

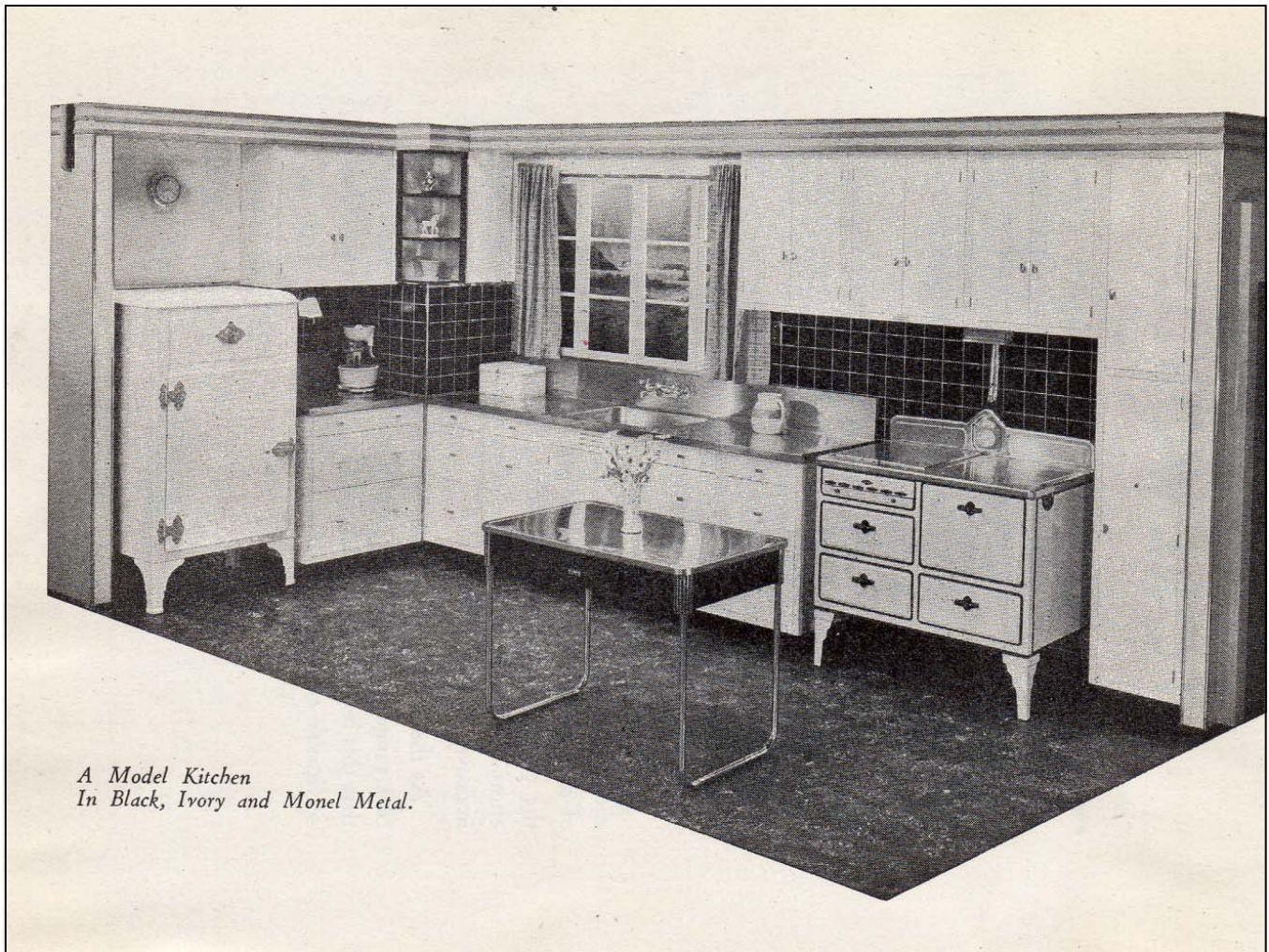


VOLUME XXVI, NUMBER 3 SUMMER 2010

Repast

Quarterly Publication of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

Equipping the American Kitchen



*A Model Kitchen
In Black, Ivory and Monel Metal.*

Image from *Star Recipe Book* (Detroit, MI: The Detroit Vapor Stove Company, 1933), p. 6

Janice Bluestein Longone Culinary Archive, Clements Library, University of Michigan

OFFICIAL DONATION OF LONGONE CULINARY ARCHIVE

Over 200 guests attended a tea at the University of Michigan on June 8 to honor Curator Janice Bluestein Longone and Professor Daniel T. Longone. The event celebrated their official donation of the Janice Bluestein Longone Culinary Archive to the William L. Clements Library.

At the tea, Provost Teresa Sullivan accepted the donation on behalf of UM, stating that the gift transforms the university into a national leader in this emerging field of scholarly research. In her own remarks, Jan Longone commented that “culinary history is a subject worth studying and fighting for.”

In 2000, following Jan’s appointment as Adjunct Curator of American Culinary History at the Clements, she and Dan had begun to donate portions of their personal collections to the library, realizing that they had the opportunity to create an archive there that would be “second to none”. More recently, UM announced its intention to maintain and enhance the culinary collection indefinitely, prompting the Longones to reconfirm and complete their gift. “We feel that we have helped build the foundation for an academic discipline”, they explained recently, “and have, in many ways, as one of our supporters has said, made the invisible visible.”



**Jan and Dan Longone at the honorary tea.
(Photo: Joel Goldberg, *Ann Arbor Chronicle*)**

Amassed with love and lots of legwork over a period of several decades of the couple’s marriage, the archive contains tens of thousands of items, including books, journals, magazines, manuscripts, graphics, maps, menus, ephemera, and realia. Roughly one-third of the holdings are cookbooks. A brochure notes that the collection covers not only the essential “high spots” in the field but also these related areas:

- Immigrant and ethnic voices
- Regional foodways
- The cooking school movement
- Women and gender
- Ecology and environmental studies
- The “great ladies” of 19th-Century American cookery
- History of food advertising
- Food and government policy
- Food and the media
- Charitable cookbooks
- Food and literature
- Appliances and equipment
- Chefs, restaurants, hotels, and menus
- Industrialization of food production
- Military and war cookery – at home and at the front
- Children’s cookery
- Foodstuffs
- Seminal European works
- Food and the counter-culture
- Health, diet, and vegetarianism
- Beverages— wine, beer, spirits, coffee, tea, and chocolate
- Markets and grocers
- Food and the Arts
- Transportation, travel, and tourism
- Homemaking, decorum, and etiquette
- Prohibition
- The Depression.

We congratulate the Longones for the wonderful gift and legacy that they have left to the University and to the discipline. ■

Repast

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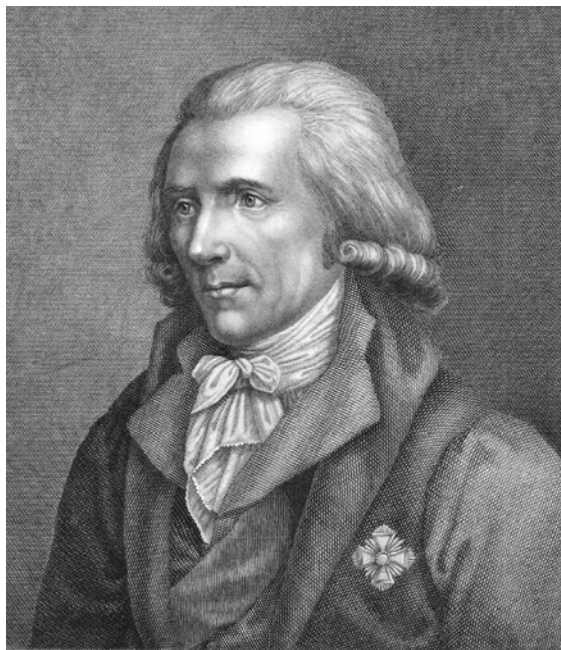
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BENJAMIN THOMPSON, COUNT RUMFORD: HIS KITCHEN AND CUISINE

by Nicholas Delbanco

*Nicholas Delbanco is the Robert Frost Distinguished University Professor of English at the University of Michigan, where he directs the Hopwood Awards Program. His most recent novel—his 24th book—is based on the life of Benjamin Thompson, entitled *The Count of Concord* (Dalkey Archive Press, 2008). A British-born American who received his B.A. from Harvard and his M.A. from Columbia University, Prof. Delbanco conducted the bulk of his research on Thompson at the University of Michigan's Clements Library and at the libraries of Harvard University and Dartmouth College.*



Benjamin Thompson, Count Rumford (1753-1814)

On my bookshelf stands a copy of the *Rumford Complete Cook Book*, published by Rumford Chemical Works, in Rumford, Rhode Island.¹ The improbable claim of its faded red cover is: *More than 5,000,000 copies in use.* Rumford Chemical Works, the baking powder company, was established in 1854; the first edition of its cookbook was printed in 1908. My own is the 41st Edition, printed in 1947, and the publishers proudly assert—again with a touch or *bouquet garni* of hyperbole—that “This book is the newest link in perhaps the greatest of cooking traditions....”

For those who might have thought instead of such “cooking traditions” as Escoffier’s or Taillevent’s, and to whom the name “Rumford” means little, here’s a thumb-nail summary of the inventor-chef’s life. Benjamin Thompson was born in Woburn, Massachusetts, in 1753. He died as Count Rumford on the outskirts of Paris, in 1814. His titles would come to include Knight of the Orders of the White Eagle and St. Stanislaus, Privy Counselor of State and Lieutenant-General in the Service of His Most Serene Highness the Elector Palatine, Reigning Duke of Bavaria. He acted as one of General Gage’s informers, a loyalist and royalist in “the revolt of the colonies”; he fled his native land just ahead of retribution and only once thereafter—as a British soldier—returned. As Sir Benjamin Thompson of London, he was famous for his stoves, for his experiments in heat and light, for his mistresses and for his soups. It was he who first discovered the value of wide wheels for carriages, a smoke-shelf in a fireplace chimney, and double-glazing in windows; his measurement of candlepower remains the standard unit, and he organized the poor of Munich and taught them to spin wool. Thompson was a founder of the Royal Institution of Great Britain and, it has been argued, the father of nuclear physics. From a farm boy with a penchant for the grandiose, he became an authentic grandee.

