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Repast

Quarterly Publication of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

The Growing Diversity of American Cooking **One Century Ago**



Restaurateur Chin Foin, shown here in 1906 with his wife, Yokelund Wong, was the leading food purveyor in Chicago's Chinatown during the period when its growing fame inspired the first English-language Chinese cookbook in the United States (see article on p. 14).

Photo from Immigration Service records held by the National Archives and Records Administration, Chicago.

WE WILL REMEMBER MARY LOU UNTERBURGER

On June 2 the Culinary Historians lost one of our most cherished members, Mary Lou Unterburger. She had joined CHAA in the 1990s, and remained a member right up to her passing at age 90.

Mary Lou faithfully attended our monthly talks until it became physically impossible for her. Last Summer, she moved from her longtime apartment on South Maple to The Manor, an assisted-living facility at Glacier Hills on Earhart Road. CHAA co-founder Jan Longone tells us that Mary Lou telephoned her not long before her passing “to say how sorry she was that she could not participate more fully in CHAA because of her health, but that she wanted us to know that her membership and participation in CHAA was something that gave her much, much pleasure. And, that is a tribute to all CHAA members.”



Photo courtesy of Unterburger family

Repast

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Former President Carroll Thomson and her husband John recalled, “Mary Lou was always cheerful and was a real help to us. She was always able to provide help with refreshments, even on short notice.” It was due to her efforts that we secured the use of the Walden Hills Community Room on Pauline Boulevard, which was our meeting place during 2000 and 2001.

Mary Lou was also an enthusiastic participant at our biannual theme potlucks, bringing such creations as *lekach* honey cake (Jewish Foods Around the World, Dec. 2000), *champiñones en escabeche* (Tapas meal, Dec. 2001), her grandmother’s Scottish currant loaf (Family Immigrant Cooking, Jul. 2008), and an elegant *génoise* with apricot liqueur and whipped cream (French Bistro meal, Dec. 2008).

A well-attended memorial was held on June 22 at her place of worship, the First Congregational Church of Ann Arbor. In their remembrances, the speakers described Mary Lou with such apt phrases as “generous”, “literate”, “modest”, “interested in everything”, “witty”, “welcoming”, “good storyteller”, “embraced change”, “plucky”, “feminist”, “inner strength”, and “sincere”.

Because of these qualities and the influence of her advanced education, her military service, her career as a librarian, her travel, and her children, Mary Lou’s horizons expanded way beyond what one might expect of a Depression-era farmgirl from the Rocky Mountain region.

“We never considered ourselves poor”

Mary Louise Wilkerson and her three siblings grew up on a farm in Montezuma County, in the far southwestern corner of Colorado. In a memoir about these times, “Finding ‘Milk and Honey’ on a Dust Bowl Homestead” (*Repast*, Fall 2000), she recounted that the farm lacked electricity and running water. Cooking, baking, and other chores were done on a wood-fire range.

Mary Lou's father, James Taylor Wilkerson, had built a new barn in 1914 before getting married. But during the drought years, the family had to retreat from raising cash crops to mere subsistence farming. "We never considered ourselves poor", Mary Lou wrote. "We just had no money."

The children's chores included tending the flock of Rhode Island Reds. If all went well, the two biggest roosters were destined for the Fourth of July table. They were cooked "Maryland style" (breaded and deep-fried, then baked) and accompanied by new potatoes and garden peas in cream. The cream, along with butter and ice cream, were made from milk supplied by the family herd of Holstein-Friesian cows.

Mary Lou's mother, the former Nellie Bennett, kept house and prepared meals for the family and its hired farmhands. Monday was washing day, Tuesday for ironing, Wednesday for bread-baking. Nellie often consulted County Extension Service bulletins that she saved, and a drawer full of recipes that she'd clipped from farm and dairy journals. Home-canned and root-cellar fruits and vegetables helped see the family through each long, harsh Winter. Mary Lou, a 4-H Club member, won First Prize one year at the State Fair for her own raspberry preserves, which she recalled netted her \$1.50 from the Fair and an equal amount from the Ball-Mason jar company.

During World War 2 at the University of Colorado, where she would earn a bachelor's degree in English in 1943, Mary Lou was a member of the Japanese-American Club, where she supported Japanese-American students who'd managed to secure college deferments to avoid internment camps in the West. After graduation she joined the WAVES, where for 2½ years she trained Naval air cadets in navigational technology. She was posted at bases in such locations as Beeville, TX; Hutchinson, KS; Atlanta, GA; Bronx, NY; and her favorite, Quonset Point, RI.

A Romance with Books

After her discharge in December 1945 Mary Lou attended Columbia University in New York, where she completed a master's degree in library science. She was then recruited to come to the Detroit Public Library in 1949. During her long career there she worked mostly at branch libraries and for five years at the main library on Woodward Avenue, where she met fellow librarian George W. Unterburger. They married in 1952 and would raise four children together.

It was while she was working at the Sherwood Forest branch of the Detroit Public Library that Mary Lou helped stoke the intellectual curiosity of a young book-borrower and culinary-historian-to-be, Raymond Sokolov. With great interest she followed his subsequent career as a student at the Cranbrook School and Harvard College, as a restaurant critic and food writer for the *New York Times*, *Natural History* magazine, and the *Wall Street Journal*, and as the author of about a dozen books on cooking and on the culture and history of food. This year Sokolov, 71, published *Steal the Menu: A Memoir of Forty Years in Food*, which was released a few weeks before Mary Lou died.

Mary Lou retired in 1989 as manager of the Campbell branch library, on Vernor Avenue in the largely Latino southwest section of Detroit. She and George moved to Ann Arbor the following year. After George passed away in 1995, she kept active in her

In Memoriam: Connie Fitzner



We were also sorry to learn of the passing on June 1 of Constance N. Fitzner of Plymouth, MI, who'd been a CHAA member since Summer 2005. Connie, a native of Chicora, PA, and a graduate of Plymouth High School and Wayne State University, had

retired after more than 40 years of employment at Michigan Bell Telephone. Friends recalled that she loved making fruit pies, and was often kindly bringing food over for other people. Alongside CHAA she was active in several other organizations, including the Plymouth Historical Society, the Civil War Round Table, and the German Club. In addition, Connie had served as the President of the Business and Professional Women's Club of Plymouth.

church and in organizations such as the CHAA, the League of Women Voters (LWV), and the American Association of University Women (AAUW).

Current CHAA Co-President Judy Steeh worked with Mary Lou in the AAUW, where she was an active member of its Bibliomaniacs book group and a stalwart pricer of "special" books for its annual used-book sale. Judy recalls, "Mary Lou's knowledge of old and rare books was extensive, and she kept it up to date by attending conferences and workshops all over the country. She nurtured a whole new generation of old-book lovers in AAUW—including me."

Her children and her world travels were additional factors that promoted cosmopolitanism in Mary Lou's outlook. Besides trips across the U.S., she traveled to the UK, France, the Czech Republic, and Japan. Her son James and his wife Junko Endo lived in Japan for a time, where they ran what Mary Lou once described as "a tiny, traditional restaurant". They now live in Portland, OR. Mary Lou's daughter Helen lives in Denton, TX, with her husband, Melvin Krejci; her son Thomas lives in Brooklyn, NY, with his wife, Ellie; and her daughter Amy lives in Ann Arbor with her husband, David Salamie.

Talking and visiting with her children and their families added to Mary Lou's culinary curiosity and knowledge. Once, David's grandmother, Hopsie Salamie, invited her and other women in the family to come to her home in Roseville, MI, and see how to make the flatbread of her old Syrian village. Mary Lou passed on the knowledge by baking us such flatbreads for our Silk Road theme meal in December 2005.

In recent years, Mary Lou reflected on her life experiences for two oral history interviews. One, for the Veterans History Project, was videotaped and deposited in the collection of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. The other one was conducted by the local chapter of the League of Women Voters, and is available on the Internet as an audio podcast. ■

FROM SETTING THE TABLE TO WASHING THE DISHES, AND LOTS IN BETWEEN

The Winter and Spring meetings of the Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor explored the varied topics of catering, dishwashing, distilling, dinnerware, strawberries, and hot dogs. Thanks to Program Chair Laura Gillis for arranging an exciting program of talks! We summarize them below, and will report on the Summer theme meal in our next issue.

With words, slides, and platters of beautifully presented food to sample, CHAA member **Sherry Sundling** summed up her culinary career in a talk on Jan. 20, “Sweet ‘n’ Sour: 30 Years of Recipes, Memories, and Adventures in Catering”. Growing up in Britton, MI, Sherry showed an early talent with food preparation, and after college she took culinary lessons from Viennese-born Baroness Charity de Vicq Suczek in Detroit. Her subsequent career included a variety of restaurant jobs in southeastern Michigan, 17 years with the Univ. of Michigan Dining Service, teaching in-store classes on cooking and kitchen equipment, and a successful private business called Sherry’s—Caterer of International Cuisine. Most of her catered cooking was in the kitchens of synagogues and churches for *bar mitzvahs*, weddings, and other social occasions. Through learning-by-doing she educated herself about Jewish kosher and holiday cookery.

Sherry told us that the seven most important elements of a catering business are patience, vision, liking people, interpersonal skills, a regularly updated repertoire of recipes, thinking on the fly to solve problems, and strong legs and feet. Food must be not only delicious but also beautifully presented; Sherry used elements such as butter sculpture, carved melons and pineapples, mirrored bases, and basketry of swans and ducks to create dramatic centerpieces and tablescapes. One of her daughters wrote her a computer program that helps assemble a recipe, convert quantities as needed, and formulate a shopping list. Besides social caterers like Sherry, the catering industry also includes those whose focus is commercial (for corporate functions) or cultural (for museums, galleries, etc.).

CHAA Co-President **Joanne Nesbit**’s cleverly titled Feb. 17 talk, “Who Did the Dishes at the Last Supper?”, snagged the *Ann Arbor Observer*’s coveted designation as February’s “Only in Ann Arbor” Event of the Month. Joanne began by pointing out that a cup or a wineskin must have been passed at the Last Supper, but whether the guests used plates that needed washing is a question that lingers. Indeed, dishwashing is one of the least noted and studied aspects of food; nevertheless, it’s possible to trace its inspiring progress through history. The oldest plates were probably the simple wooden boards known as *trenchers*. Plates of more durable materials could be washed in running water and scoured with sand. Sinks came later, eventually equipped with drains and other fixtures. Commercial soap was introduced in the late

1860s, competing with sand, turpentine, and other dish cleansers. Grease could be removed with newsprint or other paper, which then became good fuel for the fire. In the late 1800s, a bottle of diluted ammonia was often kept at the sink to help “cut grease”, or else citrus peelings might be added directly to the dishwater for this purpose, along with borax or soda to “protect the hands”.

Still, washing was considered drudgery best left to the hired girl, or to a boarder who could claim a discount for his toil. Otherwise it might be an evening chore for youngsters—but boys’ participation was so rare that someone wrote in 1876 that any lad who does the dishes should get a medal! Restaurant dishwashers, nicknamed “dish dogs” or “pearl divers”, usually labored in hot, stuffy basements; in April 1889, those in New York struck for better pay and working conditions. Possibly the first real dishwashing machine had been patented by Joel Houghton of Ogden, NY, in 1850, a cylindrical wooden tub enclosing a rack of dishes that rotated when volleys of boiling water were sprayed against them. Far more effective was an 1886 model patented by Shelbyville, IL, socialite Josephine Cochrane that became popular in restaurants. Her business was later sold to the Hobart Mfg. Co., which still exists (and which spawned KitchenAid to make stand mixers). Another clever device was designed to wash either dishes or, with the racks removed, clothes. Joanne concluded her amusing and creative presentation by involving the audience in songs and stories about dishwashing.

Ari Sussman spoke to us on St. Patrick’s Day about “The Rise of Craft Distilling in America”. He is the Distillery Manager of Red Cedar Spirits, the research facility for Michigan State University’s program in artisanal distilling, which is now also affiliated with Luleå University in Sweden. Examples of distillation products include grain spirits such as whiskey, and fruit spirits such as brandy. Ari summarized their production process: during fermentation, the action of yeast converts glucose into ethanol and other forms of alcohol; and during distillation, the alcohol is boiled away from the water and then captured by condensation. (In an alternative process called “jacking”, the water is frozen as ice and removed.) The resulting high-proof spirit is colorless, but except in cases such as vodka, colorants are later added. Ari pointed out that commercial “branding” efforts often advertise factors that aren’t relevant to product quality, such as the number of sequential distillations carried out.

Some of the earliest apparatuses for distillation were the *alembic* and related technologies, developed in the 700s and 800s in Persia and Moorish Córdoba. Irish and Scottish monks who learned of the process on visits to Spain discovered that copper is a superior metal for distillation, and that reducing the surface area makes for a heavier, more complex flavor. The introduction of continuous distillation (1830s) led to industrial facilities with immense columnar stills. Nevertheless, in the U.S. alone, prior to the Temperance movement there were some 6,000 legal stills, many on a small scale. Recovering from Prohibition, the industry consolidated into a handful of major firms with little product variety. When the MSU program was begun in 1997, their equipment was purchased in Europe since small-scale stills were no longer available here. But in the last few years the number of craft distillers in the U.S. has grown

explosively, with about 450 licensed as of 2013. A key factor has been state laws allowing simpler licenses for small distillers; e.g., the fee in Michigan was reduced from \$10,000 to \$100. The popularity of craft spirits has also benefited from the locavore movement and the cocktail renaissance.

