A Man's View of Spring Cleaning

The following is a lament written in 1854 by an unknown “sufferer”. It appeared for the next 30 years in various publications.

**A Man's View of Spring Cleaning**

Chairs, tables, stands, are standing round at sites and at sevens,
While wife and housemaids fly about like meteors in heaven.
The parlor and the chamber floor were cleaned a week ago;
The carpet shook, and windows washed, as all the neighbors know;
But still the sanctum has escaped - the table piled with books,
Pens, ink and paper all about, peace in its very looks.
- Till fell the women on them all, as falls the plague on men,
And then they vanished all away, books, paper, ink, and pen.

And now, when comes the master home, as come he must by rights;
To find all thing are "set to wrongs" that they have "set to rights."
When the sound of driving tacks is hard, through the house is far from still,
The carpet woman on the stairs, that harbinger of ill,
He looks for papers, books or bills, that all were there before,
And signs to find them on the desk, or in the drawer no more.

And then he grins thinks of her who set this fuss afloat,
And wished she were out at sea in a very leaky boat;
He meets her at the parlor door, with hair and cap asky,
With sleeves tucked up, and broom in hand, defiance in her eye;
He feels quite small, and knows full well there’s nothing to be said.
So he holds his tongue, and drinks his tea, and sneaks away to bed.

The melancholy days have come, the saddest of the year,
Of cleaning paint, and scrubbing floors, and scouring far and near.
The mistress calls to man and maid to tea, and sneaks away to bed.
So he holds his tongue, and drinks his tea, and sneaks away to bed.

A Man's View of Spring Cleaning

The melancholy days have come, the saddest of the year,
Of cleaning paint, and scrubbing floors, and scouring far and near.

Where are those rooms, those quiet rooms, the house but now presented,
Wherein we dwelt, nor dreamed of dirt,
Where are those rooms, those quiet rooms, the house but now presented,

The melancholy days have come, the saddest of the year,
Of cleaning paint, and scrubbing floors, and scouring far and near.

Where are those rooms, those quiet rooms, the house but now presented,
Wherein we dwelt, nor dreamed of dirt,
Where are those rooms, those quiet rooms, the house but now presented,

The melancholy days have come, the saddest of the year,
Of cleaning paint, and scrubbing floors, and scouring far and near.
Historic Humor

From the Files

The Telephone Girl

The telephone girl six still in her chair
And listens to voices from everywhere.
She hears all the gossip, she hears all the news,
She knows who is happy, and who has the blues;
She knows all our sorrows, she knows all our joys;
She knows every girl who is chasing the boys;
She knows of our troubles, she knows of our strife,
She knows ever man who is mean to his wife;
She knows every time are out with the boys,
She hears the excuses each fellow employs;
She knows every woman that has a dark past,
She knows every man that is inclined to be fast;
In fact there’s a secret ’neath each saucy curl
Off that quiet, demure looking telephone girl.

If that telephone girl would tell all she knows
It would half turn our friends into bitterest foes:
She’d saw a small wind that would soon be a gale,
And engulf us in trouble and land us in jail,
She would let go a story (which gaining in force)
Would cause half our wives to sue for divorce;
She would get all the churches mixed up in a fight
And turn all our days into sorrowing nights,
In fact, she would keep all the world in a stew,
She would get all the churches mixed up in a fight,
If that telephone girl would tell all she knows
In fact there’s a secret ’neath each saucy curl
Off that quiet, demure looking telephone girl.

When you think what you owe the telephone girl?
If she told a third part of the things she knew.
She knows every woman that has a dark past,
She knows every man that is inclined to be fast;
In fact there’s a secret ’neath each saucy curl
Off that quiet, demure looking telephone girl.