The career was rich and strange; it resists brief summary. Count Rumford’s published writings run to several thousand pages; his preserved letters are numerous also, as are contemporary accounts. World-famous in his lifetime, he has

been almost wholly forgotten. Franklin Roosevelt called him, along with Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, one of the three most remarkable minds America produced. He was the single American to be painted by Thomas Gainsborough; his face adorns the Rumford medal conferred by Harvard College, as well as the can of baking powder on your local supermarket shelf. (In addition to Rumford Baking Powder, the same company owns the Clabber Girl brand.) He designed the convertible sofa and the drip coffee pot. His statue stands at the entrance to the English Garden in Munich, a park he single-handedly designed. Although the cookbook’s editors call him “The American ennobled by the courts of Europe because of his pioneer discoveries in cooking”, in fact Benjamin Thompson became a Count of the Holy Roman Empire because of wartime service. As Minister of Defense he preserved the city of Munich from Austrian and French invasion, and was ennobled for his labor with soldiery and cannon rather more than for cuisine.

In any case, his reputation now stands in near-total eclipse; his experiments with gunpowder, his construction of the “Rumford stove and roaster”, his fervent sponsorship of the potato in Europe—these are oddities. A peculiar blend of the 18th and the 19th Centuries—the enlightened and the romantic spirit—informs his life and work. He was vainglorious in the extreme yet took out no patents and wanted no payment for his inventions; a self-made man and social climber, he upheld established order with real zeal. Thompson loved to live near royalty and gloried in their favor, yet his labors were unceasing for “improvement” of the poor.

Here, the frontispiece of my little red cookbook does put the case precisely:

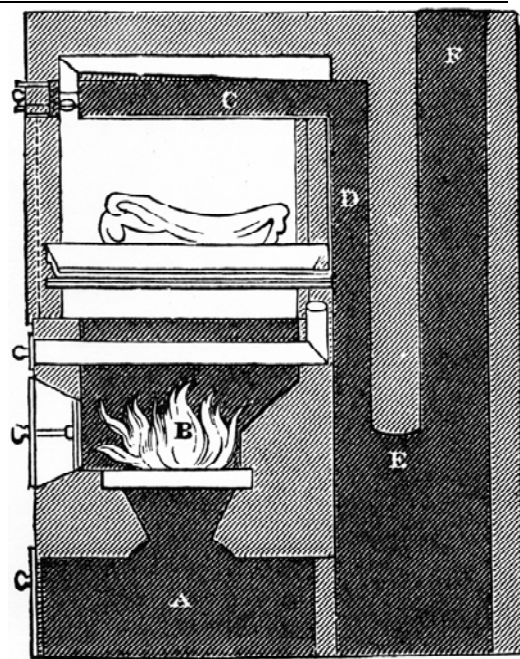
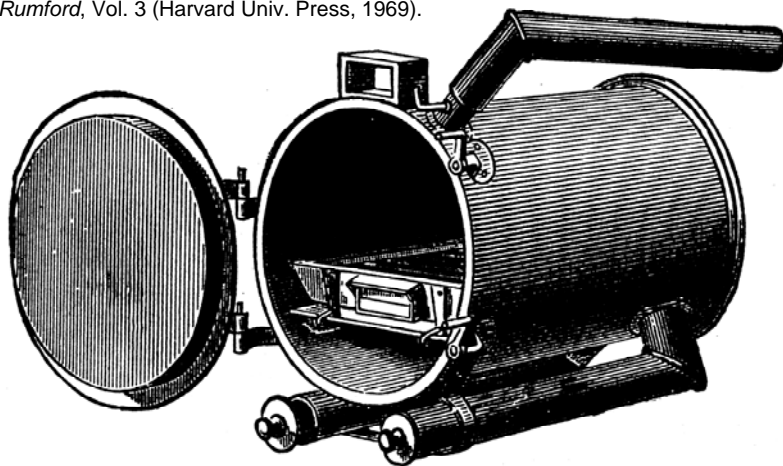
He was the first to study diet; to invent an effective oven, and roaster, and tea kettle, and boiler; to advocate drip coffee; to suggest holes in the handles of pots and pans so they can be hung up; to analyze fuels and the management of heat; to devise the modern air-tight stove; to lay out efficient kitchens; to reason about the

continued on next page

COUNT RUMFORD

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Rumford's roaster design. In the left diagram is the roasting chamber, which is heated by the pair of 23-inch iron blowpipes; the tube at the top carries off steam. The flow of hot air can be carefully regulated with stoppers on the blowpipes and a damper on the steam-tube. The cutaway on the right shows the firebox, B, heating the blowpipes; the ash pit, A; and the steam-tube, C. Diagrams on these two pages are from Sanborn C. Brown, ed., *Collected Works of Count Rumford*, Vol. 3 (Harvard Univ. Press, 1969).



construction of oven doors and thereby open up the great field of insulation.

All this is true. "My principal design", he wrote, "is to fix the attention of my readers on a subject which is highly interesting and deserving of the most serious consideration. I wish to inspire cooks with a just idea of the importance of their art. In what other art could improvements be made that would more powerfully contribute to the enjoyments of mankind?"

This impulse to "contribute to the enjoyments of mankind" and the meliorist's ongoing question— "How can we make things better?"— is characteristic of Thompson, as well as many of his contemporaries in the Age of Enlightenment; consider Benjamin Franklin, Humphry Davy and the rest. And although it overstates the case, as do the cookbook's publishers, one could make the claim that Rumford "is honored today as the grand master of the great guild of chefs, the first and greatest scientist of the kitchen." For it's fair, I think, to argue that the tradition of "haute cuisine" has its roots in prodigality and waste; if milord takes out a hunting party and brings back five hundred partridges and woodcock and grouse (this antedates, of course, the age of refrigeration), they need to be used up. No grandee would have dreamed of distributing his still-warm kill to the local populace for food; instead he would have instructed the cook to prepare, for fellow-nobles, a feast. Thus begins the process of "reduction", the stock that's boiled for flavor and sauce that makes, of what was once a pile of flesh, a morsel fit for kings. So four and twenty blackbirds get baked inside a pie.

But Thompson cooked for multitudes, not the ennobled elect. Perhaps the farm-boy in him never wholly went away, and the democratic impulse stayed intact. While he wrote *Of the Pleasures of Eating, and of the Means that may be employed for increasing it*², he insisted, always: Less is More. The hundreds of pages his essays devote to the preparation and distribution of food have a constant purpose and common denominator: how to maximize our resources and minimize our waste. The Count perorated on barley, peas, potatoes, corn, their excellence as nutrition, and the utility of feeding soldiers and poor persons at a

collective soup kitchen. To dine *à la Rumford* quickly came to mean to eat nutritiously if tastelessly; his soup became a synonym for low-class, filling fare.

He arranged his kitchens down to the smallest detail: the location of the rivets in a double-boiler's metal base, the placement of shelving in stoves. Thompson decided where to hang his pots and where to bore a hole in the handle for hanging and how to stack his pans. He proselytized at length about the virtue of enclosed, as opposed to open, fires; he measured the amount of meat left over after cooking in a Rumford Roaster, and argued that it far exceeded— both in weight and nutritional value— the remnants of a joint cooked over an open flame. As he declares at the start of his essay on Food,

There is, perhaps, no operation of Nature, which falls under the cognizance of our senses, more surprising, or more curious, than the nourishment and growth of plants, and animals; and there is certainly no subject of investigation more interesting to mankind. As providing subsistence is, and ever must be, an object of the first concern in all countries, any discovery or improvement by which the procuring of good and wholesome food can be facilitated, must contribute very powerfully to increase the comforts, and promote the happiness of society.

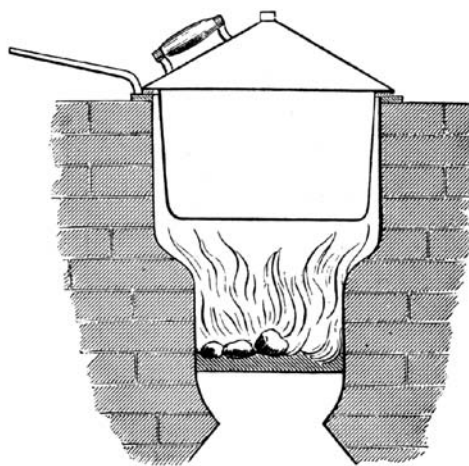
The language is ornate and earnest, but its intention is clear; all his inventiveness was marshaled in the service of efficiency. In an article this brief, I can convey neither the sweep nor the particularity of the Count's suggestions. So let me pick and choose. Here— from the essay "Of Food" in *Essays of Count Rumford*— are three representative passages as to how best to cook and eat, a taster's sampling merely of the scientist's advice:

Saucepans and other kitchen utensils which are very bright and clean on the outside may be kept hot with smaller fire than such as are black and dirty; but the bottom of a saucepan or boiler should be blackened in order that its contents may be made to boil quickly, and with a small expense of fuel.

In regard to the most advantageous method of using Indian corn as food, I would strongly recommend, particularly when it is employed for feeding the poor, a dish made of it that is in the highest estimation throughout America, and which is really very good and very nourishing. This is called hasty-pudding, and it is made in the following manner....

Causing any thing to boil violently in any culinary process is very ill judged; for it not only does not expedite, even in the smallest degree, the process of cooking, but it occasions a most enormous waste of fuel; and by driving away with the steam many of the more volatile and more savoury particles of the ingredients, renders the victuals less good and less palatable. To those who are acquainted with the experimental philosophy of heat, and who know that water once brought to be boiling hot, however gently it may boil in fact, cannot be made any hotter, however large and intense the fire under it may be made, and who know that it is by the heat,— that is to say, the degree or intensity of it, and the time of its being continued, and not by the bubbling up or boiling (as it is called) of the water, that culinary operations are performed— this will be evident....

