

The Museum of Eastern Shore Life

Preserving the Heritage and History of the Eastern Shore



Welcome to 2009

CONTENTS

- COVER... 2008 train show
- Page 2.....The Clothes Iron: a History
- Page 3..... Specialty Irons
- Page 4..... Ironrite Automatic Iron
- Page 5..... Diversified Farming
- Page 6..... New Additions
- Page 7..... Shortall's Honored
Train Show Pictures
- Page 8.....Request for Pictures
Membership Form

They came and they came and they came. Despite the inclement weather and the downturn in the economy attendance at the Christmas Train Show was approximately 1800 happy adults and children. Santa Claus' knee was well worn at the end of four days.

Many hundreds of homemade cookies and 50 gallons of punch provided the sugar rush necessary to visit all the exhibits .



The Train Repair Weekend sponsored by the National Capitol Trackers and the DelMarVa Train group again drew many amateur and experienced train affectionatos who needed their prized trains workable again.



Mom's least favorite chore

At least it was my mother's least favorite chore. She insisted that shirts, underwear and bed clothes all be ironed.

Getting the ironing done after a load of wash was something that took a great deal of time and energy. In the early days lifting a hot 15 pound sad iron from the stove and ironing a load of laundry was a herculean task. The genesis of this article was a IRONRITE MANGLE machine that turned up during our inventory. I had heard about mangles but had never actually seen one up close and personal. My grandmother used a flat or sad iron that was heated on the Pittston Coal stove in the basement and my mother used an electric iron later, to be replaced by a modern steam iron.

Antique irons have become collectible reminders of the past and clubs have sprung up to collect and demonstrate these domestic tools.

The first irons or sad irons made by blacksmiths derived their name from the old English word "said" meaning solid or heavy. The oldest versions were simple flat pieces of metal that had a handle attached. Early handles were metal or wood pieces and could get quite hot. Manufacturers eventually created a variety of handle styles that made holding the handle more comfortable. Slotted, spiral, coiled and folded handles were common.



Eventually the flat iron was replaced with a hollow arrowhead shaped box that could be filled with hot water or charcoal. Mary Potts, from Ottumwa, Iowa developed and patented the hollow iron filled with non-conductive plaster of Paris which provided a longer more even heating iron.



Early irons were heated directly in a fire or placed on top of a stove. By the early 20th century self heating irons powered by gasoline and kerosene were considered a vast improvement.

Electric irons didn't become common in the country until rural electrification brought inexpensive power to outlying areas.

Mary Potts was issued patent 113,448 for a detachable handle iron. The user could heat a number of iron bodies on a stove, attach the handle to one until it cooled and then attach it to another heated body.



Corsica Antique Tractor Club

The Corsica Tractor Club is having a raffle for this beautiful OLIVER pedal tractor at its annual tractor show Sept. 26, 2009 from 9 to 3 on Glendale Ave. just off Chesterfield Ave. in Centreville. This show, sponsored by Trice Auctions, will feature Oliver and David Bradley tractors.

You can't tell in this picture but it is a beautiful lavender color.

The Specialty Irons

NOT ALL IRONS WERE FLAT OR BOX SHAPED PIECES OF METAL. WHEN RUFFLES OR FLUTES BECAME POPULAR ON AMERICAN CLOTHING A SPECIAL, SOME SAY UNIQUELY AMERICAN IRON WAS INVENTED. THE IRON CAME IN PLEATER, PLAITER, CRIMPER, FLUTER, OR RUFFLER IN EITHER A ROCKER, ROLLER CRANK OR TONG (AND PROBABLY MANY OTHER) STYLE. THE HOMEMAKER HAD A WEALTH OF IRONS TO CHOOSE FROM BUT THE TEDIOUS WORK WAS STILL THE SAME.



NOT TO BE LEFT OUT OF THE PICTURE WERE THE FEMALE CHILDREN. TOY IRONS WERE MADE SO THAT THE YOUNG GIRLS COULD IMITATE THEIR MOTHERS AT WORK. THESE IRONS WERE VERY MUCH DUPLICATES OF MOM'S IRON AND CHILDREN WERE TAUGHT HOW TO TAKE CARE OF THE FAMILY'S CLOTHING SO THEY COULD BE GOOD MOTHERS AND HOUSEWIVES WHEN THEY GREW UP.

