

PANNEBAKKER FAMILY NEWS



NEWSLETTER OF THE PANNEBAKKER FAMILY ASSOCIATION

April Fools' tradition popularized

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On this day in 1700, English pranksters begin popularizing the annual tradition of April Fools' Day by playing practical jokes on each other.

Although the day, also called All Fools' Day, has been celebrated for several centuries by different cultures, its exact origins remain a mystery.

Some historians speculate that April Fools' Day dates back to 1582, when France switched from the Julian calendar to the Gregorian calendar, as called for by the Council of Trent in 1563. People who were slow to get the news or failed to recognize that the start of the new year had moved to January 1 and continued to

celebrate it during the last week of March through April 1 became the butt of jokes and hoaxes.

These pranks included having paper fish placed on their backs and being referred to as *poisson d'avril* (April fish), said to symbolize a young, "easily hooked" fish and a gullible person.

April Fools' Day spread throughout Britain during the 18th century. In Scotland, the tradition became a two-day event, starting with "hunting the gowk," in which people were sent on phony errands (gowk is a word for cuckoo bird, a symbol for fool) and followed by Tailie Day, which involved pranks played on people's derrieres, such as pinning fake tails or "kick me" signs on them.

How the Log Cabin Became an American Symbol

Many Americans have a special fondness for the log cabin, viewing it as the home of heroic pioneers, or at least a great weekend escape. But it wasn't always this way. The log cabin was originally disdained here in America—and it took decades of pop culture and political shifts to elevate the structure to the vaunted status it holds today.

While there's plenty of imagery portraying log cabins in the English colonies of Plymouth and Jamestown (established in Massachusetts and Virginia, respectively), these depictions couldn't be further from the truth. The English had no history of log cabins—they preferred more "refined" frame houses, and would sometimes squat in subterranean dugouts until they could be built. In fact, the log cabin was first constructed in the New World in the short-lived colony of New Sweden, established in the Delaware River Valley in 1638. Such structures had been around continental Europe for centuries, and the Swedish colonists were simply using a skill that had been passed down through generations.

Log cabins might have remained a Swedish anomaly in the New World had it not been for the German and Scots-Irish who adopted them after arriving in the mid-1700s. But none of these log cabins looked much like the quaint, cozy structures we revere today. They often had dirt floors, were crawling with lice and other pests, and were prone to drafts; as one traveler remarked around 1802, the gaps between logs were "filled up with clay, but so very carelessly, that the light may be seen through in every part." Yet as uncomfortable as these cabins were, they offered impoverished immigrants an invaluable slice of freedom. Cheaper and far easier to construct than finer homes, the log cabin thus became the go-to home for newcomers to the New World, helping millions of desperate



refugees turn their dreams of settling in America into a reality.

But the practicality of the structure did nothing for the log cabin's public image, or that of its inhabitants. Benjamin Franklin wrote that there were only two sorts of people, "those who are well dress'd and live comfortably in good

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houses," and those who "are poor, and dirty, and ragged and ignorant, and vicious and live in miserable cabins or garrets." Dr. Benjamin Rush, Surgeon General of the Middle Department of the Continental Army and a signatory to the Declaration of Independence, said the cabin dweller was "generally a man who has out-lived his credit or fortune in the cultivated parts."

As for cabins themselves, they were generally seen as "rude" and "miserable," and no self-respecting American would deign to live in one. Not permanently, at least. Cabins back then were temporary stepping stones meant to be abandoned once something better could be afforded; barring that good fortune, they were to be covered with clapboard and added to as the cornerstone for a finer home.

But the log cabin and its inhabitants' public image got a makeover after the War of 1812. The nation had just defeated the British for a second time, and Americans were feeling good, forging their own identity and distinguishing themselves from the old world. Log cabins—ubiquitous and appropriately rustic—started taking on an all-American sheen.

Soon enough, writers and artists were portraying them in a positive light. One notable example is James Fenimore Cooper's 1823 novel *The Pioneers*, where the house of protagonist Natty Bumppo is described as being "a rough cabin of logs." That scene in turn is thought to have inspired artist Thomas Cole's 1826 painting, *Daniel Boone Sitting at the Door of His Cabin on the Great Osage Lake*. Together, these works helped spark an entire movement that saw the pioneer as a hero. Log cabin dwellers were no longer disdained for their rough edges; these same edges were what made them romantic and distinctly American.

