

Harrison Heritage News

Published monthly by Harrison County Historical Society, PO Box 411, Cynthiana, KY, 41031

October 2004



Vol. 5 No. 10

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THE KITCHEN STOVE

George D. Slade

At the time of this writing, I am in my 78th year (7/4/94) and do a lot of reminiscing. Near the top of the list of my memories would have to be "the kitchen stove." In those early days, (1916-1930s) we did not have electricity, gas, or running water to accommodate the many kitchen appliances that we enjoy today. Some folks now call them "ranges" but to us they were "stoves." Other than providing warmth for the kitchen, cooking on the top surface and baking in the oven, it served many other purposes.

There were many makes and models of the kitchen stove. Generally, it was made of cast iron, polished black, and weighed several hundred pounds. Some models had doors finished in white or colored porcelain with chrome trim. Once placed in the kitchen and connected to the flue with black sheet metal pipe, it became a semi-permanent fixture.

A typical stove would have six round, flat caps, or lids, about eight inches in diameter, smooth on the top side to be flush with the smooth stove top. Each lid had, near the outer edge, a recess about three-fourths to one-half inch into which an iron cap lifter could be inserted. The caps were supported by various shapes of lift-off framework, all smooth on the top side. Once the framework and caps were assembled on top of the stove,



(Above) Black cast iron kitchen stoves could be found in most Harrison County homes in the days before 1930. Fuel was either coal or wood. Photo of c. 1900 stove courtesy of Ripley Museum, Ripley, Ohio, www.ripleymuseum.org.

a smooth, level cooking surface was provided.

An eye-level back panel extended the length of the stove. A metal cabinet about ten by twelve inches and also at eye level, was connected to the top of the back panel and was the same length of the panel. This cabinet extended over the cooking top and absorbed heat from the cooking top. It was used as a food warmer.

At one end of the stove was the fire box at the bottom of which were two grates to support the fire materials. These were made so that they could be shaken from the outside to cause the clinkers to drop into the ash pan below. Access to the fire box to add wood or coal could be had by removing a lid or through a hinged door on the side. At the far end, away from the fire box, was the warm water reservoir. Extending front to back, it was about twelve inches wide and twelve inches deep. The reservoir water never boiled.

Now to get cooking. First we need to build a fire. Begin by shaking the grates to get out the clinkers. Remove the top lids over the fire box. Place a coal oil-soaked corn cob on the grates. Lay some wood kindling on next, then some wood or coal. Replace caps. Remove and empty the ash pan. Through the ash pan opening, with a wooden match, light the oil-soaked cob. Replace ash pan and close door. Open the damper. When the top above the fire box gets hot, partly close the damper. If you want to get the oven hot, move the oven damper to the hot position. This forces the heat to go around the oven before reaching the flue, causing the oven to heat.

While the oven is heating, make biscuits, slice ham, put water in the graniteware coffee pot. Place the pot near the front end. When the water boils, add ground coffee to the pot. Place the ham in a cast iron skillet and set the skillet on the cooking top. Put some brown sugar and a little water in a pan and place this on the cooking top. By now, the oven is hot, so open the oven door and slide the black pan containing the biscuits onto the oven

(The Kitchen Stove continued from

(Continued on page 3)

Harrison County Historical Society
Larry Moss, President

**Meeting Report- September 15th -
Sally Cammack**

During the business meeting Larry Moss, president, reminded members of the upcoming Battle of Cynthiana reenactment, and reviewed the ongoing Handy House situation. Not enough people signed up to participate in Renaissance folklife sessions. Program speaker Sally Cammack presented a most interesting program regarding her gourds, the development of her craft, and information about her Cynthiana shop, The Gourd Patch.

Next Meeting October 15th to Feature Artist

Ben Mansur will present the October program, October 15 at 7:00 P.M. Mr. Mansur is an outstanding artist who has lived in Harrison County since the 1980s. He is perhaps best known for his wood sculptures. Be sure and attend his lecture which should be both interesting and educational.