Springtime and the Lowly Iron

By Peg Statilfe

Wait a minute… how do you get from the subject of spring to an iron? Well, let’s find out.
To almost everyone springtime is synonymous with beginning, new birth, a time to start fresh, form a new relationship, create a new look or simply freshen the old look. In today’s world we have all manner of devices to assist us in doing the above. It goes without saying that electricity, the gas powered engine and world-wide communication has transformed the way we live today. Just for the fun of it, put yourself into the 1800’s to let’s say, the 1860’s and imagine what it was like to be a housewife doing her spring cleaning. There were no vacuum cleaners, no running water, no washing machines or dishwashers, no fancy soaps or detergents you could run to the store to buy. The only power you had was human power. The only devices you owned were invented out of necessity and even those were few and far between. In general, you owned a broom, a rug beater, scrub brush, pail, wash board, tubs and, yes… an iron.

The iron, to some it was and still is an instrument of torture, appears to have been invented by the Chinese well over a thousand years ago. When fashion changed (from wearing animal hides to wearing cloth) sometime after the Stone Age, the natural human proclivity was to remove wrinkles from clothing. Common facts pertaining to the art of ironing in graves, or “ironing” a piece of cloth using a metal pan smoothed out of necessity and even those were few and far between. In general, you owned a broom, a rug beater, scrub brush, pail, wash board, tubs and, yes… an iron.

In the late middle ages, along came the flat iron or sad iron as it is sometimes referred to. These were manufactured by blacksmiths and designed with a heavy iron base complete with a handle. Let’s take a moment to discuss the difference in the terms “flat iron” and “sad iron”. Sad is the archaic term for solid, therefore, the sadiron was a thicker base as often as three inches and weighing in at 22 pounds whereas a flat iron, although solid, had a much thinner base. The flat iron was much more versatile and easier to use.

Although several methods of heating flat irons existed, ranging from a hollow base filled with hot coals, to a reservoir for Coleman fuel, they were most commonly heated on the top of a wood stove to the proper temperature, and then used to perform the task of removing wrinkles from clothing. Common sense dictated that there were at least two mills involved with this operation, one was having two or more irons, and the second was protection against the hot handle.

As time passed and innovation advanced, so did the flatiron. One safety feature was the introduction of a wooden handle to the iron. This eliminated the use of a fabric hot pad; however, housewives demanded more of the instrument, so irons with specific uses were becoming prevalent. Ruffle irons, narrow irons specifically for pleats, broader irons for wide fabrics, tiny irons thought to be salesman’s samples or children’s toys are now believed to have been used for delicate items such as lace handkerchiefs or camisoles.

Although technologically advanced for their day, flatirons were not easy to use, it took a day to get the laundry clean, and then it took another day to put it right and straight. Be that as it may, the flatiron was essential in keeping a proper household over 100 years ago. They still exist today and can be found in museums, antique shops, flea markets, wherever there are artifacts of the past. They are collector’s items, used for door stops, paperweights or just for show, they can be plain or fancy, some unusual in their design or size. You have to ask yourself if you could have done what your fourth great grandmother did. The answer is probably yes, it was expected of you.

We have come full circle in this little story. This spring as you put the finishing touches on that set of curtains or those fresh-world washlines think back to what might have been and rejoice.
15 Mechanic Street
On The Site Where Now Stands Alstead's Munici-
pal Building

By Bruce Bellows

There has been a structure at 15 Mechanic Street in Paper Mill Village for at least 175 years, probably longer. However, the first documented evidence of activity shows that around 1850 a building located on that site was occupied by James Sleeper’s Harness Shop. It would appear that Mr. Sleeper had a thriving business in making custom leather harness for working teams as well as driving horses and harness repair. From what can be discerned from the records, the business must have been successful because he remained in that location for 13 years.

In 1863, Harvey Randall purchased the building and opened Randall’s boot and shoe store. Here he not only produced ladies low shoes and slippers, but made men’s boots and dress shoes as well. He also sold Chicago and French Kid Boots, which were probably considered “tres chic” in the day. Mr. Randall’s tenure lasted until 1891 when at that time he sold the business to Fred Prentiss and Fred Marvin.

Leon Trow’s picture of the meat market when Harry Abbott was employed at the store the entire time Mr. Libby owned it. The meat cutter at Libby’s Market, Albert “Frenchie” Lenay married Beatrice in 1963 and together they purchased the store which later became known as “Frenchie’s Market.”

