

MOUNT PROSPECT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MUSEUM JOURNAL



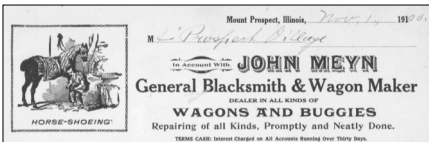
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DOMESTIC TOOLS: THE HIDDEN BACKBONE OF MOUNT PROSPECT



Unlike people, not all tools are created equal. But they are all important to life and the pursuit of happiness - liberty, not so much!

Any item that can be used to achieve a certain task or goal is a tool. Some are used in a farming enterprise. Others are used in construction or manufacturing. And don't forget about those tools used in the garden, kitchen and laundry.



In years-gone-by, for instance, a swage was used by blacksmiths to form metal into detailed shapes that were too intricate to form with a regular hammer. A swage was an essential tool to Mount Prospect's first blacksmith, John Meyn, so that he was able to make horseshoes. Down the road at the Wille Cheese Factory, a curd agitator was a tool necessary to help milk curdle with rennet, so that curds could form.

Meanwhile, in their homes, Meyn's and Wille's wives and children were using domestic tools to manually accomplish the chores necessary to keeping their households running smoothly. When you think about it, these founders of Mount Prospect wouldn't have been able to accomplish what they did if they had had to go home and cook and tend to the

house and family at the end of a long day in the shop or factory.

Domestic tools perhaps played an even more important role in Mount Prospect's development than industrial tools did. Managing and maintaining a household was as involved as running a business, shop or factory. Although women at the turn of the century were portrayed as dainty and delicate, their jobs at home were anything but. Some of the household chores that women did, most on a daily basis, included: cooking, cleaning, gardening, sewing, mending, ironing, canning and

keeping the house warm during the winter. Tools gave women a helping hand in providing their family with a structured and stable home.

Some domestic tools are still in use today like a darning egg or a rolling pin, but others have become obsolete or have evolved beyond recognition. Today we often take these tools for granted, or we don't realize how big of a part they played in everyday life.

Having clean clothes was not only an act of proper hygiene, it was also a social standard. If a person was seen in town wearing dirty and unkempt clothes, it was a poor reflection on the entire family. It was not only unattractive, it also conveyed the impression that the wife was not equipped with the proper tools to take care of her family.

Laundry was an absolutely necessary chore, and it took an entire day to complete. Before washing machines were introduced, laundry was done manually, using boiling hot water and Fels-Naptha soap. Dirty clothes were mixed into soapy hot water inside a copper boiler, which sat on the hottest lids of the wood burning stove. The main tool that helped with laundry was actually advertised in the 1908 *Sears, Roebuck & Co. Catalogue* as a "washer." It was called a washer because it truly was the washing machine. It can also be referred to as an

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SAVE THESE DATES...

- June 18, 2015:**
Mount Prospect Stories: A Peek in Mount Prospect's Attic at the Mount Prospect Public Library, 7 p.m.
 - June 27, 2015:**
Totally Tools Auction at St. Paul Lutheran School gymnasium, 10 S. School St., 7 p.m., \$10.
 - July 17, 2015:**
Life as a Prairie Girl at the MPHS Museum Campus, 9:30-11:30 a.m. and 1:30-3:30 p.m., \$10.
 - August 9, 2015:**
History Day Bake Sale at Farmer's Market at the Mount Prospect train commuter parking lot, 8 a.m. to 1 p.m.
 - August 19, 2015:**
Silent Movie Night/Ice Cream Social at the MPHS Museum Campus, opens at 7:30 p.m., movie starts at 8 p.m.
 - October 29, 2015:**
Purse Auction at the Village Hall Community Room, 7 p.m., \$10.
- For more information contact the Historical Society, 847/392-9006.*

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FROM THE DESK OF THE DIRECTOR



Lindsay Rice
Executive Director

One of the greatest ways to teach history is to give people the opportunity to *live* history.

On July 17, second through fourth grade girls will be given the chance to

experience *Life as a Prairie Girl*, a new program coordinated by the MPHS Living History Committee. The program will be held at the MPHS Museum Campus. The day will be split into two sessions: the first will be from 9:30-11:30 a.m., and the second will be from 1:30-3:30 p.m.

Everyone in the family played an integral part in maintaining the homestead, including the children. Young girls were required to help their mothers with any chores that needed to be done around the house. Tasks like cleaning the house, preparing food, maintaining the garden and helping with laundry were all things that young girls helped their mothers with.