In conjunction with the inaugural exhibit of the Dinnerware Museum in Ann Arbor, museum director and CHAA member **Margaret Carney** spoke to us on Apr. 21 about “Unforgettable Dinnerware: Creating a Dream Museum in the 21st Century, One Place Setting at a Time”. Dr. Carney and her husband, Bill Walker, are ceramics experts and thus, she said, “we are interested in what comes between food and the table.” She narrated a slideshow of dozens of her favorite pieces of dinnerware and related images, including several from the exhibit. Some of the most elegant examples were a tea bowl from the Sung dynasty; Quimper earthen flatware (1939) and Longwy Ware, both from France; a Wedgwood plate; a Tiffany art glass finger bowl; and Spode and Delft Blue flatware used on the RMS *Titanic*. Classic American examples included Hall china (East Liverpool, OH), Pickard china (Antioch, IL), a Lennox Ming-pattern plate (Trenton, NJ), an opaque green Jadeite pitcher and mugs as made by Anchor Hocking (Lancaster, OH), stemware of Vaseline glass (whose green color comes from its uranium content), and the patent for a Carder Pyrex teapot.

There were one-of-a-kind works by ceramic artists such as Val Cushing, Lisa Orr, Bill Parry, and Ted Randall. More on the mass-market side of the spectrum were sets of Corelle Ware, Farberware, Tupperware, and festive fondue equipment, not to mention TV dinners and ads, and trays of prisoners’ last meals. Margaret noted that the museum is still looking for a permanent location, a spot where “the dish ran away with the spoon.”

“Heirloom Strawberry Varieties” was the talk given on May 19 by **Emily Jenkins**, a small-scale farmer as well as owner and baker at Tanglewood Bakery (Plymouth, MI). In addition to her narrated slideshow, Emily brought along some historical writings on the strawberry, and planters of wild and domesticated varieties. CHAA Co-President Judy Steeh prepared strawberry shortcake using a recipe from the late Patricia More of Ann Arbor. The strawberry genus, *Fragaria*, includes over 20 species, all of them edible. The earliest definitive references, Emily told us, are from the ancient Roman era, mostly in medical treatises where the fruit was mentioned as a cure for indigestion. One name used in medieval times was “hayberry”. French aristocrats began cultivating the plant in the 1300s. By 1430, the strawberry was being sold as a snack in London streets, and its popularity spread across Europe in the 1500s. In the mid-1700s, French gardeners noticed a marvelous new variety and dubbed it the pineapple strawberry for its flavor. Botanist Antoine-Nicolas Duchesne showed it to be a deliberate or accidental hybrid of two New World strawberries that had earlier been brought to Europe and gardeners there: a wild North American species (*F. virginiana*) and a large, juicy species (*F. chiloensis*) cultivated by the Mapuche Indians in Chile. The hybrid, designated *Fragaria x ananassa*, became a

common table and dessert fruit among many classes, and today accounts for all grocery-store varieties. But some people still prefer wild species whose fruits are tiny but packed with flavor, such as the Alpine strawberry (*F. vesca*).

England and the U.S. also played major roles in the history of strawberry varieties. The Royal Horticultural Society encouraged further improvement of *ananassa* by awarding medals. In the 1860s Thomas Laxton developed breeds that resisted disease and that fruited earlier and longer. Larger-scale commercial production led to new technologies of fertilization, hotbeds and hot-houses, and pest and disease control. In the early 1900s, American breeders such as Arthur B. Howard developed varieties that could be shipped across the U.S., although their flavor was simply sweet without any wild, musky undertones. The USDA’s freezable varieties have also affected the industry. Today, the artisanal and locavore movements have prompted interest in rescuing heirloom varieties that survive, such as the Sparkle, first introduced 70 years ago.

An added talk was presented on Jun. 11 at the downtown library by **Bruce Kraig**, longtime President of the Culinary Historians of Chicago. He spoke about his book *Man Bites Dog: Hot Dog Culture in America* (2012), and presented slides of dozens of Patty Carroll’s photos of hot dog stands from that book. Hot dogs, Dr. Kraig told us, are at the core of what Americans think about their culture. Like other American sausages, they were originally craft products of German immigrant butchers. As food for the poor, made from suspect scraps of meat, they were “dangerous”. In the 1870s, Swift, Armour, and other Midwestern meat packers industrialized production and created a national market for hot dogs. In New York in that decade, they began to be sold on streets and in ballparks. Street vending was a family affair: a man—usually Jewish, Greek, or Italian—sat on a chair beside a portable steamer, with a basket of fixings prepped by his wife back home. The first mention of “hot dog” in print (1892) echoed an old joke that they might be made of dog meat. Over the years, their composition shifted from pork toward beef, considered more “clean” by the public. But even the premiere “all-beef” varieties were typically sold at grungy neighborhood joints.

Coast to coast, the hot dog ethic is “fast, cheap, and a lot of it”. But ethnic and regional styles persist, bucking the usual trend toward nationwide food uniformity. Hot dog styles tend to emerge bottom-up: a guy dreams up a great new idea, and others copy him. The New York style is a long, garlicky dog grilled on a flat griddle and dressed with sauerkraut and mustard, or else with a tomato-onion sauce. A Chicago dog is more subtly seasoned with coriander and paprika, is quickly heated in a hot-water bath for “snap”, and served with mustard on a poppyseed bun loaded with fresh and pickled vegetables. Chicago’s Maxwell Street Polish is a *kielbasa* hot dog served with caramelized onions. The slaw dog of the South is served with coleslaw and pickle. The Sonoran dog of Arizona is wrapped in bacon and topped with pinto beans and other burrito-type ingredients. Bruce also mentioned the Italian hot dog, the corn dog, and the Michigan Coney. ■

THE HILL FAMILY MANUSCRIPTS

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DINING IN A WEALTHY WESTERN HOME

by Philip M. Zaret

CHAA member Phil Zaret worked for over 10 years as a volunteer at the University of Michigan developing an index of culinary references found in manuscripts at the William L. Clements Library. He used that index in compiling the article below, as well as his article in our Summer 2012 issue, “‘Sappers and Miners of the Army’: Sutlers in the Civil War”.

This article is based on the Hill Family manuscript collection at the UM Clements Library. It's a large collection with an extraordinary amount of material about food, cooking, and dining, covering the period from about 1865 to 1910.

Any writer who wishes to accurately portray all aspects of this period from inside the minds of those who actually lived it would do well to study the Hill family of Denver, CO. And thanks to the minutely detailed records of the Clements Manuscript Food & Society Index, researchers can navigate through hundreds of collections besides that of the Hill family and find material—in abundance—that they could not find otherwise.

The bulk of the material in the collection comes from Isabel Hill—daughter of Nathaniel Hill, a U.S. Senator from Colorado for one term (1879-85)—and from her mother, Alice Hill, one of the founders of the YWCA. Isabel, who was born in 1864, attended boarding schools in New York City, and after graduation came back to her family, dividing her year between Washington, DC, and Denver. After Nathaniel's term was completed, the family returned to Colorado for good. Isabel remained at home until her late 30s, when, at the turn of the century, she got married.

From the Hill Family collection we can see that food and dining played a central role in the social life of the upper classes. For this, one needed cooks. Finding and keeping cooks was a constant preoccupation, as shown in the following passages.

Mattie [the cook] left suddenly yesterday. ... Very busy ... did errands to two employment bureaus, want cook & waitress. [Isabel Hill, 1890]

I have nearly engaged a cook but not positively. If I engage her, she will leave Washington for Chicago by a night train & only reach Chicago an hour before we do. Time is not fixed. Do not say anything about a cook before the servants. [Alice Hill, 1890]

Sometimes one had to be conniving to get a cook.

Then to hunt up a cook. First I went to where [Lizzie, ex-cook] used to live & found them gone & no one knew where. Then a bright thought struck me to go down to the stable on G Street & see if Saunders [ex-butler] were there. Fortunately I found him: he told me where they were living, 1310 Eleventh Street, so out there I posted. Found a nice comfortable house & Lizzie washing. After some conversation, she finally agreed to break up & go west with me, Saunders & her niece to follow. [Alice Hill, 1885]

Many cooks were not simply “good American girls”, but of some curious ethnicity, which never failed to elicit comment.

We went to such an exquisite dinner at Mrs. Winslow's. She has a Chinese cook & I never ate a more perfect French dinner & such china & glasses. [Isabel Hill, 1905]

The comments were usually more extensive when the cook happened to be of African heritage.

Mama brought three colored servants from Washington with her, but the cook & the man have not proved great successes. The other night the cook put a can of French beans on the stove without making any hole in the can. Of course it exploded & the can was found perfectly clean and empty. The next morning the beans were found on the ceiling ground into a fine powder. [Isabel Hill, 1883]

Willis [butler] has been complaining of the cook's drinking a good deal lately, and for a few days he has been insisting that she is a bad woman. ... Willis went out yesterday to look for a cook & met with great success. A colored woman he heard of called last eve. I interviewed her. She is a clean, good looking woman of about 35. [Isabel Hill, 1893]

The house servant who waits on table is named Preston, and his wife Nannie has been cook till the day following my advent here, when she went home for a month with her three little pickaninnies, and the new cook, a very pretty colored girl of twenty-two, wearing short dresses, has brought four little ones of her own to swell the accounts. ...

We have just the kind of table I like & the new cook is quite good except in the soup line. [Isabel Hill, 1893]

Unfortunately for their employers, cooks were human beings, not automatons, and had personalities that could be quite irritating.

We set to work ... to clean out the cupboards to make it respectable for a new cook, and such a pretty place you never saw. I am sure the cupboards had not been touched since the year one & there was an accumulation of dirt, beetles & old tins everywhere. The new cook came that night and is going tomorrow. She puts on too much "side" for us. She has always lived in a house with ten or twelve servants & this morning she refused flatly to make toast for us, as that had always been the parlor maid's work, where she had been before, & she told Mrs. Pearce that the breakfast things would be left on the table all day sooner than she would lift a finger to take them down, as that was quite beneath her. All this not in an impudent way either, but as if it was quite out of the course of things that this should be expected of her. Mrs. Pearce has another one in view, who we will hope will not be so elegant. [Isabel Hill, 1880]

I wish you could hear our "swell" cook talk. She patronizes us all to pieces. She never uses words less than four syllables long, and if Mrs. Pearce asks her to make anything that she does not know how to, she says with a superior smile, "Oh, Lor', mum, that is quite out of fashion, mum." [Isabel Hill, 1881]

There were other problems with cooks.

I have made certain discoveries about Kate, the dining room girl, which prove positive that she is "nicht gut". Perhaps I may hold onto her for a time yet. I told her I would not have her coming in at 12:30 or later 3 or 4 times a week etc., etc. I hate a row & I hate house keeping & I am tired of Denver through & through. I had a talk with Hannah yesterday— told her what I should expect if I left her here as last year. She is perfectly honest & trustworthy, if she is not much of a cook. If she were a finer cook I should be tempted to a richer diet. [Alice Hill, 1905]

I am afraid the cook is a failure so far as Colorado is concerned. She is grunting all the time, hasn't a bit of pluck & I am sick of her already, but the man & housemaid are nice. [Alice Hill, 1883]

We have had lots of trouble with servants, as everyone predicted. The old cook, for all she is so ancient, has not run herself out of temper and she reduces the two maid servants daily to tears. The other night cook had no tea and she would not give the girls coffee. So they came up weeping with their story, and Mrs. Pearce sent orders to the cook



Isabel Hill (left) with her sister Gertrude, on building steps, Christmas 1884.

Photo: William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

to make some coffee for them immediately, if not sooner, but rather than do this, the old woman went out and bought a quarter of a pound of tea. There was a scrimmage this morning & we are on the lookout for another old hag to bully us. [Isabel Hill, 1880]

But not all cooks were bad.

The new cook, Miss Ryan, gave us a most excellent & English breakfast. Her gravies, soups & meats would delight Mrs. Pearce's heart. Her desserts are also nice, & her condescension & affability are amazing. My dinner party was so successful that I meditate another, guests not decided upon. [Alice Hill, 1880]

continued on next page

THE HILL FAMILY

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Ellen is doing some great stunts in cooking. We would certainly enjoy some of her revised receipts [recipes]— delicious fish balls, perfect Johnny Cake— a dream of a Waldorf salad etc. We are out so much, that she must do some fancy dishes when we are home— delicious pie crust, too. Have strawberry short cake for lunch today & tomato jelly & dream sandwiches (cheese) with salad, tonight. [Isabel Hill, 1907]

Our new cook is a very good woman, a Christian Scientist. Some things she does very well. She takes great pains and wants to stay. She rises and sets by the cookbook. She is neat as wax & gets on well with the other servants. [Alice Hill, 1908]

Not all cooks came fully trained, so the mistress of the house had to complete their education.