NOW DON'T PICK UP THE PHONE AND CALL ME - I'M NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE WAY PEOPLE'S ROLES WERE DEFINED IN THE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURIES. IN OUR ATTIC IS THE LITTLE METAL IRONING BOARD THAT MY WIFE USED AS A CHILD TO PREPARE FOR HER FUTURE LIFE. WE ALSO HAVE A REGULAR IRONING BOARD SOMEWHERE AROUND HERE WITH THE OTHER "FEMALE" THINGS.



AMERICAN MACHINE: CO.
FAIRLY COMMON HAND ROLLER



DUDLEY: MID 1870'S WITH
VERY FANCY FINISH.
VALUE ABOUT \$750



OSBORNE: THIS COMPANY STILL
MAKES LEATHER WORKING EQUIPMENT
BUT ALSO PRODUCED SEVERAL
FLUTERS. VALUE ABOUT \$300



GENEVA ROCKER: A VERY
COMMON STYLE MADE IN GENEVA,
ILLINOIS VALUE \$50



EUREKA: A UNIQUE DESIGN WITH A
SPRING AND ROLLER ASSEMBLY AT
THE TOP AND AN 8 SIDED BASE
VALUE ABOUT \$600



HAND FLUTER: A RARE SPECIMEN
WITH BOX

RUTH ROGAN BENERITO, A HOUSEWIFE AND VERY SMART CHEMIST DEVELOPED THE MODERN PERMANENT PRESS FABRIC. THE QUAKERS PROBABLY DID IT FIRST IN THE MID 1800'S BUT RUTH DID IT BEST. AS PERMANENT PRESS IMPROVED AND MORE WOMEN ENTERED THE WORKPLACE ESPECIALLY DURING THE WAR YEARS IRONING DECLINED. BUSINESS MEN OFTEN FOUND IT MORE PRACTICAL TO SEND THEIR SHIRTS OUT AND FOR A REASONABLE, TAX DEDUCTIBLE FEE HAVE THEM WASHED, STARCHED AND IRONED.

DR. RUTH ROGAN BENERITO
INVENTOR OF THE MODERN PERMANENT
PRESS PROCESS



4 IRONRITE - The Automatic Ironer

Rhythmic... Restful... Automatic Ironing

Yes, you read that right. According to the IRONRITE user manual ironing is now a rhythmic, restful and relaxing activity. I'm sure a lot of women did not agree with this ad writer's view of ironing.

The MANGLE (in England) or WRINGER (United States) consisted of two rollers connected by gears that were turned by hand or later electricity. The original idea was to wring the water out of wet clothing. Many of you might remember the wringer washer where mother passed the clothes out of the washer tub through two rollers to squeeze the water out. My job was to catch the clothes as they came out. Mother always warned me not to get my fingers too close to the wringers or I would get caught and lose a finger. I guess I minded because all ten are still there. That type of washer was patented by John E. Turnbull of Saint John, New Brunswick in 1843 but was rendered obsolete by the invention of the electric washer and dryer in the 20th century. The museum has a gasoline powered wringer washer that was used in rural areas without electricity.

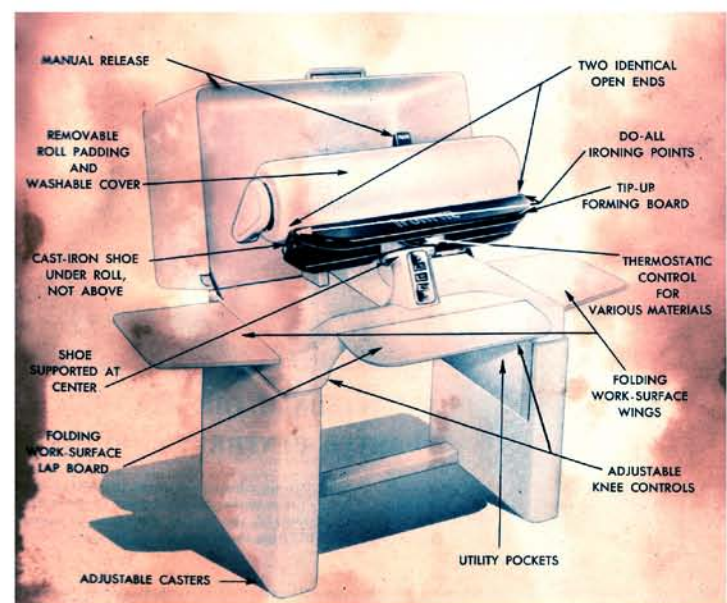
Mangles were originally large machines used in commercial laundries. Wringer mangles were gradually replaced by electrified and heated mangles during the 1920's that dried and pressed the laundry in one operation. The material was passed between a rotating pad and a heating element, coming out on the other side dry and flat. Done properly laundry could be ironed in a much shorter time.