**New Book: Historic Battle Grove
New Book: Historic Battle Grove Cemetery -
Self-Guided Tour**

A thirty-page, spiral bound guidebook, by Charles Feix, which describes 22 monuments and includes a guide map, is \$5.00 at the cemetery office. To order by mail, send \$7.00, which includes postage and handling, to: Battle Grove Cemetery, 531 East Pike Street, Cynthiana, Kentucky 41031.

**Harrison County, Ky., History
on the Internet:**

- www.cynthianaky.com - *Harrison Heritage News* back issues are archived on the "Historical Society link found at cynthianaky.com." (Internet search engine www.google.com searches these back issues.) Church photos, history and other information is on this site.
- Battle of Cynthiana Reenactment Information - www.battleofcynthiana.org
- Hinkson and Ruddle Station Historical Society: www.ramsha1780.org

**CYNTHIANA-HARRISON COUNTY
MUSEUM**

112 S. Walnut St., Cynthiana, Ky. 41031 Hrs: 10-5 Fri-Sat

Martha Barnes

Skillets, Kettles, and Stoves on Display

Although our Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum has a great number of fantastic items on display, there also are many helpful books in the museum. How wonderful it would be if we had the space to set up a library/reading/research room as a part of the museum.

Among the books are copies/reproductions of old Sears catalogs. While considering that George Slade would write an article on stoves for this month's newsletter, I perused a 1908 Sears, Roebuck Catalogue. It is rather amazing to find deluxe six hole steel ranges complete with reservoirs, warming closet, and oven door thermometer for \$15.95. Elaborate heating stoves were advertised at \$23.95 and the Acme Giant which "burns anything" was available for \$4.95.

Those first Harrison Countians probably spent much time in front of their fireplaces since they were their only source of heat. Also the source of light, the fireplaces were used for food preparation. Andirons and several cast iron cooking utensils are in the museum collection. Stoves, of course, were much better than fireplaces. In the museum housekeeping section is a fine "Iron Queen" four cap wood/coal cookstove loaned by Clarence and Flossie Williams. Some of the stoves came with attachments. Ruby Lenox has loaned both a water reservoir for a coal/wood stove and a removable oven for an oil cook stove. Cast iron skillets, tea kettle, waffle iron, various pots and pans, flat irons as well as graniteware items are displayed. A miniature reproduction of a coal/wood range has been loaned by George Slade and the late Jim Bob and Hallie Martin provided a miniature reproduction of a pot belly stove. Harold Slade has refurbished two heating stoves which are on exhibit in the museum annex.

Our museum displays help us to better see the way we were and help us to diligently strive to make the future better. How amazed our ancestors would be to see microwave ovens, convection ovens, gas grills, coffeemakers, gas fireplace logs, etc. etc.! The Roman historian, Tacitus once said, " All those things which are now held to be of the greatest antiquity were at one time new; and what we today hold up by example, will rank hereafter as a precedent."

The Cynthiana-Harrison County Trust, Inc. (the museum group) usually meets on the second Saturday of each month at 5:00 P.M. in the annex. We encourage you to attend. Although still in the planning stages, we are hoping to move the museum into the present annex building. This will require much study, organization, time, treasure, and talent. We need your support.



A graniteware coffee pot was always on the Slade family kitchen stove. Introduced in 1876, graniteware is still being manufactured.

(The Kitchen Stove continued from page 1) shelf. Turn the ham. The coffee has brewed so slide it to the end towards the warm water reservoir to keep it hot but not boiling. Take the ham from the skillet to the plate and place it in the warmer above the cooking top. Pour the brown sugar molasses into a bowl. Break eggs into the ham grease in an iron skillet. Toss the egg shells into the coffee pot to settle the grounds. Check the biscuits. They're done. Remove the from the oven. Turn the eggs, then yell "breakfast's ready."