Can't you teach your western cook to make raised bread? You will injure your health by eating her miserable short cake & other "fixins". [Alice Hill, 1887]

I think Ellen must be developing into quite another kind of a cook, and of course you must have taken much trouble to get recipes for her & show her how to do them. [Alice Hill, 1907]

Gordon [butler] with his accustomed energy & punctuality had obtained a reinforcement for the culinary department & on my arrival found said individual broom in hand engaged in sweeping up the kitchen. Her name is Delia Scott & she is the sister of Mrs. Pratt's Katie. She is a young girl & seems disposed to do as well as possible. She is rather a novice in cooking & I have been giving her some instructions in the art, giving her the benefit unreservedly of my vast acquirements in that department. [Maria Hale Gordon (Alice Hill's sister), 1885]

For instruction, one needed recipes and cookbooks.

I would most earnestly request that at some early date, when you have nothing to do or if your business is not very pressing, you will transcribe some of your most valuable receipts for making different varieties of breakfast cakes, that ten minute cake, ginger bread & cookies, custards, & some simple puddings such as Indian, tapioca, etc. It would be very acceptable to me & I should rely much more on yours than on the receipts of my cookbook. I always considered you so famous in that line, you know. [Maria Hale Gordon, 1885]

Ellen continues to cook a nouvelle. Her sauces are all so excellent— so improved. She uses the "Rocky Mountain Cook Book" for everything— I have loaned her— written by Mrs. Norton, our ex-cooking school teacher. [Isabel Hill, 1907]

On the job training was not enough. Isabel and others established a school, called "Kitchen Garden", to train children from an early age to become skilled domestic servants. This was not only a way to ensure a steady stream of "help", but also a way to rescue young people from poverty. Isabel kept a notebook of the school's activities, which were very precise and strict, including a military-style "broom drill", in which children "march up in fours with brooms like soldiers". She provides the exact marching orders for this drill.

Several pages each were devoted to the topics of table setting, table clearing, washing dishes and care of the kitchen. At this point Isabel pauses for a short narrative.

At this point we had at the Delgany Kitchen Garden, an Exhibition to which we invited the mothers of our pupils, and about 15 ladies from the Home Department came to visit us. The mothers showed great interest and the children did very well. We had a short talk on Wood & Paper Firebuilding, and the Wood samples from Miss Hill. Next a demonstration of Table Setting, superintended by Mrs. Dick, and a talk on Bed Making, and the made up bed exhibited by Miss Gilb. This was followed by a game or two & later by lemonade & cakes, contributed, the former by teachers & latter by ladies of the Home Department. It was thoroughly sociable and pleasant, some mothers bringing their babies with them. [Isabel Hill, 1897]

Her notes then continue with dinner table setting, announcing dinner, serving, care of table cloths, finger bowls and much more. She concludes with simple cooking lessons, and advice about neatness, order and cleanliness.

Women of Isabel Hill's class did not have to cook, but knowing how to cook was a valuable skill— whether for training their cooks and assessing their performance, or for pinch-hitting when the cook was hors de combat. For this, lessons, classes and cooking schools were a necessity.

Miss Parloa's cooking school is getting along finely.* Aunt H attends every week & seems to enjoy it. Several of my friends go, and Abby Taft is going to have a tea party soon, and make all the things herself, after Miss Parloa's receipts. [Isabel Hill, 1887]

To cooking class, Ruth Hurd with us, learned to make blancmange, stewed potatoes, broil fish, hash, potato soup, escalloped eggs & had a good time. [Isabel Hill, 1889]

* Maria Parloa was the founder of Miss Parloa's School of Cooking, first in Boston and later in New York, and was also briefly associated with the Boston Cooking School. She wrote a series of tremendously popular cookbooks between 1872 and 1909.

Clark stopped for us & went to cooking class at 9:30. All in white pinafores & caps. Learned to make fire, bread & rolls, coffee, boil & cream potatoes, tomato soup, croutons, cook oat meal & bake apples, chops & each did her share. Long lessons owing to fire smoking at beginning, & [so it was] after 2:00 when we got home. [Isabel Hill, 1889]

Elsie & I to Charles Block at 2:30 for cooking lecture by Miss Hammond for St. Mark's church, Many ladies there, who tasted lobster salad, charlotte russe, orange charlotte, after dishes were made. [Isabel Hill, 1890]

Wish you could have dropped in on us yesterday morning and seen four females, Miss Aldrich, Mary, the girl, Aunt Hattie & I with our sleeves rolled up, big aprons on, armed each with a sharp knife, paring away at a half barrel full of peaches. We began 9 AM & at 10 [PM?] 19 jars of preserved peaches, besides six jars of pineapple stood neatly side by side on the kitchen table. The peaches were delicious ripe ones with delicate pink flesh, but they are expensive this year. Aunt Hattie & Mrs. Matteson bought a barrel full at wholesale price and then divided them. Last week Mrs. R. also did up forty-two quarts of tomatoes, a bushel of pears and lots of apple jelly for winter use. [Isabel Hill, 1893]

May 18, 1894. Boston, Massachusetts. To Gordon's, with Elsie to Pope Bicycling Rooms where she took lesson. Fanny Field also there. To 171 Fremont, called upon Mrs. Fessenden, looked in on Boston Cooking School— 19 girls at work. [Isabel Hill, 1894]

With their lessons learned, Isabel and friends set up a "cooking club" for their mutual entertainment.

Down to Mrs. Rollins on way to Cooking Club at the Arnold's. Lunch at 1:30: croquettes, jellied tongue, bread, cake, chocolate, lemon snow, tomato salad, escalloped potatoes & candy. After lunch, danced. [Isabel Hill, 1884]

The Cooking Club gave its inaugural supper for '86 here last Friday night & we had an uncommonly good supper and good time. We had bouillon, picked up fish, beef steak & mushrooms, cauliflower salad, lemon ice and sponge cake, and everything extremely well cooked. [Isabel Hill, 1886]

Women in these circles often exchanged recipes, and prided themselves if they were able to master new dishes and to grace their tables with splendid or surprising fare.

Please ask Ednah to write and if not too much trouble to send the receipt for the walnut cream, which she used to make so nicely last winter and

which I am desirous to emulate when I get back to London. [Isabel Hill, 1880]

Pearce's & Williams' were to dinner Sunday, last day of old year and I tried a new dish for me— a saddle of mutton done in the English way & I guess it was a great failure— but I had boiled turkey & oyster sauce, and if they didn't like one they could eat all the other. ... New Year's Day Kate Slaymaker & I made some chicken salad in AM & we had some cake left over from Thanksgiving & we thought if anyone called we could give them hot coffee & raw oysters & quite a nice lunch without especial trouble. [Isabel Hill, 1881]

Ask aunt Lizzie if she knows how to make pea soup, for a change from meat & vegetable soups, it is very nice. I have learned how to make it deliciously. If she wants the receipt I will send it to her. ... We have to buy our white bread for I won't waste my strength kneading dough. My thoughts are now in the kitchen. [Alice Hill, 1882]

Went to Convent & walked home & made Maryland biscuit. Mean to cook something new every day. [Isabel Hill, 1884]

Wednesday, a mixer of drinks who discovered a new combination wrote a letter to the Herald giving the receipt, and announcing that he had christened the beverage "The Herald Punch". Everyone seems to have cut out the receipt, and within less than a week the Herald punch had become one of the most popular beverages of New York. The receipt is as follows: Take the juice of one rich orange, one teaspoonful of powdered sugar, one ordinary drink of rye whiskey, with enough of St. Croix rum to flavor the mixture. Shake the ingredients thoroughly in a goblet of shaved ice, and strain into a glass. [Isabel Hill, 1900]

I made marmalade from your receipt and it was a perfect failure. [Alice Hill, 1908]

There were food crazes in those days, too. Take the chafing dish, for instance.

Pa & K escorted me to Lawrence's, first meeting of "Chafing Dish Club". Mr. L. cooked sweetbreads & venison. [Isabel Hill, 1896]

Had carriage & took edibles to Mrs. Pearce's for our chafing dish lunch. ... I cooked lobster Newburg, delicious. Mrs. F cooked breasts of canvasbacks, fine, salad, cream puffs, which Alida made at home. [Isabel Hill, 1900]

With H. Sims & Choate to Rollins' supper at Lenox Chambers— chafing dish affair. ... I made

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MARY FRANCES AT 100

or

A CHILDREN'S COOKERY BOOK WHOSE TIME HAS COME BACK AROUND

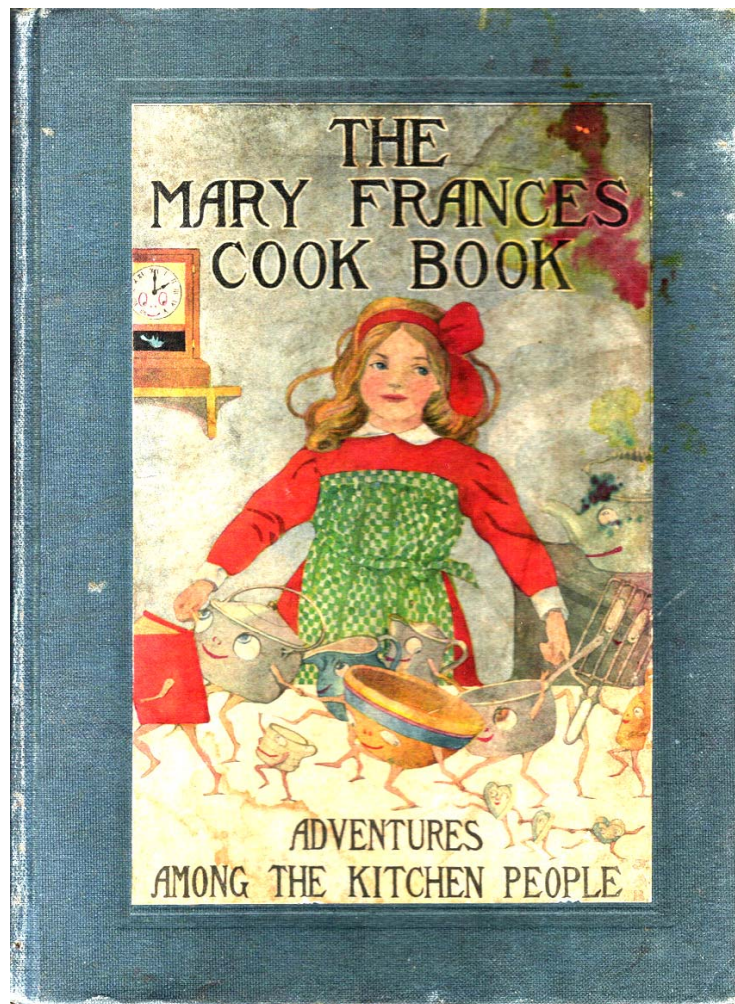
by Leni A. Sorensen

Leni Ashmore Sorensen of Crozet, VA, is a longtime subscriber and contributor to Repast. She is the retired African-American Research Historian at the Monticello estate near Charlottesville. In addition to writing and research focused on foodways and garden ways in African and African-American history, for a quarter-century Dr. Sorensen has demonstrated fireplace cookery at museums and historical sites. Her most recent article for Repast (Spring 2010) was a review of the book by Judith Carney and Richard Rosomoff, In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World. Leni maintains a blog, "The View from Indigo House" (www.indigohousehistory.com).

One hundred years ago, middle-class attitudes about children, kitchens, and other household arenas were quite different from ours. Today, books on how to include children in the food-making process are finding an enthusiastic audience among parents. However, a quick examination of their titles makes clear that the authors simply assume that the child must be supervised in the kitchen. In other words, the focus is on cooking "with" children, rather than on teaching children how to cook on their own.

That difference certainly stands out when we look at a book by Jane Eayre Fryer that was intended for young readers, yet offered a much wider range of acceptable activities for children than do books in our own day. More generally, in late 19th- and early 20th-Century children's fiction and activity magazines, one finds children (especially boys) encouraged to walk long distances unaccompanied by adults, or to experiment with volatile fluids, electricity, internal combustion motors, or sharp tools. Such steps were commonly included in story narratives or in directions for projects. Indeed, boys' magazines at that time quite routinely ran articles in which eight- or ten-year-olds were encouraged to do experiments under little or no adult supervision.

So it is no wonder that Jane Fryer gave the central character of her book series, Mary Frances, free run of the family kitchen, the sewing room, and the garden. The first of



Images courtesy of Leni Sorensen.

the books, *The Mary Frances Cook Book: Adventures Among the Kitchen People* (Philadelphia: The John C. Winston Co., 1912), is couched in a narrative about young Mary Frances learning to cook from the "kitchen people", animated culinary tools who help her follow the basic recipes. The girl is directed to toast bread over an open flame, to pour boiling-hot sugar syrup into beaten egg white, to know which side of the cookstove surface is the hottest, and to pan-grill a beefsteak by handling a skillet at "blue heat till smoking". None of these tasks are presented as out of the ordinary, nor as challenges for which she needs adult supervision.

