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## ACROSS THE ISLAND

### Holman's Catalogue Dates Back 53 Years

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HOLMAN'S CATALOGUE furnished winter reading for people all across this province when I was a boy. Many is the hour I whiled away "buying" items from one of those catalogues when I was small, and didn't have one cent, let alone the proverbial "two cents to rub together".

I dropped into Roy Carter's "Blue Goose" restaurant one evening a few weeks ago and he showed me one from 1913 that's as good as new. The genial Mr. Carter was good enough to loan it to me for a really good look.

Women's Editor Audrey Jenkins is doing the story on the ladies' items – I believe that our Bill Taylor has photographed some of the styles and you'll likely see Audrey's story and the pictures on the women's page later this week.

I just barely remember the high necks ladies wore on "waists" at that time – they came high around the neck, as this catalogue reveals. There was one V-neck one advertised, and that must have been considered very naughty indeed. Before I leave the women's items to the capable typewriter of Audrey, just one more male observation.

NOT IN ANY pictured ladies garment illustration were you ever allowed to glimpse even a tiny bit of a woman's leg. Even in the corset advertisement, and these featured wasp waists for the most part, the legs were camouflaged so they could not be seen. But the mingling of the sexes was not interrupted by the covering up of the ladies' charms – none was even suggestively visible. They courted each other, married and did the same things, apparently as we did in my courting days and as the young people are doing even now, even when so much of the female body is exposed, at times, it makes one wonder just where the baring process will stop.

### Prices Of 1913 Are Recalled

ENOUGH OF WOMEN'S things, let's look at some prices of 53 years ago. A high grade screen door sold for \$1.50, cheaper ones went at 85 cents. Seedless raisins were 12 packages for \$1.30. Coffee was 35 to 45 cents a pound, camp coffee – it came in bottles – was 20 cents for a small one, or 40 cents for a big one – but no size information was given. They also sold "Essence of coffee" in those days, at 20 cents a bottle. Choice tea was 40 cents a pound.

"Self-rising buckwheat, for griddle cakes", was 15 cents a package and "it needed neither salt, yeast or baking powder."

A cow bell was 30 cents, a 25-gallon milk can \$4.50, solid steel spades sold at 75 cents, a post-hole digger at \$1.20.

The "best house paint" cost \$1.80 a gallon and "best barn paint" was 98 cents a gallon. Handsaws were 90 cents to \$2.00. "Best front door locks" sold at \$1.89 a set, lesser ones for 59 cents, padlocks were 20-30 cents.

Highest quality 3-ply roofing was \$2.25 a roll. Beaverboard was the big item in wallboards then. No price was quoted. But the catalogue said "it takes the place of lathe, plaster and wall paper". A fancy metallic ceiling was shown and I recall an uncle of mine did the ceiling, and also the kitchen walls of a new house with it when I was just a boy.

### Shoe Repairs Done At Home

COBBLER SETS – for shoe repair – sold at 80 cents. They included three lasts for various sized shoes, a hammer, a knife, "sewing, pegging and stabbing awls", two packages of nails, and a sheet of instructions. These sets were used in most homes then. My mother was widowed when her family was small; I don't think she had any particular skills at that sort of thing, but she did all of the cobbling (shoe repairs) that was needed at our home. It was grim necessity, most people just didn't have any money to spend on things that could be done at home.

A note book, or scribbler were unknown, we did our writing in school on slates. The catalogue priced slates at four to 10 cents each, the bigger slates were nine by 13 inches. Slate pencils were 12 for five cents. For present day readers, slates would be filled with writing, then it was erased and you had a clean slate to start work all over again. The recommended practice was to have a small bottle of water and a cloth to wipe the writing off the slate, but other methods were more widely used at times. A spit on the slate and a rubbing with a sweater sleeve pulled over the hand was one method that I recall.

Sunlight soap was a big item then and it sold for five cents for a twin-bar. The same item sells now for 37 cents, Roy Carter tells me.

### Gillette Razors Were \$5.00 Each

STRAIGHT RAZORS were the man's shaving tool then and they cost up to \$2.00 each. But the Gillette safety razor was coming into use, apparently. And it sold for \$5.00. It was silver-plated, which made it expensive. I recall that users were urged not to strop or hone the razor blades at that time. Most people did though.

Minard's Liniment was a household remedy and it sold at 25 cents a bottle. A washing machine sold for \$5.89 – it was hand powered – the price with wringer was \$8.35. A washboard was 25 to 40 cents.

An ice-cream freezer was \$1.25. You put the cream and the added flavorings, etc. into the metal bowl which had a beater arrangement inside that turned as you turned the crank. You packed ice and salt in the space between the metal bowl and the strongly-reinforced wooden bucket into which the bowl fitted.

But a few old-timers, like myself, can remember when they made ice-cream in a half-gallon biscuit can. You fitted the ice and salt around the can, in a large basin, or some similar container; you placed the palm of your hand flat on the covered top of the can and turned the can back and forth as long as your wrist could stand the strain. Then you'd probably take off the cover, scrape the frozen cream off the inside of the can, then turn it some more.

You repeated that performance until you had ice cream inside. It was a laborious process, but the product tasted all the better for having made it yourself.

### Farm Items Were Low Priced

A SET OF driving harness for a horse cost \$15, with breaststrap, with collar and hames it was \$17. Team harness with breeching cost \$33. The best horse collars came for \$3.45. a work pad and breeching was \$5.75.

A hay fork was \$2.50 and a hay carrier \$5.00. Wire hay rope sold for three cents a foot for five-sixteenth size. The three-eighth inch size cost four cents.

A Lowden cow stanchion cost \$1.30. The stanchion setup could be arranged so that every cow in a row of stalls could be released at the same time, the catalogue said.

A steel gate, four feet high, 12 feet long, sold for \$4.65.

Men's shoes had high box toes, for the most part, many were buttoned instead of laced, and the heels were high. I'd liken them to the "Cuban heels" ladies wear now. The prices ran from \$1.75 to \$5.00 for the really expensive ones.

Men's hats sold for 25 cents to \$1.25. Fur felts ran as high as \$2.00. Men's suits sold for \$10 and \$11.50, a really good one cost as much as \$17.

"Motor style" raincoats, or topcoats, came all the way down a man's leg to well below the calf.

HOLMAN'S WERE offering the Hercules bed spring at \$3.25 and it was guaranteed for 25 years. I remember they used to advertize this spring in the Guardian, with some huge weight pictured atop the spring. Memory tells me it was a barrel of flour, which weighed 200 pounds, or a barrel of lime, which weighed 425. I think it was a lime barrel, but my memory is hazy. If any reader can correct me on that one I would appreciate it.

A daisy barrel churn cost \$8.75 and a cylinder churn was \$2.00. Beautiful extension dining-room tables sold at \$7.00

Waltham watches were the real thing in those days, and the 17-jewel watch cost \$15.75.

There are many other things but space is running out. I hope many of you enjoy this reference to merchandising of 53 years ago. My thanks again to Roy Carter for making the catalogue available. I'll be bringing it back within a day or so.