Aside from doing chores, girls were also allowed to play games. Because a lot of families on the prairie did not have much money, girls would often make dolls out of items they had on their farm. Common homemade dolls were made out of corn husks, paper or yarn. "There is something extra special about homemade dolls. They are never perfect, nor are they as beautiful as the porcelain dolls some girls own. Homemade dolls stir the imagination and allow creativity to run wild. They are also unique from one another, making each one special in its own way. It is interesting that throughout history when girls had difficult (and unpleasant) chores, they were perfectly satisfied making their own

rudimentary dolls and letting their imagination take care of the rest," explained Lindsay Rice, MPHS executive director.

Girls who attend this program will have the opportunity to partake in chores of a prairie homestead, and create their very own homemade doll. Reservations are required for this program and enrollment will be limited. Parents will be responsible for both drop-off and pick-up. There is a \$10 admission fee to cover the cost of supplies.

To register your child for this program, please contact the Historical Society at 847/392-9006 or info@mtphistory.org.

At the turn of the century, when children weren't occupied with doing chores, they were allowed time to enjoy the simple pleasures of being a kid. Some children of 2015 might not be able to imagine having fun without electronics, but kids 120 years ago had no choice. Despite not having electricity, there were toys that gave children the same amazement as a TV. Magic Lanterns were widely popular from the 17th century until around the 1920s. A magic lantern was an early type of slide projector. It was typically made out of metal, and the images were painted or drawn onto a glass slide.

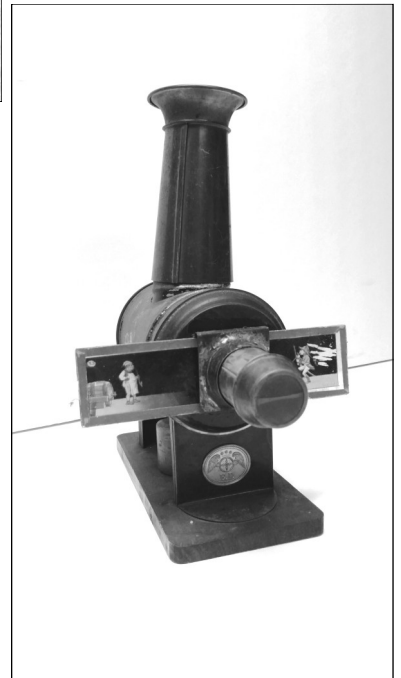
FROM THE COLLECTION



A candle or kerosene lamp was placed underneath the lantern to flood the inside with light, projecting the image onto the screen. The magic lantern brought pictures to life, even more so than stereoscopes. Not only was this entertainment for children, it was also a way for them to make money. A child could charge his or her friends a penny to watch their magic lantern show. Blank glass slides were also available so that kids could make their own slides using

crayons. The Mount Prospect Historical Society has a magic lantern from 1900 in its collection. Along with this magic lantern are over 30 slides, a box of blank slides and crayons. Because it is a unique object in our collection that is in excellent condition, we have chosen to digitize it as a part of the Illinois State Library Digital Grant project. It will also be on display at the Mount Prospect Public Library this summer.

Left: Magic lantern slide.
Below: Magic lantern



*"DOMESTIC TOOLS",
CONT FROM PAGE 1*

"agitator", and it looks similar to a metal plunger with a wooden handle. It was used to surge the hot water through the clothing, which got rid of the dirt, sweat and germs. Without the agitator, the person doing the laundry would have no way of properly cleaning the clothes without burning their hands.

The agitator was essential to doing the laundry, and it was responsible for the family to have clean clothes.

Aside from clothing, it was equally important to keep the house clean. Brooms were used to sweep hard surfaces, but before the first vacuum was introduced in the 1920s, a tool was required to clean all the carpets and rugs. Imagine what our rugs and carpets would look like if we didn't clean them. It would not only be a health hazard, but the embarrassment from when guests came to visit would be unbearable. Before the first vacuum, people used a tool called a "carpet-beater." Its function is in its name, and its design was so effective that it didn't change for over a hundred years. In her oral history, Bessie Friedrichs Barns remembered having to drag the rugs and carpets outside, throw them over the clothes line and beat the dirt and dust out. It wasn't a particularly pleasant job, but it was certainly necessary in order to maintain a clean house to entertain guests.