Despite her lack of cooking knowledge, Mary Frances is assumed to know how to load charcoal or wood into the stove, and how to shake down the ashes. The young girl seems to already know how to adjust the dampers to help regulate the heat. In fact, in an amusing scene, it is Mary Frances who "saves" her Great Aunt Maria when that elderly lady burns the breakfast porridge so badly that the kitchen is full of smoke. Later, the scorched pot—Boiler Pan, one of the kitchen people—undergoes sanding by Mary Frances to fix the burned spots.

In this, the first book in the series, Mary Frances's mother is said to be ill and has gone to "rest" in the country.

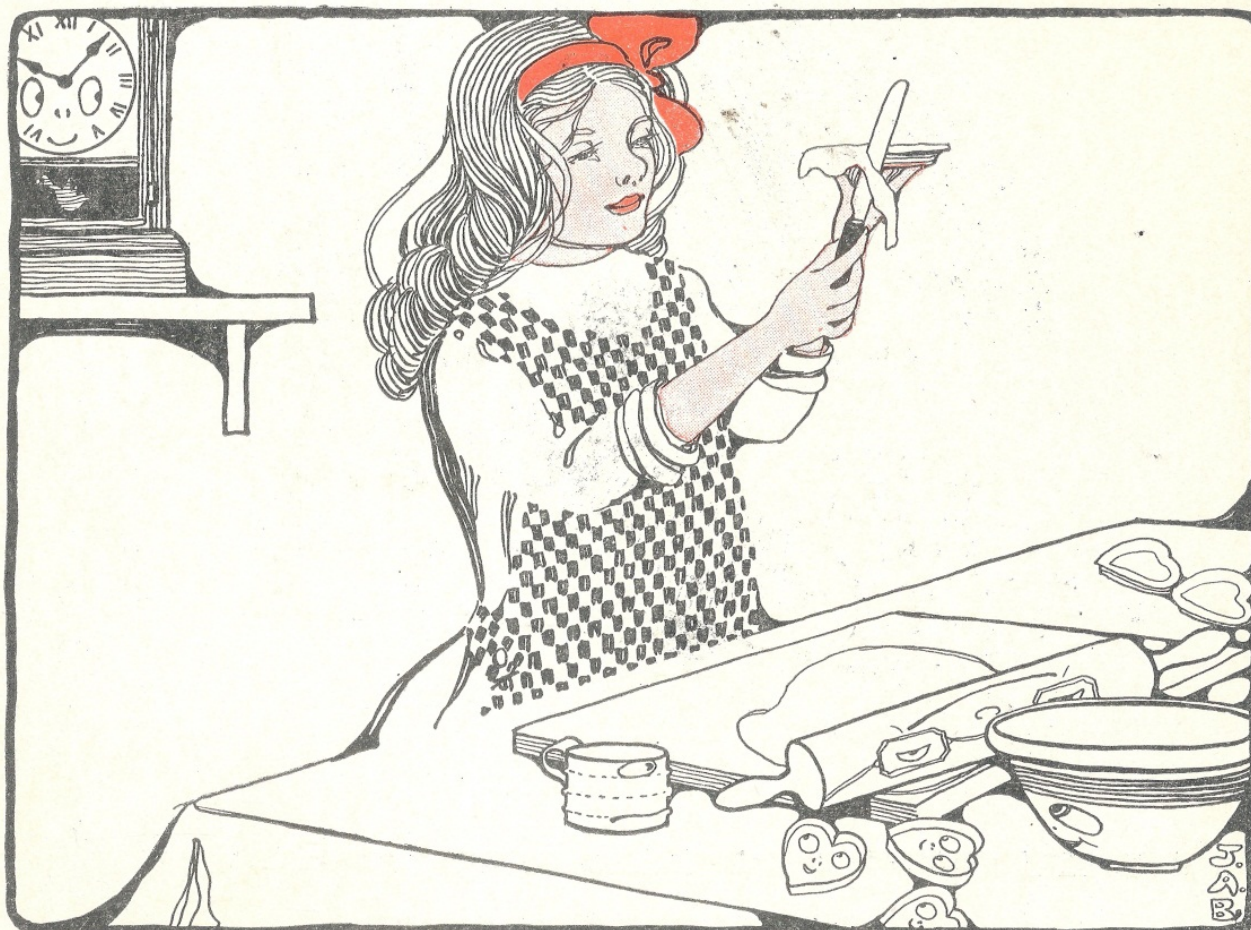
She leaves at home Mary Frances, her older brother Billy, and their father, roughly supervised by the elderly and persnickety Great Aunt Maria. The great aunt does not actually live at the house, which is lucky since the kitchen people can only interact with Mary Frances when the girl is alone. As a surprise, she has decided to cook her way through a handwritten book of recipes that her mother put together in anticipation of teaching her daughter the basic cookery skills. As Fryer states in the book's introduction, "Some very wise people will call this a story book, some a manual training book, and others a cookery book, but Mary Frances knows better; she knows that it is a Book within a Book that introduced her to Auntie Rolling Pin and a lot of other dear, dear friends"

It's an interesting conceit used in most of the Mary Frances book series: her mother must abdicate the teaching role as her health takes many a downturn, leaving Mary Frances and the family on their own. In the 1913 sewing book, mother is still ill and is taken by her husband on a trip to California to restore her health. In the 1918 knitting book,

we are told that the mother's arm was so badly injured as a child that she cannot knit; she passes the task to Great Aunt Maria and by default to the "knitting people". In an exception to the rule, when Mary Frances takes a fancy to working outdoors she calls on her Boy Scout brother Billy, along with a host of "garden people", to successfully pull off flower and vegetable gardens. This time, her mother seems to be at home, although she only appears at the very end of the story in a minor role. However, just as in all of the other books, Mary Frances's gardening project is a surprise whose development is kept secret from the grownups.

The illustrations for *The Mary Frances Cook Book* were done by Margaret G. Hays (sister of Grace Drayton, who created the Campbell's Soup Kids¹) and Jane Allen Boyer. Except for the gardening book illustrated by William F. Zwirner, the remaining Mary Frances books were illustrated by Boyer alone. It is easy to see why Fryer dropped Hays and continued her relationship with Boyer, an artist who

continued on next page



"They're grand!" chuckled Auntie Rolling Pin. "Can you bake them?"

MARY FRANCES *continued from page 11*

possessed a much more deft hand at drawing. The kitchen characters are clever and executed in a style often resembling Art Deco, with long sinuous lines as borders and stylized rounded shapes.

A Product of Her Social Milieu

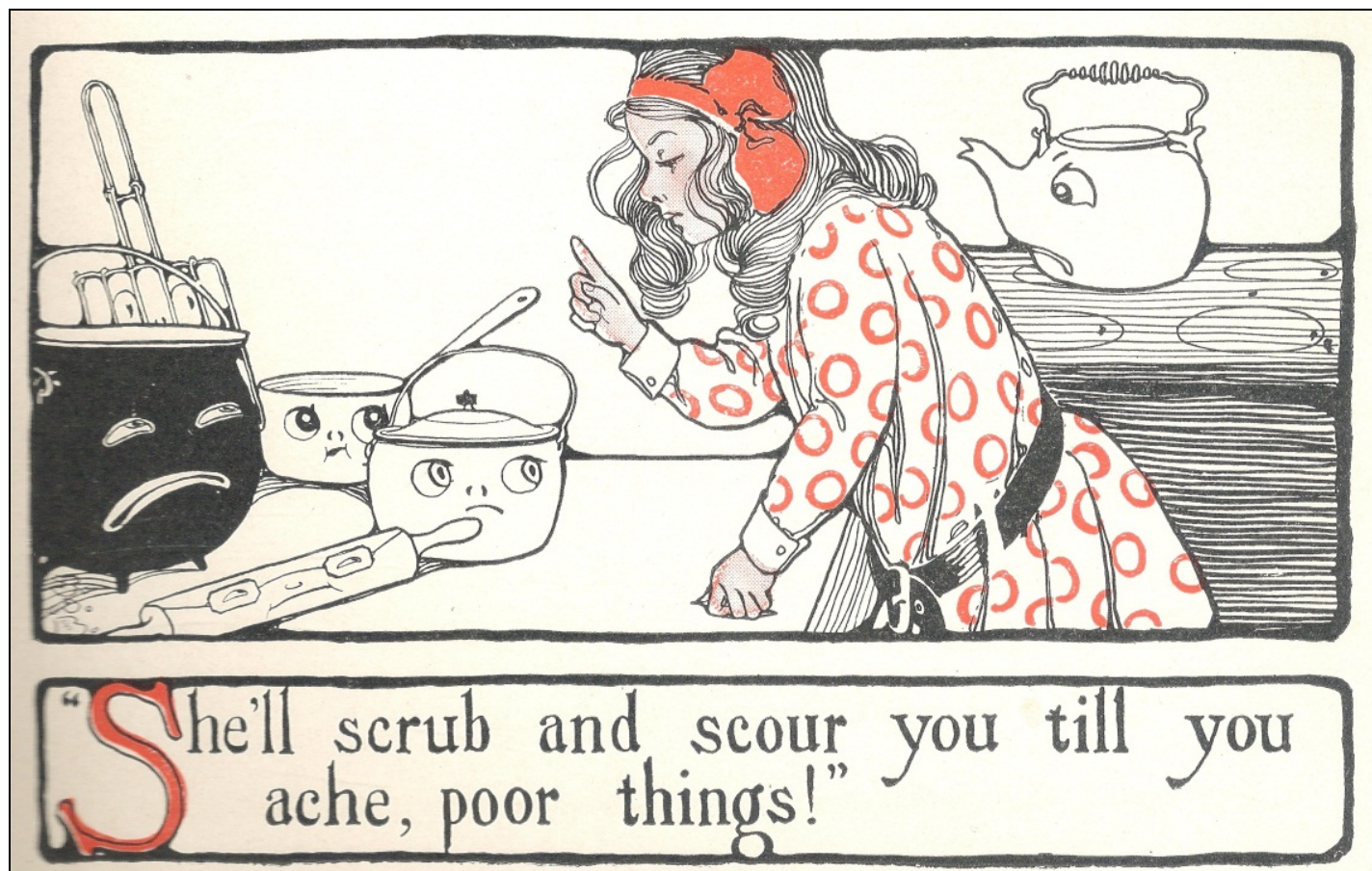
In this book series, Mary Frances and her fantasy helpers become the voices for the author to show off her considerable expertise in the domestic arts. Fryer was part of the early 20th-Century movement to improve the lot of the housewife and to introduce the newest technologies and scientific understandings about foods.

Born in Philadelphia, PA, in 1876, she attended Northfield Seminary in Massachusetts, where she specialized in domestic art and science and graduated in 1896. Within a year, she was teaching Latin and English at the Mt. Holly Military Academy in New Jersey (1897-98). Later, she supervised the domestic art and science program at the Jacob Tome Institute in Port Deposit, Maryland (1899-1902). Following the custom of the day, she left teaching when she married John Gayton Fryer of Providence, RI, in 1902.²

Ten years later in 1912, at age 36, Fryer began publishing this series of books designed to teach young girls

fundamental domestic skills. At this time, she lived in a small town just outside Camden, NJ, across the Delaware River from Philadelphia. Unlike many authors of her era, she made only limited reference to people outside the world of her small-town white family; in particular, her books spoke to the wives and children of the rising middle class. For example, Mary Frances's father is a shopkeeper and owns his own store. And despite the fact that Fryer had been born, raised, and educated in the Northeast and had taught school there, her only reference to the existence of African Americans occurs in a racist recipe title, "Pickaninny Fudge". The accompanying text reads, "Isn't that just like Mother!— to call Chocolate Fudge that cute name!" (I should note here that the fudge recipe is an exactly doubled version of the more plainly named Chocolate Fudge recipe that appears in another book by Fryer, the *Loose-Leaf Cook Book*.)

Mary Frances's Great Aunt Maria apparently has a live-in maid named Nora who might be Irish, if the illustration with her plain round face and tightly wound topknot is any indication of the author's intent. But the only definite case in which Mary Frances encounters someone from a background different from her own is the appearance of a male Irish tramp in Chapter 12. She is in the middle of making toast



and ready to make an omelet when the tramp appears at the window.

“Please, Miss,”— the oldest, hungriest-looking tramp she ever saw looked down at her, taking off his worn out cap. “Please, Miss— a cup o’ tea— anything? I am that tired and faint.”

Along with a large cup of tea, Mary Frances cooks the man the omelet that she is just learning to make. He eats it with great appreciation, but Mary Frances’s father has heard their voices and comes into the kitchen. Harshly he shouts at the tramp, “Be gone”, and orders Mary Frances inside. But the good tramp saves the day when he begs to be heard. In his Irish brogue he says, “I’d do anything for the young lady— not let a ‘air o’ ‘er ‘ead be ‘urt. Please don’t be too ‘ard on ‘er.” The scene ends with Father handing out advice to his daughter to not let strangers in the door. She apologizes, and he forgives her.

