

HISTORY AT HOME



THE GENERAL STORE

When settlers first arrived in the northern interior of British Columbia they only had the things they had managed to bring with them. They knew that once they had settled on their new homestead they would have to make or buy anything else they needed. As the number of settlers in the interior grew, general stores began opening. Each general store had a storekeeper who operated the business and sold supplies to customers.

Albert Huble and Edward Seebach built a general store at the Giscome Portage. The store was a false front, two-story building with an upstairs room that was used as an office. The front of the building had two large display windows and a door in the middle. A great deal of Huble and Seebach's business was done with trappers and First Nations people, who traded furs for goods or credit at the store. We know this because inside the building was a home-made fur press which was used to pack loose furs into tight bundles called bales.

The general store was a busy place that supplied settlers with many of the items that they could not make or grow themselves. Since the Seebach and Huble General Store was also one of the last stores that travelers would find on their way north, many would restock their supplies at Giscome Portage before continuing their journeys.

These old-fashioned stores were called "general stores" because rather than selling one kind of merchandise, like a grocery store selling food or a hardware store selling building supplies, the general store sold all kinds of items. Customers could buy food staples such as oats, lard, flour, sugar, and molasses. Spices could be purchased at the store, as well as luxury items such as coffee, tea, candies, and cookies. Other useful goods, such as pots and pans, dishes, blankets, matches, tools, pencils and pens, writing paper, clothing, fabric, tobacco, candles, nails, and wire were also sold. All of the items at the Seebach and Huble General Stores were shipped up the Fraser River from larger cities so they could be sold to the settlers in the area.



The Seebach and Huble General Store is still running today. To learn more about it, visit: www.hublehomestead.ca/generalstorehistory. Another great resource is our children's book, *Mr. Seebach and the New Store*, available for purchase through Huble Homestead or at Books & Company (www.hublehomestead.ca/childrensbooks).

If you want to use The General Store to inspire at-home learning:

1. **Discuss general stores. Some ideas to get you started:**
 - a. What kinds of items that could be found in general store?
 - b. Why was a general store important to settlers?
 - c. What kinds of people were visiting the general store, and what sorts of things would they buy?
2. **Discuss how settlers acquired goods 100 years ago, and how we acquire them today:**
 - a. Use the worksheet below to identify where goods could be obtained, both today and 100 years ago. Could the items be made or grown at home? If not, what kind of store would you go to?



Shopping: Then & Now

On the left are some items that people like to have in their homes.
Write down where you might get these items, today versus 100 years ago. Could you make them at home? What kind of store could you buy them in?

Item	100 Years Ago	Today
Food		
Candy		
Dishes		
Clothing		
Blankets		
Tools		
Pens, pencils and paper		