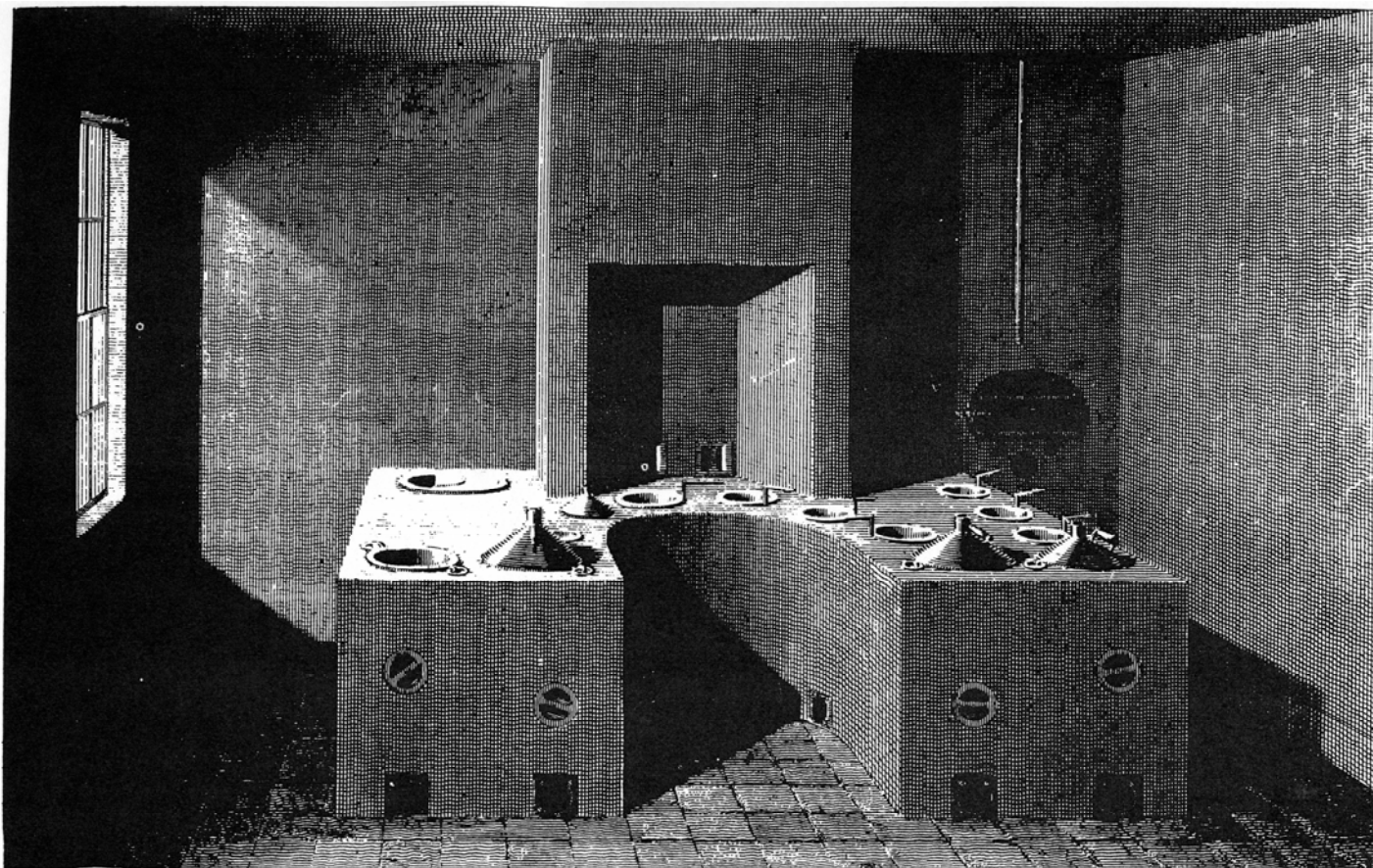
The capital of New Hampshire, Concord, had first been known as Rumford, Massachusetts (in honor of the town in



A cutaway view of Count Rumford's recessed copper saucepan, which rests on an iron rim so as to sit directly above the flames of a brickwork fireplace.

Essex from which its settlers hailed— and which also gave its name to Rumford, Rhode Island, and Rumford, Maine). When, in the colonial period, the boundary dispute between New Hampshire and Massachusetts was finally resolved, and a new border drawn, the inhabitants renamed the place in honor of their signed agreement: *Concord*. So what was once the village of Rumford is, today, Concord instead. And when Benjamin Thompson was invited by the Elector Palatine to title himself a noble of the Holy Roman Empire, he took the name of Rumford to honor “that which is forgotten”. Few citizens of Concord realize that their town was formerly known as Rumford; few folk who lift a coffee cup, or dine on soup with barley, or praise a spitted roast as moist, would recognize that their eating plea-

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Count Rumford's design for a family kitchen range that was built for Baron de Lerchenfeld in Munich. The mass of brick-work holds 13 stoves (“fire-places”) that heat an array of recessed boilers, saucepans, and stew-pans.

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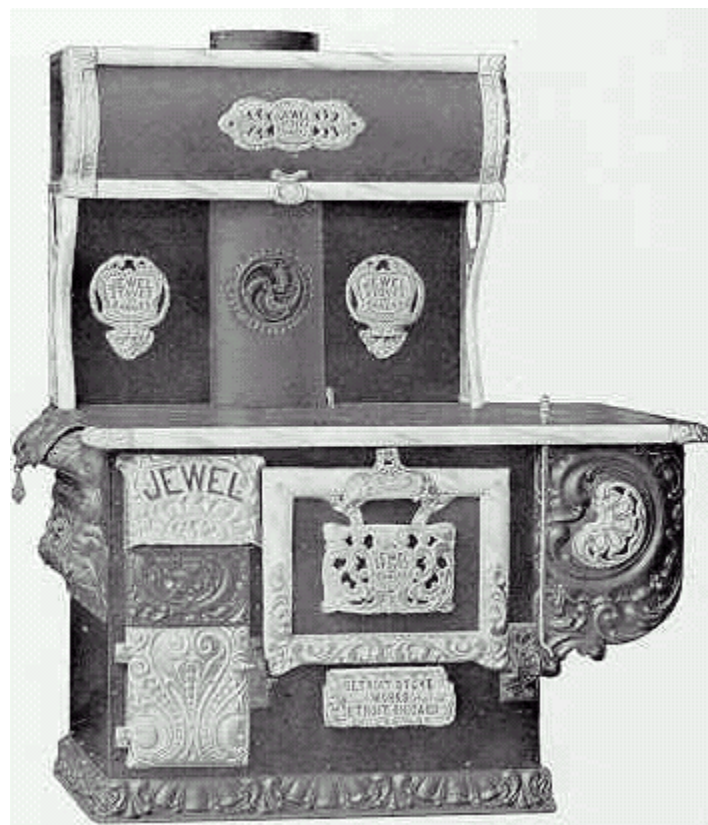
SHEET STEEL'S SWEET SPOT

❧

DETROIT AS THE STOVE-MAKING CENTER

by Ronald Ahrens

Ronald Ahrens of Ann Arbor is a freelance writer and the owner of Baggy Paragraphs Company. His writing has appeared in dozens of newspapers and magazines, and he has contributed regularly to such publications as DBusiness, Automobile Magazine, the Ann Arbor News, and annarbor.com.



**Premier Jewel Steel Range (1902)
from the Detroit Stove Works.
(Commercial Catalogs Collection,
Bentley Historical Library, Univ. of Michigan)**

I was eight years old in 1964 when our family visited my great-grandmother, Emma Labans Ahrens, on the farm northwest of Leigh, Nebraska. We had a brand-new, ranch-style house on Omaha's western edge and were accustomed to every suburban convenience, so I was stunned to find Emma, at the age of 85 and widowed five years, cooking on an old wood-fired range that was enameled in creamy white and trimmed in green. The lid to one of the two burners over the firebox on the left was removed for serious potato boiling in a blackened pot. Creamed corn and green vegetables from the garden simmered atop two of the other burners while chicken sizzled in a skillet.

From this oven, I was soon to experience the unbelievable novelty of freshly baked bread. Emma opened the oven door and held out her hand to gauge the compartment's temperature. To quickly build heat, she added cobs to the firebox. Cobs! My astonishment increased! The blaze that was engendered not only cooked the food but also warmed water in a copper-lined tank on the range's right-hand side. After the dessert of fruit and cream pies, that hot water filled dishwashing and rinse tubs that were set on the kitchen table. No soap was used—only the hot water. To dry the vessels, a flour-sack dishtowel was flourished. Wastewater with bits of leftover nutriment went into the slops for the farm's dozen or so hogs.

Rise of Stove-Making in Michigan

There's every chance that my great-grandmother's mighty range, likely purchased with her egg money, had come from the great and distant manufacturing center of Detroit, for the city was "the chief center of the stove industry in America", according to George B. Catlin in *The Story of Detroit*.

Catlin writes, "This industry began in a repair service for replacing outworn and broken parts of stoves which had been manufactured chiefly in Albany and Troy, N.Y., and shipped to Detroit." They had come as soon as the Erie Canal was opened in 1825. The Hydraulic Iron Works expanded beyond its service of making replacement castings and performing repairs, and eased into the business of manufacturing stoves. Jeremiah Dwyer, an apprentice molder there in 1849, saw potential for the specialty and entered a partnership to acquire the Ganson & Mizner factory at Mount Elliott and Wight Streets in the city. With the infusion of additional capital in 1864, the Detroit Stove Works was created to produce Jewel stoves. The operation emphasized metallurgical innovation, thereby producing superior iron and steel castings.

Demand for stoves boomed as the nation's western frontier expanded. (My own ancestors appeared on the Nebraska census of 1860, and, interested in keeping warm inside their drafty wood-frame farmhouses—which represented an upgrade from a "soddie"—they almost certainly would have responded favorably when a door-to-door solicitor came along to sell a stove.) Dwyer co-founded the Michigan Stove Company, which produced the Garland line, in 1871, and a decade later he organized the Peninsular Stove Company. The three firms prospered. "For several years", Catlin writes, "the stove industry was regarded as of the first importance in Detroit manufacturing." By 1926, when his history was published, the Art Stove Company, incorporated in 1888, and the Detroit Vapor

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DETROIT STOVES

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Stove Company, which formed six years later, stood shoulder to shoulder with the earlier firms as part of the Big Five. These plants covered more than 40 acres of Detroit's ground and employed more than 5,000 men in the production of about 600,000 units per year.

