

Midwest Open Air Museums Magazine



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A MERRY PRAIRIE HOLIDAY



In This Issue:

Remembering Laura Poresky

Conner Prairie's *A Merry Prairie Holiday*

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Lessons Gleaned from a Chinese Open Air Museum

When Nature Calls – From the Gallant Farm Blog

Elizabeth Farnham's Account of Early Illinois Dialect

Winter Coasting – from the 1880 *American Agriculturist*

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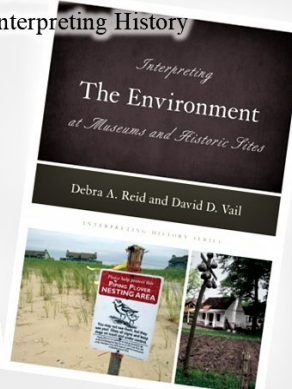
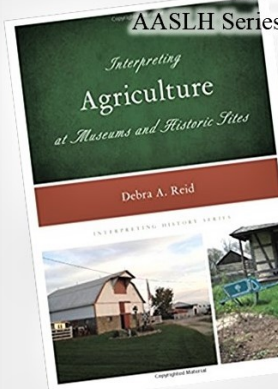
INTERPRETING AGRICULTURE AT MUSEUMS AND HISTORIC SITES

INTERPRETING THE ENVIRONMENT AT MUSEUMS AND HISTORIC SITES

By Debra A. Reid

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Cover Photos - Different aspects of Conner Prairie's *A Merry Prairie Holiday*.
(Photos courtesy of Conner Prairie)



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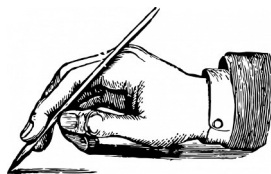
ALHFAM



The Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums

EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

By Tom Vance



THE past year has been unique and interesting. My guess is that everyone who went through the "What do you see yourself doing in five years?" exercise back in 2015 did not get the correct answer. Who could have guessed? Metaphysicians talk about how you create your personal reality by the thoughts and emotions you send out to the world, and that the thoughts and emotions that we collectively send out create our mass reality. Interesting!

My personal reality hasn't changed much in some respects. I'm still working on the same projects – the magazine, the Five Mile House, and the Amish Heritage Center, along with projects here at home. On the other hand, I miss going out to eat, seeing people at in-person meetings, and not having Thanksgiving (and probably Christmas) with my family. Zoom has taken over my life, it seems.

At the Five Mile House, a small historic site near Charleston, Illinois, we have taken advantage of cancelled summer programs to make great progress on



The reconstructed barn at the Five Mile House near Charleston, Illinois.

the barn that we are restoring at the site. As a small, not-for-profit, all-volunteer site, we raised more than \$200,000 to reconstruct an 1880 barn that was originally located three miles to the east. It has been reconfig-

ured for programs, and a complete blacksmith shop is being installed. I see an article coming up on the project next year.

At the Amish Heritage Center near Arthur, Illinois, we have moved in two historical Amish houses. The Moses Yoder House, dating to 1866, is the oldest Amish house in Illinois. We have purchased 2.4 acres with an option on another 2.5 and have recently received a grant to move a historical Amish school to the site. Future plans include a large museum center, moving in two historical Amish barns, and a late 19th-century Amish living history farm.

That brings us to MOMCC and the magazine. As with the fall issue, the winter issue has not gone as originally planned. Some planned on articles have been postponed, and some new ones have appeared to take their place. The issue has become more eclectic than usual. Melinda Carriker's tribute to Laura Poresky is particularly touching. Robin Mayes sent in a fun article on outhouses and Kristie Hammond, who was in my "How to be an Author" session at the spring conference, has contributed two articles since, including one in this issue on something found in almost every gift shop, the bilbo-catcher. Finally, Brian "Fox" Ellis submitted an interesting article on a Chinese open-air museum that he visited.

We all hope we'll be back to normal by the conference this fall at Tiller's International in Kalamazoo, Michigan. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone in person again soon. Take care and stay safe. □

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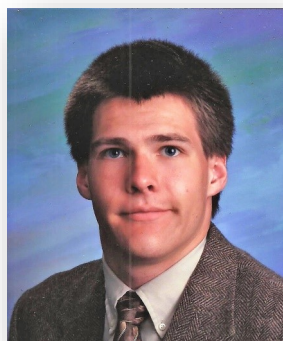
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THE CANDACE TANGORRA MATELIC AWARDS

The Midwest Open Air Museums Coordinating Council (MOMCC) established this award in honor of MOMCC's first president, Candace Tangorra Matelic. It recognizes the best article published in the *Midwest Open Air Museum Magazine* each year.

2019



Article: "A History of Radio"

Vol. XXXX, No. 1, Spring, 2019

Rob Kranc – is a volunteer at Buckley Homestead County Park in Lowell, Indiana. A graduate of Ball State University with a BA in Telecommunications, he received his MA in Business Management at Calumet College in May 2019. He is an enthusiast for radio programs from radio's golden age and radio and film history. He also is a member of a performing group that puts on recreations of several classic radio shows on stage including *The Shadow* and *Sherlock Holmes*.

PREVIOUS WINNERS

| | |
|---|---|
| 2018 – Andrew Kercher "When it Comes to Our Collection, The 'D' Word is Something We Embrace" | 2010 – Susan Odom "Practical Perspective: Turning History into a Business" |
| 2017 – Todd Price "Telling a Story Through a Lens – The J.C. Allen Photo Collection" | 2009 – Kim Caudell "Murder Ballads in a Nutshell: Britain vs. America" |
| 2016 – Stephanie Buchanan "Learning and Leading: Incorporating Youth Volunteers Into an Agriculture Program" | 2008 – John C. Bielik "Paper Marbling as a Hands-On Activity" |
| 2015 – Alex Stromberg "Being Disney" | 2007 – Barbara Ceiga "Putting Visitors First: Journey from the Practical to the Profound" |
| 2014 – Kyle Bagnall "Project Passenger Pigeon" | 2006 – Laura E. Daugherty "Pictures of the Past: Conserving and Preserving 19th Century Photographs" |
| 2012 – Gordon Bond "The Downside of Family-Friendly" | 2005 – Merrilee Garner "Community Collaboration: Schools, Museums, Historical Societies and You" |
| 2011 – Daniel E. Jones "Broom Corn: An Introduction to the Plant that Swept America" | 2004 – Debra A. Reid "Living History's Long Row to Hoe" |

PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

By Mike Follin

WELL another MOMCC Fall conference has come and gone and it is one that will certainly be remembered. Not for the outstanding sessions, not for the annual meeting, not for the workshops, but for the indelible spirit that binds us together as an organization and propels us forward no matter what the challenge might be. As Winston Churchill said, "When you're going through Hell, KEEP GOING!" Many of us have been going through and are still going through "Hell" since March. While we have evolved, changed, adapted, and learned, we at the same time have grieved, lost, and lamented jobs, programs, and friends. All of this is to say we have *kept on going*. We learned that members have revamped programs, become innovative in the method of program delivery, and even discovered partners in the community that had heretofore not been identified, all of this in an effort to continue our mission of informing, educating, and preserving history, while in the process "making history."

Abigail Adams probably said it best, "Great difficulties may be surmounted by patience and perseverance." We as an organization have done just that. MOMCC took their first steps in the "virtual conference" arena with the recent fall conference. While it would have been wonderful to see each other in real time it was a great delight to see each other virtually and even better that folks from *outside* the Midwest region chose and were able to join us. Others within the region said the trip would have been a hardship but thankfully were able to join virtually and share in the discussions.

I want to take a moment to thank members of the board who planned and produced this virtual conference and then instructed the rest of us on how to participate. The mini workshop Melinda Carriker gave on "Using Zoom" was extremely helpful to those of us without tech expertise. Ann Cjeka and Monique Ingot

were instrumental in getting out the schedule and issuing the invitations and instructions; hats off to these folks for getting us to step into the 21st century.



It was good to hear *and* see each of you while learning how you and your organization are dealing with, adapting to, and moving forward in these challenging times. Some admittedly are moving faster than others, but as Confucius said, "It matters not how fast or slow you move, only that you keep moving." We are all endeavoring to keep moving, and it was wonderful to see the members of the organization do what they always do: rise to the occasion to help, suggest, and show other members how challenges can be met and overcome. It's what this organization does well. KEEP UP THE GOOD WORK!

To that end, we are looking forward to the spring MOMCC conference. The Spring Conference will also be virtual, but with a much broader agenda and program. We need your suggestions and feedback in order to make sure the programming meets the needs of our members during this unique time. Please send suggestions to Becky Crabbe or Tracie Evans .

We have discussed holding a monthly MOMCC-sponsored "happy hour," which would allow members to see, discuss, and share with each other in a relaxed setting, so keep your eyes open for more information. Finally, thanks to all of you for faithfully supporting the organization. We will get through this together as long as we have each other to lean on. One of my favorite sayings is, "when you reach the end of your rope, tie a knot and hang on." We all may feel as though we have been tying lots of knots, but with the knot comes a helping hand – just reach out and grab it. Thanks to all of you. □

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MOMCC was established in 1978 with the goal of furthering the interchange of materials, information, and ideas within the history museum field.

Membership

We welcome membership and participation from administrators, volunteers, interpreters, curators, historians, educators, maintenance/facilities staff, gift shop workers, facilitators, docents, and anyone else with an interest in history and public education. Membership is \$30 per year for individuals, \$35 for families, and \$50 for institutions. Membership application can be found at www.momcc.org.

Our Purpose

The purpose of MOMCC is to further promote excellence and to provide a forum for the interchange of materials, information, ideas, and consideration of issues within the open air, interactive, and historical museum profession.

MIDWEST REGION: The Midwest is defined as the eight states of Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

OPEN-AIR MUSEUM: Interpreting life as material culture in the context of buildings, objects, and open space. A site or facility that interprets history through exhibits, living history interpretation, and/or educational programs.

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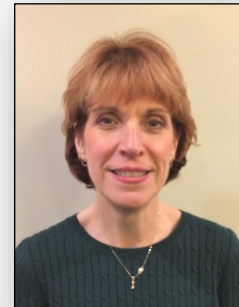
PRESIDENT



Mike Follin received his undergraduate degree in Cultural Anthropology and Communication from Capital University and his graduate work was at Ohio State University in the field of Research and Performance of American History and Folklore. He recently retired as Coordinator of Interpretive Services in Public Programs at the Ohio History Connection, where he had been for 35 years.

VICE PRESIDENT

Gail Richardson is the foodways supervisor at Sauder Village, where she develops and implements butchering, dairy processing, and candle making programs and food related festivals as well as working in collections during winter months. She has been active in MOMCC for the past 10 years.



TREASURER



Debra A. Reid is curator of Agriculture and the Environment at The Henry Ford (since January 9, 2017). Before that, from 1999 through 2016, she taught in historical administration, history, and women's studies at Eastern Illinois University in Charleston, Illinois. She has recently written two books, *Interpreting Agriculture at Museums and Historic Sites* (2017), and *Interpreting the Environment at Museums and Historic Sites* (2019, co-authored with David Vail) both published by AASLH.

SECRETARY

Dawn Bondhus Mueller worked in a variety of professional capacities at Living History Farms in Urbandale, Iowa, for 15 years. She is now the Executive Director at the Wisconsin Automotive Museum located in Hartford, Wisconsin.



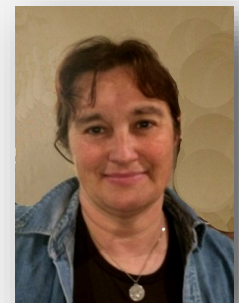
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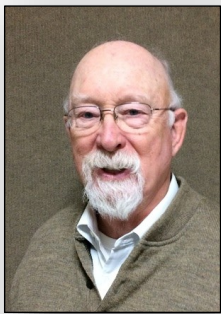


Betsy Urven worked for 10 years as lead interpreter and program assistant at Wade House State Historic Site in Greenbush, Wisconsin. She has also produced period clothing for a number of historic sites and has been involved with MOMCC since 2002.

MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Ann Cejka is the Program Coordinator for Ushers Ferry Historic Village in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where she also serves as curator of collections, manages social media, and produces various forms of electronic media. She holds a Bachelor's degree in history and public relations from Mount Mercy College.





MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Jim Patton worked as lead interpreter and resident blacksmith at Lincoln's New Salem State Historic Site near Springfield, Illinois, for 21 years. He currently serves on the board of directors of the Elijah Iles House in Springfield, and is a long-time member of MOMCC.

MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Kate Garrett is a heritage interpreter at Kline Creek Farm located in West Chicago for the past nine years. She started as a volunteer at Graue Mill in Oakbrook, Illinois, then worked at Living History Farms in Iowa and the Baseball Hall of Fame in Cooperstown before returning to DuPage County, Illinois.



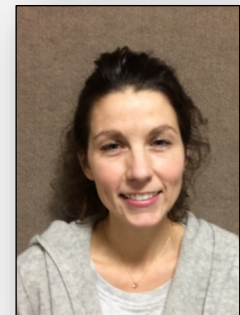
SPRING CONFERENCE COORDINATOR

Becky Crabb recently retired as Park Manager at Lake County Parks Buckley Homestead, Indiana, where she worked since 1980. She is past president of MOMCC. After being raised on an Indiana farm, Becky earned a degree in Wildlife Biology from Ball State University.



FALL CONFERENCE COORDINATOR

Monique Inglot works as the Assistant Program Coordinator for Volkening Heritage Farm in Schaumburg, Illinois. She has served as MOMCC Fall Conference Coordinator since 2014.



CONFERENCE REGISTRAR

Ed Crabb has an Associate degree in Web and Graphic Design. He has been a Volunteer for over 30 years at Buckley Homestead County Park in Lake County, Indiana, and is starting on his fourth year as the Conference Registrar.