Similar shifts occurred in the political realm during the 1840 election. President Martin van Buren faced an uphill battle for reelection that year, and a politically aligned newspaper thought it could give him a leg up by launching a classist attack against rival William Henry Harrison: "Give [Harrison] a barrel of Hard Cider, and settle a pension of \$2000 a year on him, and my word for it, he will sit the remainder of his days in his Log Cabin." In other words: Harrison was an ignorant hick.

It was a lie—the wealthy Harrison actually lived in a mansion—but most of the public didn't know it, and his rivals assumed voters would scorn Harrison's poverty. They were wrong! Millions of Americans still lived in log cabins, struggling day-in-and-day-out, and they were *not* impressed.

In no time at all, Americans rich and poor were displaying their Harrison love and log cabin pride by holding cabin raisings and patronizing specially-constructed log cabin bars, marching in massive parades with log cabins pulled by teams of horses, and purchasing heaps of Harrison-themed, log cabin-stamped merchandise, including tea sets, hair brushes, and hope chests. With his eye on the prize, Harrison gamely played into this fib, telling frenzied crowds that he'd rather relax in his log cabin than run for president, but that he had heeded their call to run for the White House. That fall, he won handily.

Though Harrison died 32 days into his term, his log cabin campaign became a reliable template for candidates in the years ahead. Franklin Pierce downplayed his family's wealth in 1852, instead focusing on a brief time spent in a log cabin as a baby. James Buchanan did the same in 1856, and Lincoln's log cabin youth was brought up consistently come 1860. "Like President Harrison, Mr. Lincoln has spent about one third part of his life in a log cabin," one biography read.

Most powerful in terms of ingraining log cabin adoration in young Americans, though, were the scores of false histories that projected the log cabin back onto Plymouth and Jamestown. Historians of the late-19th century had heard so much about the log cabin that they just assumed it was key to American growth and expansion, leading to assertions like John G. Palfrey's 1860 claim, "[Settlers] made themselves comfortable in log-houses," and images like W.L. Williams 1890s painting, *Plymouth in 1622*. The latter shows the colony as a smattering of log cabins and was widely distributed to elementary school classrooms, cementing the image of a cabin-laden Plymouth.

From then on, the log cabin was portrayed as the ultimate proverbial rag from which the rich nation of the U.S. had emerged, as when historian Warder Stevens declared in 1916, "The story of America is written in log cabins." It's this tradition of myth-making and believing that inspired subsequent outpourings of log cabin nostalgia: Lincoln Logs in the interwar years, log cabin chic of the 1990s, and today's reality programs showing urbanites fleeing to the woods.

These days, the log cabin is emblazoned on money and sewn onto flags; it fascinates modern artists like Will Ryman (who created a gold-resin-covered log cabin at the New Orleans Museum of Art); and it appears in music of

all genres, from country crooner Porter Wagoner's 1965 track "An Old Log Cabin for Sale" to T-Pain and Lil Wayne's 2008 romantic rap "Can't Believe It." That said, perhaps the log cabin itself is the nation's greatest rags-to-riches story; it went from being sneered at as a poor immigrants' hovel to being revered as an American icon. Not bad for something that writer John Filson, discussing Boone's home circa 1784, described as "not extraordinary."

By Andrew Belonsky

The "F" Word!

Don't like the F-word? Blame farmers and soft food. When humans switched to processed foods after the spread of agriculture, they put less wear and tear on their teeth. That changed the growth of their jaws, giving adults the overbites normal in children. Within a few thousand years, those slight overbites made it easy for people in farming cultures to fire off sounds like "f" and "v," opening a world of new words.



An ancient woman from Romania shows an edge-to-edge bite (left). A Bronze Age man from Austria had a slight overbite (right).

The newly favored consonants, known as labiodentals, helped spur the diversification of languages in Europe and Asia at least 4000 years ago; they led to such changes as the replacement of the Proto-Indo-European *patēr* to Old English *faeder* about 1500 years ago.

