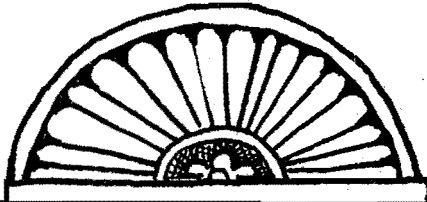


THE COOKING FIREPLACE
IN THE HAGADORN HOUSE

BY

HELENE C. PHELAN

ALMOND
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
MONOGRAPHS



THE ALMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Almond was settled in 1796 by families from Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. The Almond Historical Society was formed in 1963 under the leadership of John Reynolds, who was its president until 1971. An absolute charter was granted to it in 1971 by the University of the State of New York.

The home of the Society is at 11 Main Street. The house was built about 1830 and was willed to the Society by former member Kenneth Hagadorn.

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Helene C. Phelan

The most immediate attraction for visitors to the Hagadorn House is the cooking fireplace that was uncovered almost intact, in 1942, by Kenneth and Marie Hagadorn, who then owned the house. Curious as to what lay behind the abnormally thick wall which concealed the fireplace, the owners had it torn down to reveal this long forgotten center of household activities over a hundred years before. (There are several other fireplaces in the house still to be uncovered, whose handsome mantels can only suggest the original appearance of the heating system of the house built by Jesse Angell in the early 1800's.)

Many years ago, some former owner, finding more sufficient ways of cooking and heating than fireplaces, sealed up the cooking fireplace as it was--crane, kettles and all--never dreaming that this act would someday provide an amazingly lucky "find" for the Hagadorns and for us.

For the builder of the original fireplace, his early 1800 creation was quite up to date, though not too many years later the introduction of stoves would replace cooking fireplaces entirely. Iron cranes, such as the one bolted into this fireplace wall came into use after 1720, according to J. A. Russell in a recent article in Yankee magazine.¹ Before this,

¹Russell, J. A. "Fireplaces Were For Cooking" Yankee, November 1971.

according to this article a large wooden pole held the trammels, chains, and pot-hooks, which in turn held the kettles. According to Mr. Russell, "many a dinner was lost with the drying out, burning through, and collapse of such wooden supports before the use of iron."

Brick fireplaces, which were both more practical and more elegant than stone, were standard by the time this fireplace was built. The Hagedorn House fireplace has brick part way down the back, and then seems to be filled in, almost in a sloppy fashion, with stone. Since the depth of the fireplace at the bottom is very shallow compared to that of the oven opening and ash chamber there may be some question as to the original back wall depth at the floor. This is also supported by the fact that the apparent outer wall of the fireplace extends into the present kitchen enough to suggest a deeper original opening. All examples this writer has seen pictured, show a larger fire space, and Mr. Russell suggests that fireplaces in the kitchen were often "twelve feet long, six feet high, and six feet deep."

The oven in the Hagedorn House is the upper opening on the left of the fireplace as you look at it. Below it is the ash chamber. The fire which was used for baking was built in the oven itself of a hot burning wood such as pine or alder, and when the wood had been consumed, the embers were put out in the lower chamber, the oven was raked out with a special hoe designed for the purpose, "winged" or swept, covered with leaves according to Mr. Russell, and then the dishes to be baked, and the bread, were put in place, the oven and ash chamber sealed off until the baking was done and the fragrant loaves of bread or the pots

of beans were removed.

The seal of the oven was sometimes made with one door which covered both openings, sometimes with separate doors for the oven and ash box. (There are no existing doors for these openings at the present time, but hinge marks indicate this fireplace had one door).

In many a household well into the middle 1800's, it was considered sinful to cook on the Lord's day and the beans for Sunday were put into the bake oven Saturday night and sealed up until they were needed the following day. This was the regular practice of the great grandmother of this writer as late as the 1800's.

Some of our visitors may have seen a "peel" or long shovel, used to place and remove loaves of bread from the oven. There is at the moment no example of this type of tool in our fireplace equipment, but it was a necessity in baking.