MAGAZINE EDITOR

Tom Vance served as site manager at Lincoln Log Cabin State Historic Site south of Charleston, Illinois, for 28 years before retiring and becoming a historic consultant. He is past president of MOMCC, was editor of the magazine from 1986 through 1992, and has been current editor since 2016. He holds an M.A. in Historical Administration from Eastern Illinois University.



REMEMBERING LAURA PORESKY, 1972-2020

By Melinda Carriker

LAURA M. PORESKY was born on April 7, 1972, in Ithaca, NY. She was the daughter of Robert and Barbara Poresky, and sister to Pamela Baker. The family moved to Manhattan, Kan., when Laura was four months old as her father joined the faculty of Kansas State University. Laura died from cancer on September 20, 2020.

The majority of us knew Laura as an amazing period clothing designer and sewist, but where did it all begin? The answer, high school. She joined the Society for Creative Anachronism and went to her first renaissance festival thanks to the school taking a bus to it each year. Renaissance was the start of her love of period clothing. She left high school for Coe College, where she was involved in theater and making clothing for the stage. After receiving a bachelor's degree with a theater major, she headed off to Iowa State University to achieve her master's degree in Textiles and Clothing. While at ISU, she learned about clothing preservation and had access to some wonderful historical clothing items. During these years of school, she learned about many different time periods and created a wide range of clothing for herself and others.

Laura began her museum career at Old Cowtown in Wichita, Kan. When she started at Old Cowtown, there was not a lot of period clothing being worn. She took it upon herself to research the clothing and start making it.

She made the move to Living History Farms in Des Moines, Iowa, in 2002 and became the period clothing assistant. From 2002 to 2020, she made hundreds of outfits

for staff, interns, and volunteers. She enjoyed researching the 1850, 1875/6, and 1900 clothing, hairstyles, and accessories. She gathered people together for knitting and sewing lessons. She became not only the period clothing supervisor, but also the millenary site supervisor and the textile collections supervisor.

She truly dressed people from head to toe, and frequently walked up to

staff, interns, and volunteers to fix a collar or give a reminder of something that was out of place. When you saw Laura coming, you instantly started patting yourself and making sure everything was in place. When you had a question about if a fabric would work for an outfit, what jewelry you could wear, or where to find something to make your outfit that much closer to accurate, Laura was the person you sought out. If she didn't know, she would tell you to research it and then share the information with her so she would know for the future. When the LHF family gathered to remember Laura, many shared with excitement what outfit they had, or had worn, that was made by Laura.

Laura also was a long-time member of Midwest Museum Open Air Museums Coordinating Council, attending many of the bi-annual conferences. She was a regular in the clothing and sewing workshops, and many times was one of the few people to finish the project before the conference was over. If she wasn't taking the workshop, she would sometimes be found helping those who were. She also gave many memorable sessions, including how to properly pack a trunk. When it came to the dinner and dance, Laura stood out. She could put on any piece of period clothing and make it look like she had stepped right out of that era. She loved to dance and would move around the dance floor with a big smile on her face.

While not able to make it to all the conferences, Laura did attend a number of the Association for Living History, Farm and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM) annual conferences over the years. Laura was one of the people who could meet and exchange ideas



Laura on the porch in 1995
(Photo courtesy of Laura's family)



Laura in an 1840s dress made in 1991 at the Homeplace. (Photo courtesy of Laura's family)



At Old Cowtown, May 1999 (Photo credit: Amy Loren, courtesy of Laura's family)

with people no matter where their museum was located and what time period they represented. She loved to learn, so these conferences were a wonderful place for her to find stimulation for her ever-evolving clothing creations.

Beyond clothing, Laura was also a spinner, a participant in the Des Moines Spinning and Weaving Guild, and was often found spinning on a drop spindle as she walked and talked with people. This was the regular way to find her if you spotted her at a renaissance festival. She was a founding member of the LHF Walnut Hill Choral Society and a member of Drake University Community Choir. She was part of the Brass Gears Adventures Society and the Des Moines Science Fiction Society. She had two cats, Gatsby and Lilly, for roommates.

When looking through remembrances of Laura that were shared in various locations after her passing, there is a

theme that is quickly noticed. Many people shared how Laura had a gentle presence, was loving, very knowledgeable, extremely talented, and had a great sense of humor. I imagine many of you dear readers would agree with these and can add more descriptors when you think of Laura. She was one of a kind, touched many, leaves an amazing legacy, and will be missed. □

About the Author – Melinda Carriker has worked full-time, and more recently seasonally, for Living History Farms in Urbandale, Iowa, since 1996. She has been a member of MOMCC for many years, a magazine editor since 2006, and a board member since 2013, with membership coordinator being her current role. She holds bachelor's degrees in general communication and earth science from the University of Northern Iowa.



MOMCC 2004 conference at Living History Farms — Laura helping with a presentation on historical quilts and clothing. (Photo credit: Steve Davis, LHF)



MOMCC 2008 conference in Southern Indiana — Laura saving time by ironing her dress while wearing it.



MOMCC 2008 in Southern Indiana — Laura exploring the woods (Photos by the author unless otherwise noted)



MOMCC Fall 2009 conference at Sauder Village — Laura was a regular participant in the dances.



MOMCC Fall 2009 conference — Many people think of beautiful clothing when they think of Laura. She had fun wrapping several of us in duct tape to make duct tape doppelgangers.



MOMCC Spring 2010 conference at Mahaffie Stagecoach Stop in Olathe, Kansas.



MOMCC Fall 2018 at the Henry Ford was one of Laura's final conferences. She won an award for her Sesquicentennial outfit.

WINTER IS CLOTHING REPLACEMENT TIME

At Living History Farms

By Laura M. Poresky, Period Clothing Supervisor

Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the Winter, 2016 issue of MOMCC Magazine. It is being reprinted here in memory of Laura for her many years of dedication to period clothing and her many years of involvement in MOMCC and ALHFAM. The following book review by Laura originally appeared in the spring 2017 issue of MOMCC magazine.

Author's Note: Living History Farms, located near Des Moines, Iowa, is a 500-acre living history site that includes four historic areas: a 1700 Ioway Native American farm, an 1850 pioneer farm, a 1900 horse-powered farm, and the 1875 town of Walnut Hill complete with a blacksmith, General Store, print shop, and Flynn Mansion and barn, both of which are on the National Register of Historic Places.

The staff at Living History Farms are asked to submit blog posts about their sites and what they've been learning and doing. This article involves my blogs about replacement clothing we made in the winter of 2015 and how it held up during the 2016 interpretive season.

WINTER is clothing replacement time here in Period Clothing. During the general season, I'm out in the Millinery or another site three days a week, and the other two days are usually spent fitting new people with clothing from stock, altering the clothes to fit them, and doing mending. There's always plenty of mending to do.

At the end of the season, I get back clothing like these trousers – our interpreters work hard! Some clothing I can buy new for the guys, especially at the 1900 Farm and in Walnut Hill. The women's clothing and most of the men's clothing for the 1850 Farm must be made here. 2016 was my fourteenth year here, so I've started seeing clothing I made



come back with so many holes and tears that it can't be fixed enough to wear for a whole season. Looking them over, I start to think about how to make new clothing better – longer-lasting or at least faster to construct.

Our 1850 men's shirts have a distinctive "square and rectangle" cut that uses fabric very efficiently. In the past, the shirts have been made with a dressy pleated bosom, as nice shirts were made back then. But the two pleated bits sometimes got put into the shirt wrong, and they make the front of the shirt heavier and hotter than our guys out on the Iowa frontier need for every day work. So, last winter I figured out a simpler shirt that's faster to make. The simple placket is quick to put in by machine, and the facings that make the shoulders more durable under suspenders are sewn in with running stitches rather than felling stitches that must be worked one at a time.

Vests are always a problem. Specifically, vest pockets are a problem because everything ends up in them, and they are a pain to fix. Lots of stitching goes into making vest pockets last as long as the vest itself. Welt pockets are standard in 19th-century vests, and they are complicated in themselves.

Hopefully after all that zigzag and stay stitching,





the pocket bag will not fray out inside the vest. Careful topstitching will help the outside welt stand up to use, even if the guy hangs his hands in them all the time. We'll see how long these vests on the right last out at the 1850 Farm. They are replacing some that I made three years ago.

The vest below has seen a season-and-a-half of use as the wearer's primary vest. He brought it in to be fixed at the end of July. It's not as crisp as when it was new, of course, and the harsh surface of the wool jean is now soft and almost smooth as well as faded. It's been machine washed on a regular basis, but not pressed very often.

The welt pockets' top edges are in need of repair. The one that usually holds a watch on a chain is particularly



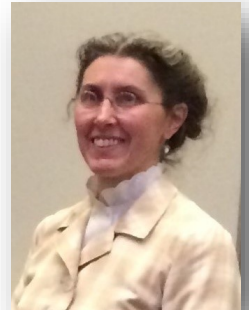
frayed. There are rips under both back belts and some other small holes in the linen back, which have worn to a cotton-like softness.

The pocket bags are all in good order, both the front welt pockets and the patch pockets on the front linings. The outer edges and turn of the collar are also in good shape.

So, I'd say all the interior work to keep pocket pieces from fraying inside and grading seam allowances was worth it. I also see why many surviving vests from the 1840s and 1850s have corded or bound welt edges – it's an area that takes constant wear.

It's something to think about for the next set of vests, certainly. Worsted wool braid in military colors may still be available, and if I can't find something suitable I may just make cord out of rug wool and dye it. In the meantime, his other wool vest is reportedly in very good shape, being less used. Repairs to this one will only take a couple hours. We'll overcast the welt edges, possibly with some wool raveled off remnants, and patch the holes on the back with more linen. Soon it will be ready to go out to the 1850 Farm again. □

About the author – Laura M. Poresky was the Period Clothing Supervisor and Millinery Lead Interpreter at Living History Farms. Her sewing career started with a doll dress with wonky sleeves (no pattern) when she was too little to use a sewing machine. She has made clothing and interpreted at The Homestead 1850 and Old Cowtown Museum in addition to making period clothing for interpreters at other museums. She holds an M.S. in Textiles and Clothing from Iowa State University, and a B.A. in Theatre Arts from Coe College.



An interpreter drives oxen on the 1850 farm at LHF.

Cristin O’Keefe Aptowicz. *Dr. Mütter’s Marvels: a true tale of intrigue and innovation at the dawn of modern medicine.* (NY: Gotham-Penguin Books USA, 2015).

Hardcover \$17.95. 384 pages. ISBN-13:9781592409259.

Reviewed by Laura M. Poresky

WHAT do you know about the beginnings of plastic surgery? How about preparing a patient for surgery pre-anesthesia? What is the most useful attribute for a practicing surgeon to have in the 1840s? What effect did the first demonstration of ether have on medical practitioners? The answers to these questions and more are folded into this biography of the founder of the Mütter Museum in Philadelphia, that also serves as an engaging history of American surgery in the first half of the 19th century.

An orphan from the age of seven, Thomas Dent Mütter (he brought the umlaut back with him from medical training in Europe) has a story that could easily be hurried through in cliché: raised by a guardian, struggled to get to Europe where he discovers his life work, rises to the top of his profession, brought down far too early by the effects of a childhood illness. But the author’s access to not only Mütter’s papers but those of his friends and enemies over 15 years of research have allowed her to give a roundness and humanity to every person who shows up in the narrative. The doctor’s ambidexterity and affinity for snappy dressing (the latter his guardian’s despair when he was 13) turn out to be the key to performing surgical procedures, almost too quickly for other doctors to follow, with an impressive survival rate compared to less fastidious peers. Fascinated by “monsters” during his training in Paris, he learned techniques for correcting physical disfigurements and came up with innovations that are still used today. His museum – one of the last acts of his career as a surgeon-lecturer – began as his own study collection.

There are, naturally, pitfalls: his early professional years spent trying to create a practice; attempting to garner attention by going about town in a flashy equipage while running up tailors’ bills; his *magnum opus* on the speediest way to conduct nearly any surgical operation published shortly before anesthesia became a viable option and allowed surgeons to take their time, instead of rushing to complete procedures before shock set in; and, finally, the failure of his two good hands to serve him and his patients.

Along the way, the author gives a vivid picture of conditions at the time. Most of us are familiar with the historical trials of cold and mud and epidemic disease, which she lays out for the casual reader. But her writing illuminates the choice plastic surgery patients made, to risk a very, very good chance of death to have a more normal life in the first half of the 1800s. Remain unable to turn your head due to scar tissue, as you have been unable to do for the last 15 years—or probably die. It isn’t even a coin flip at

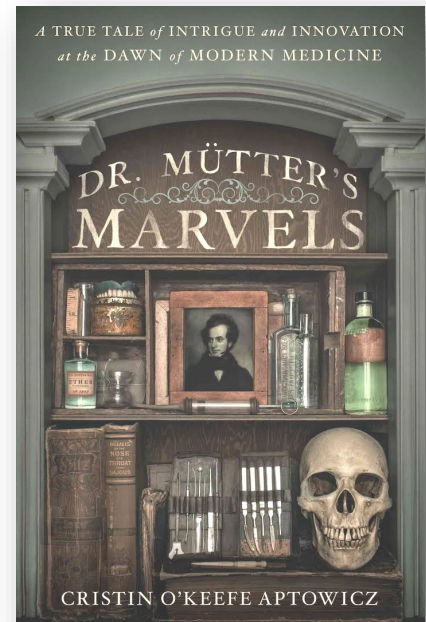
this point; it’s a ghastly case of I’d-rather-die-than-keep-living-like-this state of decision.

