

Heartland Museum

APRIL 2022 NEWSLETTER



Got your Easter bonnet?

Hidden Gems

There are so many items in our General Store, you will want to spend plenty of time to "shop"! The General Store came to mind as we wrote our second article this month.

Household cleaning - and some of the items in the General Store would be much needed and appreciated by the housekeepers of the past! And some things are back in use.....

There are several "rug beaters" on the walls. Imagine rolling up your heavy rug and carrying it outside, perhaps to the clothesline, and using the beater to smack the carpet over and over, so that dust and grime would leave the carpet and make a dust cloud before settling. Later in time, little brooms that run over the rug and picked up up stray bits were considered an improvement. (Swiffer?)

The Wright County Monitor first mentioned General Stores in the county in 1880 - when travelers noted that Otisville (DOWS) had 24 inhabitants for two blacksmith shops, one wagon shop, one doctor, and one general store combined with the hotel. They then went to Clarion, with 146 inhabitants, 2 general stores, 2 lumber stores, 1 drug and grocery, 1 hardware and grocery, 1 millinery and dressmaker, 1 barbershop, 2 hotels, 1 blacksmith, and 5 lawyers. It is evident that the general stores played an important part of early settlements. The general stores carried as many necessities as they could - flour, sugar, material, spices, nails, tools, and so much more (the original Walmarts of the day!)

As you look around the General Store, you will find stoneware, a much used kitchen item. A few stoneware items probably came with families in wagons - a bowl, a crock, perhaps a butter churn. Cast iron was another highly used item. Cast iron fry pans, kettles, trivets, etc. were heavy duty (and heavy in weight). As families became more prosperous, cut glass and a good china set and other fancy items were available thru the local general store. Enjoy looking thru our General Store.



Back in the Day

Housekeeping chore of the past

Spring housecleaning...a thing of the past? Perhaps it is, and that may be a good thing. Housewives - or maids if there were any, would take a good week or more to prepare the house in spring for a fresh outlook for summer.

As is mentioned in more than one article in the Wright County Monitor, on "proper cleaning", the women would usually start at the top of the rooms and work their way down. In the days of wood burning stoves, this often included washing the walls in each room. A bucket of water and vinegar were the cleaners of choice. Drapes were taken down to be washed, which involved a tub and soap for hand washing, and taking the curtains to a clothes line for drying. What pictures the family may have had were

removed and furniture moved, or even taken outdoors. Rugs were taken outside to beat the dust and grime out. Chimney ducts & flues were cleaned out - a critical job as a chimney fire would be devastating.

Windows were scrubbed until they shined. Bedding - not the mattresses we are fortunate to have - but cloth mattresses stuffed with straw, had to have the straw replaced, and cloth was washed and dried. Wood bed frames were wiped down with a mixture of cooking oil and varnish to kill bed bugs. No corner of the house was forgotten, as an attic and basement (if the home had them) were also cleaned, dusted, shined and made ready for spring.

Wood floors would need waxed. Now this task was half very hard work, and half fun.

The hard part was putting the wax down - a paste wax that took a few hours to apply and then had to dry a bit. The fun part was making it shine - children could put on old socks and start sliding around until the floors were gleaming. One ad in the 1920's offered a wax that you could shake onto the floor and then invite your friends in to dance until the floors were shiny!

Well, maybe SOME spring cleaning events should make a comeback!



Did you know Heartland Museum has a cleaning week every year? We couldn't do it without our volunteers! Above are some of the ladies from a couple of years ago after cleaning the 4-H schoolhouse, and below is Melanie Maasdam (middle) with her cleaning crew, who make each of our tractors shine.



Put it on your calendars! MAY 21 is planned for our annual Open House - with a twist! This year look forward to a Murder Mystery Night as you roam our main streets!

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