Detroit had the advantageous geographical location that allowed ships docking on the Detroit River to unload iron ore and coal. Rail lines fanned out across the continent. But other Michigan cities and towns such as Camden and Kalamazoo were engaged in stove manufacture as well. In Dowagiac, southwest of Kalamazoo, P. D. Beckwith formed the Round Oak Stove concern, with eight employees, no later than 1871. The company's heating stove was adapted to burn coal as well as wood. The Michigan Central Railroad ordered some of them for its depots between Detroit and Chicago, and then a nationwide sales network developed. The Round Oak company—the origin of the name is unclear, but it might refer to the upright cylindrical shape of the stove itself—sponsored a baseball team and the band that played for dances in Round Oak Hall. The Beckwith Memorial Theater was built in Dowagiac in 1892. The company employed as many as 1200 workers in the 1910's and stayed in business until after World War 2.

Meanwhile, the town of Chelsea, about 70 miles west of Detroit, was home to the Glazier Stove Company, founded in 1891. A Michigan state historical marker at the compound's so-called welfare building informs visitors that, owing to the scarcity of skilled personnel in this rural town, workers came from Detroit by a weekly train. To keep them entertained in their spare time, Glazier built the welfare building in 1906. It offered swimming, basketball, billiards, a theater, and a reading room. The company went bankrupt the next year. [For more on Frank P. Glazier and his stove works, see the two articles in *Repast* Spring 2001, pp. 6-8.]

Before the Big Three, Detroit Had the Big Five

Catlin places the number of different models produced by one Detroit stove-making company (demurring as to which) at "more than 400." He could easily have been referring to the vast Detroit Stove Works and its Jewel stoves that were made at 1320 Jefferson Avenue. "With the largest stove plant in the world, equipped with all modern appliances that money can buy and brains can devise, employing more skilled hands than any other concern in our line, steadily employed and contented mechanics, we *ought* to build the *best* stoves and ranges in the world, and we *do*", boasts DSW's 1902 catalog. More than 3.5 million examples were in "successful use". The company had taken nearly 40 years to build its reputation, which it claimed "grows wider each season." "We propose to maintain it at any cost", the catalog says. The crown trademark on Jewel stoves guaranteed the highest quality of workmanship, materials, and design. The busy pattern shop ensured exclusive, attractive, up-to-date designs.

That year's Jewel line started with the Lotus cook stove, an unornamented, 140-pound woodstove, which sold for \$14.75. The line culminated in the ornately nicked and grandly patterned Premier Steel range with an encased water reservoir and a high-mounted warming closet. This stove weighed 635 pounds and broke the \$100 barrier by a buck. That was a lot of



This 1930's-era Hostess model gas stove, made by the Detroit Stove Works, is used for cooking demonstrations at the Rentschler Farm Museum in Saline, MI. (Photo: Randy Schwartz, Sept. 2007)

egg money. Most of the 32 Jewel lines, each with multiple models, could burn coal, coke, wood, or cobs. Situated on 13 acres at the foot of the Belle Isle Bridge, the immense plant also issued massive hotel ranges (used in boarding houses as well); petite parlor stoves; laundry stoves that would hold up to six irons and could also be used for cooking; hop-drying stoves for hop-drying houses, tobacco factories, and dry kilns; and portable farmers' boilers that operated with but a joint or two of stovepipe and were suitable for farmers, butchers, and manufacturers of soap, among others. The Jewel Street Car Heater was the "handsomest, most durable, and most economical street car stove ever built" and would "outlast the life of a car". Its operation was claimed to cost about one-tenth the expense of electric heating. In Washington, DC, the Smithsonian's Museum of American History includes a 1930's-vintage Jewel cook stove, resplendent in turquoise enamel, in a front-lobby display case.

The Premier Steel Range was billed as "the handsomest of steel ranges". It was made of heavy blue steel, and the body panels sandwiched a slab of asbestos between two sheets of metal. The fire box on the left was outfitted with a grate that could be reversed to support a wood fire rather than coal. The grate could be removed through a special door. A heavy steel ash pan, with a tightly hinged door of its own, was positioned just below the firebox. The extension at the rear of the firebox was for long pieces of wood. There was a big hopper-feed door on the left side for adding fuel, and just below it, another door opened to allow for the broiling of food in direct contact with the flame. (Coal could also be fed through this door.) A flue-shifting reservoir damper made for the quick heating of the oven and of the water reservoir. The oven door, it was claimed, was nicely balanced and fell to its horizontal position without jarring. Strength was the chief quality of the oven rack, which was a casting, presumably of iron. The stove surface was cast in sections to forestall cracking, and the burner covers were "extra heavy", with ring sections in one of these covers for selectively

increasing the size of the burner hole. A special cutout for the firebox poker, which was included, was found in the right-front corner of the stove surface. The high closet on the back of the range offered a rolling front with heavy cast hinges; there was also a pair of drop teapot shelves and a towel rod. At the unit's very bottom, the ornamental base could be removed when the range was carried through doorways. The sales pitch was meant to convey the impression of strength and durability, but to the contemporary eye the range is strikingly well engineered, with an impressive number of amenities included.

By 1930, the Detroit-Michigan Stove Company—the result of merged operations between two of the Big Five—produced Detroit Jewel stoves and ranges. The company's slogan was "They Bake Better" and the catalog boasted an all-gas lineup. Products were now finished in beige and Nile green. "Ebonited" burners and grates were available. Prices for model number 6035LCB ran from \$259.25 to \$280.25. A Hostess-model gas stove from the 1930's has been part of the Rentschler Farm Museum display in Saline, Michigan.

Besides the Jewel and Garland brands, Detroit Vapor Stove Company created the Red Star line after incorporating in 1894 and cornered the market for oil-burning stoves and ranges. "Detroit is today considered the most progressive manufacturing city in the whole world", said DVSC's 25th annual dealers' catalog in 1920. "Here we are able to get the choice of the world's best in labor, materials and the many things necessary in big manufacture. This means better service to our dealers." The Red Star line featured a range with a six-burner stove and twin ovens. This oil-burner weighed only 215 pounds. No price was included in the catalog. Another premium product was the 158-pound cabinet-style range, all finished in white enamel, with three burners and a desirable glass oven door.

Peninsular Stove Company said in Catalog No. 423 that it had the "largest, most up-to-date and best equipped stove factory in America. Every modern appliance for making first-quality goods is installed in this immense plant. Occupies six city blocks and has more than 2,500,000 square feet of floor area." The company's patented steel ovens were made in one piece in order to avoid their cracking or the leaking of ashes. Item number 6820 was the Pearl Grey Porcelain Cast Iron Range with a five-

piece nickel base, six eight-inch burner holes, and an oven with a thermometer. The unit weighed in at 535 pounds. "Due to their everlasting wearing qualities, Peninsular Steel Ranges have won the endorsement of 2,000,000 users", the catalog continues. Between heavy steel plates was a slab of "pure asbestos". (This description today seems like an oxymoron.) The steeple-head rivets holding the triple thickness together were of "genuine Swedish iron" and were "driven cold by hand". The company's Number 5 Army Range outclassed any piece of armor before battle tanks were developed. Made of 14-gauge steel plates and a plethora of extra-heavy rivets, the Double 5 model presented 16 burners across a top measuring 106 inches. Of course there was also a huge oven. The double range weighed exactly one ton.

(During the preparation of this article, the writer found no information about the Art Stove Company, the last of the Big Five manufacturers.)

Decline of the Industry

Historian Charles K. Hyde, of Wayne State University, contends that the arrival of central heating, and of gas and electric stoves and ranges after 1910, challenged the Detroit Five. "Furnaces were a different animal because they used electrical controls", he said. The stove companies "never really made the transition." Meanwhile, workers' foundry skills were transferable to the automotive industry. "Detroit became an expensive place to be a manufacturer if you were making anything other than automobiles."

Besides the Peninsular building, which still stands on Russell Street near Interstate 75, the best surviving symbol of the defunct stove industry is the giant Garland stove that was created for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, in Chicago. Twenty-five feet tall, 30 feet broad, and 20 feet deep, it required three rail cars in transport and was valued at \$25,000. The 15-ton behemoth was displayed in the Manufacturers and Liberal Arts Building, and "beneath it was arrayed an assortment of the company's stove and range models", according to a 1973 account by the Detroit Stove Restoration Committee. After the

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"The World's Largest Stove" was constructed by the Michigan Stove Company to represent Detroit and the state of Michigan as the stove capital of the country at the Chicago world's fair in 1893. Made of hand-carved oak and other materials, it is a scale replica of the Garland model of cast-iron kitchen range. (Photo: Michigan State Register of Historic Sites)

PATIENCE AND HER COUSINS



THE HOOSIER KITCHEN CABINET

by Nancy Hiller

*Nancy Hiller is a cabinetmaker and writer living in Bloomington, Indiana. After earning a City & Guilds of London Certificate in furniture making in 1980, she worked for several custom furniture and cabinet shops in England and the United States before opening NR Hiller Design, Inc. in 1995 (www.nrhillerdesign.com). Hiller specializes in period-authentic kitchen cabinetry and built-in furniture for other rooms. Her book, *The Hoosier Cabinet in Kitchen History*, was published in 2009 by the Indiana University Press.*

As she sat down with a glass of iced tea one steamy afternoon in August, 1916, your great-grandmother might have run across the following earnest pledge in *The Saturday Evening Post*:

I will make each kitchen hour a joy, each meal a source of keenest pleasure. I will banish blue Monday and black Friday, and fill the days with the song of willing service. I will keep your kitchen as neat as wax—your food supplies in perfect order. I will always be on time, always keep my temper—never aggravate—never disappoint you.

Quite a list of claims for a would-be servant to make. Few, if any, among us would dare promise never to disappoint an employer. Who was this willing worker, this paragon of capability and unflinching cheer?