On hot summer days enough was cooked in he morning for both the noon meal, which we called dinner, and for supper, the evening meal. The fire was then allowed to go out until the next morning. Sometimes, though, it was necessary to keep the fire going when canning fruits and vegetables or on wash days. At these times the kitchen became almost unbearably hot.

It was in the winter months that the cookstove came into its own. I have memories of coming in out of the snow, placing my wet gloves and socks on top of the warmer cabinet to dry, then opening the oven door, pulling up a chair and warming my feet and hands from the oven heat.

At night, after supper, we might let the fire die down a little until there were only red hot coals. Then we could remove the lids from the fire box, bring out the wire mesh corn popper and pop the corn over the hot coals. We would then pour the popped corn into a dishpan, cover it with melted butter and a little salt. Then it was time for the adults to sit at the kitchen table for a few games of euchre while the kids played on the kitchen floor, all enjoying the delicious popped corn.

When my mother would bake angel food cakes, of course she used only the whites of the eggs. She would put the yokes back into a half shell, add a little salt and pepper, then set the egg shell into the cap lifter recess to cook. In a few minutes it was done. We would then take a spoon and eat the contents. Not a bad snack in the middle of the afternoon for a hungry kid.

Not much was wasted in those days. When digging potatoes, Dad would save all the small little ones ("marbles", he called them). On snowy days when the hens couldn't get out of the chicken house, he would fill a kettle with the small potatoes, put them on the kitchen stove and boil them until they were soft, then add a little wheat bran, crushed hot peppers and Watkins liniment, mash and stir it all together, then feed it to the hens. They would eat this concoction, then shuffle around the chicken house, cackling all the time. Dad said it made them lay more eggs.

Of course, there was always a tea kettle of water on the stove top, full and hot for the various needs of the day, such as washing the dishes or scalding a chicken. On ironing day a number of black flat irons were kept on the stove top, hot and ready. Wash days, usually Monday, would find the copper wash boiler on the stove full of water and dirty clothes into which had been shaved some lye soap. A cut-off broom stick was used frequently to punch the soil from the clothes. I always thought that we wore out more clothes from washing than from wearing. Lye soap, made from grease and concentrated lye, was usually manufactured in a big iron kettle outside, but if the weather was bad or if there was not too large a quantity, it would be made on the kitchen stove.

A staple in our diet those days was "clabber" cheese, now known by the more dignified name of "cottage" cheese. To make clabber cheese, two or three or more one gallon crocks of milk were placed on the back area of the warm water reservoir. In about a day the warmth would cause the milk to sour and clabber. This clabber was then poured into a cloth sugar sack and hanged on the clothes line to drain, thus separating the curds from the whey. The whey was caught in a slop bucket to feed to the hogs. After thoroughly draining, the bag of curds was emptied into a kettle, salted, cream added, stirred thoroughly and, presto, "clabber cheese." I always liked to eat it while it was still warm, right out of the bag, before the cream was added, with a little salt, and right in my hand.



An 1860s print of a Victorian-era kitchen features an early cast iron stove. Kitchens became unbearably hot in the summer but the heat was welcomed in wintertime. Courtesy of www.housemouse.net.

(THE KITCHEN STOVE Continued from page 3)

The stove oven served many purposes. Some models had a thermometer in the door which might give a remote idea of the oven's interior temperature. However, most baking was accomplished from educated guesses and experience. A straw was pulled from the kitchen broom and stuck into the cake to test its doneness. Children were warned not to jar the floor while the cake was baking. Jarring would cause the cake to fall.

Apples were peeled, sliced and dried in the sun on the smokehouse roof, then dusted with sulfur and warmed in the oven before storing for winter use. The sulfur kept them from molding. The oven played a major role in raising chickens.