The "S" shaped hooks that hang from the iron crane are called trammel hooks. All fireplace utensils were homemade in those days, spits, cranes and pots, and of course, the andirons and tongs. Two examples of tongs are shown in the picture.

The visitor can only imagine the warmth and the smell of the cooking fires of long ago. He may not think about the fact that there was an art, not only to the building of the fireplace, the forging of the tools, the making of the bread, but even to the choice of firewood, depending on the purpose for which it was to be used.

Did they want the fire to burn slowly and last

a long time? For this they used hardwoods. For cooking coals, they used such trees as ash, rock elm and rock maple. And who is there who has not experienced the fragrance of burning apple wood and recall a wistful moment of wondering about the days when? Mr. Russell tells us larch, chestnut and conifers other than pine were avoided for reasons of smoke and smell!

In years gone by there were other cooking fireplaces in houses in Almond. One known to us was in the house now owned by Mrs. Sophis Lewis at 82 Main Street, and another one in the house now occupied by the Donald Linderman family. Many others disappeared when cooking stoves replaced the old cooking fireplaces, and Franklin and other iron stoves furnished heat for houses. It may be our good fortune to uncover another fireplace someday. Be that as it may, the example in the Hagadorn House gives us a real understanding of the role of the housewife in the early 1800's.

THE END

H.C.P.

GLOSSARY OF FIREPLACE EQUIPMENT

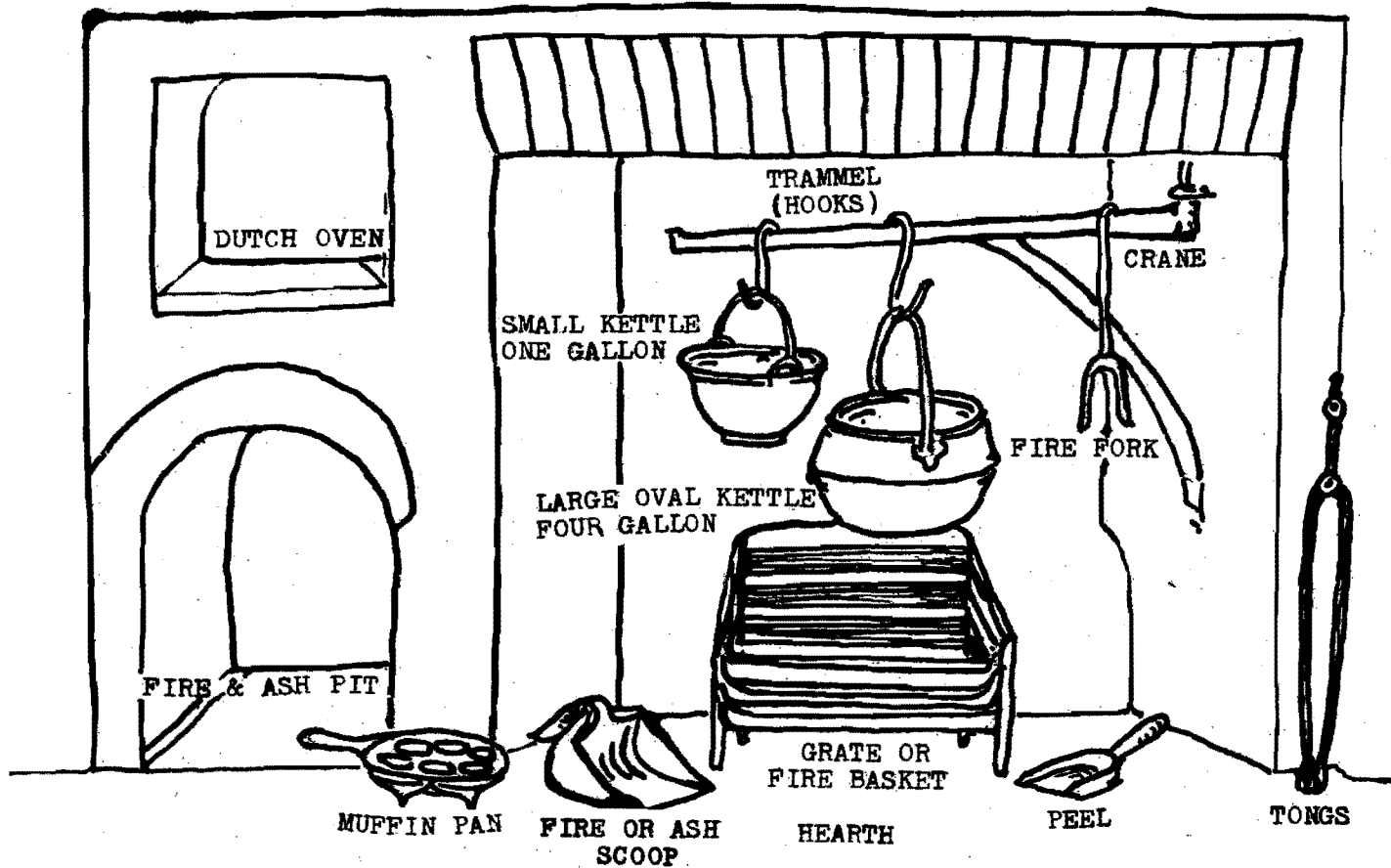
1. Andirons- held logs in place in firebox. (Firedogs-very plain type and-iron).
2. Bellows- used to pump air to get fire going.
3. Cauldron- (see Kettle)
4. Cobirons- similar to andirons, but plain in design and have rows of hooks on the standards on which spits could be placed.
5. Crane- a swinging iron bar extending over fire to hold equipment. (Also known as chimney crane).
- 6 Trammel- (English spelling - tramelle) (pot hook) hook used from crane to hold kettle. Also known as cottrall, Jib-crook, halle, or hanger.
7. Hearth- floor of fireproof material extending out into room to prevent burning.
8. Hoods- found in fireplace influenced by Dutch building.
9. Kettle- deep pot, sometimes footed, usually of iron, to hold stew, etc. One of the oldest of cooking utensils. Cast iron from 16th Century on.

