



Our Old Bookcase, September 28, 2017, The Preservation of old irons & their heritage

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**Photo caption:** This “Geneva Hand Flutter” was a specialized iron for ironing ruffles and/or pleated clothes. The Patent date was August 21, 1866, following the Civil War era. A Hand Flutter is on exhibit at the Mercer County Historical Museum.

### **OUR OLD BOOK CASE**

***By Joyce L. Alig, President, Mercer County Historical Society***

Ironing is a Lost Art. But I am not seeking to see about preserving that lost art. I remember the days of ironing men’s white cotton shirts, and ladies cotton blouses and skirts and slacks. I remember ironing men’s work shirts and pants. I even remember ironing blue jeans. We had to wash the clothes in the washing machine, and add starch to the better clothes. We used wooden clothes pins to hang those clothes on the clothes line to dry. Next, we women would take the clothes into the house, and sprinkle the clothes with water to ease the challenge of ironing them. The Steam Iron was quite an innovation in my younger years. I remember using Spray Starch to make the clothes appear “unwrinkled.” Recently, we were driving home from Fort Wayne, on a Monday, and we saw many rural homes with their blue work clothes hanging on the clothes lines. I saw that those women are preserving the Art of Ironing.

The Preservation of the old Clothes Irons is fascinating to me because those Irons are “works of art.” I love to visit the Deluxe Dry Cleaners at 219 South Main in Celina. They have one of the finer private collections of Clothes Irons which I have seen. If you have not seen their collection of old Irons in the front window of their store, stop in and visit them. Their Mini-Museum Exhibit is the result of years of collecting. The old Clothes Irons are not something which people threw away. Those Irons have been used for decorations, weights, door stoppers, etc.

On Sunday, October 22, the Historical Society Members will host an Open House, 1:00 – 4:00, with a Military Exhibit, hosted by the Museum of the Soldier, at the Mercer County Historical Museum, 130 East Market, Celina. An exhibit of old Clothes Irons is also on exhibit at the Mercer County Historical Museum. These Irons have been donated by many families, over the years; e.g. Gladys Gray, the Daily Standard, donated her fine collection. The Flatirons, also known as Sadirons, were made of solid iron, in a shape of a triangle, or were double pointed. The Flatirons had detachable handles, so that one Flatiron could be heated on the stove, while another Flatiron was being used. The Irons varied according to use.

Sometimes the early Irons were heated with charcoal; other Irons used gasoline. In my mind, those Irons with their miniature gas tanks on the back were accidents waiting to happen. Electric Irons were patented in the 1880's. Electric irons were exhibited at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair. Examples of Improvements introduced over the years included an Iron heel rest, a thermostatically controlled Iron, lighter weight Irons, and steam Irons. As late as 1972, General Electric introduced the first self-cleaning steam, spray, and dry Iron.

The last innovation to ironing clothes was the introduction of wrinkle-free fabrics. The clothes industry jumped on that invention. That concluded the Rise and Fall of the use of Clothes Irons which we used in caring for our families' clothes.

The Sunday October 22 Military Exhibit and the Sunday November 12 Post Card & Post Mark Exhibit, will be the last two Open Houses at the Mercer County Historical Museum in 2017. I hope to see you when you stop by and say hello before the Holidays.

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