Sometimes the hen would take her chicks off the nest before all the eggs were hatched. Some might be "pipped" but still in the shell. We would take these in, place them on rags on the warm oven door, help them out of the shell, let them dry, then put them back with the hen. Often the hen would venture too far into the weeds with her brood. Then a sudden downpour of rain might develop. The hen would try to hover her chicks but often there would be too many for her to cover and some would drown. We would take these seemingly lifeless chicks to the house, place them on the oven door, rub them gently with a dry cloth and frequently bring them back to life.

There were some chores associated with operating the kitchen stove. It was my job in the afternoon, after school, to bring in coal, wood kindling and corn cobs to put in the can of coal oil. Then empty the ashes. Sometimes when it seemed that the oven wasn't heating properly, it was necessary to take the soot rake and remove the soot from under the oven through a little rectangular hole below the oven door.

Many families considered the kitchen stove their most valued household possession. I have heard stories of homes catching fire and the first item considered saving was the kitchen stove. One incident involved two neighboring men who rushed into a burning home, picked up the stove, fire and all and carried it to the safety of the yard. Later the same two men returned to move the stove and found that both of them together could not budge even one end.

I am sure that the kitchen stove is in the Smithsonian Institute. If not, then it should be, because it played a very big role in the making of America. [George D. Slade]

Federal District Judge Mac Swinford's Civil Rights Decisions Praised

[Reviewed by William A. Penn]
A recent article in *The Register* of the Kentucky Historical Society (Vol. 101, No. 3) mentions the civil rights decisions of Federal district judge Mac Swinford, from Cynthiana. The article, "The Fayette County School Integration Controversy, 1971-72: Removing the Vestiges of Segregation," by David L. Wolfford, traces the court cases that forced Fayette county to integrate the county's lower grades.

In 1971, Robert Jefferson and three other parents filed suit in Lexington's U. S. District Court [*Robert Jefferson et al v. Fayette County Board of Education*] "claiming that the board maintained a dual system," and declared the lower grades were in fact segregated. The plaintiffs asked that attendance zones and bus routes be redrawn so that "no school had more than a one-third black enrollment and to repair the decaying inner-city black



(Above) Federal district judge Mac Swinford. Photo, 1972, Lexington Herald-Leader.

schools."

Arguments began in January 1972. On June 13, 1972, Judge Mac Swinford found for the plaintiffs "and declared the Fayette County board in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment. In response to Swinford's order, the Fayette

County school board closed five inner-city, mostly black schools and implemented busing blacks.

Judge Swinford had a record of supporting civil liberties. In 1970, he overturned the suspension of a long-haired student that had not met a school's rigid standards. "Swinford wrote the opinion in the nation's first post-*Brown* [*v. Board of Education*] desegregation case in 1955, ordering Adair County to allow black students to enroll in its white schools." In April 1963, he ordered the Bowling Green school system to do the same. He also "condemned the Kentucky High School Athletic Association for following racist policies."

The article concludes, "We can only speculate when the vestiges of the old system [of segregation] would have disappeared had the [*Jefferson*] plaintiffs not brought the matter to court and had Swinford ruled differently in this historic decision."

CIVIL WAR IN EASTERN KENTUCKY SEMINAR INCLUDED BATTLE OF CYNTHIANA

On September 24th, the first Civil War Symposium on the Civil War in Eastern Kentucky was held in Pikeville, Kentucky, hosted by Randall Osborne. Speakers who have researched Eastern Ky units included Marlitta Perkins (14th Ky. U.S.); Robert Baker (39th Ky. U.S.); Jim Prichard (10th Ky. Mtd. C.S.A.); and John David Preston, author of the *Civil War in the Big Sandy Valley*. Bill Penn presented a slide show on the Second Battle of Cynthiana, which included the 39th Ky. under Burbridge and Morgan's 10th Ky. Mr. Osborne hopes to organize another symposium next year where researchers of the Civil War in Eastern Kentucky can exchange information.