There is one bad stumble in Ms. Aptowicz’s descriptions of ordinary life. As

a prelude to the problems inherent in plastic surgery, she declares that burn victims were largely created by the dangers of working with fire: “...a splatter of hot oil hops from a swinging pot and leaps – flame-touched – onto a woolen apron...Once started, these types of fires were devastatingly difficult to stop.” (p. 140) This is not only inaccurate for the most part but also unnecessary: none of the patients she describes Dr. Mütter treating were injured as adults confined in fashionable gowns. They were little children in short clothes. She gives no documentation for this two-page excursion, so I am afraid that it is something she either picked up from sensationalistic primary sources, or, worse, learned in college. Either way, she did not give the matter the careful examination she gives to other parts of the book, and I hope my relative lack of familiarity with medical history isn’t causing me to believe other errors.

But other than that, this is a very readable and detailed history, not only of a talented, humane doctor and teacher, but of the complicated world he worked in with his peers and students. And with the author’s wealth of primary sources, she gives us the brilliance of discovery and the passionate discussions that follow it, personality by personality. Some doctors thought washing their hands was a waste of time. Some of them didn’t. Some of them noticed that some diseases appeared to be communicable, even to the point of following a single doctor as he made his rounds. The politics of these discoveries, the pre-proof-of-germ theory “why yes, I do see that nearly all the cases of puerperal fever this summer are in Dr. Mütter’s practice – but surely that’s only because he has such a large number of patients” stubbornness of experienced practitioners in the face of deductive logic are fully rendered in an engaging manner.

It might not be the best subject for everyone’s bedtime reading, but it won’t put you to sleep. Recommended for those who know where to use a grain of salt. □



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BRINGING HOLIDAY PROGRAMMING INTO A NEW ERA

CONNER PRAIRIE'S A MERRY PRAIRIE HOLIDAY

By Michelle Evans and Ellen Paulin, Conner Prairie



LIKE many sites, Christmas events have been a cornerstone of Conner Prairie's programming since the very beginning of the site. We recently came across a map of the 1973 event, showing buildings that are long gone and some historical structures that have moved more than a few times since then. Over time and with the addition of Prairietown, the event grew into Conner Prairie by Candlelight. In the 1990s, Conner Prairie made the then-bold move of moving away from showing what guests expected Christmas to look like with out of place Christmas trees in the 1820s and 1830s, holiday wreaths, and carolers, to a move toward a more historical celebration (and non-celebration). The event included some who didn't celebrate the season at all, some who had religious reasons for the celebration, and others who celebrated extravagantly.

Over the next 30 years, the program settled into a rhythm that became tradition for many families. Guests left the Welcome Center in groups of 25, with a group leaving every 15 minutes. From the Pennsylvania German family recalling traditional foods and visits from Belznichol to the Methodist family from upstate New York anticipating a visit from Santa Claus, in spite of what the bishop might have to say, to the old-school Presbyterian railing against this "pagan" celebration, guests saw how a wide range of Hoosiers celebrated the season. The local storekeeper, Mr. Whitaker, would ponder the idea that people might be interested in giving gifts at Christmas rather than the New Year. As a good businessman, he might have to switch up his inventory to meet that need. Each evening would end with a visit to the much-anticipated Christmas party hosted by Dr. Campbell, the town founder. A native of Lexington, Kentucky, Dr. Campbell and his wife had grown up with an extended season of holiday parties and visits. Guests would walk out the door with a sweet treat and sounds of familiar holiday carols.

Top photo — The Reynolds light show, a long-standing local tradition, was moved to Conner Prairie in 2019. (All photos courtesy of Conner Prairie)

Over the years, other storylines came and went. As an ode to William Conner's own connection with the Moravian missionaries who worked among the Lenape, a Moravian couple traveling through talked of the Moravian Love Feast. In recalling other holidays remembered at the same time of the year, a Jewish couple made an appearance for several years. Their story included reminders of why so many early Jewish immigrants made their way to America. Hanukkah was and is a minor holiday in the Jewish calendar but one that this family remembered fondly in their homesickness as they traveled to meet family in another part of the state. A free Black character with family roots in Jamaica recalled her own family traditions and her grandparents' stories of Jonkonnu.

After many years of nearly sell-out crowds, attendance began to decline. Holiday programming multiplied at other venues in the area, dividing the existing audience. We knew that for some families with young children or older family members, the 90-minute format of moving from place to place with a larger group was not working. It was time to switch things up.



Hands-on gift making with Santa's elves is available in the North Pole workshop although most activities are being held outdoors this year due to COVID-19.

We had heard through the grapevine for some time that the administration of Conner Prairie had their sights set on a bigger event for the holidays with a full-blown festival atmosphere, but we didn't know when. All we knew for sure was that even though Conner Prairie by Candlelight was a beloved tradition of many (including our own staff!), it was an extremely high-maintenance program for such a limited through-put. The timed groups were difficult to logistically manage, it was a tremendously stressful task to get enough staff for all the nights, and, ultimately, the program couldn't grow to attract more guests without us running things past midnight! We didn't want to remake the wheel since things would be changing, but we did want to make things easier for ourselves and help guests transition into a new format of experiencing the holidays at Conner Prairie.

With all of that in mind, for 2018 we moved from a timed, group-tour Conner Prairie by Candlelight to an open and free-flowing format. Guests were still admitted in half-hour timeslots, spreading out the crowd. We kept the same characters and stories that the annual regulars had come to love, but expanded their stories to last the entire night instead of replaying the same eight minutes of script every 10-15 minutes. Guests could come more than once during the run of the program and have a different experience depending on what time they came and where they went. You could be a part of a lovely and intimate family moment with the Zimmermans, help the Campbells get ready for their party, or deliver notes and gifts back and forth between citizens of Prairietown. And because it was free-flowing, we could now more than double the capacity of the program, which we did! Thanks to the surveys, we know that we attracted more first-time visitors to the holidays than we ever had before. Ultimately, this was the last time we would do Conner Prairie by Candlelight as we moved to a brand-new festival in 2019.

Going into the next year, there had been a long-standing community tradition of going to see "the Reynolds lights," an extravagant free drive-through light display put together by a local business, Reynolds Farm Equipment. With new businesses coming in and upcoming road construction, it became an untenable event for Reynolds to continue, and they struck up a deal with Conner Prairie to give us the beloved Reynolds lights. Combined with Conner Prairie's desire to pump up the holiday program, these things all

came together to form what is now A Merry Prairie Holiday.

A Merry Prairie Holiday combined what people love about Conner Prairie with a more spiffed-up holiday atmosphere. We still would have the historical holiday experience in 1836 Prairietown, but experimented with breaking down some barriers of what year it is to include an 1863

Christmas on the Homefront and Battlefront and Cranky Storytelling of Holidays Around the World (the last one being particularly popular). Outside of Prairietown, guests could play "Reindeer Games," a carnival-like midway of holiday themed games, go for a ride on a carousel, make and take a small gift in the North Pole Workshop, or just stroll through the lights. It was a pretty swell inaugural year for a new program.



Kringle's Carousel is located in a large open-air pavilion where guests can enjoy a traditional carousel ride.

But, just like it did with the rest of the world, 2020 had different plans for Merry Prairie's second year. With the rise in COVID-19 cases, we have had to adjust our plans multiple times to ensure that everyone can stay safe but still enjoy themselves. We've moved everyone in Prairietown outside to accommodate proper social distancing and have narrowed the experience to first-person characters around several fires through town. You can still come see the Zimmermann family and help surprise their mother with a visit from Belznichol. There is still singing and storytelling, including a restaging of Holidays Around the World (on the opening weekend of the 2020 program, the conclusion was met with chants from the audience of "Do it again! Do it again!"). We've had to forego the Reindeer Games this year, but there are plenty of music, lights, and even the carousel is still available (with extra staff on hand to sanitize between rides, naturally).

While there is surely at least one Scrooge in every bunch, by and large we have found guests to be pretty forgiving of what we can and can't offer this year. And even in the one year of Merry Prairie Holiday without COVID, there was little to no offense taken at the blending of digital and analog program features, telling us our guests were ready for something new. Time will tell how the evolution will continue, but it's sure to be fun. □

About the authors – Michelle Evans is Domestic Trades Manager and Ellen Paulin is Senior Manager of Interpretation, both at Conner Prairie.

FUN IS UNIVERSAL

HISTORY AND INTERPRETATION OF THE BILBO CATCHER

By Kristie Hammond, Colonial Williamsburg

BILBO CATCHER, *kendama*, cup and ball, *bilboquet*, *balero*, all these names represent toys in the same family. Various versions of cup-and-ball can be found in historical site gift shops across the country, but where did they start, and how can they be used to create meaningful interpretations to families of all ages? I hope that while I do not have all the answers maybe this article will be a starting point for other sites to make stronger connections between their souvenirs and site history.

As universal as the cup and ball has become, tracking the origins of the game is difficult. A variation in Japan is known as *kendama*.¹ In Mexico, a similar game is called *balero* and has additional variations and names throughout Latin America.² Many sources credit France with the origin of this toy, known there as the *bilboquet* as far back as the 16th century.

However, it is likely this game goes back even further. In *The Historian's Toybox: Children's Toys from the Past You Can Make Yourself*, Eugene and Asterie Provenzo explain the etymology this way: "In France, the game was called *bilboquet*, a name derived from *bille*, meaning a wooden ball, and *bocquet*, the point of a spear."³ They also agree that while elusive, the origins likely precede France, saying, "The cup and ball's origin is unclear, but we know that the toy was well-known in India and Greece very early and had become very fashionable as a toy among adults and children in Italy and France by the late sixteenth century."⁴

Gwen White, *Antique Toys and Their Background*, and Joan Joseph, *Folk Toys Around the World and How to Make Them*, suggest Italy or Greece as early beginnings.⁵ White and Provenzo also mention Captain Cook's trip to the Sandwich Islands, known today as Hawaii.⁶ In *Folk Toys Around the World*, Joan Joseph elaborates on Cook's discovery:

"Although documentation is certainly scarce on the Flip-Ball toy, it is believed to be an ancient folk toy of China and, traditionally, is held to be the forerunner of the Cup-and-Ball toy of the Western world. In 1778, when Captain James Cook visited the Sandwich (Hawaiian) Islands, he noted that the islanders played a form of Cup and Ball. Ring and Ball as they called the toy, was made of plaited cane; this appears to have been a step in the modification of the Eastern to the Western toy."⁷

By the 18th-century, there are records of similar toys all over North America, from Mexico, to the US and Canadian Eskimos.⁸ In *Games of the North American Indians*, Stewart Culin describes a similar ring and pin game this way, "the ring or target is attached to a thong or cord by means

of which it is swung in the air, the object being to catch it upon a pin or dart fastened to the other end of the thong. It is analogous to the well-known European game of cup and ball (Fr. *bilboquet*)."⁹ There are many variations of the game among American Indians, the details and materials changing throughout the different tribal nations. Culin describes different variations throughout the western states, including some from the Chippewa in Minnesota and Wisconsin.¹⁰ One version, called *napawagan*, is made of a bundle of cedar leaves and a wooden pin attached with a cotton cord, the object being to catch the bundle.¹¹ There are also many versions where one must catch a series of hollowed out bones, or rings of dried gourd, or hide on a pin.

It is easy to become very Eurocentric when studying how an item or idea moves around the world. However, one thing that has become apparent is that this type of game had no one origin, versions were developed all over the world by different people and cultures. Trade almost certainly would have influenced this, but regardless, this style of game seems to have a universal quality, to this day, and the many variations just make it a richer cultural artifact.

1. Masami Ito, "Kendama: a whole new ball game." *The Japan Times* (November 8, 2014), accessed June 4, 2020, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2014/11/08/lifestyle/kendama-whole-new-ball-game/>.

2. "Balero: Embassy of Mexico," V&A Search the Collections (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2017), accessed June 4, 2020, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O1277879/balero-balero-embassy-of-mexico/>.

3. Eugene F. Provenzo, Jr. and Asterie Baker Provenzo, *The Historian's Toybox: Children's Toys from the Past You Can Make Yourself* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1979), 195.

4. Provenzo, *The Historian's Toybox*, 195

5. Gwen White, *Antique Toys and Their Background* (London: Chancellor Press, 1971), 131; Joan Joseph, *Folk Toys Around the World and How to Make Them* (New York: Parents' Magazine Press, 1972), 50.

6. White, *Antique Toys*, 131.; Provenzo, *The Historian's Toybox*, 195.

7. Joseph, *Folk Toys Around the World*, 50.

8. Provenzo, 195.

9. Stewart Culin, *Games of the North American Indians*. (NY: AMS Press, 1907), 527.

10. Culin, 533-4.

11. Culin, 533.



Figure 1 – French Bilboquet made of elaborately carved ivory with replacement silk cord dating to ca. 1780. (Accession #1967-48-42-a.b., gift, Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum)

White asserts that “By 1767 most nurseries had a horse on wheels and a game of cup and ball.”¹² It is important to notice what is missing from historical sites, not only what is present. It is far too easy to look at a site like Colonial Williamsburg, the capital city of a wealthy colony, and miss what hasn’t stood the test of time. This city is a snapshot of life for the wealthiest citizens, those that could afford to send away to England for expensive toys and trinkets, much like White’s comment, which assumes everyone can afford a nursery. While it is certainly possible that cheaper cup and ball toys could have been made, it is significantly harder to find records of less prominent families who may have improvised similar toys rather than buy them.