On the afternoon of April 1, 1966 the Griffin house next to the store caught fire and in 3½ hours the Griffin house, Carter house and Frenchie’s Market had burned to the ground. Although no cause of the fire was determined, some folks had their suspicions.

In 1967 contractor Steve Allen erected a building on the site of the previous stores for office rental space. For the next 30 years this building saw many tenants and a couple of different owners before the town took possession for back taxes in 1996. At that time the town voted to raise and appropriate the money to convert the old office building into a municipal building for the town of Alstead. Plans were drawn and work commenced by Bellows Construction and School House Woodcraft (Steve Allen) in 1997; the building was completed in 1998. After its many lives, the building is now the home of the town’s municipal offices.

Proud papa, Ernest Batchelder and his son Robert, show off the interior of his market. He ran the store until 1940 when he sold it to Owen Libby. Photo from Batchelder family.

Owen H. Libby purchased Batchelder’s store and at that time owned the commercial Cheese Farm brand Libby’s Market expanded its inventory to include groceries, fruit and vegetables, clothing, shoes, houseware, patent medicines and a variety of other items along with the meat. Owen Libby owned this true mercantile store for about 20 years. Beatrice Canfield Hadley was employed at the store the entire time Mr. Libby owned it. The meat cutter at Libby’s Market, Albert “Frenchie” Lenay married Beatrice in 1963 and together they purchased the store which later became known as “Frenchie’s Market.”

E. F. BATCHELDER Meats and Provisions
Alstead, N. H.

It is likely that the requirement to obtain licensing was not well enforced earlier in the decade. Amos Shepard was operating both his store and tavern in 1792, but a review of his day books from the period of 1780-86 indicates that this was occurring even earlier. Shepard was staying with Mr. Beckwith when he initially came to Alstead – an entry made October 11, 1780 states “I moved out of Mr. Beckwith’s house”. However, his own home, which is now the barn on the Paisted property, was started later, as evidenced by the following entry: “April 18, 1786 Hotchkiss began to frame my house. Worked ½ day - it rained in the after-
noon.” In addition, his day book contains several entries from 1782 onward that he was selling a sizable number of mugs of flip and rum. The data frames a hypothesis that his tavern may have been built in the early as 1789, as opposed to the well published date of 1790.

The predominant liquors served in those days were rum and beer. The colonial era taverns served a number of weird combinations of molasses and raw egg. It would be mixed in a pitcher and then whipped into a froth by plunging a hot fire poker (aka a flip-dog) into its midst. White mugs, typically made of wood, leather or pewter were likely the vessel of choice in around here, flip glasses were prevalent in the colonities as well.

More Taverns than Churches: Alstead in the 1790’s
By Ann White

Early town records document the proliferation of liquor li-
censes between 1792 and 1798, a total of 31 licenses were issued to taverns, public houses of entertainment, stores, and a one-
day license was issued specially for town meeting.

Ten individuals obtained licenses throughout these years for either taverns or public houses of entertainment, notably these being Amos Shepard, James Kingsbury, Elisha Kingsbury, Benja-
mess Kingsbury, Nathaniel Fay, Samuel Calder and John Wait. We know the locations of some of these venues - Amos Shepard had his tavern and store on Alstead Center Road, and Elisha Kingsbury also ran both a tavern and store on Hill Road (Darby Brook Farm). Purposely, the Benjamin Cutter establishment was on Glaum Mine Road, and the Fay tavern was located on North Road.

The graph below illustrates the total number of recorded li-
censes during this time period.

Senses of Old New Hampshire

Thursday, April 25 at 7:00 p.m.
3rd. Congregational Church

Join us in welcoming Folklorist Jeff Warner and lis-
tening to his music, songs and stories of life in New Hampshire in the 18th and 19th Century.

Jeff’s repertoire is drawn from traditional singer Lena Bonnie Fis (1875-1942) from Jefferson and Temple, New Hampshire. He accompanies himself on a variety of instruments… the concertina, banjo, guitar and sever-
al pocket instruments such as bones and Jew’s harp.

Light refreshments and conversation with Jeff will follow the program. All are welcome.

Save this date!
The Sally Loomis Letters

Addressed to Liverpool, Perry County, Penna.