10. Mantel tree- beam supporting mantel.
11. Oven hoe- used to rake ashes and coals out of baking oven. (Length of hoe handle gives some idea of depth of oven).
12. Peel- shovel used to put bread in - or pull out of oven.
13. Pipe Tongs- used to get hot coals to relight one's smoking pipe. (small)
14. Ratchet hook- sawtooth edged hook to provide adjustable heights for kettles.
15. "Spider"- frying pan.
16. Spit- used for roasting of meat.
17. Griddle- flat iron sheet with either a loop handle to hang, or a small projectile handle. (Known in Scotland as Girldes-plates, were used for cooking oat cakes).
18. Muffin pan- Iron pan with compartments for to shape the individual muffins.
19. Trivet- three-legged support to hold kettles, etc. Usually iron.
20. Grid-iron- placed over center of fire. Usually wrought iron. Composed of number of parallel bars on which meat rested during cooking.
21. Tongs- to pick up logs or turn.

22. Dutch oven- open fronted cooking utensil, hung or stood in ashes. Used to bake. Made of sheet iron, brass, or pottery.
23. Fire-fork- wrought iron fork about four feet long used to turn burning logs.
24. Forks (smaller)- also used when cooking meat or toasting. Usually two-pronged.

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DUTCH OVEN

TRAMMEL
(HOOKS)

CRANE

SMALL KETTLE
ONE GALLON

FIRE FORK

LARGE OVAL KETTLE
FOUR GALLON

FIRE & ASH PIT

GRATE OR
FIRE BASKET

MUFFIN PAN

FIRE OR ASH
SCOOP

HEARTH

PEEL

TONGS

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