Her name was Patience McDougall. And she had cousins who made similar claims—Mary, Helen, and Bertha Boone. Any of them would gladly have become your great-grandmother's role model and confidante while gaily whipping her kitchen into shape. Patience, in particular, personified a host of womanly virtues. She was content to stay at home and work hard, ever without complaint. She was smart, organized, and efficient. While she was always ready for work, she cleaned up beautifully by late afternoon, just in time to welcome hubby home from his hard day at the office or mill.

There was just one catch to this fantasy of female perfection. Patience and her cousins were not women, but cabinets—Hoosier cabinets. Their vows were composed by professionals in the ever more sophisticated field of advertising.

**A kitchen without a cabinet is like
a farm without a plow**

The woman needs the labor saving Hoosier Kitchen Cabinet just as much as the man needs his plow and improved farm machinery—even more, in fact, because she can save her strength and her time **three times every day** by using it.

No need to go without one on account of the price, because our prices and terms are so liberal you will never miss the little money it costs.

It cuts the kitchen work practically in two, saves countless steps, time, and prevents waste. Decide for yourself whether it is what we claim—try one for 30 days in your own kitchen, just as 300,000 “Hoosier” users have done.

Save \$5 to \$15 on your Cabinet. Write to-day for handsome catalogue—it tells why it is easier for you to buy the Hoosier and be sure it is the most convenient and durable, than it is to buy an unknown cabinet and take chances.

The Hoosier Mfg. Company, 900 Adams Street,
223 Pacific Bldg., San Francisco, California
More Hoosiers in use than all other makes combined

A March 1910 advertisement for the Hoosier cabinet.
(Photo courtesy of Henry County Historical Society,
New Castle, IN, www.kiva.net/~hchisoc/museum.htm)

With a sales trajectory that peaked in the 1920's, then fell sharply to near oblivion by 1940, the class of freestanding cabinets we now call Hoosiers coincided with America's transition from a 19th-Century economy grounded in production to one that would, in less than a hundred years, instead be characterized by consumerism and debt. Women's lives during the late 1800's were quite different from ours today. In rural areas and for women of the working class, general housekeeping involved real physical labor: churning butter, stoking stoves with wood or coal that had to be carried from the porch or cellar, chopping and mixing and washing—in fact, doing most things—by hand. Kitchens were sparsely furnished, usually with a worktable and sink, a storage cupboard, and a few open shelves; dry goods purchased from the grocer were kept in a pantry, along with rows of canned goods most women made from produce they grew at home.

Even for women of the middle class who could afford paid help, everyday life was far from a cakewalk. Servants were increasingly hard to find, and those that were available for hire

all too often brought their own difficulties into mistresses' homes— communication problems, personality conflicts, and differences in domestic habits.

The challenges faced by women from the lower and middle classes presented ripe opportunities for businessmen to market new labor-saving creations. The Hoosier cabinet was a development of earlier casework forms, improved with purpose-built accoutrements— sifters and bins for sugar and flour, spice racks, menu planners, and extendable lower shelves. It concentrated kitchen essentials in a single area, complete with a pull-out counter at which its user could sit while working. Advertisements claimed that by storing everything a woman needed within arm's reach, these cabinets could save nearly 1600 "unnecessary" steps a day.

Although the cabinets' practical features made them an easy sell, their rise to nationwide adoption arguably owed even more to the methods by which they were marketed. The early 20th-Century valorization of science and efficiency touched every aspect of life, from systems for organizing office paperwork to eliminating waste in shop-floor production. The same kind of analysis, applied to consumer psychology, sharpened the effectiveness of advertising.

The various cabinet companies' sales campaigns benefited from the observations of 19th-Century female authors, who wrote from the premise that women should make their homes a peaceful refuge to which husbands could retreat after the rigors of their day at work. Catharine Beecher, most notably, had ventured beyond the realm of recipes and other practical guidance to publish trenchant insights into the psychology of domestic life. Understanding that women needed to feel their contributions were valued not just by family, but in the wider socio-political sphere, she argued that housekeeping, no less than other business, should be formally taught, and that it warranted the cachet of domestic "science". While she supported home beautification on the grounds that it would promote the gladness so encouraging to godly living, she cautioned against overspending, as doing so could kindle domestic strife. Strife, above all, must be avoided; a husband who was "wearied with endless complaints" might well be drawn to clubs plying family-wrecking temptations.

The Hoosier Manufacturing Company, which would eventually become the largest of the makers, tested the market for its original cabinet during the final years of the 19th Century and found its product eagerly embraced. Having acquired a factory and studiously maximized production, the company focused on moving goods out the door. Strategically coordinating its print advertisements with other methods of marketing and sales, the company developed a network of dealers and provided them with robust support. Scripts enumerated the cabinet's step-saving features, diagrams advised the proper stance to assume while talking to customers, and charts gave detailed direction in the most effective ways to demonstrate the cabinet's working parts. By 1914 this single manufacturer had sold 700,000 cabinets. By 1920 this figure had leapt to two million.

The Hoosier Mfg. Company was only one of the manufacturers of the cabinet form now associated with that company's name, but it did by far the most advertising. This

company was based in New Castle, which is northeast of Indianapolis. (The company was closed in the 1940's. No part remains in business, although the records and many of the company's products are kept by the Henry County Historical Society in New Castle, Indiana <http://www.kiva.net/~hchisoc/museum.htm>.) The "Dutch Kitchenet" was the brand name of the Hoosier cabinet equivalent manufactured by Coppes Brothers and Zook, Inc., located in Nappanee, Indiana. That company used the name "Napanee" for some of their product lines, altering the spelling to avoid causing trouble. (Coppes Napanee closed but was later revived as a manufacturer of basic kitchen cabinets.)

Most impressive among the marketing efforts of the various manufacturers are their advertisements, in which the influence of Beecher and other women writers is thrillingly apparent. In their imagery and copy, the ads are stunning expressions of social relations and values. Some offer subtle instruction in manipulating a husband to purchase this household appliance, which, goes the claim, will leave wives headache-free and energetic at day's end. "I've banished evening weariness by saving needless steps" asserts one Hoosier model as she seductively removes her apron. Others, such as Patience McDougall, declare the cost of the cabinet a pittance relative to the benefits it provides: "I will save you all I cost in a score of ways"— indeed, "to live without me is an extravagance." Offering their cabinets for sale on credit with payments of only \$1 a week, manufacturers claim buyers won't even know they've spent the money. No need to worry about spendthrift-bred discord in these homes!

Beyond helping their users produce delicious and timely meals, these cabinets will, ads vow, help women stay young. "Saving work is saving youthfulness", points out one lovely Hoosier beneficiary, while admiring herself in a mirror. Other advertisements aim to make women feel valued; one notes that the Hoosier-brand cabinet "has been designed by women for women"— specifically, by the company's own "Council of Kitchen Scientists". The cabinet is described as "not a mere cupboard and table combined, but a scientific work-reducing machine"— indeed, an "automatic servant" that will put an end to the exigencies of hiring, managing, and sometimes having to fire human help. The Sellers company claims that its version incorporates "added features that cost us over \$100,000 annually", a level of investment that implies the importance of the women on whose behalf it is made.

In almost every case, the ads present the cabinet as a testament to a woman's housekeeping prowess and thus an indicator of her worth. The Napanee "Dutch Kitchenet", for example, is said to be "the indorsement [sic] of success". But more than this, possession of a cabinet reflects a woman's embrace of modern values. "The modern science of home-making is causing thinking women to use more care in the outfitting of their kitchens than they do in the selection of the furniture for their living rooms", asserts a 1920 ad. "For, what use is a beautiful living room if the kitchen work is so wearing as to prevent one from enjoying the luxuries of the rest of the house? The two million American women who now own Hoosier Kitchen Cabinets seem unconsciously to have grasped this basic idea of modern home economics."

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THE AMERICAN KITCHEN: FURTHER RESOURCES

In conjunction with this theme issue, we want to call to the attention of our readers some additional materials on the history of the American kitchen and, further below, contact information for dealers in antique stoves.

For several decades Prof. Ruth Schwartz Cowan, now in the Department of History and Sociology of Science at the Univ. of Pennsylvania, studied the history of "women's work" with attention to both the technical and sociological aspects. Especially useful for culinary historians is her essay "The Consumption Junction: A Proposal for Research Strategies in the Sociology of Technology", which appeared on pp. 261-280 in Wiebe E. Bijker et al., eds., *The Social Construction of Technological Systems* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987). The essay includes a summary and analysis of the history of home heating and cooking systems in the U.S.

Phyllis M. Ellin, who is now an historian with the National Park Service, wrote a 1985 master's thesis at the Univ. of Pennsylvania, *At Home with the Range: The American Cooking Stove, 1865-1920*, available in full at <http://www.archive.org/details/athomewithrangea00elli>.

The highly praised *America's Kitchens* (Historic New England, 2008) was written by Nancy Carlisle and Melinda Talbot Nasardinov, both longtime curators at Historic New England. In chapters devoted to such topics as "The New England Hearth, 1720-1840" and "Kitchens Along the Rio Grande, 1821-1912", it includes the impact of such factors as regional foodways, domestic servants, home economics, and advertising. The work is lavishly illustrated and makes

innovative use of case histories, household manuals and diaries, and recipes.

The Warmest Room in the House: How the Kitchen Became the Heart of the Twentieth-Century American Home (Bloomsbury, 2007) is a popular history by Washington, DC freelance writer Steven Gdula. He devotes a chapter to each decade of the 1900's, tracing how equipment and appliances evolved, how space, time, and work were organized in the kitchen, and the influence of trends such as convenience foods and of events such as Prohibition and the World Wars.