In creating the Mary Frances series, Fryer joined a host of other successful women authors of children’s books, with whom she must have been familiar and to whose model of success she must have aspired. Beatrix Potter’s *Peter Rabbit* had first appeared in 1902, becoming a beloved character in the United States as well as in its home country of England. The sassy anthropomorphic character charmed children as well as adults, and there were five more books in that series published between 1904 and 1912.³ In *The Bobbsey Twins*⁴, first published in 1904, the principal characters were children who seemed in many ways to lead a life free of adults, somewhat as was seen later in Charles Schultz’s “Peanuts” comic strips.

Other Books by Fryer

I first encountered Mary Frances as an eight-year-old when, in 1950, I bought a used copy of *The Mary Frances Sewing Book* (1913) for 5 cents at the Goodwill. Following the lessons, I learned to sew dolls’ clothes and became a quite competent hand-sewer. I still faithfully use a thimble as was insisted upon by the Sewing Bird.

Over the intervening years, as I came across them I bought the remaining books in the Mary Frances series. Following the cooking and sewing books, the subsequent entries were *The Mary Frances Housekeeper* (1914), *The Mary Frances Garden Book* (1915), *The Mary Frances First Aid Book* (1916), and *The Mary Frances Knitting and Crocheting Book* (1918). Despite the treacly and sometimes preachy tone, the books offer clear directions, and any kid who was a competent reader and willing to use the tools correctly could replicate the sewing patterns or the food without confusion.

At the same time that she was writing the Mary Frances series, Fryer was composing her own cookbook opus, the 475-page *Mrs. Fryer’s Loose-Leaf Cook Book: A Complete Cook Book Giving Economical Recipes Planned to Meet the Needs of the Modern Housekeeper* (Chicago: The John C. Winston Co., 1922). This work surely reflects the influence

of Marion Harlan’s cookbooks that had flooded the market and were immensely successful over five decades. Alongside her novels and short story collections, and many other housekeeping and cookery books, Harlan had published *Common Sense in the Household: A Manual of Practical Housewifery* in 1871, four years before Fryer’s birth. This was followed three decades later by *Marion Harlan’s Complete Cookbook: A Practical and Exhaustive Manual of Cookery and Housekeeping* in 1903.

By 1922, Fryer had all the advantages of the newest cooking technology and domestic science research. Her *Loose-Leaf Cook Book* included everything from charts with proper body weights for children and adults to advice on the most appropriate foods for invalids. To my modern sensibility, the most intriguing chapter is the one on fireless cookery. Here, the housewife starts cooking the food on a stove to get it to the boiling stage, then sets the pot into a hay-insulated box (known in earlier farming circles as a “hay cooker”) to continue the cooking process while she goes about her other chores. Fryer seemed to be familiar with the commercial models available for the home kitchen of her day, and she included 33 pages of recipes for this energy-efficient kitchen tool. It works as does a slow-cooker, but is fuel-less!

All of the Mary Frances titles have been reprinted in paperback, and *The Mary Frances Cookbook* is freely available online in PDF and other formats⁵. A facsimile copy of the *Loose-Leaf Cook Book* is also available⁶. I hope that this brief review will interest readers to know Mary Frances’s world and to explore Fryer’s cookbook for adults, as well. ■

Endnotes

1. “Mary Frances”, *Our Little Library* blog (Mar. 11, 2010), <http://our-little-library.blogspot.com/2010/03/mary-frances.html>.
2. Clarice Fox-Hughes, “Mary Frances Cookbook”, *Storybook Woods* blog (May 2, 2006), http://storybookwoods.typepad.com/storybook_woods/2006/05/mary_frances_co.html.
3. “Peter Rabbit”, *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peter_Rabbit.
4. The 1904 work was the first of 72 books in the series. This was the Stratemeyer Syndicate’s longest-running series of children’s novels, penned under the pseudonym Laura Lee Hope. See “Bobbsey Twins”, *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bobbsey_Twins.
5. Feeding America: The Historic American Cookbook Project, http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/html/books/book_64.cfm.
6. Jane Eayre Fryer, *Mrs. Fryer’s Loose-Leaf Cook Book: A Complete Cook Book Giving Economical Recipes Planned to Meet the Needs of the Modern Housekeeper* (Brown Press, 2007), ISBN 978-1-40860-949-1.

CHICAGO, 1911

03

AMERICA'S FIRST CHINESE COOKBOOK IN ENGLISH

by Randy K. Schwartz

The earliest known English-language Chinese cookbook published in the United States recently passed its century mark. Surprisingly, this pioneering work was not the product of San Francisco, New York, or another world-famous Chinatown on either coast. Instead, it was printed in Detroit and was written by Jessie Louise Nolton, a Chicago newspaper writer with a focus on women's health and beauty. Entitled *Chinese Cookery in the Home Kitchen: Being Recipes for the Preparation of the Most Popular Chinese Dishes at Home*, it was a true reflection of the nascent but growing acceptance of Chinese people and culture—including cuisine—in the Upper Midwest of the time.

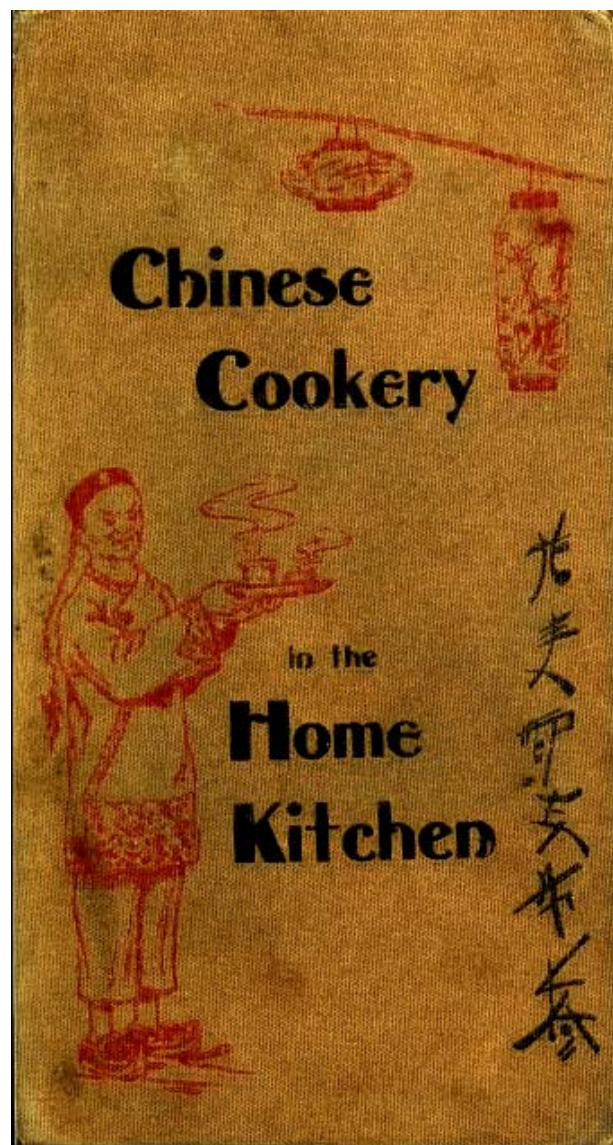
Very little has previously been written about this path-breaking book. Only a handful of public library collections own copies, including the Detroit Public Library and the Janice B. Longone Culinary Archive at the University of Michigan Libraries.¹

This cookbook was very attractively produced. The covers, about five by nine inches in size, are of cardboard wrapped in a loose-woven brown cloth with overhanging ragged edges. Imprinted on the cloth are the book title and some mock-Chinese characters, both in black, along with two drawings in red. Inside are roughly 135 pages (there is no pagination) of very thick paper printed with black letters, and with green woodblock-style drawings and decorations on page borders and elsewhere. Each page facing a recipe page is void of text except for the label "Notes", a handy feature seldom seen in cookbooks nowadays.

Below, I will summarize the contents of the book, then present evidence that it was a self-published work based on ideas and recipes Nolton had gathered from one or more chefs in Chicago's Chinatown. Finally, I will situate the book as a landmark in the history of Chinese people's assimilation, as well as mainstream people's acceptance of Asian culture and cuisine in the U.S.

The Mystery of the Orient

Today, "ethnic fare" is arguably the most popular category of food in the U.S. But Nolton's cookbook gives a glimpse of a time before such cuisines had reached mainstream popularity.



Front cover of copy owned by the Boston Public Library.

A century ago, Chinese food, or any imitation of it, was considered at best exotic and at worst dangerous. By that time, much of the authentic international cuisine that had once arrived at American shores had long since been assimilated, or more accurately, "tamed" and ground up into the Melting Pot. (Notable exceptions included African American and Louisiana French cookery, which remained outside of the mainstream.)

It also needs to be kept in mind that during this period, unfortunately, most of white society had utter contempt for East Asian peoples and cultures. The reasons are beyond the scope of this article, but it is an undeniable fact. Chinese immigrants were actually taunted with the accusation that they ate rats.² The *Ford Guide*, a textbook used at the Ford Motor Company's English School in the 1910s, stated matter-of-factly: "Yellow races ... have been called half civilized, because they have not got ahead quite as well as white people."³

But Nolton, in her comments introducing *Chinese Cookery in the Home Kitchen*, observes and encourages a countervailing trend—a growing attraction to Oriental culture and cuisine, in part exactly due to its exotic character:

The favorite dishes of the Orient are rapidly becoming favorite dishes of the Occident. This is especially true of the Chinese dishes. The glamour thrown about them by the mystery of their origin and the still greater mystery of the combinations used in their preparation, adds a zest of which even the most skeptical is conscious.

Further, the author promises in advance that her recipes are the real thing:

None of the Chinese dishes permit of the substitution of strictly American ingredients, therefore no so-called Americanized recipes are given. American imitations lack the peculiar flavor which makes the chief charm of the Oriental cookery.

Nolton warns readers that the Chinese meal order “is rather ‘topsy turvey’ according to the established American or European custom” since the first course consists of “dessert”, such as preserved Cum Quats, tiny rice cakes, salted almonds, and tea.

Finding the Right Ingredients

The author of *Chinese Cookery in the Home Kitchen* points out that necessary “special ingredients” (as she calls them) can be purchased from Chinese merchants “found in almost every city of any size in America” In her terminology, these special ingredients are as follows:

- Chinese potatoes, a sweet, crisp aquatic tuber [most likely what we now call “water chestnut”]
- Chinese mushrooms, available dried
- Chinese beans [i.e., mung beans], used to make sprouts to “take the place of celery in Chop Sooy”
- bamboo shoots, imported from China in cans
- Chinese pineapple, imported in cans
- Lichee nuts, available either dried or preserved in syrup
- Cum Quats, preserved in syrup, also known as “Gam Quat, Gamgot, etc.”
- Canton Chow Chow, assorted chopped fruits preserved in syrup, “used for dessert”
- Chinese ginger, available either dried in sugar or preserved in syrup
- Chinese almonds, blanched, dried, and salted
- Chinese oils, namely sesame and peanut
- Chinese seasoning sauce and Chinese flavoring sauce [see below].

Nolton describes Chinese seasoning sauce as, “A rather salty sauce with a sort of meaty flavor. It is a necessity in preparing Chinese dishes to obtain the peculiar flavor which makes the chief charm of the dish.” She calls for it to be added to Chop Sooy early in the cooking process. Only near the end of the book does she note in passing that the sauce is often known as “soy”, “see yu”, or “see gow”. “See yu” is the Cantonese term for dark soy sauce.

By contrast, *Chinese Cookery* instructs us, Chinese flavoring sauce is “like molasses in appearance” and is not cooked with the other Chop Sooy ingredients. Instead, it is thickened with rice flour, wheat flour, or corn starch, and this “gravy”, as Nolton calls it, is added to the Chop Sooy shortly before the dish is finished cooking.

I suspect that this “flavoring sauce” is a different form of soy sauce, or some other soybean-based sauce such as the Cantonese *hoisin*. (Chop Sooy itself is Cantonese in origin, as discussed below.) Other than Chop Sooy, the book’s only recipe calling for this ingredient is Chinese Cured Pork. Here, the flavoring sauce is combined with the seasoning sauce and with brandy to make a marinade that is rubbed on strips of pork. The strips are cooked and repeatedly basted with the marinade in an oven, thereby curing the meat.

Of course, cooks are free to use whatever ingredients they like, regardless of what a cookbook author might say. On a later page, I spied a sign that Nolton’s stern admonitions against using imitation American ingredients might not always have had the desired effect. On the Notes page facing the recipe for “Chinese Chop Sooy”, a user named Sara had hand-written: “These chop sooy recipes are fine made from American ingredients. We use them often.” (This is in the copy held by the Longone collection, which was a gift of Judith Hamlin.)

Washing in Many Waters

Besides using the most authentic ingredients available, Nolton insists that Asian cooking methods be followed to a “T”, writing: “The charm of each dish depends in large measure upon the exactness with which the minutest detail is carried out.”

First and foremost, she wants us to know the proper way to prepare rice: “A Chinaman washes the rice in many waters, rubbing the rice well between the hands in each water of the many used, until it is entirely free from the white powdery substance that gives the water a milky appearance.” This rinsing of surface starch allows the grains to remain separate during cooking, thereby avoiding, as Nolton describes it, “the sticky mass which is commonly the result of American methods of cooking the cereal.”