Perhaps France gets the most attention because of the popularity of the toy with the French royalty. In the summer of 1585, Pierre de l’Estoile notes that King Henry III carried the toy with him when he went out.¹³ Some authors go as far as to say his court was “obsessed” with it as Joseph does in *Folk Toys Around the World*: “In the late 16th century it was the rage of France: King Henry III played Cup and Ball as he walked the streets, and the members of his Court were obsessed with the toy.”¹⁴ Since they were so popular among the elite, de-

signs could get quite elaborate and expensive. White explains, “The game was played by royalty and the upper classes and the toys which were turned by a turner were expensive to buy.”¹⁵ However, it seems to be a toy that overcomes socioeconomic status, in that it could be made from ivory, bone, wood or, as in the Sandwich Islands, “plaited cane.” Joseph continues, “Even the most humble peasant could enjoy the toy, adults and children alike.”¹⁶



Figure 3 – Bilbo Catcher made in England, 1770-1800, ivory. (Accession #1936-591, museum purchase. Photo by the author with permission of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation)

In the *Handbook of Fashionable Games* (1859), there is this description of how to play:

“A ball of ivory or hard wood is attached to a stem of the same substance, having a shallow cup at one end, and a point on the other. The player holds the stem in his right hand, as shown in the figure, and having caused the ball to revolve, by twirling it in between the finger and thumb of his left hand, he jerks it up, and catches it, either in the cup or upon the spike, to receive which a hole is made in the ball. We need scarcely say that the latter feat can only be performed by a skillful player.”¹⁷

This further confirms the materials of ivory and wood as well as the dual objective of catching the ball in the cup or on the spike.

In the collections at Colonial Williamsburg, there are different versions of this toy. One is wooden, of the cup and ball style. Another wooden example is a turned-spindle bilboquet. Still another is larger in diameter and made of ivory.

12. White, 16.

13. Joseph, 50; White, 131.

14. Joseph, 50.

15. White, 131.

16. Joseph, 50.

17. White, 133.

Upon finding this first example in the collection (figure 2), I was surprised and excited. This 18th-century English toy is remarkably like the bilbo catchers often seen in gift shops or, more accurately, these new toys are actually very close to the originals – always an encouraging discovery. The boxwood handle is turned in double-baluster form with a cup on one end and a point on the other.¹⁸ Either end could receive the ball at the end of the nine-inch cord. This one also seems to be darker in color, likely from age and repeated use from the oils on players' hands. A similar darkening developed as I practiced with my modern version.

There is also a 19th-century piece, more akin to the cup-and-ball style. Long handles, measuring almost a foot, and a tall-sided cup make this version a bit easier to master.¹⁹ A string with a ball or ring on the end would be tied around the handle and the player would try to catch this ball in the cup or the ring on the handle. For this style, the circular swinging motion works well.

The ivory one is certainly something special (figure 3). Dating to 1770-1800 from England, it almost has the appearance of marble.²⁰ To imagine hitting a two-inch marble ball off your head as one so often does when attempting this game is downright painful. However, as ivory is often mistaken for bone, one would imagine this to be much lighter than the marble it mimics. This is, however, a larger version of the game with the ivory ball measuring just over two inches in diameter, compared to an inch-and-a-half diameter for the wooden ball.

In the November 8, 1770, edition of *The Virginia Gazette*, Sarah Pitt, one of the milliners in Williamsburg, advertises “cocoa and bone bilbo catchers.”²¹ This description was perplexing. While a chocolate candy bilbo catcher sounds interesting, it is unlikely. When searching for other uses of the phrase, “cocoa and bone” I often found references to knife handles. It makes sense that the same or similar process would be used to turn a spindle and ball for a toy as turning a handle for a knife. In *Turning and Mechanical Manipulation* by Charles Holtzapffel, he describes cocoa wood as “excellent for excentric [*sic*] turning.”²² Similarly, he describes boxwood this way: “Boxwood is much used for clarionets [*sic*], flutes, and a great variety of turned works.”²³

There are also 17th-and 18th-century prints showing the bilboquet in use and demonstrating that this was a toy for both boys and girls to play with. One example is a print of Charlotte Mercier from 1756 (figure 4).²⁴ She is dressed



Figure 4 – Charlotte Mercier, painted by Phillippe Mercier; engraved by James McArdell, London, 1756, mezzotint engraving. (Accession #1967-419, museum purchase, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation)

in a fine gown with an elaborate cap and ruffles. Her father, Philippe Mercier, painted the portrait, then James McArdell engraved it for printing. Other copies engraved by Charles Spooner are entitled *Youthful Amusement* and were often paired with a young boy playing with a top.²⁵ Both McArdell and Spooner apprenticed under John Brooks, also learning much from Brooks' assistant Andrew Miller.²⁶

In Henry Rene d'Allemagne's *Sports Et Jeux D'adresse* or *Sports and Games of Skill*, he highlights a satirical print from the 17th century. *La Foire Franche des Bilboquets* or *A Free Fair of Bilboquets*, shows a town street scene.²⁷ In researching this print, initially all I had was the section pictured (figure 5). This led me to d'Allemagne's book and the full print. However, this did not mean “case closed;” in fact, this discovery gave me more questions than answers. To begin with, the book, *Sports and Games of*

Skill, is written entirely in French, and there are no English translations readily available. With the help of a colleague's translation, I began to piece together more information. Everywhere you look in the full print, there are people playing with the bilbo catcher. Many of them are playing when they should be working.

This is the case with the boy in my section of the print, he sits playing with his ball and cup, but what was he supposed to be doing? As you look at the foreground of the full print, you can follow along with the text and match the images to the descriptions of the tradespeople. But when

18. Bilbo Catcher, 1952-10, A&B, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, accessed July 1, 2020.

19. Bilboquet Cups, 1959.1200.64, A&B, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, accessed July 1, 2020.

20. Bilbo Catcher, 1936-591, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, accessed July 1, 2020.

21. Advertisement, *Virginia Gazette* (Williamsburg, Virginia, November 8, 1780), 1.

22. Charles Holtzapffel, *Turning and Mechanical Manipulation* (London: Holtzapffel and Co., 1852), 80.

23. Holtzapffel, 76.

24. Jane Carson, *Colonial Virginians at Play*. (Williamsburg, VA: The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, 1989).

25. Charles Spooner, “Print: British Museum,” *Youthful Amusement* (The British Museum), accessed October 1, 2020, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1943-0410-1697.



Figure 5 – “La Foire Franche des Bilboquets,” from *Sports et Jeux d'Adresse*, Henri Rene d'Allemagne, Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie, ca 1910, 117. (Photo courtesy of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation)

we got to the middle tradesperson, the translation proved a challenge. By finding another artwork with the same phrase, “*le petit decrotteur*,” I was able to confirm the tradesperson as the little shoeshine.²⁸

Upon examining the rest of the print, one sees a store selling bilboquets where four women are not enough to meet the demand. There are individuals and pairs all playing, and even someone being reprimanded for playing, presumably when they should have been working. In the foreground, the shoeshine is joined by a porter, washer woman, cobbler, and water-carrier.²⁹ Many sources described this print as satirical, with little explanation as to why. It might have something to do with laziness, highlighting tradespeople who have stopped working in the foreground. Perhaps it is the isolating nature of the game. Other period games

26. Walter George. Strickland, *A Dictionary of Irish Artists ... One Hundred and Fifty Portraits, Etc.* (2 vol. Maunsell & Co.: Dublin & London, 1913), <https://www.libraryireland.com/irishartists/index.php>. It is interesting to note that John Brooks and Andrew Miller, later his assistant, both apprenticed under John Faber. Brooks' own apprentices James McArdell and Charles Spooner seemed to have a close relationship not only in printing some of the same work, but also by being buried near each other.

27. “La Foire Franche des Bilboquets,” from *Sports et Jeux d'Adresse*, Henry Rene d'Allemagne, Paris: Librairie Hachette et Cie, ca.1910, p.117. I encourage you to look up the entirety of the print as my words cannot capture the full intent of the work.

28. John James Chalon, “Le Petit Décrotteur,” Paris Musées (The Museums of the City of Paris), accessed October 1, 2020, <https://www.parismuseescollections.paris.fr/fr/musee-carnavalet/oeuvres/le-petit-decrotteur-16>.

29. Henry René d'Allemagne, “Le Bilboquet.” Essay. In *Sports Et Jeux D'adresse*, (Paris, France: Hachette, 1903). 114-21.

30. By “most recent” I still mean before COVID-19 made hands-on activities so dangerous.

bring people together, even if they are competing, but the bilboquet requires strict attention to one's own game. Could this be akin to our tendency to be absorbed in cell phones even when in a crowd?

My bilbo catcher gives me the chance to have many engaging interactions with guests. I share a little about the history of the toy, demonstrate a few times and then let them try. On one such occasion, a young man was walking down the street juggling. I thought, “Here's someone with superior hand eye coordination skills; I bet they'll really enjoy this game.” I talked with him and his mother as I demonstrated, then passed it off for them to try. He was determined, after he successfully completed the more challenging ball-on-pin version, he told his mother he was going to stay until he caught the ball on the saucer side. He was not exaggerating, and a little while later, he had conquered both sides.

One of my favorite interactions was with a family visiting from Italy. They stopped to participate in Patriots at Play, a hands-on site facilitating children's games and activities, including the bilbo catcher. As I explained the different options in English, the parents translated for their daughters. The girls chose some games to play and enjoyed themselves. As they finished up to leave, the girls handed me back their toys and said “thank you” in English, and I was able to reply in Italian, “*Prego*.” Their eyes lit up when they realized that while I could not carry on a conversation in Italian, I knew enough of their language to say, “you're welcome.”

The most recent of my stories involves a teenage brother and a younger sister with their family.³⁰ As they approached, I noticed the siblings were picking on each other. When I asked if they had time to try some 18th-century toys, their family stayed and talked with me for quite a while. By the time they continued down the street, all squabbles had been forgotten thanks to a bilbo catcher and a whirligig.

It is very important that my interpretations focus on the whole family, not just the children. As many of the sources above have already mentioned, the bilbo catcher was a toy for children and adults, boys and girls, rich and poor. While there may be differences in the materials and exact design, fun is universal. ▢

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About the Author - Kristie Hammond has been an Interpreter at Colonial Williamsburg for about a year and a half. Originally from South Central Ohio, she graduated from Mount Vernon Nazarene University with a bachelor's degree in History and Integrated Social Studies. Before starting at Colonial Williamsburg, she was a substitute teacher. In her spare time, she enjoys gardening, listening to audiobooks, and working on paint-by-numbers. If you liked this article, learn some bilbo catcher techniques from the skill clip on the ALHFAM website.





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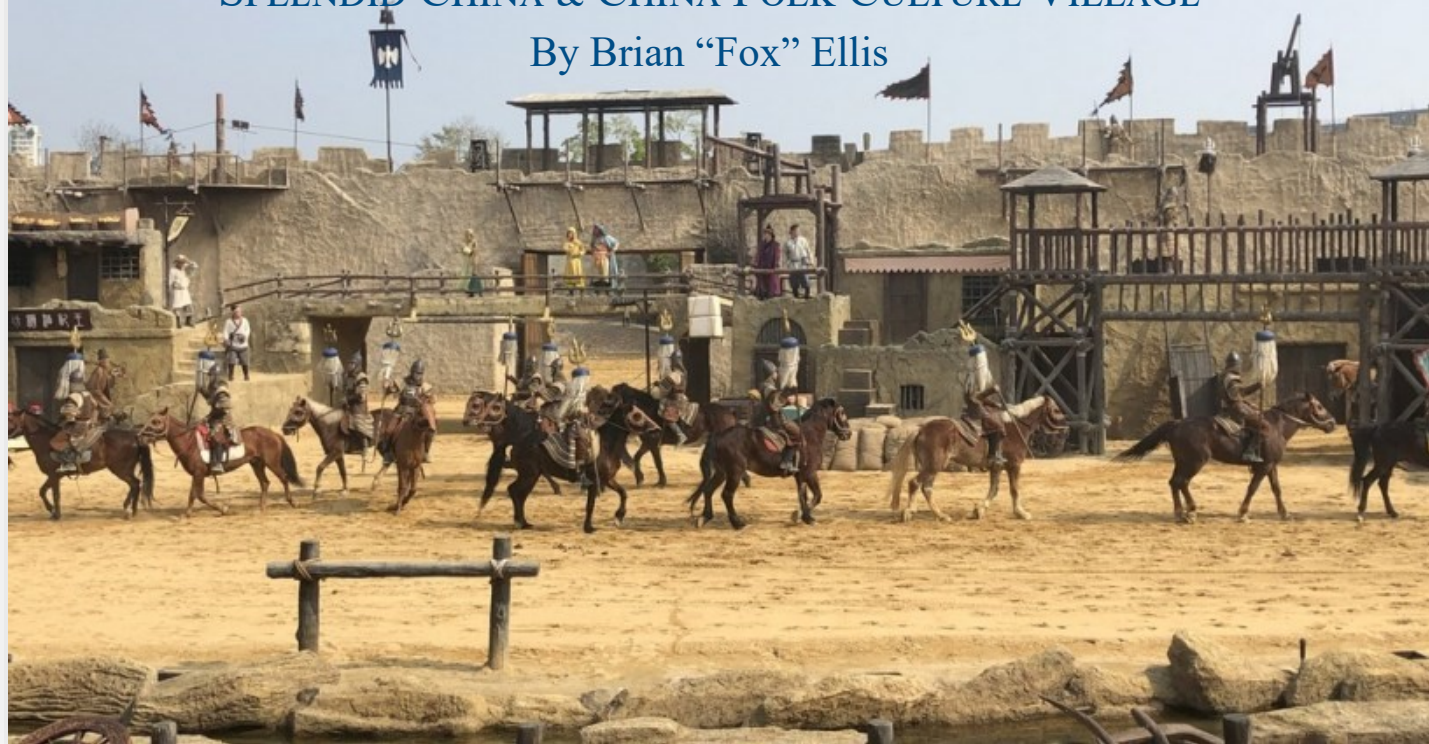
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Lessons Gleaned from A Chinese Open Air Museum

SPLENDID CHINA & CHINA FOLK CULTURE VILLAGE

By Brian “Fox” Ellis



IMAGINE time traveling to the many remote and rural villages of China in a morning. Then imagine taking on Godzilla-like proportions and walking the circumference of China in an afternoon. Now you have at least some small semblance of the day I spent at Splendid China and China Folk Culture Village, one of the largest outdoor museums I have visited in any country. My tour manager, Alberto Alexander from Dream-On Tours, found the place online and suggested that we visit.