Alstead, N.H. October 31st, 1828

Dear Son,

Must I again take my pen to write to you without receiving a letter from you? I begin to think that you had forgot that you had a mother, or you would have written sooner. I was very anxious to hear from you. We went to all the post-offices, but could find no letter. Eliza was here the middle of September, and she had not received any, and Mr. Cran was as anxious as I was, but two weeks ago Eliza sent your letter to us. I was pleased to hear of your good health, but was sorry to have you move so soon, and go farther from Jonas. I received a newspaper from you, and Mr. Cran had a letter from Jonas. I was sorry to hear the ague had get hold of you; I am afraid it will be too hard for you. I want you should write as soon as you receive this letter, and let me know how you do, and all about your affairs since you left home. I suppose you would like to know how we do, and how we get along with our affairs. I will tell you.

Mr. Bolster came and helped William cut our hay, and William helped him. I did not pay out by 59.98 in money for haying. I got Mr. Dunmore to grade the grain. I shall have to pay money for that, if I can get it. I forget to tell you that Mr. Staples came here in April, and said he must have that money, and I hired forty dollars of Sally Cran and veteran of Doctor Bond. I have paid ten. I did very wrong to tell the old cow so soon. If I had kept her till now, she would have brought me five and twenty, if not thirty dollars, very quick, but I did better than Mrs. Cran, for she kept her cow till the first of October, and did not get but ten dollars for her. She was so poor she sold her three-year-old steer to Samuel Blake for forty-eights dollars, and the brown one weighed seven hundred and ninety odd. Earl is a meat peddler. Mr. Brown will leave the paper mill tomorrow, and go to Peterborough. He has bought half of Sidney Smith’s paper mill. Willard Stevens works at the paper mill in Hancock. Elisha Kingsbury has left the paper mill and took hold with Samuel Powers in building the mills. They have got the saw-mill raised. The mills are to be separate. Lewis Fletcher stays, but Adaline has gone to the factory. William has got his corn husked and the potatoes dug, and will finish making cider tomorrow. It is good weather to work.

Sunday evening, November 6th.

I think you would like to know how we do; I will tell you. I have been almost worn out in taking care of Nancy. It is 6 weeks yesterday since she has been out of the room until today. She went into the entry and locked out. I forgot to tell you that Mr. Sparks come here in April, and said he must have that money, and I hired forty dollars of Sally Cran and veteran of Doctor Bond. I have paid ten. I did very wrong to tell the old cow so soon. If I had kept her till now, she would have brought me five and twenty, if not thirty dollars, very quick, but I did better than Mrs. Cran, for she kept her cow till the first of October, and did not get but ten dollars for her. She was so poor she sold her three-year-old steer to Samuel Blake for forty-eight dollars, and the brown one weighed seven hundred and ninety odd. Earl is a meat peddler. Mr. Brown will leave the paper mill tomorrow, and go to Peterborough. He has bought half of Sidney Smith’s paper mill. Willard Stevens works at the paper mill in Hancock. Elisha Kingsbury has left the paper mill and took hold with Samuel Powers in building the mills. They have got the saw-mill raised. The mills are to be separate. Lewis Fletcher stays, but Adaline has gone to the factory. William has got his corn husked and the potatoes dug, and will finish making cider tomorrow. It is good weather to work.

The United States began keeping weather records around 1810 and although by today’s standards, their measuring instruments were crude, data was nonetheless being collected. These records revealed that during 1827 and ‘28 there was unprecedented warmth and an extraordinary amount of rain. With temperature staying considerably above normal for the season and an abundance of rain, crops were planted far earlier than would normally be expected. The rains caused the major rivers and their tributaries to flood; also in April there was a devastating frost which destroyed the previously planted crops. Today’s meteorologists attribute that weather phenomenon to an extraordinarily strong El Nino which occurred during those years.

This little narrative points out the importance of preserving relics such as the Sally Loomis letters. So much can be learned from a word or phrase that enlightens us to life in Alstead in the early 1800’s as well as the world that surrounded them. It just takes a little time to ferret out the information. It is my hope that more gems of this nature can be offered to our reading public in the future.