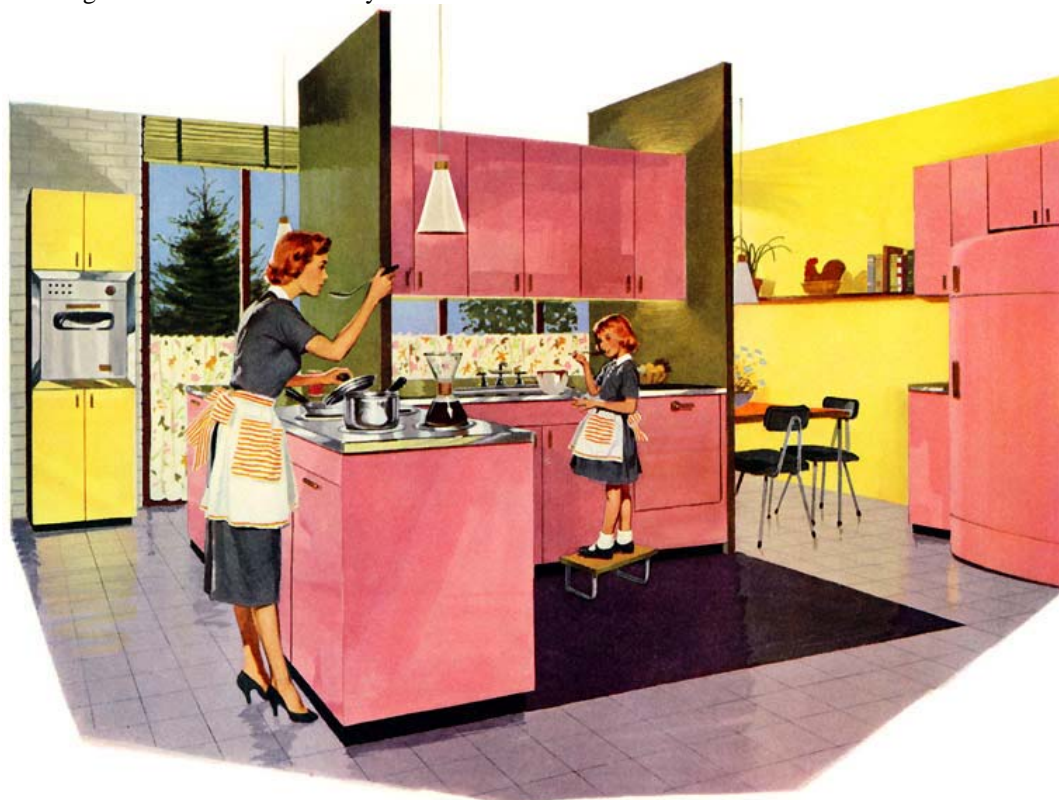
Created by a man in Michigan, the My Antique Stove website (<http://www.myantiquestove.com>) is an online community of collectors, restorers, and others interested in antique stoves. The site not only facilitates buying, selling, and discussions, but also archives hundreds of historical photos, ads, and other information.

These dealers and dealer associations offer information, restoration, and buying or selling of antique stoves and parts:

The Original Antique Stoves
410 Fleming Road
Tekonsha, MI 49092
tel. 517-278-2214
<http://www.antiquestoves.com>

Antique Stove Association
2321 E. Pioneer
Duluth, MN 55804
<http://www.antiquestoveassociation.org>

Antique Stove Information Clearing House
421 N. Main Street
Monticello, IN 47960-1932
tel. 574-583-6465.



Detail of a 1955 Jones & Laughlin Steel advertisement designed by John and Earline Brice. The tagline for the ad ran, "What Belongs in a Beautiful Kitchen? YOU and Steel!"

CHAA PROGRAM REPORT



ENJOYING OUR PEARLS AND OUR SWINE, TOO

Our Winter 2010 programs explored two main themes: (1) local, national, and international influences on the Ann Arbor area food scene, and (2) examples of food's appearance in literature.

Gourmet Soups by the Sidewalk

"Cooking in a Red Garage: 30 Years of Le Dog" was the title of a delightful talk on Jan. 17 by Hungarian immigrant Jules Van Dyck-Dobos. In 1979, Jules and his German-born wife Ika began selling hot dogs and popcorn at a space they named Le Dog, essentially a sidewalk food stall (less than 200 square feet) on Liberty Street in Ann Arbor. To attract Winter customers they added fine soups made from scratch, and these soon became their stock-in-trade. Currently they make 10-12 soups every day, two of the favorites being lobster bisque and Alsatian cabbage soup. Many of the clients are "regulars", especially office workers from the surrounding blocks, who arrive at lunchtime as often as four days per week. To accommodate them, the menu is rotated every day on a several-week cycle.

The earliest soups at Le Dog were adaptations of those that Van Dyck-Dobos remembered from his earlier stint cooking in the bakery/restaurant of a fellow Hungarian chef, the late Louis Szathmary in Chicago. (Other places where Jules had been chef in his earlier days include the Hotel Hershey in Pennsylvania and the Naval Academy Officers' Club in Annapolis.) Gradually he and Ika added other European-style soups of their own creation. They are very hearty—thicker than French soups and using ingredients such as squash, beans, and rutabaga—to suffice as a substantial midday meal. Jules noted that the cosmopolitan character of Ann Arbor makes it a good place for the purveying of fine food. He also observed that it is difficult today to find traces of Hungarian culture and cuisine in North America, since most urban immigrants became successful and then assimilated into mainstream suburban life.

Fluffy Biscuits in a Jiffy

On Feb. 21, Ann Arbor journalist and author Cynthia Furlong Reynolds spoke to us about her 2008 book, *Jiffy: A Family Tradition, Mixing Business and Old-Fashioned Values*, a corporate history of the Chelsea Milling Co. in Chelsea, MI. Reynolds spent several years and interviewed 89 people in preparing the volume, which won a Michigan Notable Book Award. The Chelsea area, a prime region for growing Winter wheat, already had some 750 mills in 1901 when Chelsea Milling was founded by the Holmes family. The business provided flour for bakeries in Detroit and the surrounding area, affording a comfortable income for owners Howard and Mabel Holmes. But in 1929-30, business suffered when the wheat crop was struck by a parasite. Mabel had the idea for a value-added product: packages of pre-mixed biscuit powder, allowing even a widower raising children by himself to provide his kids with

fine, fluffy biscuits in a snap. Dubbed "Jiffy Mix", this product became very popular. Business soared further during World War 2, when the need for bread and other baked goods increased within the U.S. military and at busy local factories and boarding houses. Without enough refined white flour to satisfy demand, the company successfully experimented with flours that included wheat bran and other middlings.

Today, Chelsea Milling is still a family-run business with 345 employees. At one or another time it has carried 60 products, even including doughnuts. The current sales line numbers 23 items, with cornbread mix accounting for roughly 80% of the business. Thanks in part to the company's tradition of zero advertising, prices are low, making for strong sales internationally and to institutions such as universities and prisons. Current President and CEO Howard "Howdy" S. Holmes, the former Indy racecar driver, is part of the latest generation to run the firm. He has focused on modernizing the business, and a new facility is planned to include test kitchens and a visitor center.

That Day We Pigged Out

March 21 brought to Zingerman's Roadhouse in Ann Arbor a special talk and tasting about bacon. The presenter was Ari Weinzwieg, a founding partner at Zingerman's, longtime CHAA member, and author of the 2009 book *Zingerman's Guide to Better Bacon: Stories of Pork Bellies, Hush Puppies, Rock 'n' Roll Music and Bacon Fat Mayonnaise*.

Bacon varieties sampled and discussed came from three cuts of the pig: belly ("streaky" bacon), loin ("back" bacon), and cheek ("jowl" bacon). To wit, there was Nueske's applewood-smoked bacon (Wittenberg, WI); a hickory-smoked bacon rubbed with brown sugar and cracked black peppercorns, made by a family of German heritage in the Ozark foothills of Arkansas and sold by such brands as Ham I Am; the very strong-flavored Smoky Mountains Country Bacon from Benton's Hams (Madisonville, TN), which is made from Berkshire pigs and is dry-cured and hickory-smoked, two days each; Kolozsvari Szalonna, a rich, double-smoked, thin-sliced Hungarian bacon made by the Bende family in Chicago; the dry-cured, thin-sliced Iowa Pancetta from La Quercia (Norwalk, IA); and the hickory-smoked Burgers' Jowl Bacon, made from fat-rich pig cheek by Burgers' Smokehouse, a family business in California, MO.

Other down-home dishes included rye'n'injun bread pan-fried in bacon fat and topped by a spread of pimento cheese with bacon bits; cornbread, made from Anson Mills cornmeal and bacon bits; Grits and Bits Waffles, based on a Georgia version of the Dutch classic, waffles filled with bits of Anson Mills organic grits, Vermont cheddar, and bacon bits; potato hash fried in bacon fat; and biscuits with "chocolate gravy" (i.e., bacon-fat gravy with some cocoa powder mixed in), another Southern tradition.

Words Deliciously Chosen

The Argentine-born Maria C. Andre, a professor of Spanish at Hope College in Michigan, gave an Apr. 18 talk on "Chicanas and Latin American Women Writers: Exploring the Realm of the Kitchen as a Self-Empowering Site". Dr. Andre interpreted various works by Isabel Allende (Chile), Laura Esquivel (Mexi-

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COUNT RUMFORD *continued from page 5*

sure owes something to Count Rumford's work with fire, heat, and stoves. So let us raise a glass to him only dimly remembered in the country of his birth.

I cannot conclude this Essay, without once more recommending, in the most earnest manner, to the attention of the Public, and more especially to the attention of all those who are engaged in public affairs—the subject which has here been attempted to be investigated. It is certainly of very great importance, in whatever light it is considered, and it is particularly so at the present moment: *for however statesmen may differ in opinion with respect to the danger or expediency of making any alteration in the constitution, or established forms of government, in times of popular commotion, no doubts can be entertained with respect to the policy of diminishing, as much as possible, at all times—and more especially in times like the present—the misery of the lower classes of the people.*

R.I.P. ■

References

1. Lily Haxworth Wallace, *Rumford Complete Cook Book*, 41st Edition (Rumford, RI: Rumford Chemical Works, 1947).
2. Benjamin Thompson, Count Rumford, *Essays, Political, Economical and Philosophical*, Vol. 1 (Boston, MA: D. West, 1798).

