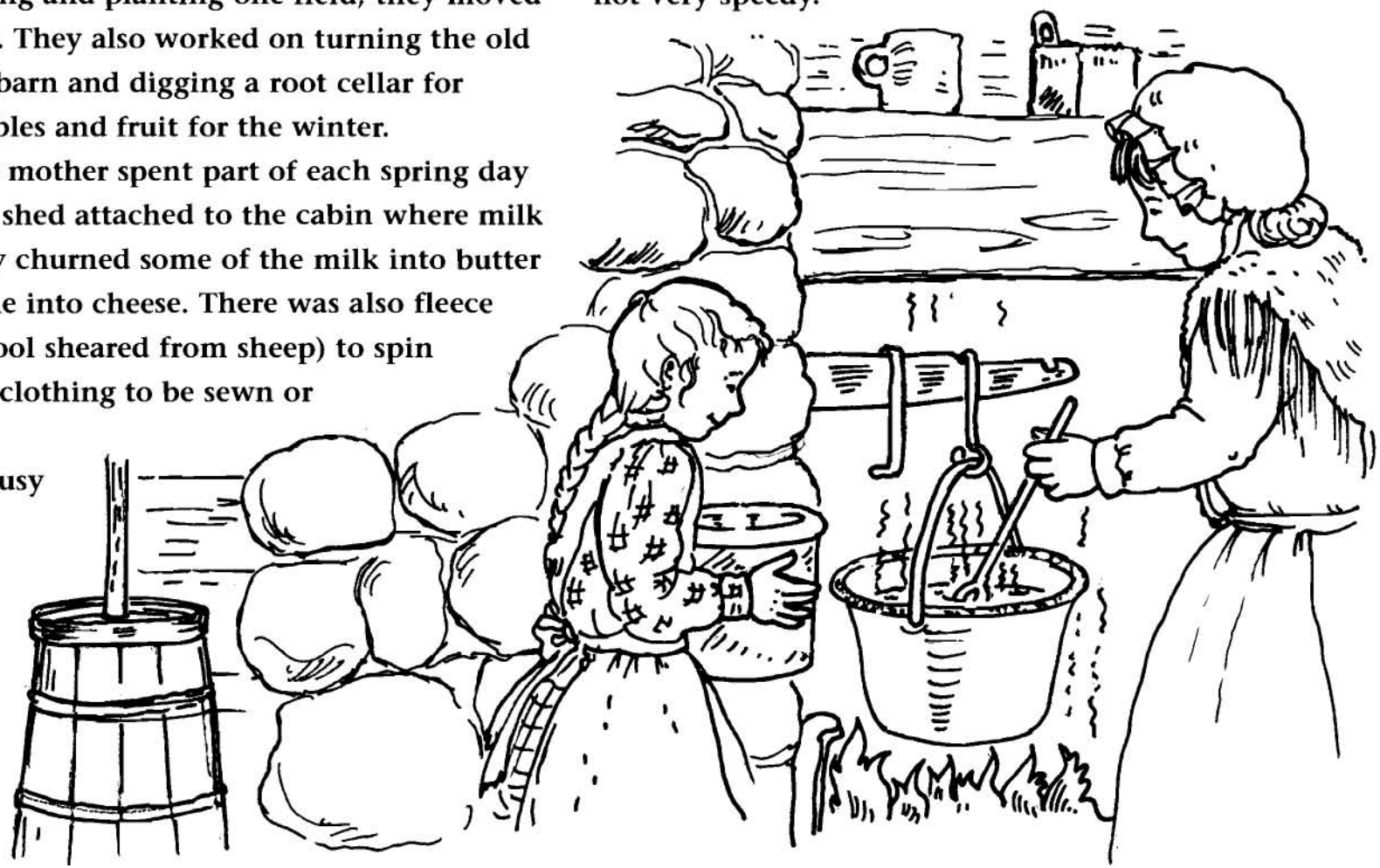
SPRINGTIME MEALS

Making pottery and preserving wildflowers were only a small part of the Butler family's busy springtime work. As soon as Sam and his father finished plowing and planting one field, they moved on to the next. They also worked on turning the old lean-to into a barn and digging a root cellar for storing vegetables and fruit for the winter.

Liz and her mother spent part of each spring day in the dairy, a shed attached to the cabin where milk was kept. They churned some of the milk into butter and made some into cheese. There was also fleece (the coat of wool sheared from sheep) to spin into yarn and clothing to be sewn or mended.

With this busy schedule, Mrs. Butler sometimes made meals that were quick and easy. There were no frozen foods in 1843, of course, and no canned or packaged foods either. Every meal had to be made from scratch, so the pioneer versions of fast food were not very speedy.



PROJECT

HASTY PUDDING

This recipe and the next one will let you taste the kind of hearty meals that pioneer kids ate. Hasty pudding can provide a stick-to-your-ribs breakfast or can be eaten at any time. Leftover hasty pudding is also good fried.