The IRONRITE company was considered to be the premier manufacturer of electric and gas mangles for home use. They had several important features such as the heat coming from under the cloth being ironed and open sides to allow the operator access to both sides of the machine. Despite these attributes the mangle was large, heavy and expensive. Even though it was housed in a metal cabinet it wasn't something you kept

in your living room. If you had a large kitchen it might fit in a corner but a separate utility room or basement would be better. Not everyone could afford this type of luxury or had the room for it.

There was also the matter of coordination. To get the material to feed properly required coordination between hand, eye and knee and some people just couldn't manage. Ironrite had several competitors such as Conlon, General Electric, Thor, Maytag and Sears. With the advent of permanent press and working housewives the market declined and production of mangles ended in the early 1960's. A very modern looking rotary iron is still available from the Miele company for \$2100.

The Ironrite was solidly built and many can be found today, in working condition, at garage and yard sales in the 50 dollar range. There are even several web sites devoted to these devices. Try www.archive.org, type IRONRITE in the search box for 3 Ironrite color videos. After watching them I think I'll stick to hand irons! The Museum has a Model 85 including a rather scorched copy of its operator's manual in case you have a heavy load you need ironed some weekend.





By Marianne Jackson

If you've taken a drive around the Eastern Shore lately, you've probably noticed some changes to the agricultural landscape. Gone are the large dairy farms and beef herds that once dominated the livestock industry and instead you may find greenhouses, grape vines and some diversified livestock. It seems that farmers must continually find new ways to keep being farmers.

Although the majority of farmland in this area is still used for grain farming, many new "crops" are being introduced to our area. The easiest ones to locate are the ones grown in the half-acre greenhouses that seem to be popping up everywhere. Used mostly to grow flowering annuals or garden vegetables for large wholesalers, these greenhouses offer additional income for those already farming or can be a full-time agri-business housed on a reasonably small amount of land. Just as chicken houses burst onto the scene years ago with their automated systems and computer operations, greenhouses look like an easy way to grow plants. What farmer wouldn't want to work in warm, dry weather every day. But before you run out and order your greenhouse take note that they can cost as much as \$300,000, to build, are very labor-intensive, and have to be temperature controlled and moisture regulated for up to six months a year. Don't let the "automatic overhead irrigation" lead you astray. This is a very hands-on undertaking.

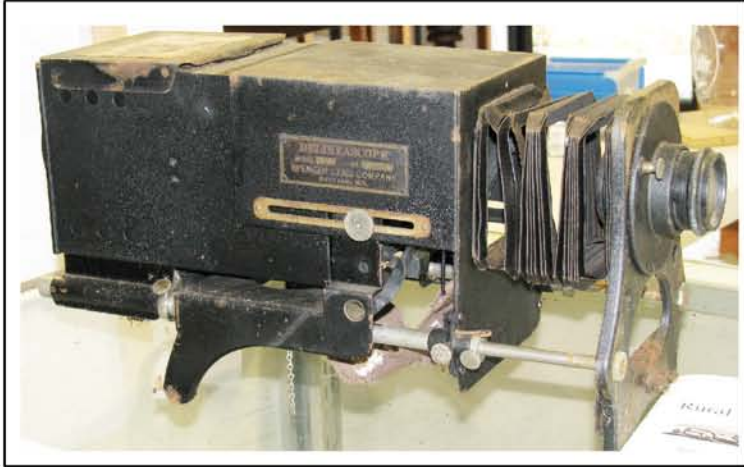
Another crop that might be more difficult to find, but one that is becoming increasingly more popular, would be grapes. Almost all vineyards in our area grow wine grapes and most sell to Maryland wineries. With more than 50 active vineyards on the Shore, we are producing our share of Maryland grapes and we are home to the current President of the Maryland Grape Growers Association, Jennie Schmidt. This industry can also be very labor-intensive, but for a shorter period of time. Their industry standard is one person for every five acres of vines, but everyone I spoke to says that rule is only good for routine maintenance. A few times each year you will need many more hands to get the work done and yes, grapes are still harvested by hand. Most Eastern Shore vineyards are small, but with an average yield of five tons per acre, you might want some help to bring in your crop. This industry has done a wonderful job of marketing the beauty of their product, not just on the table or in the bottle, but on the vine. Vineyard communities are springing up all over and are similar to golf communities in that they are built around or beside an active, producing vineyard. I was delighted to find one of these communities, Preserve at Southeast Creek, in Church Hill.