She goes on to write that the rice should be cooked in a large quantity of rapidly boiling water in an uncovered pot, or, “To quote from one Chinese cook, ‘Water boil him very fast, shake him too much so cannot burn.’” She also gives a method for Chinese steamed rice, achieved by simmering in a tightly covered pot.

Further, Nolton describes the shape and proper use of a *wok*, or as she calls it, “The Chinese Chop Sooy kettle”. She writes that the water or stock used as a cooking medium should be periodically poured along the vessel’s sloping sides instead of directly atop the food ingredients, noting, “This is a very important detail in cooking Chop Sooy, as the best results are impossible unless this rule is strictly followed.”

continued on next page

CHINESE COOKBOOK *continued from page 15*

Chop Sooy is the Foundation

“Chop Sooy,” Nolton claims, “in its various forms, is the foundation of three-fourths of all the dishes served in the Chinese restaurants.”

Contrary to a popular misconception, chop suey was not invented by Chinese immigrants in the West, but is a transplanted and adapted version of Cantonese *tsap seui* (“miscellaneous scraps”). The dish of that name was a tradition local to Xinning, a then-rural county south of the city of Guangzhou (Canton) in what is now Guangdong Province in southern mainland China.⁴ Most early Chinese immigrants to the U.S. came from this one county, which would be renamed Taishan (Toisan) in 1914 with the establishment of the Republic of China.

The dish is made in a *wok*, and is used to accompany bowls of rice. In variants of the dish, the rice is replaced with boiled noodles (*war mein*) or with stir-fried noodles (*chow mein*, from Cantonese *ch'ao min*). As E. N. Anderson has summarized this genre of dishes⁵:

Basically, it is leftover or odd-lot vegetables stir-fried together. Noodles are often included. Bean sprouts are almost invariably present, but the rest of the dish varies according to whatever is around. ... None of the above dishes ranks high with Cantonese gourmets, since all are mixtures of a lot of things and none demands fresh fixings. In fact, all of them are in the nature of hash—cheap, quick, easy ways to get rid of less than desirable leftovers and other scraps. Their popularity with restaurateurs is easy to explain— all the stuff that would otherwise have to go to the animals can be fed to people. As a matter of fact, they can be excellent dishes in their own right and are widely popular, but their avatars in traditional cafés and homes in Hong Kong are very different from those one encounters in restaurants catering to Westerners.

In Nolton’s recipe for “Chinese Chop Sooy (Ordinary)”, diced lean pork is first braised in the *wok* in “lard, olive oil, butter or peanut oil, the latter being preferred.” Successively, sliced onions, celery, Chinese mushrooms, and Chinese potatoes (the aquatic tuber mentioned above) are added. Water or chicken stock is incorporated a little at a time for additional moisture, as needed. Soy sauce is added to the *wok* and the whole is allowed to cook, covered, for 12-15 minutes.

The Chinese Chef, as a rule, is apt to leave the vegetables a little under done, according to the taste of the average American palate. A few minutes more cooking is permissible than the time called for in the directions, but in no instance must [i.e., may] this time be prolonged till the vegetables are over-done, as that would spoil the dish entirely.

When the cooking is done, a gravy made from flavoring sauce, as discussed above, is stirred in and allowed to thicken, and “four drops” of sesame oil are stirred in as well.

Chop Sooy should come from the kettle in a mass, without any separation between the ingredients and the gravy, but should never be allowed to become stiff. Nothing but experience will determine the exact rule to follow.

Following this recipe for “ordinary” chop suey made with pork, the author provides four versions with chicken, and one each with veal, pork and green pepper, lamb, beef tenderloin, and duck.

Nolton calls for chop suey to be served atop rice in individual bowls, accompanied by cups of tea. At the home luncheon that she describes, each place setting also has “a pair of dainty chopsticks” and a small pot of extra soy sauce. Note that in a more authentically Chinese style of eating, the *fàn* (rice, millet, noodles, or other starch) is served in individual bowls, but the *ts'ai*, or *sung* in Cantonese (cooked savory morsels in sauce, such as chop suey), is taken with chopsticks from a single shared bowl around which the diners are seated. The *ts'ai* is not the “main dish” but essentially a relish to enhance the palatability and digestion of the *fàn*.⁶

Clearly, in the advice about how to eat this food, no less than in the selection of dishes, ingredients, and preparation techniques, Nolton and her sources must have made a whole series of choices as to which aspects of the cuisine should be adapted to an American setting (e.g., the use of chopsticks), and which others should remain “foreign” (e.g., eating from a common bowl). It is exactly these types of decisions that are constantly being made and remade in the evolving assimilation of any ethnic cuisine. As Netta Davis concluded in one study⁷, commercial Chinese-American food

is both “unauthentic” fabrication and the product of an “authentic” cultural adaptation. The accommodation of Chinese cuisine to the American market and palate are the result of a process of negotiation and transformation carried out by Chinese-American immigrant restaurateurs whose business entails offering a product acceptable to the primarily non-Chinese public.

Other Dishes and Menus

Chinese Cookery in the Home Kitchen also instructs the reader how to make her own noodles by rolling egg dough very thin, then slicing it into narrow strips for boiling. The noodles are used in a recipe for *chow mein* and five variant recipes for *war mein*.

The remaining recipes in the book are as follows:

- Eggs Fo Yong (4 recipes)
- Chinese Cured Pork
- Chinese Roast Pig
- Ham and Eggs Canton Style
- Fried Rice (Chinese Style and Canton Style)
- Fried Rice with Chicken
- Boned Squab
- Shark’s Fins [description only]
- Yan Wor Gang (Bird’s Nest Soup)
- Chinese Fritters
- Chinese Salad (2 recipes).

Both of the salads incorporate mandarin oranges, Lichee nuts cooked in preserved ginger syrup, preserved citron boiled until tender, sliced fresh cucumber, lemon juice, and sugar. One version adds some minced preserved gingerroot.

Nolton concludes her book by providing several recommended menus for luncheons and other meals. On a page of “Decorations for a Chinese Luncheon”, she suggests that the hostess procure lotus and bamboo lilies and arrange them singly in sprays, since “The Chinese never mass the flowers.” Other decorating suggestions include tall vases of bamboo stalks or peacock feathers, and a large Chinese umbrella opened directly over the table. “The place cards can be gay with tiny Mandarins, Chinese boys with umbrellas, and maidens with the inevitable fan held coyly in their hands. The lettering should run up and down the card in true Chinese fashion.”

Chinatowns in the American Heartland

We’ve seen that Nolton conveyed to her readers the appeal and healthfulness of Chinese cuisine and dining customs, despite sometimes falling into inaccuracy or stereotype. Her book attempted to describe in great detail some Chinese ways of preparing and serving food, adapting these to the context of the American home kitchen.

Nothing like this had ever been done before. Jacqueline M. Newman, founder and editor of *Flavor & Fortune*, the Long Island-based quarterly of Chinese cuisine, has collected and studied some 5,000 international cookbooks (and other books) about Chinese food that use English as at least one of the languages for the text. She has concluded, “The Nolton book is really the first true Chinese cookbook in English.”⁸ In fact, it was likely the first such work printed in any Western language anywhere in the world, a fact difficult to prove since so many early books didn’t include publication dates.

This raises a question. What resources existed at this time so that Nolton, a white middle-class American woman, was able to accomplish such an unprecedented project?

For clues, we need to look first at the communities of Chinese immigrants that existed then in St. Louis, Chicago, Detroit, and other Midwestern cities. These communities had originated in the 1870s when many Chinese migrated out of the West, where they faced waning labor opportunities (in particular, the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869) and increasingly anti-Asian public sentiment and legal discrimination. In the heartland of America, the immigrants found that hostility was generally less widespread and vitriolic. Many of them established small businesses such as trading firms that imported commodities and sold wholesale; retail stores that offered dry goods, fresh produce, or groceries; laundries; and eateries.

Chicago attracted the largest Chinese population in the Midwest. The 1910 Census reported 1,778 ethnic Chinese residents of the city, all but 65 of them men.⁹ This gender imbalance was typical of the time, resulting from barriers to immigration and citizenship imposed by the Federal Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Still wary of public sentiment, over half of these Chicago residents chose to live outside of Chinatown.

Chicago’s first Chinatown— as it was already being called— was located in The Loop, on S. Clark Street between W. Van Buren and W. Harrison Streets, only a few blocks from the lakefront harbor. To gain more space and cheaper rent, in 1912— the year after Nolton’s book came out— a new, larger Chinatown was established less than two miles to the south, on W. 22nd Street (now called Cermak Road) between S. Clark Street and S. Archer Ave.¹⁰ It soon became a tourist attraction, with visitors greeted by a colorful entrance gate bearing a slogan in Chinese characters, “The World is For All”.

In Chicago, the major Chinese clans involved in the grocery trade established eateries as well. Over time, restaurants became the most important businesses in Chinatown. Produce and other perishable foods were purchased locally, whereas dried, bottled, or otherwise preserved goods were imported from China. The latter were typically shipped by sea from Hong Kong to San Francisco, then carried by rail to Chicago; the stores also sometimes sent agents overseas to purchase goods directly in China.¹¹

During the 1910s, the number of Chinese eateries in Chicago and other major U.S. cities soared, as chop suey and similar dishes became highly popular. Most of the restaurants, whether inside or outside Chinatown, were modest chop suey houses; others were large and sometimes extravagant. In 1916, Canton native Tom Lok established a chop suey restaurant in Chicago’s Loop Chinatown that had 200 seats, seven cooks, and six waiters. That same year, Eng Gow established the Golden Pheasant Inn elsewhere in The Loop, at 72 W. Madison Street; by the 1920s, it boasted having 175 tables, 75 employees, and 30 shareholders.¹² In pace with the growing popularity of such restaurants, the women’s pages of newspapers in Chicago and other cities carried recipes for chop suey and similar dishes.¹³

continued on next page



Two facing pages of the cookbook.

CHINESE COOKBOOK *continued from page 17*

A Sympathetic Newspaper Writer

Although Nolton's book is directed at home cooks, near the outset she writes that her material derives "from the recipes given by Chinese cooks of great reputation". At several points she notes that she is describing how things are done by Chinese restaurants and chefs— although always in the abstract, never naming names. We noted earlier that she actually quoted the broken English of "one Chinese cook" explaining how to boil rice. All of this suggests that she adapted most of her recipes and other information from professional Chinese cooks, which might explain why she decided to put "Edited by Jessie Louise Nolton" on the title page.

Supporting this conclusion is the fact that Nolton's office at the *Chicago Inter-Ocean* newspaper was located only a short walk from the edge of the Loop Chinatown (see panel below, "Who Was Jessie Louise Nolton?"). It's not hard to imagine her making a series of visits to a local restaurant, perhaps on her own time. Gaining their cooperation, she could interview the manager and cooks and observe exactly how dishes were prepared in the kitchen.

The leading candidate as Nolton's intermediary would be Chin F. Foin, the foremost Chinese restaurateur in Chicago during this era. In 1892, at the age of 15, Chin had immigrated to the U.S. from his native Xinning. (Xinning, we noted earlier, was the place of origin of chop suey, the focus of much of Nolton's book.) He attended Yale University and in 1895 moved to Chicago, where he rose through the ranks of the Chin clan's business, Wing Chong Hai & Co., which imported goods from China and Japan for sale at their Chinatown grocery store of the same name. In 1900 he became the firm's manager, then proceeded to establish a series of increasingly upscale eateries.¹⁴

Chin Foin's restaurant empire began with the King Yen Lo, which he established in 1902 just one block from the firm's grocery store. One author notes¹⁵,

The restaurant was appointed with sumptuous furniture made in China. The wooden tables were decorated with mother-of-pearl and topped with marble, a popular style at the time. King Yen Lo was patronized by visiting Chinese officials and other prominent Chinese, as well as by upper-class Chicago socialites.

Who Was Jessie Louise Nolton?

Until now, the woman who wrote America's first English-language Chinese cookbook was something of a mystery. The only clue was an identifier on the title page of the 1911 volume itself: "Edited by Jessie Louise Nolton of *The Chicago Inter-Ocean*".

By studying newspaper archives, census records, and other sources, I've been able to piece together a picture of Nolton's life. She was born in New York State in 1860, and the family moved to Chicago when Jessie and her older sister, Mabel, were still girls. In Chicago their father, Julius H. Stevens, found work for a time as a liquor dealer.

Soon after finishing high school, on August 2, 1878, Jessie married fellow Chicago resident Lansing B. Nolton. (Recall that in the 19th Century, women were still essentially barred from higher education.) In 1882 or 1883 they moved to Los Angeles, where he worked initially as an insurance agent and then in a succession of railroad jobs. The couple raised three sons together before eventually divorcing about 1896. Mrs. Nolton supported herself by working as a manicurist and as a teacher of physical exercise using the Ralston techniques. Ralstonism was a social movement that also urged very definite dietary habits, notably the consumption of fresh rather than processed foods, and a reduced reliance on red meat.