INGREDIENTS

4 cups water
1 teaspoon salt
1 cup cornmeal (white or yellow)
maple syrup

EQUIPMENT

large saucepan with lid
mixing spoon
adult helper

MAKES

4 *to* **6** *servings*

1. Put the water and salt in a saucepan.

2. Ask your adult helper to heat the water and salt to a boil in the covered saucepan.

3. When the water is boiling briskly, sprinkle in the cornmeal, a little at a time. Stir constantly as you add the cornmeal to keep lumps from forming.

4. Lower the heat, cover the saucepan, and simmer for 1 hour. Stir the mixture every few minutes so that it won't stick to the pan. The pudding is ready when it is about as thick as oatmeal.

5. Serve the pudding hot with plenty of maple syrup.

PROJECT CRICKET THERMOMETER

Insects can give you some amazing clues about temperature. When the temperature drops to 48°F, for example, grasshoppers cannot fly. If the temperature drops 8° more, all insects stop chirping or buzzing.

There are several different ways to use the chirping of crickets to find out what the outdoor temperature is. Test out the two methods described here with an adult outside on a spring evening. The second method is easier, but might not be quite as accurate.

MATERIALS

watch with a second hand
pencil
scrap paper
outdoor thermometer
adult helper

METHOD 1

1. Listen carefully to the crickets' chirping until you are sure you can single out the chirps of one cricket.

2. Have your helper time you with the second hand on the watch while you count the number of chirps the cricket makes in exactly 60 seconds. Write the number on a piece of scrap paper.

3. Subtract 40 from the number of chirps. Divide the answer by 4, then add 50 to that number to determine the temperature. For example, if you count 68 chirps, subtract 40 to get 28, divide by 4 to get 7, and add 50 to get a temperature of 57°F.

4. Check your results with the outdoor thermometer.

METHOD 2

1. Have your helper time you while you count the number of chirps in exactly 14 seconds.

2. Add 40 to the number of chirps and you have the temperature. For example, if there are 17 chirps in 14 seconds, adding 40 to 17 means a temperature of 57°F. Does method 2 work? Which method works better?

3. Check your results with the outdoor thermometer.

PROJECT

KNOT THIS WAY

There are many different kinds of knots, and some of them have special purposes. Pioneers used a knot called a clove hitch to hold logs together, and they made a lasso (a long rope with a changeable noose used for roping cattle and horses on the frontier) with a running bowline knot. One of the easiest and most useful of all knots is the square knot. It is very strong, easy to untie, and you can learn it in a few minutes. (In fact, when you tie your shoelaces, you are tying half of a square knot.)

Practice the square knot a few times, and before long you won't even have to think about how to do it. You'll be surprised at how often it comes in handy, not just for projects, but for everyday things like tying packages.

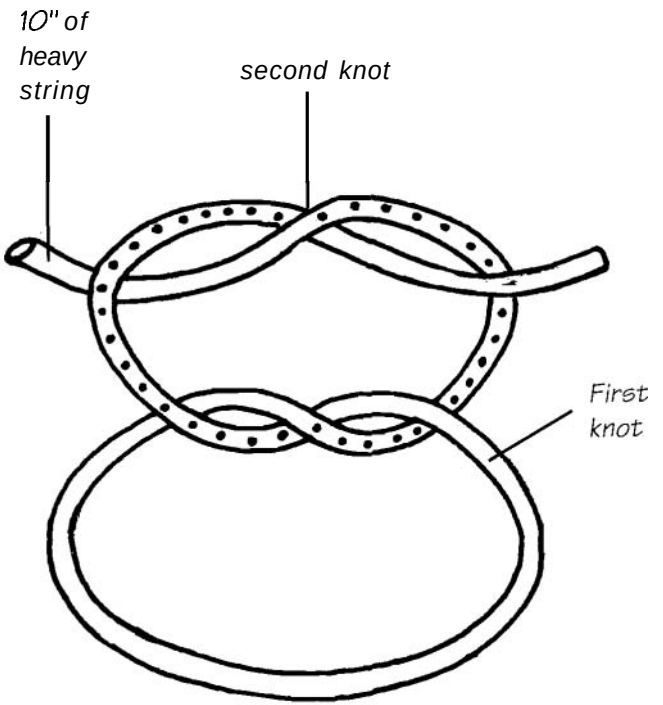
MATERIALS

heavy string, twine, or yarn (about 10 inches long)

1. Tie a knot the way you do when tying your shoes, by looping one end of the string under the other.

2. Tie a second knot, going the other way as shown in the picture. When you see the figure eight form, you know you have it.

3. Pull the ends tight. Try tugging on the ends and you will see that the knot will not loosen. And yet, you can untie it in a second.



square Knot

Dotted line shows the figure eight.