DETROIT STOVES *continued from page 11*

Exposition, the stove was dismantled and shipped back to Detroit, where it was re-erected and displayed at the Michigan Stove Company's property. After MSC and the Detroit Stove Works merged in 1926, the stove followed to DSC's East Jefferson site. The Detroit-Michigan Stove Company was acquired in 1955 by Welbilt Corporation, and the stove was leased to Schafer Bakeries and used as an outdoor advertisement for bakery products till 1965, when it was donated to the City of Detroit. The stove received a \$300,000 restoration in 1998, and it has since been displayed at the Michigan State Fairgrounds. The 2009 state fair was the last, and a new home was being sought for the stove.

But not even the vast cavity of this most famous of all Detroit stoves could produce a revelation as profound as that which I experienced nearly 50 years ago when crusty, yeasty bread emerged from the oven that my great-grandmother cleverly fired with wood and cobs when I was a young boy in Nebraska. ■

Ronald notes that most of the stove catalogs that he consulted were from the collection at the University of Michigan's Bentley Historical Library. Catalogs and additional materials are also found in the Longone Culinary Archives at the UM Clements Library. Ronald also called our attention to a July 2001 article from the UM News Service, written by CHAA member Judy Steeh, "Detroit—Stove Capital of the World" (<http://www.ns.umich.edu/index.html?Releases/2001/Jul01/r070901c>), which quotes extensively from archives curator and CHAA founding member Jan Longone.

HOOSIER CABINETS *continued from page 13*

And what, precisely, were these "modern" values? On this point an early document from the Hoosier Mfg. Company is revealing. A 1910 account published in the *New Castle Times* explicitly stated what hundreds of Hoosier advertisements made clear: to be modern was to be free from "the ancient curse about man eating bread in the sweat of his brow." To be modern was to be beautiful, logical, and happy, instead of a "fagged-out drudge". To be modern was to keep one's hands clean, to minimize labor at home by employing equipment one could buy—not just Hoosier cabinets, but hand tools, such as meat grinders and apple-parers, and later, blenders and other electrical appliances. Before long, being modern meant skipping preparatory work altogether—buying pre-ground beef and ready-canned applesauce and baking "homemade" biscuits from a mix. By the 1960's, modern living had brought us TV dinners, which spared women even the effort required to spoon out individual servings of vegetables or chicken pot pie. Apparently, being modern meant buying things instead of producing them ourselves—an interesting idea to ponder in an era when many of us have rediscovered the joys of growing and making. ■

CHAA REPORT *continued from page 15*

co), Rosario Ferre (Puerto Rico), and others, as a counter-discourse to European feminists whose writing leaves out women of color and women of the lower classes. Among bourgeois feminists, the kitchen has often been portrayed as a locus of oppression, where women are held in a sort of "house arrest". By contrast, many Latin American feminists seek to portray the kitchen as a locus of learning, creativity, collectivity, even romance and liberation. More specifics can be found in Dr. Andre's article, "Liberation in the Kitchen" (*Repast* Summer 2004, pp. 6-8).

May 16 was our afternoon for Poets on Food, including readings by Marvin A. Brandwin from his book, *A Smorgasbord of Verse: Easy to Digest Food Poems* (Ann Arbor, MI: Charing Cross Press, 2009), and by Chloé Yelena Miller from her blog, <http://chloeyelenamiller.blogspot.com>. In addition, a few CHAA members read some food-related poems by other authors. Some of Miller's most poignant works, such as the poem "How to Make Ribolita", resulted from trips that she made to Italy with her mother to research family history. Brandwin's works are humorous, rhythm-and-rhyme poems that often poke gentle fun, as in the example below. ■

Food Historians

by Marvin Brandwin

Some people are so involved with food
From a historical perspective,
That they are with dual skills imbued
Those of gourmet and detective.
They search kitchen drawers and old book pages
And stuff their files with culinary clues
About eating habits throughout the ages
That probably no one but themselves can use.
I hope at least that despite their mission
They occasionally will cease the looking,
And use the contents of their erudition
To make delicious dinners with their own cooking.

RECIPES FROM THE CAPE FEAR REGION



JONKONNU IN THE KITCHEN

by Ann A. Hertzler and Madeline C. Flagler

This article is based on work that the authors carried out for the Bellamy Mansion Museum in Wilmington, NC. Madeline Flagler was Education Director at the museum during 2001-2009 and is currently Executive Director at the Wrightsville Beach Museum of History (Wrightsville Beach, NC). Repast subscriber Ann Hertzler of Wilmington is a nutritionist, dietician, and emeritus professor at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Blacksburg, VA). Her previous article for Repast was "The Sources and Uses of Children's Cookbooks" (Winter 2007). The authors were inspired to send us this article after seeing our theme issues on African-American Food History (Winter and Spring 2010).

The Jonkonnu festival has been reenacted annually by the Bellamy Mansion Museum beginning in 2007, reclaiming a tradition that has had deep significance and importance within the African-American community. This mansion, located in downtown Wilmington, NC, was the residence of physician, planter, and businessman John Dillard Bellamy and his family. It was built on the eve of the Civil War by free and enslaved black artisans. In 1865, Federal troops commandeered the house as their headquarters during the occupation of Wilmington.

Jonkonnu, a celebration with strong West African roots, first described in Jamaica in the late 1600's, came to North Carolina about 100 years later. Traditionally celebrated between Christmas Day and New Year's, participation in Jonkonnu was by the community, both blacks and whites, but led by the enslaved population. This elaborate festival was celebrated by enslaved people in Wilmington, at Buchoi and Clarendon Plantations across the river in the Lower Cape Fear region, and in northeastern North Carolina in the Albemarle region.

There are descriptions of masked dancers, vibrant costumes, and original songs and chants that were performed to the sound of bones, cows' horns, drums, and triangles. The musicians' songs were in the African tradition of call and response. These descriptions are of the visible or public Jonkonnu activities describing the men's participation. On the other hand, there are no accounts of the enslaved women preparing festive treats and beverages in the big house and in the slave quarters. Their work was invisible, unacknowledged, and unreported. During the celebration of Jonkonnu the focus of creative activities of male and female slaves differed considerably. In this article we are going to look at the women's contributions in the area of food.

Women slaves worked extra hours in the kitchen of the big house preparing festive holiday cakes, cookies, and beverage recipes of European and Southern heritage for Christmas and Jonkonnu. Our research on gingerbread and beverages associated with Jonkonnu was an opportunity to illustrate the contribution of the African-American cook.

Gingerbread

Gingerbread— a crisp, spicy cookie or a softer, fluffier cake of English heritage— was specifically named as a festive treat in letters and diaries of the 19th Century and earlier. The variety of spices found in these recipes indicates African-American contributions. Ginger and butter were combined with a sweetener of honey, treacle, sugar, or cheaper molasses. To this was added sack (a fortified wine), cream, claret, or vinegar, and spices such as cloves, nutmeg, cinnamon, and mace. Some recipes include almonds, raisins, dates, or the peel/zest of orange or lemon.

The local McKay-Cromartie manuscript, on microfilm at the New Hanover County Library, with recipes dating from the 1700's, mentioned ginger for seasoning and saleratus (a forerunner of baking powder) as a leavening agent with the acid molasses. African Americans were especially known to blend spices with ginger to recreate the exotic tastes of their African culinary heritage. Charles Joyner noted that they used what they found in "the New World environment; but to those foodstuffs slave cooks applied an African culinary grammar— methods of cooking and spicing, remembered recipes, ancestral tastes."¹ In her 1881 cookbook Mrs. Fisher, a former slave from South Carolina, added cinnamon and allspice to the gingerbread recipe:

70. Ginger Cookies. One teacup of molasses, one-half teacup of sugar, one tablespoonful of butter, one tablespoonful of lard, one quart of flour, two tablespoonfuls of ginger, one teaspoonful of cinnamon, one teaspoonful of allspice, two tablespoonfuls of yeast powder [a single-acting baking powder]. Cream butter and sugar together and add molasses. Sift yeast powder and flour together and add to butter, sugar, and molasses, then add lard and spices, etc., and work it up well. Roll out on a board, and cut them out and bake like you would a biscuit.²

Beverages

Alcohol specialties were also a feature of Jonkonnu, which became part of a "drinking Christmas". With so many slaves involved, these beverages represented a considerable portion of a household's yearly budget; thus, the master might dispense weak liquor, watering down the drinks in order to economize. Somerset Place in the Albemarle bought modest amounts of rum and whiskey for the slave community at harvest and holiday time. On Christmas morning at Clarendon Plantation in the Cape Fear region, the enslaved men came to the "Big House" to each get their "dram of fine whiskey". Other drink recipes served to the slaves during the Jonkonnu festivities were toddies, punches, and eggnog.

A hot apple-toddy was served at Buchoi Plantation about midnight on Christmas at a grand ball held by the slaves. Recipes in cookbooks of the time for beverages as well as other

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JONKONNU

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foods reveal the slave cook's seasoning creativity. A hot apple-toddy combines liquor, a sweetener (often honey), and hand-grated spices often used by Africans, such as nutmeg, allspice, cloves, and mace.

Most punch recipes contained rum. In the early 1800's, Robert Roberts, an African-American butler and majordomo in Massachusetts, included in his servant's manual a punch recipe flavored with lemon:

79.— To Make a Beautiful Flavoured [sic] Punch. Take one dessert-spoonful of acid salt of lemon, half a pound of good white sugar, two quarts of real boiling water, one pint of Jamaica rum, and half a pint of brandy, add some lemon peel or some essence of lemon, if agreeable, four drops of the essence is enough; then pour it from one pitcher to another twice or thrice to mix it well. This will be a most delicious and fine flavoured [sic] punch.³

Marion Brown's 1951 cookbook included a recipe for "The Original Cape Fear Punch" that combined sugar and lemon juice with "1 qt. green tea, 4 qts. of rye or bourbon whiskey, 1 qt. rum, and 1 full qt. brandy." The punch was aged 30 to 90 days before adding sparkling water, champagne, fresh oranges and lemons. Brown likened this mixture to that described in an old rhyme:

A little water to make it weak,
A little sugar to make it sweet,
A little lemon to make it sour,
A little whiskey to give it power.⁴

The ale, or "nog", of 17th-Century English eggnog was replaced with rum, wine, whiskey, brandy, and other spirits by 19th-Century Southerners. The cows and goats brought by the English to North America provided fresh milk and cream on most plantations by the mid-1600's. Female black slaves often maintained spotless dairies on local plantations and used the cream for many fancy dishes and drinks such as eggnog.