As a storyteller, historian, and museum consultant who has worked at countless historic sites and museums, I was particularly curious about how this Asian historical village managed crowds, presented living history programs, and dealt with accurate interpretation of controversial ideas. And taking the Godzilla metaphor one giant step further, walking through this huge park was a bit like taking mammoth steps from Lincoln’s New Salem to Conner Prairie to Sauder Village to Greenfield Village, all within an afternoon – but definitely with an Asian flare.

China Folk Cultural Village is a collage of a dozen clusters of buildings, each of them life-size replicas of the distinctive historical villages that once dotted the Chinese landscape. From Tibetan temples to Korean adobe, Mongolian horse-hair yurts to Thai influenced bamboo huts, China is a vast country that over time has welcomed or swallowed up dozens of cultures.

As I walked around the park (and throughout China the past three weeks), I could not help but notice the amazing diversity of faces that are the many tribes of Chinese cultures. Most folks have migrated to the large cities to work in factories and office towers, but the diverse foods served in any neighborhood and the dialects you hear riding the overcrowded subways are obvious signs of the ethnic diversity within Chinese society. This set of villages is an effort to preserve some elements of the different cultures and to educate future guests about China’s past. There were dozens of school groups marching about, each of them wearing their school uniforms and being led by teachers, each with a flag, wearing headset microphones and loudspeakers on their belts.

As someone who has worked at more than a few outdoor museums, I could not help but take notes on what worked and what I might learn from their experiences, good and bad.

When we first entered, I was a little disappointed by the high price, 220 yuan, about \$30 US, and the price did not seem to reflect the overall feel of the quality of the experi-

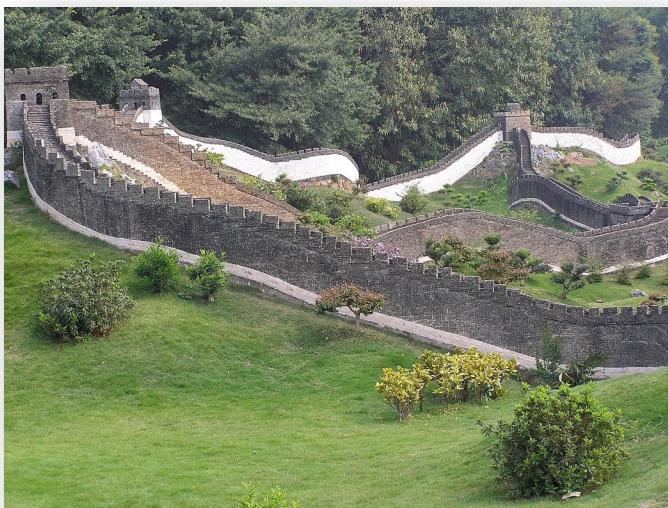
Above photo – The *Legends of the Desert* show at China Folk Cultural Village, is the story of one tribal warlord invading another along the Silk Road during the Yuan Dynasty. (Photo credit: nextchapterjourney.com)

ence. There were also add-on tickets one needed to purchase to participate in certain activities. If the price is higher, then it should be all-inclusive; if there are additional charges, the gate price should be more affordable. This is a difficult balance. We felt they missed the mark.

Once we realized that the ticket included about a dozen 10-minute performances of folk music, dance, and story-telling, a different show in each village, we were a little more enthused. We saw eight of the 12 programs.

The caliber of the programs varied, but one thing they all had in common was a genuine effort to get the audience involved. We could clap or sing along; we were invited to join in call-and-response chants, and they always picked a few volunteers and dressed them in period garb, making them a character in the skit. Folks like to feel like they are part of the show; invite them in! We saw this handled well and not so well in different shows. When the child picked was a ham and the narrator played to the child's strengths, it always worked, but a common mistake was to either make it too complicated or not make directions clear and simple so the audience ended up laughing at, not with, the one chosen.

If the effort at audience participation was the high point of every show, the consistent low point was the sound system. Every program used a hand-held microphone, which felt out of place; if a mic is needed, a body mic or headset is affordable, and the quality will be greatly improved. They can easily be made invisible. The speakers crackled because they were almost always way too loud. I was not alone in holding my ears so I could actually hear what they were saying or singing. Every performer should know you can never be louder than the audience. If you get quieter, intentionally, the audience will often get quieter as well. The speakers were often hanging in an odd and obvious



The Great Wall in miniature at Splendid China. (Photo by Dmpendse, Wikimedia, public domain)



The Hanging Temple in miniature at Splendid China. The original is located in Shanxi Province (Photo by the author)

place. Only one village “hid” the speakers in a period-looking wooden box with a cloth front. If you are going to use modern electronics in a historical space, make the effort to use them well and to blend in with the period set pieces. I feel a little bad harping on this, but it interfered with the joy of the program and is so easy to get right with a little effort. And yet, in spite of this consistent problem, there was much to be enjoyed.

Our favorite three programs included:

The Dai Ethnic Village was a great place to start. There was a native flute player, an opportunity for everyone to play rhythm on a set of long bamboo poles, and several young women performing concise synchronized and elaborate hand gestures while swirling to the rhythms. After the show, everyone was invited up on stage to take selfies with the beautiful girls. The selfie opportunity was a regular feature at the end of most programs, and there is no doubt that these selfies and their online presence helps drive ticket sales.

The really big show, “The Legends of the Desert,” during the day involved about 30 actors and half-a-dozen horses recreating battle scenes from the invading Mongol hordes. We did not want to pay an additional \$15 to see this, but we found a hill outside the arena where we could see part of the show. About five minutes into the program I saw a security guard was gesturing to us to get off the hill. But he wasn’t asking us to leave. He was inviting us into a side gate to sit in the staircase and watch! We saw sword play and pyrotechnics, bombs exploded, and many riders were knocked from their horses. The plot seemed a little thin and it was hard to tell who the good guys were, but the audience loved the show, especially when a few teachers were arrested, put in a rolling jail cell, then paraded across the arena. Everyone shrieked when an unexploded smoking



Miniature Temple of Heaven at Splendid China. The original temple is an imperial complex of religious buildings built 1406-1420 during the Ming Dynasty in the southeastern section of Beijing. (Photo by Dmpendse, Wikimedia, public domain)

bomb was “accidentally” tossed into the audience! We had just watched several similar grenades explode in flames! These kinds of shows are expensive and dangerous (and probably uninsurable in the US) so maybe the \$15 was well-deserved.

Our favorite show was the simplest. An older gentleman performed solo in front of the Cave Dwellings in Northern Shaanxi Province. He played a banjo-like instrument with a gourd body covered in snake-skin. He sang an epic tale with great gusto. There was no seating area, like in every other program we saw, but his magnetism and energy drew in a crowd. I did not understand a word he sang, but I was mesmerized by his simple, effective gestures and facial expressions that magnified his emotional vocal range. A good performer can overcome a less-than-ideal scenario; there is a reason we talk about a great performer commanding attention.

I will admit part of my discomfort with a few shows might have been my lack of language skills, though it also seemed like more than a few of the performers were just going through the motions. Giving the same show several times a day can get old. Please remember that every repeat performance is new for that audience, so it should be delivered with the same gusto and energy. In their defense, in more than a few situations, the hordes of unruly school children were a detriment to the program. I was appalled at the talking, moving about, and the trash they left behind. One performer asked repeatedly for students to sit down. He was mostly disregarded. The adult chaperones were just as often on their cell phones, ignoring the students, or even worse, barking at them through their belt-hanging tin

speakers, adding to the noise and discord. I know that sometimes it can be a struggle. I had recently given more than 30 performances to school-age children in China, so I also know that setting clear expectations with the students and their teachers is a vital task.

The villages seemed well-built with authentic materials. There were log homes, adobe structures, thatched roofs, and lots of bamboo. But some of the displays inside were lacking in detail and good signage. When I walk into a home or workshop, I want to see more than a sparse or vacant space. Just a few more pieces of furniture, tools, and art on the walls would help to make it feel lived-in. Of course, one cannot have fresh meat rotting in a subtropical climate, but the amount of plastic food and plastic flowers was an annoyance that grew as the tour went on. Also, I cannot think of any Midwest Open Air Museums with good translations of their signage, but if you are going to include a translation, please double-check with a native speaker to make sure the grammar and syntax are correct. Every sign should always be copy-edited, preferably by a few different people.

Another highlight was the food. Yes, in a large park with lots of school groups and families there was more junk food than I might prefer (think typical American zoo concession stands), but the restaurants and several food carts had a surprising diversity of authentic Chinese cuisine. I had fried dumplings and roasted lamb on a stick as a snack, and stir-fried yak for a hearty lunch. Wouldn't it be great if all Outdoor Museums served period or ethnically appropriate options?

They also had an Ecology Park section that does not quite measure up to the word zoo, but the animals were cute and seemed very well cared for. The red pandas were delightful, and fluffy eared squirrels in large wire hamster-tunnels were a hit. It later dawned on me how just a few lower-maintenance animals can add to the experience without adding too much to the expense. There were fish in every pond, and because the landscaping was well-managed, there were a lot of native birds flying about. I would like to have known more about the various ecosystems of China and the connections between ecology and culture, but this was not a focus of the park, and not every museum can answer every curiosity.

Toward the end of the day, we wandered over to the section known as Splendid China. Half the acreage of this outdoor museum is dedicated to reproducing the highlights of China in miniature. There is a short, mini-section of the Great Wall of China. I had climbed the actual Great Wall a few weeks before, so I was not interested in this exhibit. Further down the trail, it was amazing to see a miniature version of the Great Buddha, still quite large. There were also a dozen villages representing various architectural

styles, dynasties, and regions of China. Everything was built to scale, complete with bonsai trees, trimmed to the right size. The large temples were only a few feet tall and houses barely one foot tall. This is where I felt like Godzilla. I had Alberto take my photo from an angle that made it appear that I was roaring and trampling their villages!

This could be seen as a metaphor for the region's history that the park chooses to ignore. I know Godzilla is a Japanese creation, but it was China that trampled these villages to build city after city. As a student of Asian History and supporter of the Free Tibet Movement, there were a few open wounds that were glossed over by the park. Was Tibet invaded in the 1950s or always part of China as they want you to believe? What is China's relationship with North versus South Korea? Are they currently re-educating rural people to include them in the national dialogue or are they engaged in a cultural genocide of the Uyghurs? For an American comparison of histories poorly told, we need to look no further than our abuse of Chinese labor in building our western railroads, our history with Native Americans and African Americans, or our current treatment of immigrants. But we, as a nation are involved in a dialogue about who gets to tell the story, at least making efforts to be more inclusive. When I walked by the Tibetan Temple I cringed. I found it odd that there was a Korean Civilian Home. I avoided the Wa Village altogether. In a more enlightened setting, these could be opportunities to explore a more nuanced view of history or cultural appropriations, but not in this park. How do we allow other voices to be heard and not shy away from controversy? If historians cannot answer these questions, then we are not fulfilling a core mission of why we teach history – which is to learn from our mistakes as well as our successes.



A miniature village at Splendid China. (Photo by the author)

The Splendid China section is a large, well-manicured park with winding trails and meandering rivulets, overall very pleasing and by itself a pleasant place to pass an afternoon strolling through inspiring and educational displays. Though it might not be cost-effective or culturally appropriate to reproduce all of the major historical sites, American Indian villages, and iconic landscapes all in one park, it might be a worthy goal to create a scale model of your outdoor museum or the larger landscape that puts your site within a broader historic and/or ecological context. As an example, Bishop Hill State Historic Site, where I live, is truly blessed to have 18 pre-Civil War historical structures that are still standing, many of them functioning as museums, homes, and active businesses, including the Colony Hospital, where my wife and I run a historical bed and breakfast, The Twinflower Inn. But the town lost several of its iconic structures 50 years ago, and the thousands of acres it once farmed were carved up when the colony collapsed. I, for one, would love to see a scale model of the Utopian community in its prime with the furthest reaches of buildings represented within the farmland surrounding them.

Though I might give the experience a grade C overall, I am very glad I went, spent the money, and spent a full day. I am sure if I gave every historical outdoor museum an honest and thorough evaluation, I would find a few faults and a few rock-solid attributes, as any of us would. Every day we spend visiting another outdoor museum is a chance to pick up a few ideas to take home and help our sites refine our programs and facilities. Thank you for joining me on the tour – without the expense of a visa or the unavoidable jet lag. What might you do differently now that you have enjoyed the sights and sounds of Splendid China and China Folk Culture Villages?

About the author – Brian “Fox”

Ellis is the author of more than 30 books, two dozen musical theatre productions, and 100 magazine articles. He has helped to research, write and narrate several PBS documentaries and recently launched two television series on PBS, *History In Person* and *Fox Tales Folklore*.

As a museum consultant he has worked with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum, led a storyteller's tour of the Louvre in Paris, and curated exhibits for museums large and small. And for 40 years he has travelled the world collecting and telling stories with an emphasis on the place where art, history, science, and culture overlap.



WHEN NATURE CALLS

FROM THE GALLANT FARM BLOG

By Robin Mayes, Gallant Farm

YOUNG visitors to Gallant Farm (back in the ‘Good Ol’ Days,’ pre-pandemic, when we could actually have field trips) are often disgusted at the thought of using, or worse yet, emptying, the porcelain pot that is kept hidden discreetly in its compartment of the bedroom washstand. It is not the receptacle itself that repels them, of course. When I produce the rather delicate-looking, lidded vessel, some even “ooo” and “ahh” over it. When questioned about the possible uses of the pot, invariably someone responds with “cookies!”