In late 1899 Mrs. Nolton's father died in Chicago, and not long thereafter she moved back to the city with her youngest son. Early on, she was hired to write for the *Chicago Chronicle*. Due to developments in printing, this was a period of intense rivalry and consolidation in the newspaper industry; after the *Chronicle* went out of business in 1907, she began writing for the *Inter-Ocean* (a much more prominent paper that catered to well-to-do subscribers and businessmen) until it, too, succumbed to competition and ceased publication in 1914.

The 1910 U.S. Census was conducted during the period when Mrs. Nolton was completing her book. At the time, she was a 50-year-old divorcée living in Englewood, a community on the southwest side of Chicago. Residing in the same home, at 124 S. Harvard Avenue near W. 65th Street, were her youngest son, Valentine, age 20; her mother, the former Rosabel Rice, originally from Maine; a boarder; and a servant.

At that time, she was working in the Editorial Department of the *Inter-Ocean*, which occupied a grand building at the corner of W. Madison and S. Dearborn Streets. That was inside The Loop and only a 10-block walk from the edge of Chicago's original Chinatown. Mrs. Nolton's focus was on women's health and beauty. She wrote for a column called "Madam Helie" (Madame Hélie), which in 1912 became nationally syndicated via Universal Press Syndicate.

Mrs. Nolton was also serving on the Board of Directors of the Chicago School of Physical Education and Expression, which had been established in 1903 to offer evening classes in exercise and dance for women. Only the second gymnasium in Chicago and the first for women, it was very successful and enrolled hundreds. In 1915, the name was changed to Chicago Normal School of Physical Education, reflecting a shift in focus to the education of female phys-ed teachers.

Mrs. Nolton never published another book, and in later years she moved away from Chicago and lived alone. In her late 70s and early 80s, she rented a home in Radnor, outside Philadelphia, PA, where she was a self-employed dressmaker. Subsequently she moved to Monterey, CA, where she was the business manager of a music school. She died in Monterey on June 17, 1947, at the age of 87.

About the same restaurant, another writer observed¹⁶,

It appealed to the non-Chinese after-theater crowd and featured orchestral music and steaks and chops alongside chop suey and “Mandarin” dishes. The kitchen was open for inspection and a special section was reserved for women unaccompanied by men, important since women shoppers were known to be fond of Chinese food.

It was one thing for adventurous women shoppers to visit such a restaurant now and then, but overall the acceptance of Chinese people and culture was still severely limited. In August 1912, the flamboyant and now wealthy Chin Foin was ready to move into an expensive mansion that he’d purchased in an all-white neighborhood of Chicago when the news caused an uproar among residents. Many were dead-set against a Chinese family living in their midst. Chin was able to turn the tide only by enlisting the help of sympathetic local newspaper writers, who reported that he was a Yale graduate and that he was certainly wealthy enough to afford the upkeep of a mansion and its grounds. One woman resident gave up her opposition by reasoning that already, “We have Negroes out here now, and a few Goths and Visigoths.”¹⁷

This ugly incident shows that anti-Chinese hostility did exist in cities like Chicago, even though at a level less severe than in California (where Chin’s family would almost certainly not have been allowed to move into a posh white neighborhood). Such hostility might be an important reason why Nolton’s book didn’t give the names of the “Chinese cooks of great reputation” from whom she derived the recipes. It’s even conceivable that she secured their cooperation based on such anonymity.

This also suggests that a certain amount of spunk, if not defiance, was required of Nolton when she launched her unprecedented project to popularize Chinese cuisine in a book for American homemakers.

In addition, it appears that she privately financed the publication. True, the title page includes the words, “Published by the Chino-American Publishing Company, Detroit, Mich. Price, \$1.50”. However, searching the Library of Congress *Catalog of Copyright Entries*, the world catalog of the Online Computer Library Center, and other sources, I found no other items ever published by such an entity and no other trace of its existence besides this book, which suggests that the company name might have been one that Nolton simply made up for one-

time use. The reverse side of the title page indicates that the printing was done on the press of the Detroit Printing & Stationery Company. This small, three-year-old Detroit firm was neither Asian-owned nor located in that city’s Chinatown.¹⁸ Nolton likely chose the out-of-state press simply because it could do the handsome printing job that she wanted at a significantly lower cost than others were able to offer.

A New Route to Asia

Jessie Louise Nolton’s *Chinese Cookery in the Home Kitchen* played a path-breaking role by helping to bring ethnic Asian foodways from a reviled or exoticized periphery more squarely into an American culinary landscape that had become overly homogenized. It played this role by adapting the food customs of Cantonese restaurants to American kitchens. While Nolton’s writing occasionally tapped into romantic “Oriental” stereotypes, her efforts were mainly directed at urging readers to learn how Chinese people actually prepare and consume food in order to duplicate an authentic experience in their own homes.

The book was prompted by the emerging urban American fad for eating chop suey, as well as more refined dishes, at Chinese restaurants. Nolton not only championed this trend, she encouraged its extension to the home kitchen. In a situation where many people were still influenced by the ignorance and slander that such food was unhealthy and dangerous, Nolton’s book helped make it possible to envision a group of society ladies in the Midwest enjoying a home luncheon together featuring “Oriental” food, decorations, and chopsticks. In fact, the fad for eating Chinese was an early avenue toward the cognitive “breaking with old ideas” that was needed in order for many Americans to begin to accept, and learn more broadly about, Asian culture.

Nolton’s work also helped pave the way for the publication of other cookbooks inspired by East Asian foods. Just three years later, the *Chinese-Japanese Cook Book* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1914) was published by two sisters of mixed Anglo-Chinese parentage, Sara Eaton Bosse and Winnifred Eaton Babcock (the latter used the pseudonym Onoto Watanna). As had Nolton in her opening paragraphs, in their Preface the Eatons noted and encouraged urban America’s growing openness to Asian cuisine:

The restaurants are no longer merely the resort of curious idlers, intent upon studying types peculiar

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Formal portrait of restaurateur Chin Foin, taken in Chicago about 1915. Photo from his daughter, Gladys Wang, by way of the Chinese-American Museum of Chicago.

CHINESE COOKBOOK *continued from page 19*

to Chinatown, for the Chinese restaurants have pushed their way out of Chinatown and are now found in all parts of the large cities of America. ... There is no reason why these same dishes should not be cooked and served in any American home. When it is known how simple and clean are the ingredients used to make up these Oriental dishes, the Westerner will cease to feel that natural repugnance which assails one when about to taste a strange dish of a new and strange land.

Going a bit further than Nolton, the authors also noted that, "In China, with the exception of rice, bonbons, and so on, food is served in one large dish or bowl, out of which all eat, using the chopsticks." Overall, the recipes here were of a character similar to those in Nolton, such as "Lychee Chicken", Pork with Green Peppers, five varieties of "Chop Suey", three of "Chow Main", and an all-purpose "Gravy".¹⁹

Shiu Wong Chan's *The Chinese Cookbook* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1917) was far more extensive, running about 200 pages and containing over 140 recipes ranging from Stuffed Triangle Bean Cake to Chicken Chop Suey to Lock Yok (deer).²⁰ *Chinese Recipes: Letters from Alice Moore to Ethel Moore Rook* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1923) took the form of a series of letters and reminiscences of China, each accompanied by a recipe. In their Preface, Moore and Rook wrote, "No one need be afraid of Chinese cooking. It is perfectly balanced and very wholesome and, we think, delicious."

Midwestern suppliers of Asian foodstuffs got into the action in the 1920s by publishing their own recipe booklets for homemakers. Examples include the Min Sun Trading Co. (Chicago) and the Oriental Show-You Co. (Columbia City, IN). Two others are more well-known:

- About 1924, the La Choy company in Detroit began to publish successive editions of *La Choy Chinese Recipes* and *The Art and Secrets of Chinese Cookery*. Readers were assured that by attempting the simple recipes, which used now readily-available Asian ingredients and techniques, they would get "desired relief from the endless rounds of fried meat and plain vegetables" that characterized mainstream American cooking.²¹
- The Pacific Trading Company in Chicago published [*Mandarin*] *Chop Suey Cook Book* (1928). I've bracketed the first word of the title, which was printed in one-third the font size of the other words. This was likely intended to lend some cachet to simple, unrefined dishes such as chop suey, since the term "Mandarin" was becoming a synonym for "refined Chinese" in U.S. food commerce. Its use also capitalized on the fame of three Chicago restaurants owned or invested in by Chin Foin, whom I mentioned earlier: The Mandarin Inn, The New Mandarin Inn, and the King Joy Lo Mandarin Restaurant.

Although the 1930s saw a proliferation of new titles, it wasn't until the end of World War 2 that Chinese food writing in

the U.S. would enter a whole new phase with the publication of *How to Cook and Eat in Chinese* (New York: John Day, 1945). What made this book a leap forward was the author's intimate experience with many parts of China. Buwei Yang Chao, a physician, was born in Anhui and immigrated with her husband and daughter from Changsha, in Hunan Province; furthermore, she had traveled the country extensively and studied its local cuisines, giving her insight into regional differences. The work is not only a cookbook but also a survey of Chinese dining customs for Westerners. Clementine Paddleford, the renowned Kansas-born cooking columnist, reviewed the book and observed that Chao's readers "walk right through China's kitchen door ... while she is cooking and you sit there with your mouth watering."²²

Paddleford's hearty endorsement helps us realize how much of a turn things had taken in only three or four decades. As seen in the arc of cookbooks that began with Nolton's renegade little work in 1911, the idea of the American homemaker cooking Chinese food to please her family was transformed from unheard-of to apologetic to completely normal. This was part of an important and lasting change in the American culinary landscape. ■

Endnotes

1. A copy owned by the Boston Public Library has been fully scanned by Internet Archive; its pages can be freely downloaded in PDF or Kindle format at <http://archive.org/details/chinesecookeryin00nolt/>. Amazon sells a reformatted version of the book— with a different typescript and no illustrations— in print and for Kindle.
2. Ling 2004, pp. 46-48; Davis, p. 71.
3. Babson, p. 35
4. Anderson, p. 174.
5. Anderson, p. 174.
6. Anderson, pp. 67, 114.
7. Davis, pp. 70-71.
8. Personal communication, July 13, 2013. Published earlier, but not true cookbooks, are two works to which Dr. Newman has referred in a pair of articles (Newman 1999; Newman 2004). The first book was by Maria Parloa, formerly associated with the Boston Cooking School, *The Oriental Cook Book: A Guide to Marketing and Cooking in English and Chinese*. Published by a missionary group in Shanghai in 1889, it included a bilingual list of Chinese foods, but no Chinese recipes; Dr. Newman believes that it was probably written as a guide to assist household help in China and related countries. The second book was by UC-Berkeley chemistry professor Walter Charles Blasdale, *A Description of Some Chinese Vegetable Food Materials and Their Nutritive and Economic Value* (U. S. Government Printing Office, 1899). This was a bulletin of the California Agricultural Experiment Station that encouraged people to cultivate and consume Chinese vegetables at home, but it included only a few meager cooking instructions.
9. Steffes.
10. Chinese-American Museum of Chicago.
11. Ling 2012, pp. 62-73.
12. Ling 2012, pp. 73-74.
13. Coe, pp. 185-186.
14. Ling 2012, p. 71.
15. Ling 2012, p. 72.

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THE HILL FAMILY

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panned oysters; Hollands, crabs a la Newburg; Whipples, creamed chicken; H. Sims, toasted Swiss cheese & rum omelet; champagne & violets for ladies. Cards after. [Isabel Hill, 1900]

The Hills and their friends dined at each other's houses frequently, providing interesting and varied menus.

We took our Christmas dinner at Pearce's, it was a sort of family dinner. They spread themselves on the dinner: first soup, then a piece of roast beef, which I should think weighed 20 pounds, then boiled turkey & oyster sauce, curry of mutton, potato croquettes, celery, radishes, other vegetables, plum pudding all on fire when brought in, English mince pies (which are not as good as ours), trifle, fruits of various kinds, nuts & raisins, sherry, champagne and coffee served to the ladies in the parlor, while gentlemen smoked at the table. [Alice Hill, 1886]

My turn Wednesday to have lunch for Annie, & others I want to entertain. The menu will be—bouillon, sweetbread or oyster pates—haven't decided which—scrambled eggs with truffles, lamb chops & peas, Roman punch, prairie chicken breasts, with celery salad & fancy ice cream, probably eggs in a spun sugar nest, fruit, coffee, candied fruits & chocolate with whipped cream to drink. All these lunches I have been to have been elaborate ones & generally well cooked, but I think mine won't be the worst of the lot by far. [Isabel Hill, 1887]

Tonight Gert [Isabel's younger sister Gertrude, born in 1869] & Mont dined with us & Doctor J. & Neupples & Mrs. Sykes. We had a relish—tomato soup—puree—chickens larded & roasted, artichokes & tomatoes & rice cooked in a new way—asparagus salad—strawberry short cake, which she now makes deliciously. [Isabel Hill, 1889]

Drove to Mrs. Hubbard's for 7 PM dinner. Perfect dinner—oysters, consommé, terrapin, saddle of mutton, fine sauce, potatoes like apples, fresh asparagus, canvasback & salad, fine wines & cocktails, a gourmet's delight! [Isabel Hill, 1902]

Cuthberts, Char & Mr. Voorhies dined here, delicious soup with noodles, perfect lobster cutlets, chicken, asparagus, lettuce a la Shoreham Hotel with tomato jelly, pineapple Bavarian cream. Gert says she eats too much here, everything is so good. [Isabel Hill, 1907]

Last Saturday to matinee at Elitch's, Sunday night to Gert's to dinner, Monday F & I to see M. Adams in Peter Pan, yesterday to lunch at Mrs. George

Young's & last eve a dinner here—Cuthberts, Morris's, Knotts, Hollands, 8 in all and an excellent repast—amber soup—with custard squares (perfect) soft crabs—cucs [cucumbers] & brown bread—fried chicken, asparagus tips, new potatoes, hot biscuit, tomato & lettuce salad, cheese straws, home made ice cream with maple sauce—delicious. Bridge till midnight. [Isabel Hill, 1907]

On occasions, dining could be quite elegant.