There are many kitchen tools that we still use to this day. But one of the tools that we don't use anymore was customary in every kitchen across America until the 1950s - a churn. Unlike today, it was common then for a family to have one or two cows to produce milk. Milk was used for a variety of things, but one of the most important ones was for butter.

When cream was separated from the milk, it was put into a churn to become butter. There are many types of butter churns, but one of the most common types for a household kitchen was the paddle churn. A paddle churn involved wooden paddles that were placed inside a wood or glass container. They were attached to a metal rod, and were rotated by a hand crank. When the crank was in motion, the paddles rotated, which churned the cream into butter. A paddle churn could make butter in much smaller amounts than a plunge or dash churn, with which most Americans are familiar. This is why the paddle

churn was so convenient, and was widely used for so many years. The measure of convenience can be compared to the luxury of having a Keurig coffee maker, instead of having an industrial sized coffee urn. Would you want to make 100 cups of coffee when you only need one? This is why the paddle churn was such a great tool to have in the kitchen. It allowed families to consume butter only as they needed it, so that none of their milk would go to waste.

Another domestic tool that was a staple in every household was the coffee grinder. Even today we rely on this mechanism, though we may not realize it. Whether you're sitting down to eat breakfast, or visiting with a close friend at your kitchen table, neither would be the same without one thing: coffee. Caffeinated or not, coffee has become so entrenched in our society, that it has its own subculture. In modern society, we can always count on being able to buy a cup of coffee or making some at home. The coffee we make at home is usually already ground. If it is not, we have the option of grinding them with an electric coffee grinder.

At the beginning of the 20th century, and earlier, coffee was just as important to society as it is today. However, then coffee was mostly sold as a bean, rather than as grounds. In order for people to enjoy their hot cup of morning coffee in the morning, it was necessary to have a coffee mill in their kitchen. A coffee mill does the exact same thing as an electric coffee grinder, except the grinders are turned by a hand crank. Coffee beans were bought at the local dry goods store, like the one that was owned by William Busse Jr. from 1900 to 1927. The beans were ground in the coffee mill



and stored for later use.

Without a coffee mill, the beans would have to be ground using a pestle and mortar. Coffee mills were such effective tools, that they were used as late as the 1960s.

Every tradesmen and business that began in Mount Prospect was able to flourish and serve the community because of the specialized tools that they used. But behind every business owner, factory worker and tradesman, was a warm house, a home-cooked meal and the promise of clean clothes.

These are the small things in life that still keep us going throughout the day, but are often taken for granted. If Christina Meyn did not have an agitator to wash the clothes, perhaps John might not have been perceived as the hard-working and upstanding citizen that people remember him as now. Cook County Commissioner William Busse's Victorian house might not have seemed as grand if it had dirty carpets. Without the ability to make butter or coffee, the Meyns, Willes, Busses and Mochlings might have all been stripped of the simple things in life that sustained motivation.

The prosperity of Mount Prospect did not start with its local industries, it started with its domestic stability and the tools that made a comfortable life possible.





MOUNT PROSPECT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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TOTALLY TOOLS AUCTION

If you are in the market for some great new or gently-used tools or love to collect interesting tools from the past, you will want to mark your calendar for the new event that the Mount Prospect Historical Society (MPHS) is offering this summer.

On Saturday, June 27 the Society will hold its inaugural "Totally Tools Auction and Beer and Barbeque Tasting" at 7 p.m. in the Saint Paul Lutheran School gymnasium, 10 S. School St., Mount Prospect.

The evening will feature tools, new, gently used and possibly antique, which will be sold via a live auction, as well as at cash and carry tables. Tool aficionado Laura Luteri will be the auctioneer. Tickets can be purchased for \$10 each at the museum or via PayPal at www.mtphist.org. Reservations are needed by June 22.

Attendees will also be invited to taste craft beers brewed by Only Child Brewing Company in Gurnee (www.onlychildbrewing.com). A local resident with flavor expertise will also provide a barbecue tasting.

Those who wish to donate new, gently-used or vintage tools should phone Chad Busse at 847/253-1634 or Cindy Bork at 847/392-9006 to arrange for a drop-off or pick-up.

Proceeds from the "Totally Tools Auction and Beer and Barbeque Tasting" will benefit the MPHS's 1896 Central School restoration fund. Sponsors for the event are the Illinois Barbeque Society, Robert Bosch Tool Corporation, Only Child Brewing Company and Busse Automotive.