Needless to say, they are shocked and dismayed to hear the actual use of these one-handed, chinaware pots that the Victorians dubbed “Thunder Mugs.” They even get pretty judgmental about people who would be so crass as to use such a thing. When informed that the emptying of the chamber pots often fell to the young members of the household, the kids emit sounds of revolt.



The wicker Heywood-Wakefield child's potty chair. (photos by the author)

Our wicker Heywood-Wakefield child's potty chair usually elicits the same response from groups of sophisticated, worldly-wise seven- and eight-year-olds. I resist the urge to remind them that they were very likely using its modern counterpart in the recent past.

In the Gallant farmhouse bedroom, we have a beautiful toilet set. I believe it retains all of the original pieces. Probably ordered from a Sears and Roebuck catalog for about six

dollars, it not only has the large pitcher and bowl, but also the shaving mug, toothbrush holder, and soap dish. In addition to the chamber pot, there is a taller urn-like lidded vessel that has the undignified nickname of the “slop jar.” The slop jar was where you poured the wash water from the big bowl after use. It could then be more easily transported out of the house.

By the 1930s, most city-dwellers had the luxury of indoor plumbing, but it took a while longer for this modern convenience to make its way to the humble family farm. Interestingly, some were not anxious to bring the outhouse in! If you have ever used an outhouse or a modern pit toilet,

you are familiar with the aroma. Today's portajohns mask the smell with overpowering artificial fragrances, but you get the general idea.

Many housewives, unfamiliar with the mechanics of an indoor flushing toilet, could not imagine why anyone would want to bring THAT inside!

By the 1960s, although the farm families I knew had nice, inside facilities, most farms retained their outhouses. The old, outdoor necessary could come in handy if you were engrossed in a great game of ‘ghosts in the graveyard’ or if you were wet from swimming and were forbidden to enter the house drippy. The outhouse was also an option if you simply wanted to avoid the house just in case Mom had a job for you. And the convenience of two-holers? Well, we won't even get into that.

I remember well my Grandma Ila's outhouse. There was no trepidation involved in entering hers as there was with some dilapidated, web-covered privies. A fastidious housekeeper (a quality I did NOT inherit), her attention to detail was even mirrored in her outdoor toilet. Hers had linoleum on the floor, a store-bought seat, and even red-flowered wallpaper! A flower box on the side, just below the screened ventilation slot, held red geraniums in summer. She kept a bucket of lime handy, and adult users were expected to sprinkle a liberal dose on top before leaving. Grandma's little outdoor facility was so pleasant, we cousins used it as base during games of hide-and-seek.

The construction of a good, solid outhouse took thought and planning. As with many things, there were experts who knew the ‘ins-and-outs’ of outhouses. Charles “Chic” Sales, a comedian in the early 1900s, created a character who was such a specialist and made it into a successful comedy career.. He even wrote a book on the subject (see page 30).

All humor aside, the situating of the outhouse took forethought. The soil type in the spot where the pit was to be



Toilet set in the bedroom of the Gallant farm house.

dug was even taken into consideration. A quality outhouse included a long stabilizing post driven down into the ground. This made it much more difficult for fun-loving juvenile delinquents to upset occupied outhouses or prevent those youths from stealing them as a Halloween prank. These stolen privies often ended up in the middle of a downtown street.

Here at Gallant Farm, our one-holer came ready-made and was set down where we thought it made sense. It is near the woodshed as it probably would have been decades ago. This would facilitate grabbing a few sticks of firewood for the woodstove with every trip to the outhouse.

The interior of ours never felt quite right, though. Just bare rafters and supports. No inside wallboards of any kind. So, during the early days of the pandemic, I took advantage of the closing of the farm to remedy the situation. I added interior horizontal boards of varying widths and then ‘papered’ them with 1930s newspaper. Some aging tech-

niques and the addition of a shelf, a lantern, and a wire coat-hook seemed to make the outhouse feel ‘used.’

People often ask us if our outhouse here still works. We smile and reply that there is very little to go wrong with the workings of an outhouse but remind them that ours is just for display.

So even though chamber pots and outhouses are often the butt of jokes (no pun intended) they hold an important part in history. □

About the author — Robin Mayes grew up on a farm a few miles from Gallant Farm. Before becoming Farm Educator at Gallant Farm, she was a guide at a local cave after spending many years as a journalist.



The Gallant Farm outhouse after it was refurbished this past year.



Left – chamber pail with a “Husher” cover.



Right – pink porcelain child’s chamber pot.

GALLANT FARM

Gallant Farm is a representation of a Depression-era Ohio farm. In pre-COVID-19 days, the farm offered an interactive experience with docent-led tours of the farmhouse and outbuildings, educational public programs, day camps, and seasonal events. It is one of 11 parks operated by Preservation Parks of Delaware County in central Ohio just north of Columbus.

The farmhouse was constructed in 2011 to replicate a typical rural home of the early 20th-century. The furnishings and housewares within were all donated by local families. Gallant Farm sits on 19 acres, and in addition to the farmhouse includes a reconstructed barn with historical timbers believed to date to the 1890s, a granary, machine shed and barnyard, demonstration crop fields, garden, orchard, and pond. Visitors encounter costumed interpreters plowing the fields, tending the garden, or cooking on the wood-burning stove.

Programs at the farm are designed to transport visitors to an earlier era. Visitors learn how to preserve produce

from the garden, make sausage, prepare the garden for planting, or use the wood stove to make soups and pies, among many other activities.

Annual special events include Maple Syrup Time, an Antique Tractor Show, Music under the Paper Moon (see *Midwest Open Air Museums Magazine*, Spring 2017), and Winter Evening on the Farm.

A modern, timber-frame building holds the farm office, public restrooms, and a classroom/display space. Robin Mayes serves as Farm Educator and Gabe Ross is Farm Manager.



The Gallant Farm barn and farmhouse..

Charles (Chic) Sale. *The Specialist*. (St. Louis: Specialist Publishing Co., 1929). Hardcover. 32 pages.

Reviewed by Jenny Sherrill

Charles “Chic” Sales was a Midwestern entertainer in the first half of the 20th century who made a name for himself as Lem Putt, “The Specialist,” a carpenter from Urbana, Illinois. Born in Huron, South Dakota, he was a stage comedian, a silent film actor, and, in his 40s, a Hollywood character actor.

His “Specialist” character was a stage act that was so popular that he wrote a collection of his monologues in a small book published in 1929 with assistance (and illustrations) by a newspaper political cartoonist, Roy James. The book was so popular that Sales spent the next several months answering fan mail.

“Lem Putt – that wasn’t his real name – really lived,” Sale wrote on the dedication page of his book. “He was just as sincere in his work as a great painter whose heart is in his canvas; and in this sketch I have simply tried to bring to you recollections of a man I once knew, who was so rich in odd and likable traits of character as to make a most lasting impression on my memory.”

My heart is in privy buildin’. And when I finish a job, I ain’t through. I give all my customers six months’ privy service free...One day [customer Luke Harkins] calls me up and sez: “Lem, I wish you’d come out here; I’m havin’ privy trouble.”

So I gits in the car and drives out to Luke’s place, and hid where I could get a good view of the situation.

It was right in the middle of hayin’ time, and them hired hands was goin’ in there and stayin’ anywhere from forty minutes to an hour! Think of that!

First I looks at the catalogue hangin’ there, thinkin’ it might be that; but it wasn’t even from a reck-onized house. Then I looks at the seats proper, and I see what the trouble was. I had made them holes too durn comfortable. So I gets out a scroll saw and cuts ‘em square with hard edges. ...And I watched them hired hands goin’ in and out for nearly two hours; and not one of them was stayin’ more than four minutes.

“Luke,” I sez, “I’ve solved her.” That’s what comes of bein’ a specialist, gentlemen.

(Adapted from *The Specialist*, by Charles (Chic) Sales, Specialist Publishing Co., St. Louis, MO. 1929.)

Sale’s character supplies advice on locating the privy, construction, windows (or not), and even what color to paint it (contrasting colors are best – red with white trim increases visibility at night, you see). The shape of the ventilation hole – whether a crescent or a star – is explored in depth, and he advises caution before making too many cuts – one does have to look at them later.

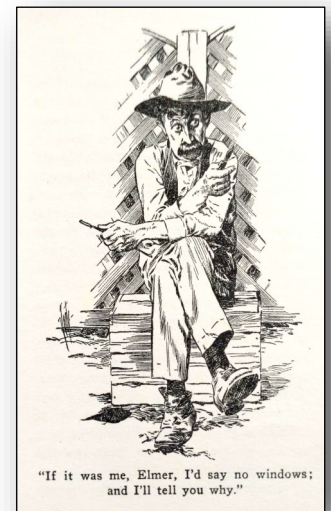
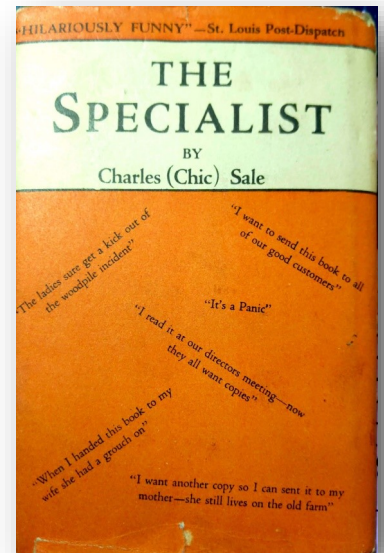
Which way should the door open?

What accessories should be provided?

Should the privy have windows?

Lem Putt offers advice on all the subjects and more in Chic Sales’ short book, *The Specialist*.

Sales died in 1936 at the age of 51, and most likely never built a single privy. □



MIGHTY HEAVEN! I RECKON A HEAP O' FOLKS TALKED A RIGHT SMART DIFFERENT IN 1845

ELIZABETH FARNHAM'S ACCOUNT OF EARLY ILLINOIS DIALECT

By Tom Vance

IN the course of preparing to present and interpret history at our museums and historical sites, much attention is paid to period clothing, foodways, agriculture, buildings, and landscape, as well as the interpretive message and how it is delivered. The language used to deliver it, however, is often over-looked, and modern words, terms, and slang, while familiar to modern ears, can detract from the interpretation.

Eliminating modern words such as “hi,” “cool,” “awesome,” “totally,” “you guys,” “yeah,” “what’s up,” “okay,” (although it does date from the mid 19th-century), and my pet peeve, “no problem,” is the first step in interpreting or portraying the time period. Incorporating some period words and terms into even second-person interpretation can better help to portray the time period. Understanding the mind set and world view of the people you are interpreting, how that translated into their speech patterns, and how they communicated with each other can only strengthen your interpretation.

Some research on how the people you are interpreting actually spoke can go a long way, even if you are not doing first-person interpretation. It becomes more important if you are doing first-person. A lot of written sources are available, including letters, diaries, journals, newspapers, novels, plays, and even period dictionaries, to get an idea of how people communicated and the words and idioms that they used. People usually wrote the way they spoke, and period dialect can often be found in their letters and other writings.

Speech patterns also depended on the area of origin and education level. Illinois is influenced by what Robert Delaney in his *Dialect Map of American English*¹ calls North and South Midland. These could also be termed Yankees, immigrating from Pennsylvania and eastern areas, and Southern Uplanders coming from Kentucky, Tennessee, and other areas to the south. The speech patterns of the people that Elizabeth Farnham encountered seem to be influenced by the Upland South and Yankees are generally referred to by the natives in derogatory terms.

Education level was also a factor. Less-educated folks would use what we consider poor grammar, including wrong verb tenses, double negatives, and other grammatical changes. The more educated would speak more proper



First-person interpreters at Lincoln Log Cabin were taught early Illinois dialect as part of their interpretive training. In the photo, young Abe Lincoln makes his annual spring visit to his step-mother, father, and family when the circuit brought him through Charleston, Illinois. (Photo by the author)

English, but still might use some period words, terms, and expressions. Other folks fell somewhere in between.

In the first-person program we developed at Lincoln Log Cabin, most of the people we interpreted on the 1845 Thomas Lincoln farm were from the upland South with a few Yankees and a couple of Pennsylvania Dutch thrown in. Besides the Lincoln family, we developed character roles for three dozen or more neighbor families. Part of the interpreter training that volunteers and seasonal staff went through included training in early Illinois dialect. The dialect was broken down into grammar rules, vocabulary, and idiomatic expressions. The dialect training was designed much like foreign language training and was incorporated into the context of other topics of 1845 life as they were being taught.

The site interpreter at the time, Beth Carvey, researched and developed the dialect based on the book *Life in Prairieland*, written by Elizabeth Farnham and published in 1846. Elizabeth was an educated author who made the trip to Illinois to visit her sister Mary around 1844. The story begins with her arrival by steamboat in St. Louis, where she boards another steamboat for the trip up the Illinois River, and then overland to Mary’s house at Prairie Lodge. Elizabeth marvels at the beauty of the Illinois country, in particular the vast prairies, but her primary interest was

documenting the people she met along the way. She also gives some interesting descriptions of clothing, food preparation, etc.

She was particularly interested in how they spoke and she describes and quotes their native dialect in numerous areas of the book. On page 17, she describes the pronunciation of the word “here,” which she spells “hyur” throughout the book:

*“It is difficult to convey by any written combination of letters the sound of this word as uttered by the natives of these regions. It is more like yur preceded by h sharply aspirated, than anything else to which I can liken it.”*²

After settling in on the second steamboat that would head up the Illinois River, a fellow passenger from the previous boat, sat down next to her. The second boat was dilapidated and filthy compared to the first. Her fellow passenger remarked:

“This hyur boat ain’t set out so smart by a heap as t’other. I ’lowed we shouldn’t have such a fine place to be in all the way.”

“Why,” said I, “had you been told that the boats up the Illinois were so poorly furnished?”