Harrison County, Kentucky, Historical Publications

available from Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum, 112 South Walnut Street, P.O. Box 411, Cynthiana, KY 41031 (859-234-7179); open Fridays and Saturdays 10 AM - 5 PM:

- Boyd, Lucinda, *Chronicles of Cynthiana*. This is a reprint of the rare 1894 edition, which includes family histories, the famous account of David Sheely and his ghost, and other historical sketches and scattered accounts of persons and events connected with Cynthiana and Harrison County. 262 pp. Hardbound. \$20.00.
- June 1896 *Cynthiana Democrat* reprint. This was a special edition with biographical sketches and photographs of prominent men and women; many photographs of buildings; city/county government, church and school information is included. 24 pp. Paperback, 12"x18". \$5.00
- *Cynthiana Since 1790*. Virgil Peddicord (1986). Mr. Peddicord attempted to list the owners/businesses located on each lot from the founding of the city through the mid-1980s, including subdivisions added through 1923. 171 pp. (See separate index below). Paperback. \$20.00
- *Index - Cynthiana Since 1790* (William A. Penn). Mr. Peddicord did not prepare a comprehensive index for his book. This supplemental index contains about 3,500 names and a reference city street map. 30 pp. Paperback. \$3.00
- *Writings of Colonel William M. Moore, (1837-1927)* compiled by Andrew B. "Andy" Peak (2002). Includes 1921-1922 articles he wrote for the *Cynthiana Democrat* about his life. He was born in Harrison Co., but his family soon moved to Lewis Co., Mo.; in 1849 he moved back to Harrison Co., and he wrote much about life in Cynthiana in the early 1850s; he joined the CSA army in 1861 and fought in battles at Lexington, Mo.; Pea Ridge, Arkansas; and Shiloh, Tenn. The book includes several family obituaries and two letters that contain Moore genealogy. 10 family photographs; index; paperback, 71 pp. \$10.00/ \$3.00 shipping. Limited supply.
- *This Old House* by Katherine Wilson. Now back in print, this book tells the stories of twenty-six early Harrison Co. houses and the families who have occupied them. Much material on Harrison Co. history. Exterior and interior b & w photos of each house. Originally printed 1956-1957. 70 pp., new index, paperback. \$15.00 (An index is available for earlier editions, which had no index).
- *Cromwell's Comments*, by John M. Cromwell (1862-1951) is a reprint of Cromwell's 1928-1941 *Cynthiana Democrat* columns on the history of Cynthiana (Harrison Co., KY). A fine writer and historian, Mr. Cromwell covered many topics, including fairs, horses, fires, churches, businesses, cemeteries, government, Civil War, social events, and the Licking River. Sometimes he quoted old county histories, updated the information, and then added his personal reminiscences of interesting personalities from his career as banker and mayor. William A. Penn and George D. Slade, editors. Paperback; preface; 2 maps; 21 photos; 4 illus.; annotated; index; 200 pp. (*Cynthiana Democrat*, 2002), \$10 plus \$3 shipping.

Shipping/handling for above books: Please include a handling and shipping fee of \$4.00 for first book (unless otherwise noted above), \$2.50 for each additional book; you will be notified if special shipping fees apply. No shipping fee on *Index - Cynthiana Since 1790*, if ordered with the book. Make checks/money orders payable to "Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum." No credit cards. Prices/fees subject to change.

Membership - Harrison County Historical Society- Join Today

Send name and address with dues to: Harrison County Historical Society, P. O. Box 411, Cynthiana, Kentucky 41031. Membership fee \$5.00 (includes Harrison Heritage News) due annually January 1.

Cynthiana Civil War Driving Tour Brochure Available

Visit the Harrison County Chamber next to the Old Jail on W. Pike Street or the Cynthiana-Harrison County Museum for a free tour guide brochure. The illustrated guide includes photos of the commanders, an 1862 battle print, and a detailed map. Don't miss the Civil War in Cynthiana interpretive sign in front of the courthouse, listing the principle Civil War sites of the First and Second Battle of Cynthiana.