American linguist Charles Hockett, noted in 1985, that the languages of hunter-gatherers lacked labiodentals, and conjectured that their diet was partly responsible: Chewing gritty, fibrous foods puts force on the growing jaw bone and wears down molars. In response, the lower jaw grows larger, and the molars erupt farther and drift forward on the protruding lower jaw, so that the upper and lower teeth align. That edge-to-edge bite makes it harder to push the upper jaw forward to touch the lower lip, which is

required to pronounce labiodentals.

Researchers used computer modeling to show that with an overbite, producing labiodentals takes 29% less effort than with an edge-to-edge bite. Then, they scrutinized the world's languages and found that hunter-gatherer languages have only about one-fourth as many labiodentals as languages from farming societies. Finally, they looked at the relationships among languages, and found that labiodentals can spread quickly, so that the sounds could go from being rare to common in the 8000 years since the widespread adoption of agriculture and new food processing methods such as grinding grain into flour.

It has been suggested that as more adults developed overbites, they accidentally began to use "f" and "v" more. In ancient India and Rome, labiodentals may have been a mark of status, signaling a softer diet and wealth, he says. Those consonants also spread through other language groups; today, they appear in 76% of Indo-European languages.

The findings also suggest our facility with f-words comes at a cost. As we lost our ancestral edge-to-edge bite, "we got new sounds but maybe it wasn't so great for us," Moran says. "Our lower jaws are shorter, we have impacted wisdom teeth, more crowding—and cavities."

By Ann Gibbons

Food To Cure What Ails You

At the turn of the 20th century, when access to professional care was spotty, many cookbooks served up recipes for the sick — some (brandy) more appealing than others (toast water). Even the *Joy Of Cooking* included sickbed recipes up through the 1943 edition.

Browse through some turn-of-the-century American cookbooks, and it's obvious that popular tastes have changed (such as the presence of fried cornmeal mush and the absence of cilantro). But more striking than the shift in flavors and ingredients is the focus on feeding those who are sick — or, to use the parlance of the time, "cooking for invalids."

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Whether you're looking at *The Settlement Cook Book* (1901), *Jennie June's American Cookery Book* (1870) or *The Woman Suffrage Cook Book* (1890), sections on nourishing the sick are all somewhat similar in approach.

First, there are a lot of fluids. Teas and lemonades, but also barley water, and something unappetizingly called "beef tea." (Think of it as a barely seasoned bouillon.) And there are a surprising number of recipes for "toast water" — basically consisting of the former infused with the latter (a drink evidently so commonplace that a recipe for toast-water lemonade in *The Woman Suffrage Cook Book* begins by instructing the reader to "make toast water in the usual way.")

The books also spell out simple puddings and porridges using thickeners that have fallen out of favor in today's home kitchen (arrowroot, Irish moss). And there are a fair number of jellies, which were popular at the time. Finally, a widespread belief in the healing power of a wee bit of wine or brandy. (Some books, like *Mrs. Lincoln's Boston Cook Book* (1884), warn against wine or liquor without the advice of a physician.)

Almost without fail, these cookbooks outline how to create an environment for optimal healing. It's not just *what* you serve, but *how* you serve it. Providing ample dining options (presented in small servings and whisked away when finished), speaking in hushed tones, ensuring proper ventilation and choosing pleasant conversation topics are all recommended, with the attractiveness of the serving bowl given equal weight as the broth it contains.

According to culinary historian Anne Mendelson, who has written about the *Joy of Cooking* (which featured its own recommendations for sickroom care and cooking through the 1943 edition), the presence of these meals amidst the roasts and desserts makes a great deal of sense, given the landscape of the time.

"You have to realize that until the early 20th century — World War I — the professionalization of medicine and nursing was just much less advanced," Mendelson explains, "and most people's access to professional care was spotty."

Which means a lot of recuperation took place in the home. And, Mendelson notes, in an era when people died in their own beds rather than in the hospital, average Americans had a lot more contact with the sick.