*“No, I never heern nothin about ‘em, but ‘tain’t in natur to have such carpets, and cheers, and glasses everywhere; it cost a heap to have ‘em.”*³

In the process of choosing a berth, the chambermaid gave Elizabeth some advice to take a certain one:

*“Kase,” to use her own elegant language, “the bugs ain’t a touch in hyur to what they be in yander.”...Seeing my consternation, she added, “O, you needn’t dread em so powerful; I broomed the berths today, and shook the ‘trasses, so they won’t be so mighty bad.”*⁴

One more quote from Farnham gives a good sense of daily conversation. Elizabeth and Mary traveled north a few miles to a village where a traveling circus was being held. Elizabeth is more interested in the people than in the circus or the exotic animals. Walking down the main street, she listens in on a conversation between three women:

“I expect there’ll be a power of folks hyur today.”

“I reckon,” is the brief reply.

“Was you ever in one of these hyur shows?”

“No, I never was; but Irene has been.”

“Whar was it?”

*“In Indiany, ‘fore dad moved hyur. She said there was a heap of droll beasts in that...They tote the same critters about every summer in different parts of the country.”*⁵

Conversations between Elizabeth and her sister all consist of proper English, so Mary, having lived in Illinois for a while, has not picked up the local dialect. Certain other people with whom they talk also don’t speak in dialect.

Two other sources were checked in the initial research. One source is two letters written to Abraham Lincoln by his stepbrother John Johnston in 1848. One written for himself, and the other written for Abe’s father, Thomas Lincoln, both asking for money. Both letters show examples of dialect throughout. In the letter written for Thomas, he says in part:

*“Dear Son, I and the old womman is in the best of health...I injoy as good a health at this time...I was cold on for it not long sence...I am glad that I have lived to see anuther Whig President alected...we have razed this summer as much as fifty bushels of corne to the acor & our wheat was very good.”*⁶

Johnston wrote another letter to Abe in 1849 concerning Thomas Lincoln’s health and asking Abe to come see his father. In the letter he spells the word “here” as “hure” in three places, confirming Farnham’s pronunciation of “hyur.”

*“I hast to inform you that father is yet a Live & that is all...& he wons you to Come if you ar able to git hure...& it is nothing more than natere for him to crave to see you.”*⁷

Another source that confirmed much of the dialect is the book *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain. In addition, an interpreter we hired a year later had grown up in Kentucky speaking Southern Upland dialect, and he was able to confirm and even add to our dialect information.

The following three pages contain Grammar Rules, Vocabulary, and Idiomatic Expressions similar to those that appeared in the Lincoln Log Cabin Interpreter’s Handbook. Most are documented to Farnham, the Johnston letters, or Tom Sawyer. The small numbers after the word or phrase indicate the page number where it is found in Farnham’s book, AL indicates that it was found in the Johnston letters, and TS indicates that it was found in Tom Sawyer. Those not attributed are based on the grammar rules. □

ENDNOTES

1. Robert Delaney, *Dialect Map of American English*, 2000, accessed December 2, 2020, robertspage.com/dialects.
2. Elizabeth Farnham, *Life in Prairie Land*, 1846 (repr., Create Space Independent Publishing Platform, 2016), 17. Available on Amazon and at Internet Archives: archive.org/details/lifeinprairielan00infarn.
3. Farnham, 18.
4. Farnham, 23.
5. Farnham, 96-97.
6. Charles Coleman, *Abraham Lincoln and Coles County, Illinois*, New Brunswick, N.J., 1955, 73.
7. Coleman, 128.

GRAMMAR RULES

1. GUTTERAL – The dialect is guttural in nature. The key to pronunciation is to half swallow most words. This is especially prevalent in vowels that precede an “r”. The sound is very hard and said in the back of the throat.

clear = clar^{109, AL} here = hyur^{123, 298} stern = starn²⁸
there = thar^{123, 361} where = whar,¹⁷⁶ somewhar³⁸

2. WRONG VERB TENSE – Verb tenses are almost always wrong.

It was give to you. The boys sleeps in thar.¹²³
I allowed you was

3. DOUBLE NEGATIVE – The double negative is common.

I don't say nothin'⁶⁷ Ain't of no use.³⁷
He ain't very handsome no how.¹⁰⁴

4. AIN'T – There are several words that use ain't.

aren't = ain't^{18, 123} haven't = hain't^{67, 124, TS}
cannot = cain't it isn't = tain't^{67, 109}

5. O = ER – The “o” ending of such words as fellow and potato is changed to “er”, again putting the sound in the back of the throat.

fellow = feller^{104, TS} follow = foller^{TS}
potato = tater¹⁷⁶ tomato = tamater, 'mater
widow = widder^{TS} yellow = yellor^{TS}

6. ING WORDS – verbs ending in “ing” are treated as follows:

- The “g” is dropped
- “a” is often but not always put before the verb
- “be” is sometimes added preceding the “a” if it is in question form.

helping = helpin'³⁶ doing it = doin' it²⁸
expecting = expectin'⁵¹ having = havin'³⁶
setting = was a settin'¹⁷⁶ whizzin' and bustin'²⁸
who'd a' thought?^{TS} carrying = totin'³⁷
going = a goin'^{29, 110} Whar be they goin'?¹⁰⁴

On non-verb “ing” words, the “g” is usually dropped.

feelings = feelin's¹⁰⁶ fitting = fittin'³³
something = somethin'³⁶ washin' and mendin'³⁷

7. EAR = AIR, AIR = EER – the “er” as in earth is changed to “air”.

earth = airth³⁹ early = airly²⁶

The “air” sound as in care is changed to an “ear” sound.

chair = cheer¹⁸ share = sheer^{TS}

8. ADDING A “T” at the end of words ending in an “s” sound.

has = hast once = oncet¹²³

9. INTERCHANGING VOWELS – Almost all vowels interchange with each other often resulting in a more guttural sound.

I = E sit = set^{104, AL} intend = entend
risk = resk since = sence^{AL}

E = I get = git^{45, 67, 361, AL} yet = yit⁶⁷
chest = chist⁴⁰ general = giner¹⁰⁶
enjoy = injoy^{AL} engineer = ingineer¹⁷

E = A certain = sartin¹⁷⁶ Jersey = Jarsey³⁰

A = O awful = orful called = cold^{AL}
wants = wonts^{AL} instantly = instontly

A = U far = fur⁴¹

O = U drove = druv²⁹⁴ another = anuther^{AL}

U = O sure = shore suppose = soppose^{AL}
undo = ondo¹⁶⁷

I = U first = fust³⁹

U = I just = jist^{41, 110} haunted = hainted^{TS}

E = U pretty = purty pretend = purtend

10. OI = I – “oi” as in poison is changed to a long “i”.

Illinois = Illinice⁴² join = jine
poison = pisen^{TS} spoil = spile^{TS}

11. CH = T, T = CH – The “ch” sound as in actual is changed to a “t” and the “t” sound as in military is changed to a “ch”.

Actually = acterally²⁶ natural = natur¹⁸ natere^{AL}
military = milichary¹⁰⁶

12. DROPPING A LETTER – in many instances, a vowel sound is completely dropped. This again, has the effect of putting the word in the back of the throat.

barrel = bar'l^{TS} document = doc'ment
particular = partic'lar^{TS} recollect = reck'lect
regular = reg'lar^{TS} speculate = spec'late²⁹⁸

Words beginning with a vowel or ending in “ed”

allowed = 'lowed^{18, TS} account = 'count, no'count¹⁰⁶
amount = 'mount except = 'cept, 'ceptin'
about = 'bout^{TS} because = 'kase²⁶
believed = b'lieved¹⁰⁶ enough = 'nuff^{TS}
it was = t'was^{42, TS} it won't = t'won't²⁹
it would = t'would^{67, TS} opinion = 'pinion⁴¹
knew = know'd³⁷ threw = throw'd²⁶

Consonants are also sometimes dropped.

already = a'ready³⁶ always = allus¹⁰²
before = 'afore⁴² captain = cappen^{17, 28}
of = o³⁷ them = em^{26, 37}

VOCABULARY

| A | | G | | once | |
|------------------|--|-----------------------|---|----------------|----------------------------|
| a lot | a heap ^{102,TS} | get | git ^{45, 361,TS, AL} | ought | oncet ¹²³ |
| a lot | mighty ²³ | get rid of | git shet of ^{39, 124} | opinion | d'ought ¹⁷⁶ ort |
| a lot | powerful ^{23, TS} | going | ago in ¹¹⁰ | | 'pinion ⁴¹ |
| a lot, very good | right smart ¹³² | guess, suppose | reckon ²⁸ | P | |
| actually | acterally ²⁶ | | | peculiar | 'culiarsome |
| afraid | a'feared ^{TS} | | | people | folks ^{176, 297} |
| again | agin | H | hed | perhaps | 'haps |
| allow | 'low, 'lowed ^{18, TS} | had | 'dought | picture | picter |
| almost | nigh ⁵² | had ought | turnin's ²⁸ | poison | pisen ^{TS} |
| already | a'ready ^{36, TS} | happenings | hast | potatoes | taters ¹⁷⁶ |
| always | allus ¹⁰² all'urs ¹⁰⁶ | has | hev, havin' ³⁶ | pretend | portend |
| among | 'mongst | have, having | hain't ^{124,TS} | pretty | purty |
| animals | critters ¹⁰⁴ beasts ⁴⁵ | haven't | heerd, heern ^{18,24} | | |
| appeared | 'peared | heard | helpin' ³⁶ | R | reg'lar ^{TS} |
| are | aar ⁴¹ , ar ^{AL} | helping | hyur ^{123,298} hure ^{AL} | regular | recklect |
| are not | ain't ¹²³ | here | hisn ¹⁰⁸ | remember | ris ¹⁰⁹ |
| ask, asked | ax ^{176,TS} ast ⁴² | his | holler | risk | resk |
| awful | orful | hollow | diggins ³⁶ | S | |
| | | home | hongrey | saw, seen | seed ^{28, 97} |
| | | hungry | Ol' man ^{42,106} | serve | sarve |
| | | husband, father | | should not | shan't ³⁸ |
| | | | I | shout | holler ¹⁰⁸ |
| | | idea | idy, notion | since | sence ¹⁰⁹ |
| | | Illinois | Illinice ⁴² | sit | set ^{AL104} |
| | | Illinois native | Sucker | speculate | spec'late ²⁹⁸ |
| | | in what place | Where'bouts | spoil | spile ^{TS} |
| | | Indiana | Indianny ⁹⁷ | start | commence ¹²⁰ |
| | | infernal (lousy) | infarnal ²⁹ 'farnal ¹⁰⁴ | | |
| | | instead | 'stead | T | |
| | | intend | entend | the other | t'other ^{56, TS} |
| | | isn't | ain't ^{18, TS} | them | 'em ^{26, 37} |
| | | it isn't | tain't ^{124, TS} | there | thar ^{28, 361} |
| | | it was | t'was ^{42, TS} | there isn't | 'taint ⁶⁷ |
| | | it won't | t'won't ²⁹ | think | allow ²⁹⁴ |
| | | it would | 'twould ^{67, TS} | think | reckon ²⁶ |
| | | | J | threw | threwed ²⁶ |
| | | join | jine | tomato | tomater, mater |
| | | just | jist ^{41,110} | twice | twicet ¹²³ |
| | | | K | | |
| | | Kentucky | Kaintucky ⁶⁷ | U | uncle |
| | | know, knew | know'd ³⁷ | unknown person | stranger ^{28, 37} |
| | | | L | V | |
| | | learn, learning | larn, larnin' ³³⁸ | very | right ²⁹⁵ |
| | | luggage, laundry, etc | plunder ³⁷ | Virginia | Virginny ¹⁰⁸ |
| | | | M | | |
| | | might | mought ^{37,130} | W | |
| | | mile | mild ^{52,361} | wasn't | warn't ¹⁸ |
| | | military | milichary ¹⁰⁶ | water | wotter |
| | | | N | well | wall ^{128,361} |
| | | nature | natur ¹⁸ natere ^{AL} | where | whar ¹⁷⁶ |
| | | near | nigh ¹⁰⁶ | whole | hull |
| | | nearly | nigh 'unto | wife | ol' woman ^{AL} |
| | | no good | no account ^{106, TS} | widow | widder ^{TS} |
| | | | O | window | winder |
| | | oblige | oblege ^{109,298} | women | womenfolk |
| | | of | 'o ³⁷ | would have | 'ud ²⁹⁸ |
| | | oh my | mighty heaven ¹⁰⁵ | Y | |
| | | “ | merciful heaven ²⁰ | yes | yas ³⁷ |
| | | | | yellow | yeller |

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS AND PHRASEOLOGY

1. GIT SHED OF or GIT SHET OF

"If she is, she'll get shet of it after a while."³⁹

"Thee'll soon git shet of that, tain't of much account anyhow."¹²⁴

2. THIS ONE TAKES THE RAG OFF 'EM ALL.

"If he's trying to land (the steamboat) thar, this one takes the rag off them all."²⁸

3. IT BEATS ALL

"It beats all how much you and Mary looks alike."⁵¹

4. TOTE THE PLUNDER

"Some rough-looking men were toting plunder on board (the steamboat)"²²

"I got tired o' totin my plunder (washin and mendin) back and forth..."³⁷

"What if there is a heap. Tote away ten or fifteen minutes and thar won't be so much."⁴⁰

5. NO ACCOUNT, TAIN'T OF MUCH ACCOUNT

"I calculate 'tain't of much account to have a woman if she aint' of no use."³⁷

"Why, 'tain't of much account for a man to brag of himself..."¹⁰⁹

"He ain't no account."^{TS}

6. TO GUM OR TO YANKEE

"Look *hyur*, stranger," said he, "do I look as if I could be gummed that easy?"²⁸