A pity you could not have staid to dinner.... Six tables were spread & in the center of each was a superb bouquet of wild flowers, for which all the servants scoured the country. We actually had printed bills of fares two pages in all with everything scratched out except what we have every day. Had caramel ice cream without the peanuts which was really delicious. The doctor had a bottle of Rhoderer to celebrate the occasion & George (not McClumpha) had donned a white jacket. [Isabel Hill, 1885]

Father left last night by train. He stayed over one day to dine at Mrs. Thatcher's & it was a beautiful "pink" dinner—16 at table, all married. All the decorations were pink—flowers, bonbons, ices, Roman punch, cutlet. ... Menu was excellent, lovely glass and china. [Alice Hill, 1885]

Nor was dinner the only meal upon which attention was lavished.

Tomorrow I am to have a breakfast party [i.e. brunch], 16 in all at 12:30. I always dread them. Menu—raw oysters, bouillon, fish & cucumbers, sweetbreads & peas, filet with potatoes a la parisienne, quails on toast with jelly, chicken salad, charlotte russe, ice cream, tutti frutti, cake, fruit, coffee, bread & butter, rolls, olives, etc. Expect to give another next week & so in a measure do up the hospitality of a year. [Alice Hill, 1882]

I give a lunch Tuesday ... asparagus puree in cups, chicken croquettes & sauce, asparagus tips, new potatoes, hot biscuit, tongue in aspic, all garnished, & lettuce salad with tomato jelly, ice cream with maple sauce—short menu & good! [Isabel Hill, 1891]

Will tell you of the lunch party at Country club. Had the table covered with tiny pink Cecil Brunot roses & maiden hair ferns; had melons, peas puree, lobster (California crawfish) Newburg, sweetbreads & peas, broiled squab with tomato aspic salad, ices, cakes, coffee. [Isabel Hill, 1905]

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Great event over, success. ... I drove out with [John] Drew [great-great uncle to Drew Barrymore] in surrey at 1:00. 20 guests. Excellent lunch, table lovely, 3 huge bouquets of pink & red roses arranged in birch canoes & cloth nearly covered with them. Had grapefruit, asparagus puree in cup, crab cutlets with cucumbers, artichokes, broiled chicken, peas & potatoes, salad & cheese, ice cream & big strawberries. Had a nice white wine cup for beverage. The place cards were California colored postal cards with guests names & I had them all sent up later to Drew for souvenirs & that he [can] remember names. [Isabel Hill, 1905]

Had large luncheon party of ladies, 16. ... Sat down at 1:00, rose 4:30. [Alice Hill, 1881]

Kate wrote you about the [dance party] but as she wasn't there I will add a few words. ... The house looked perfectly beautiful and the floral decorations were exquisite. The floors were like glass & supper was lavish, no expense spared. They had supper on the side piazza which was enclosed with canvas & had incandescent burners up & down its length. They had an elaborate supper, including chicken salad, scalloped oysters, pates, some arrangement of veal & egg, ice cream, cake, chocolate, coffee. [Isabel Hill, 1886]

We three took a drive through streets lined with apple trees, laden with blossoms & then made several calls, ended by going to Hattie's to tea. Had swell "tea": chicken croquettes, lobster salad, strawberries, hot biscuit, coffee & tea, cake & ice cream. [Alice Hill, 1886]

Even picnics could be special.

Picnic on 14th, had 14. ... Went up river in canoes, about 6 o'clock a boatman with provisions from a caterer had preceded us & he & Frank [husband] made a fire & cooked soft shell crabs, which were delicious. We had cold chicken, bread & butter sandwiches, olives, cucumber salad, with the crabs, Saratoga chips [thin-sliced potato chips], ice cream, raspberries, orange cake—a specialty of Portsmouth—watermelon, ginger ale & Apollinaris [water], as this is a Temperance town. [Isabel Hill, 1903]

Sharing meals was an ongoing form of social networking among the well to do. Isabel Hill and the Hills of Colorado are prime examples of this phenomenon—and thanks to Isabel's prodigious output of letters and diaries, we are able to hear about the actual culinary habits of people from this era virtually from their own lips. ■

16. Whitaker. She gives the restaurant's founding date as 1902; Ling gives 1905.
17. Whitaker.
18. Detroit Printing and Stationery was located on the near East side of town, at 30 Farrar Street (now Library Street), whereas Detroit's Chinatown was located on the near West side, on Third Ave. between Porter and Bagley Streets. The trade journal *American Stationer* (Apr. 18, 1908, p. 11) announced the firm's incorporation with only \$10,000 capital by principals John T. Paine, Charles W. Reen, John A. Kee, and Frank F. Werkheiser. By contrast, the American Book Company had just been incorporated in New York City with \$5,000,000 capital, and even the International Novelty Company in Kittery, ME, started with \$25,000 (both listings from Jan. 4, 1908 issue, p. 11).
19. The pages of this book are freely available on the website of Feeding America: The Historic American Cookbook Project, at http://digital.lib.msu.edu/projects/cookbooks/html/books/book_67.cfm/.
20. A copy owned by Harvard's Schlesinger Library has been fully scanned by Internet Archive; its pages can be freely downloaded in PDF or Kindle format at <http://archive.org/details/chinesecookbook00changoog/>.
21. For more information, see Raskin.
22. For more information, see Theophano.

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MORSELS & TIDBITS

“American Foodways: The Jewish Contribution” is an exhibit running Sep. 4 – Dec. 8, 2013, at the Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library (Audubon Room, Room 100, and North Lobby cases), Univ. of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Exhibit curators **Jan Longone** and **Avery Robinson** announce that the displays will include, among other items, the first Jewish cookbook published in America (1871); stories of early kosher butchers and bakers; early advertising ephemera and menus from Jewish delis and restaurants; and Jewish charity cookbooks from all 50 states. In conjunction with the exhibit, Jan will present a lecture on Sep. 24 at 4-5 pm in Room 100; the public is also invited to view the exhibit at 3-4 pm, and to attend a reception presented by Zingerman’s Deli at 5-6 pm.

CHAA member **Robin Watson** of Taylor, MI, continues to write regularly for the magazine *Culture: The Word on Cheese* (www.culturecheesemag.com). “Wurst-Case Scenario” (Winter 2012-13) explores the use of cheese in sausages, including comments by local charcuterie expert **Brian Polcyn**. “Hail to the Cheese” (Spring 2013) describes FDR’s “lifelong love affair with cheese”, based in part on material from Univ. of Vermont food scientist **Paul S. Kindstedt**’s new book, *Cheese and Culture: A History of Cheese and its Place in Western Civilization* (White River Jct., VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2012; 272 pp., \$17.95 pbk.). “Meet the Twin Cities” (Summer 2013) catalogs the best cheese mongers in Minneapolis-St. Paul.

Ann Arbor native **Hanna Raskin**’s investigation of the artisanal food movement, “Peaches and Dreams” (*Seattle Weekly*, Jun. 27, 2012), is a finalist for the 2013 Association of Food Journalists award for Best Story on Food Policy or Food Issues. The story explores the decisions that artisanal food entrepreneurs must make in juggling factors such as quality, heritage, economics, mechanization, and sustainability. Hanna included a number of Midwestern producers in her interviews, such as Herkner’s Original Cherry Topping (Old Mission, MI). She is also a finalist this year in the AFJ’s Best Food Column category and in the Association of Alternative News Media’s Best Food Writing category. Meanwhile, **Darra Goldstein**’s article on the classic dish *tabaka* from the Republic of Georgia, “A Bribe-Worthy Chicken Dish” (*Wall Street Journal*, Mar. 9, 2012), is a finalist for the AFJ’s Best Food Essay award.

Two important new books on Canadian food history came out last year:

- **Anne Marie Lane Jonah** and **Chantal Véchambre**, *French Taste in Atlantic Canada, 1604–1758: A Gastronomic History* (Sydney, NS: Cape Breton Univ. Press, 2012; 260 pp., CAN\$29.95 hbk.) is a gorgeous book with parallel English/French text. It explores how the first generation of French who settled in the region learned about, reacted to, and began to work with local food knowledge and ingredients. The account is told through stories, images, and dozens of recreated recipes, such as *pâté*

d’assiette, a meat pie that was adapted from one of the cookbooks of the contemporary French chef La Varenne.

- **Franca Iacovetta**, **Valerie J. Korinek**, and **Marlene Epp**, eds., *Edible Histories, Cultural Politics: Towards a Canadian Food History* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2012; 472 pp., CAN\$34.95 pbk., CAN\$85 hbk.) is a collection of 23 essays on such topics as cultural exchange with first peoples; the forging of regional food identities among early settlers; food traditions of such ethnic groups as Ukrainians in the western prairies and South Asians in Toronto; Jewish, Italian, and Mennonite cookbooks; and the impact of marketing, nationalism, politics, and protest movements on the Canadian culinary scene.

101 Classic Cookbooks: 501 Classic Recipes (New York: Rizzoli, 2012; 688 pp., \$50 hbk.) is a product of New York University’s renowned Fales Library food studies collection. The book includes 501 signature recipes selected by an expert advisory committee from 101 leading cookbooks of the 20th Century. Also included are 12 commissioned essays, such as **Laura Shapiro** on Fannie Farmer and Marion Cunningham, **Jessica B. Harris** on Rufus Estes, **Anne Mendelson** on Irma Rombauer and Marion Rombauer Becker, and **Alice Waters** on Richard Olney.

Check out these new websites from two veteran food writers:

- **Sharon Hudgins** (<http://www.sharonhudgins.com>) has posted much of her previous writing about the regional cuisines of such Eurasian countries as Russia and Germany. *Repast* readers will recall Sharon’s article in our Winter 2011 issue, “Russian Potato Salad: From Classic to Contemporary”. She is currently completing a new book, *T-Bone Whacks & Caviar Snacks: Cooking with Two Texans in Siberia* (Univ. of North Texas Press).
- **Nawal Nasrallah**, an Iraqi-born scholar living in Salem, NH, has established a blog, “In My Iraqi Kitchen” (<http://www.nawalcooking.blogspot.com>). There, she supplies information about the history and culture of this cuisine, together with recipes. *Repast* readers will recall Nawal’s article in our Fall 2008 issue, “The Iraqi Cookie, *Kleicha*, and the Search for Identity”. One of her books has just come out in a newly revised edition, *Delights from the Garden of Eden* (Equinox Publishing, 2013).

“Food Technologies Past and Present” is the theme of the **Roger Smith Conferences on Food** (formerly the Roger Smith Cookbook Conference), to be held Apr. 4-6, 2014 at the Roger Smith Hotel in New York, NY. Organizers **Cathy Kaufman**, **Anne Mendelson**, and **Andrew F. Smith** are accepting proposals for presentations until Oct. 1, 2013. For more info, e-mail foodconferences@gmail.com. ■

CHAA CALENDAR

(Unless otherwise noted, programs are scheduled for 4:00-6:00 p.m. and are held at Ann Arbor Senior Center, 1320 Baldwin Ave.)

Sunday, September 15, 2013

Bill Loomis, author of *Detroit's Delectable Past: Two Centuries of Frog Legs, Pigeon Pie and Drugstore Whiskey* (History Press, 2012)

Tuesday, September 24, 2013

4-5 pm, Univ. of Michigan Graduate Library
Jan Longone, Adjunct Curator of
American Culinary History
"American Foodways: The Jewish Contribution"
(more details on p. 23)

Sunday, October 13, 2013

Ben Graham, Ph.D. student in history
at Univ. of Michigan
"Pizza: A (Global) Layered History"

Sunday, November 17, 2013

Richard Balander, Assoc. Prof. of
Animal Science, Michigan State Univ.
"The Turkey: A Much More Respectable Bird"

Sunday, December 8, 2013

4-7 pm, Ladies' Literary Club, Ypsilanti
Members-Only Participatory Theme Meal
(details TBA)

On the Back Burner: We welcome ideas and submissions from all readers of *Repast*, including for the following planned future theme-issues. Suggestions for future themes are also welcome.

- Fall 2013: Formative Food Experiences
- Winter 2014: Jewish Baking
- Spring and Summer 2014: Quadricentennial of Dutch-American Cooking—
Part 1, The Hudson and Delaware Valleys
Part 2, The Great Lakes Region.

REPAST

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Culinary Historians of Ann Arbor

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First Class