In the area of livestock, another change has arrived – Alpacas. These small, fleecy animals from the cold, dry, mountains of South America seem to thrive on our hot, humid, flat farmland. Raised only for their fleece, alpacas are usually found in small herds of less than twenty animals. Adults normally weigh 120-170 pounds and can yield as much as seven pounds of fiber. Alpaca fleece is a hollow fiber that is extremely warm and durable, yet is often as soft as cashmere. Although there are a few times each year that help may be needed (think shearing day) a small herd of alpacas is relatively easy to handle by one or two people who can maintain other jobs or farming duties as well. The marketing of fleece and yarns leads some alpaca owners to open retail shops and others simply sell their fleece on the open market. Some unique characteristics of alpacas are helping to make them more popular. With their padded feet, they don't tear up pasture. Their foraging-style grazing and small intake of food means they can live happily with five alpacas per acre. And, most importantly, they use a communal dung pile. This makes pasture cleaning much less time consuming. Most alpaca farmers will tell you that these gentle creatures are wonderful to have around, and most find it profitable. However, like any livestock, there is work to be done and it has to be done everyday.

The Eastern Shore has long been, and hopefully will remain, a major force in the agricultural industry of our state. Just in Queen Anne's County alone, over 200,000 acres of land is dedicated to agriculture. Farming on the Shore provides us with food, clothing, fuel, jobs and much more. Now, as you travel the scenic roads of our special piece of the world, keep your eyes open. You never know what those farmers will be up to next!

For more information - call Marianne Jackson at Sugar Magnolia Farm (410) 820-2901.

NEW ADDITIONS: The Latest in Home Video from 80 years ago



These are DELINEASCOPES or slide projectors. Based on their size they were probably used in homes or classrooms during the 1920's. They projected 3 x 4 glass slides produced by several companies showing educational scenes or travelogs from around the world.



The projector on the left was produced by the SPENCER LENS CO. of Buffalo, New York. They were one of the premier microscope, telescope and projector lens makers in America. The 37 inch mirror in the Kitts Peak Observatory was cast by Spencer in 1921 after 3 unsuccessful tries. It was the largest mirror ever made in America and Spencer was the only company that was able to accomplish that task. Up to that time mirrors of that size had to be made in France. That mirror, now computerized, is still on the job. Today the largest mirror made from one piece of glass is 27 feet. Larger mirrors are usually made in sections.



We have a new restored slant top clerk's desk near the Museum entrance courtesy of Judge John W. Sause, Jr. The desk was completely restored by Ridgely Kelly, a cabinet maker in Centreville who donated many hours of his time to the project. It was necessary to re-cover the top in green felt and remake several of the spindles holding the shelf. Our thanks to Judge Sause and Mr. Kelly for their contribution.

VISIT THE MUSEUM ON THE WEB AT

WWW.MESL.US

Dan & Ann Shortall honored by Museum Board



John Harper, current Board chairman presents a plaque at the annual train show dinner honoring Dan and Ann Shortall for their outstanding contributions to the development and continuation of the museum.



TRAIN SHOW 2008



The Museum gratefully acknowledges grant support from the following organizations: Stories of the Chesapeake Heritage Area, Maryland Historical Trust, Choptank Electric Trust, Inc. and United Way of Queen Anne's County.

PICTURES. - WE NEED PICTURES - The Museum is designing a new exhibit on the daily life of the Eastern Shore family. We would like pictures of grandma and grandpa, working at home, baking a pie, peeling apples, doing the wash, having a birthday party, putting on a new roof or any other thing that happened in your family. The pictures will be scanned and placed in our computer AND RETURNED as soon as possible. They will be enlarged and placed in the exhibit or made into flip books. Please include some information on who, what, when and where the pictures were taken and also don't forget YOUR name and address so we can return them. Pictures can be mailed to the Museum of Eastern Shore Life, P.O.Box 525 Centreville, MD 21617. IF necessary we can make arrangements to pick them up. Call Bill at 410-758-2137 or E-mail him at starroad@verizon.net. You may also be able to e-mail pictures if you scan them at high resolution and have a fast Internet connection. Your family just might see one of their ancestors the next time you visit the Museum!

Name _____ Address _____
City _____ Zip _____ E-mail _____
Date _____

MEMBERSHIP ENROLLMENT FORM

_____ INDIVIDUAL \$15 _____ FAMILY \$25
_____ CONTRIBUTING \$50 _____ SUPPORTING \$100
_____ BUSINESS \$200 _____ LIFE \$300

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Please write "MEMBERSHIP" on your check's memo line

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