"Oh, I reckon it'll pass among Yankees, but it's no account among us."¹⁰⁷

7. PUFFIN' LIKE A BEAT HORSE

"That fellow, now, is a puffin like a beat horse."¹⁰⁷

8. AHEAD OF HEAVEN AND AIRTH

"These Yankees go ahead of heaven and airth."¹⁰⁴

9. HAIN'T CALCULATED MUCH ABOUT

"I hain't calculated much about that."⁴²

11. SHE MAY LOOK AS "THUNDERIN" AS A LIVE AIRTHQUAKE

"If a woman'll mind her own business, she may look as thunderin as a live airthquake, I shan't mind it."⁴⁰

12. A HEAP, A POWER; POWERFUL = a lot

"But thar's such a heap of it."⁴⁰

"I expect there'll be a power of folks *hyur* today."⁹⁶

"...he's seed something a powerful sight bigger."¹⁰⁶

"[He] was not only a powerful smart man, but one of mighty larnin."³³⁸

13. MIGHTY HEAVEN, MERCIFUL HEAVEN

"Mighty!" She exclaimed."¹⁰⁴

"Mighty Heaven!" she exclaimed or rather shrieked."¹⁰⁵

"Merciful Heaven, it cannot be!"²⁰

14. SMART, RIGHT SMART

"This *hyur* boat aint' set out so smart by a heap..."¹⁸

"We come to a stream that had ris a right smart sence morning."³³⁰

15. RIGHT PEART

"I must feel right peart to be out that airly."²⁶

16. STATES

Illinois = Illinice⁴²

Indiana = Indiany⁹⁷

Ill. native = Sucker⁶³

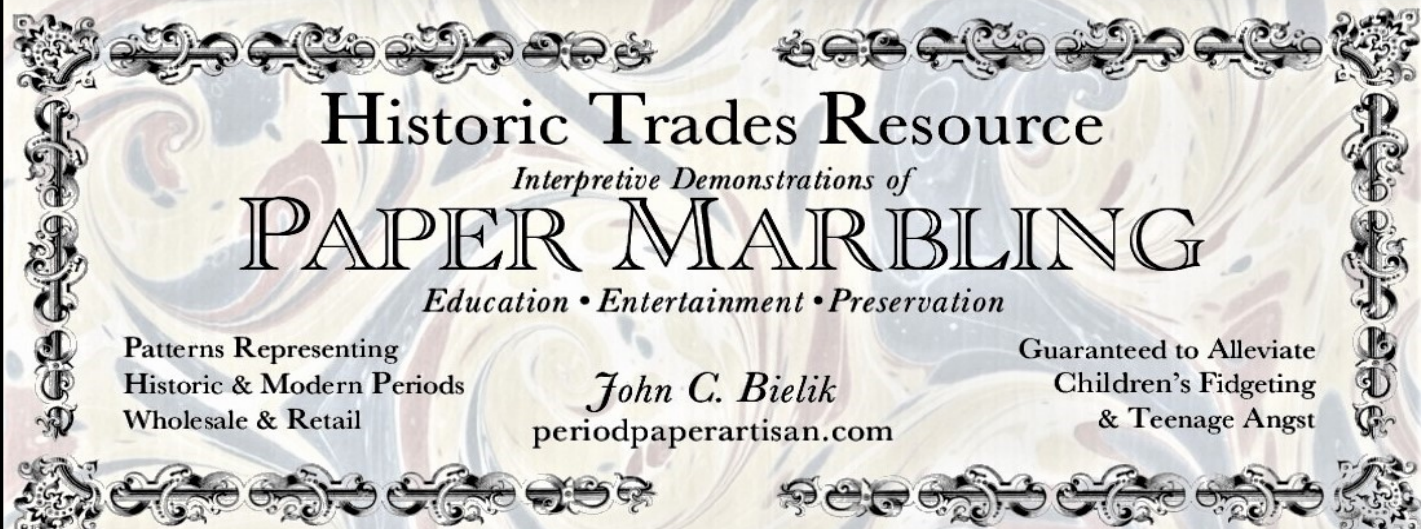
Ind. native = Hooshier^{29, 132}

Kentucky = Kaintucky⁶⁷

Ky. native = Corn-cracker⁶³

New Jersey = Jarsey³⁰

Virginia = Virginy¹⁰⁸



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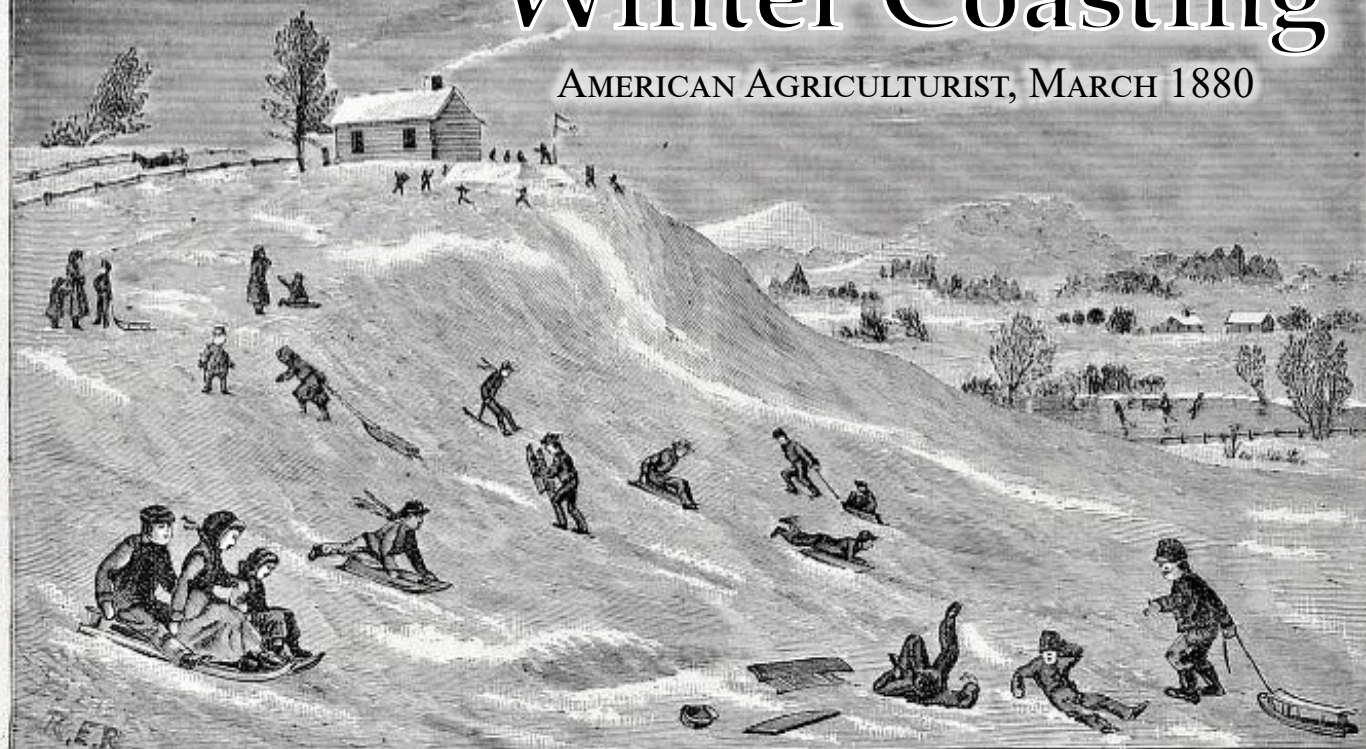


Fig. 8.—A COASTING SCENE.—DRAWN BY R. E. ROBINSON.—Engraved for the American Agriculturist.

Coasting.

It is as natural for a child to slide down a hill as for ducks to go into the water, or turtles to get on a log when the sun is shining, and get off very suddenly again when there are signs of danger. Boys, and girls too, try all summer to slide down something, if only a cellar door. But the old sloping cellar door has largely gone out of fashion, and with it has gone much juvenile fun; in the absence of the cellar door the youngsters take to something else, if only a dirty bank, and wear out their clothes, their mother's patience, and not small part of the bank itself, in their endeavors to have a slide. They will bet a board and put it where there is some hope of a ride down its splintery surface; and getting their little wagon on it will go down with a shout and a smash.—Children are creatures of motion, and anything that make motion easier is hailed with delight. Snow is just such an aid to the free movements of the child, and it is not necessary for me to say that it is

the joy of their winter life. If a well boy can be kept in the house without considerable effort when the snow has come, and the rolling banks along the fences are crusted over with a coat as hard and smooth as ice, he is a different boy from any I ever saw or ever want to see. If the average boy can be kept from sliding down those crusted snow banks on his boot, as shown in Fig. 1, some very strong measure have been used or the boy was born in the tropics and he does not know what



Fig. 1.—SLIDING.

snow is for. The shoemaker does not want any such boys around. The desire to slide being born with the child, let us see some of the contrivances with which he accomplishes his purpose.

In Fig. 2., is the simple, round-ended board, which may be of almost any length. A couple of cleats are



Fig. 2.—THE ROUNDED BOARD.

nailed across it to serve the double purpose of keeping it from splitting and the rider from sliding off. There are certain objections to this coasting vehicle which those who have tried it will understand. If the snow is soft it does not go, but buries itself; and when the

snow is hard and rough it is “rather uncertain.”

Fig. 3 is the “slew” is made of two barrel staves set a few inches apart and fastened by cross-pieces with a strip of

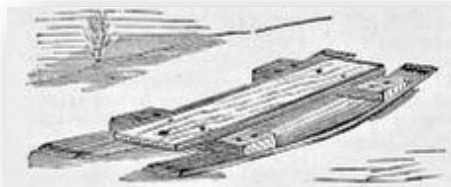


Fig. 3.—THE COMMON “SLEW.”

board upon these, running lengthwise of the staves, and making the seat. The “slew” is a low, broad runner sled, which will go either end foremost, and (when the hill is icy) sideways as well as any way; hence its name.

The Jumper, figure 4, is made of one stout stave, to which a bit of scantling one foot long is nailed, and upon the upper end of the scantling a board

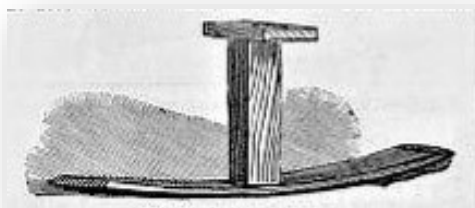


Fig. 4.—THE JUMPER.

for a seat is fastened. This is not an easy thing to ride, as there is nothing to hold on to; and to a new hand, if the hill is steep, it is a *jumper* which will sometimes leave them behind.

The *shovel* must come in somewhere, and let it be her, figure 5. This kind of coasting is not recommended, and many a child that has practiced it remembers how much better it would have been for him if he had only left the shovel alone.



Fig. 5.—COASTING ON A SHOVEL.

The *toboggan* is an Indian sled, and much used by them in Canada for hauling their traps, pelts, etc., and also for coasting. It is made of ¼-inch stuff 5 to 8 feet long, bent up in front like the dash-board of a sleigh. It is braced by several cross pins, and kept in shape by cat-gut strings, as shown in fig. 6.

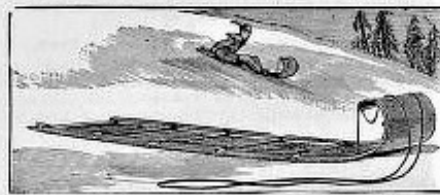


Fig. 6.—THE TOBOGGAN OR INDIAN SLED.

The sled that I had the most sport with was made like the one shown in figure 7. The runners were cut from “natural crooks.” The beams and knees all one piece, fastened to the runners by wooden pins passing through the rave, and fitting into half-rounded grooves on each side of the beams. This is probably the best sled for the farm, when it is often convenient to draw a heavy load. In coasting it has but few equals, especially if well shod.

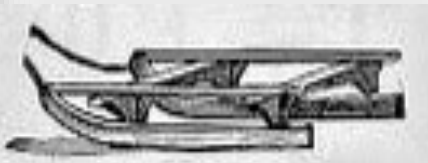


Figure 7.

In the large picture, figure 8, the artist has given us “The old school house on the hill.” It is doubtless the hour for noon recess, the day is a fine one, and all hands are out to make the most of it. Some are building a snow fort, or defending one already made, and others are skating on the pond to the right beyond; but the most of the children are having a good time with their sleds on the hillside in the foreground. There is the large sled with the two girls in the front and the boy to guide it behind. The boy who will give the little ones—too small to go alone—a ride on his large sled is doing that which will be remembered. Kind acts, like kind words, seem to live forever.

Many boys prefer to have their sled all to themselves. There are such, no doubt, in the picture. Some of the boys sit upright and guide with their heels in front, while others prefer a horizontal position, and use the toes behind for steering. The older and more daring boys have fixed up a “Cajulluck” or “Thank ye marm,” a bank thrown up in the course of the slide, so that when the sled strikes it the whole load is thrown into the air and comes down some distance beyond. It would seem that two boys have found the jumping a little serious, and they and the sled too, have suffered for the toss into the air. One poor fellow has evidently hurt the back of his head, and is not getting as much sympathy from one of the other boys, who came through all right, as the conditions of the case demand. But there is another lad coming down at full speed, and if he does not look out he too will be piled upon and added to the wreck. What would these sports of childhood be without now and then an overthrow—a bruise and a break down! They are the sore spots for a while, but they become the bright ones in the memory of younger days.—If there was not toiling up the hill in order to go down again—if there were no rough places to go over, and had places to shun, this life would not teach us the grand lessons of personal responsibility and individual power—that is does now. We must remember the influence that “all work and no play”—and “all play and not work” had on our young friend Jack.—But there goes the school bell and the scene must change. The play out-of-doors must give place for the work that is within the school-room. The horse is anxious to go on, but not so with UNCLE HAL.□



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