Early eggnog recipes combined whipped egg yolks and sugar with bourbon and white rum folded into stiffly beaten egg whites and/or heavy whipping cream with a minimum of 36% butterfat. Beating often required more than one person to beat until the egg whites could bear an egg or a silver quarter on them. Willow rods cut the beating time in half but often left splinters. This eggnog recipe from the Buchoi Plantation in the Cape Fear area was made on a gigantic scale on Christmas Eve. Beating drums and carrying torches, the enslaved men came to a great mahogany table on the wide piazza to receive a glass of eggnog from the master. Pyramids of tumblers were placed around the eggnog bowl.

Buchoi Plantation Eggnog

A fanner⁵ of fresh eggs, great dishes of sugar, and the claret of liquors. When the eggs were beaten to the required degree, viz: until the yolks were the color of rich cream and the whites adhered steadily to the dish when it was turned upside down, the whole was put together in the gigantic china punch-bowl, relic of ancestral feasting across seas in "ye olde countrie", I would not dare to say how many eggs, or how much brandy and rum went into the concoction of that bowl of egg-nog.

The Jonkonnu Celebration

In Wilmington, Jonkonnu continued on the sandy streets in front of the old Market House, one of the few places where the tradition was practiced after the Civil War. But this event has a checkered history in Wilmington. Early on it was a nuanced tradition enjoyed by both whites and blacks, but with very different meanings to the two cultures and communities. Most slave owners freely participated in a part of Jonkonnu and overlooked its unusual and "noisy" rituals and appearances. We know of the Buchoi Plantation Jonkonnu from Rebecca Cameron's account⁶, and of Wilmington's participation from newspaper accounts and white memoirs. Some of the newspaper descriptions of the festivity are put in unflattering terms, but must be recognized as white accounts during a time of disenfranchisement of the African-American community, both free and enslaved, before and after the Civil War.

On the other hand, you get a very different picture if you examine Jonkonnu as it is described by an African American. In the 1861 book by Harriet Jacobs, an escaped slave from Edenton, NC, Ms. Jacobs recounts the excitement that accompanied the festive holiday event and describes the colorful ragman costumes, dancing, music, and "gumbo box" drums.⁷ She indicates that the main festivities did not happen at the big house but back at the slave quarters where freedom was even less restricted. You get a sense that this is a time when enslaved Africans could celebrate and pass on the traditions of their pre-slavery past and honor their ancestors and cultural heritage. This has a very different context than do the descriptions by whites.

Gingerbread is still featured as a special holiday treat during the Bellamy Mansion's reenactment of Jonkonnu. Celebrating this past tradition features the festive dance and costumes of the 19th-Century participants and the familiar taste and smells of gingerbread that provided a way for enslaved African Americans to relive their own cultural heritage. It also honors the creativity, the spirit, and the traditions of their ancestors in the midst of an oppression that worked hard at destroying and disparaging all that was African in origin. ■

Endnotes

1. Charles W. Joyner, *Down by the Riverside: A South Carolina Slave Community*, first paperback edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), p. 91.
2. Abby Fisher, *What Mrs. Fisher Knows about Old Southern Cooking* (San Francisco: Women's Co-op Printing Office, 1881), pp. 32-33.
3. Robert Roberts, *The House Servant's Directory, or, A Monitor for Private Families: Comprising Hints on the Arrangement and Performance of Servants' Work* (Boston and New York: Munroe and Francis, 1827), pp. 111-112.
4. Marion Lea Brown, *The Southern Cook Book* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1951), p. 336.
5. A fanner was a large basket holding about 2½ bushels of rice.
6. Rebecca Cameron, "Plantation on 'The Neck'— Cape Fear River", *Ladies' Home Journal*, Dec. 1891, pp. 5-6; reprinted as "Christmas at Buchoi, A North Carolina Rice Plantation", *North Carolina Booklet* 13:1 (July 1913), pp. 3, 8-10.
7. Harriet Ann Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston: self-published, 1861), pp. 179-180.

MORSELS & TIDBITS

CHAA founding member **Jan Longone** was a panelist at “Curating Culinary Collections: A Symposium of Scholars, Curators, and Librarians”, held on March 6 at New York University’s Fales Library and funded by NYU’s Humanities Initiative. The day-long, by-invitation symposium discussed the history of scholarly collecting for food studies, trends in food research, and the future of collecting. The goal is to help align collecting practices more closely with the needs of researchers in this discipline; a 20-page report is to be produced as a synthesis of the proceedings and as a guide to curators and librarians. Jan was also one of the speakers at the Camp Bacon event, held at Zingerman’s Roadhouse here on June 19. She made a PowerPoint presentation summarizing bacon history for the campers.

William Grimes, former restaurant critic for the *New York Times*, has written a two-century history of the eateries of his town: *Appetite City: A Culinary History of New York* (New York: North Point Press, 2009; 384 pp., \$30 cloth). According to Grimes in a book that is rich with colorful anecdote, this evolution was a case in which an uncouth backwater was transformed into the most diverse restaurant city in the world. For example, the Swiss brothers Giovanni and Pietro Delmonico, who almost single-handedly brought European style and manners into public city dining when they founded their eponymous establishment in 1827, are the subjects of Chapter 4, “A Little Restaurant and How It Grew: The Delmonico’s Story”. Chapter 3, “New York on the Half Shell”, describes how oyster stands and saloons served customers of widely varied means for decades, only to die out in the late 1800’s when local oyster beds were decimated. Chapter 14, “The Baum Years”, recalls the theme-restaurant concept invented by Joseph Baum (1920-1998) and his influence at The Forum of the Twelve Caesars, The Four Seasons, La Fonda del Sol, Windows on the World, and the Rainbow Room.

If you seek a narrower focus— on delicatessens, but not just those of New York— turn to Toronto freelance journalist **David Sax’s** *Save the Deli: In Search of Perfect Pastrami, Crusty Rye, and the Heart of Jewish Delicatessen* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2009; 336 pp., \$24 cloth), which just won a James Beard Award. Its 18 chapters are grouped into three sections: New York, the rest of the country, and the “Deli Diaspora” (Canada and Europe); interestingly, the leadoff chapter within section 2 takes up “Detroit: Motown’s Deli Blues and Michigan’s Suburban Jews”. Naturally, the book starts with Katz’s in New York, founded by Russian immigrants in 1888 and still serving up pastrami on rye. Throughout, the book not only delves into the food that is served and how it is made, but the culture and some of the economics and history surrounding it, based in part on interviews with deli owners and employees. The reading is fun but also deadly serious, since food authenticity is now a globally endangered species. For one thing, Sax compares quality and names, with results that are often surprising. He discovers some of the most outstanding delis not in the Big Apple but in cities like Montreal, QC, Metairie, LA, and Boulder, CO. He also makes the interesting

observation that deli food is much more authentically Jewish in London than in New York, which might have to do with the fact that the deli clientele is about 95% Jewish in London versus about 95% non-Jewish in New York.

Repast subscriber Charles Witke recently brought to our attention the final book from the late **Philip J. Pauly**, *Fruits and Plains: The Horticultural Transformation of America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2008; 336 pp., \$42 cloth). It examines developments in horticulture from the days of Native American cultivation and the earliest European planters, gardeners, orchardists, and vintners, to the transformation of landscapes in such places as Florida and the Great Plains, personalities like Carver and Burbank, and the campaigns for hybrid corn, industrial fertilizers, and plant biotechnology. The author tackles big issues— sustainability, agribusiness, invasive species and the quarantining of plants— while incorporating enough fine detail to make for engrossing reading. Prof. Pauly, a highly regarded historian of science at Rutgers University, died of cancer at age 57 in the same year that this third book of his came out.

“Food, Memory and Cultural Heritage” is the theme of the Eighth **European Campus University**, a collection of workshops to be held in Tours, France from August 29 to September 5, 2010. The program is organized jointly by François Rabelais University and the European Institute for the History and Cultures of Food. Specialists in history, anthropology, gastronomy, and other disciplines will probe how memory— the ways in which an individual, group, or society constructs its past in remembering it— is a crucial factor in researching food history and culture. Instructors include Thibaut Boulay, Lucie Dupre, Allen J. Grieco, Marc Jacobs, Arthur Lizie, Fabio Parasecoli, Peter Scholliers, David Sutton, John Sutton, and Harry G. West. For further information, contact Marie-Claude Piochon at mc.piochon@iehca.eu.

“The Hungry Muse: An Exploration of Food in Literature” is the topic of the 29th annual **Key West Literary Seminar**, to be held in January 2011. Dozens of today’s most compelling, thought-provoking, and funniest writers will participate in a mouthwatering investigation not simply of the stuff we eat but of all the things food stands for in our thoughts and words and stories. Four days of readings, conversations, lectures, panel discussions, and parties add up to an event that is one of today’s smartest and most high-spirited literary gatherings. Confirmed speakers include Roy Blount, Jr., Frank Bruni, Kate Christensen, Jonathan Gold, Darra Goldstein, Adam Gopnik, Gael Greene, Madhur Jaffrey, Mark Kurlansky, Ruth Reichl, Michael Ruhlman, and Calvin Trillin. For registration and further information, visit <http://www.kwls.org/lit/2011>.

On the Back Burner: We invite ideas and submissions for *Repast*, including for these planned future theme-issues: Dining in Medieval and Renaissance England (Fall 2010); Civil War Sesquicentennial Issue (Summer 2011). Suggestions for future themes are also welcome. ■

CHAA CALENDAR

(Unless otherwise noted, programs are scheduled for 4-6 p.m. and are held at Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin Ave.)

Sunday, August 22, 2010

4-7 p.m., Earhart Village Clubhouse
(835 Greenhills Drive, Ann Arbor)

CHAA annual participatory theme picnic:
“Favorite hometown/family recipes”

**The sights, sounds, and flavors of the
Jonkonnu festival have been revived by the
Bellamy Mansion Museum in Wilmington, NC.
See the article on pp. 17-18.**

Photo courtesy of the Bellamy Mansion Museum.



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Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

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First Class