"There were extended families living in one home — this was a very common thing 100 years ago ... much more common than it is now. Women had to spend much more time in the home nursing sick children and frail old people. And at that point, childhood illness and childhood mortality were a bigger part of life."

Journalist and culinary historian Laura Shapiro has written about American women and cooking during the turn of the century in her book *Perfection Salad* (including a section on Fannie Farmer, who wrote an entire tome on *Food and Cookery for the Sick and Convalescent*). Shapiro notes that while published cookbooks of the time formalized the process, guidelines on cooking for invalids appeared in cookbooks long before.

"It goes back to Britain, and then back to the Middle Ages. And why not?" Shapiro asks. "Women were not just the cooks, they were also the caretakers of the sick at home."

But while the general guidelines on cooking for the sick has long roots, Shapiro says that their manifestation in early American cookbooks reflects the rise of "scientific cookery" rooted in the Industrial Revolution and Progressive Era — when science was overhauling everything from charity to motherhood to food.

"The home itself was a site for the reform movement, and the role of a woman was to raise up a new American family," Shapiro explains. "And you do it in great part through sanitation, hygiene and proper nutrition." But as for the actual *science* of this scientific approach? Well, they were working off a somewhat limited playbook. "Fats, carbohydrates and proteins were known by the mid 1800s," explains Patty Keane, president of the New Mexico Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, "but vitamins and minerals really weren't discovered until the early 1900s."

As New York University nutrition professor Marion Nestle notes, these bland, liquid-like diets were considered easier to digest by people who were too sick to eat — an idea that is still popular. And, Nestle argues, one that should be abandoned. "If people feel like eating and have a functioning intestinal tract, they are better off with real food."

But, as dietitian and nutritionist Patty Keane says, while getting foods with the proper nutrient profile can help with everything from healing wounds to bolstering immunity, that's not the whole picture. We can now tailor meals to specific medical conditions, but having them prepared and delivered with care, as outlined in these early manuals, is an equally important part of healing — even in modern practice.

"While the nutrition science may have changed a tremendous amount," acknowledges Keane, "we know that there is much more to the provision of meals to promote wellness and healing than the food itself."

And while formulating recipes for optimal healing has become the provenance of health professionals rather than home cookbooks, caring and concern is still very much on the menu.

Deena Pritchep

Random Thoughts

Most of my thoughts these days are about the virus affecting most of the world. We at PFA hope all are staying well.

I guess I'm old-school, but when did "social distancing" become a thing? My mom used to say, "stay away from people", and I understood quite well what she meant.

It's become common today for people to, "reach out". The only time I would reach out was when there was something close enough to touch. I contact people. I call, text or email, but I never do any of those things to people who are close enough to touch. I've seen such a thing with people texting someone sitting in the same room. To me, that is true social distancing!

Being a former teacher, I have my pet peeves, like one of my former students refers to me as their "old teacher". Sure enough, I'm old and hopefully getting older all the time, but I still prefer "former" to "old".

I also don't like to hear the decline of the English language. I was taught how to conjugate a verb so that I would not sound stupid when I said something. Also, there's a difference between the words "are" and "our"! I get confused when someone invites me to "are" house to watch TV.

Maybe it's a Pennsylvania thing to pronounce the word "bury" as though it were "berry". I get a strange mental picture when someone says that they are going to a "berryal" to "berry" someone. I picture raspberries and strawberries, which don't seem to belong. I looked it up online and sure enough one of the accepted pronunciations is "berry", I just don't know why!

Well, I guess I should have taken my peeves, along with my old self and socially distanced myself from them by berrying them in one of are trash heaps.

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Pannebakker Family Association



The Pannebakker Family Association is an outgrowth of the family reunion held at Pennypacker Mills, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania on July 2-4, 1999. The reunion celebrated the 300th year wedding anniversary of Hendrick Pannebecker and Eve Umstat, in Germantown, Pennsylvania in the year 1699. In the words of the Steering Committee of the reunion, "We hope that the 1999 Pfannebecker-Umstat Reunion will lead to the growth of a family association, which will provide a forum for conversation, collection and preservation of information, and a sense of lasting community among the heirs of this rich cultural heritage."