

Highland County Historical Society celebrates 50th anniversary, Part XVI

**By Pamela Nickell
H.C. Historical Society**

*This is the way we wash our clothes,
wash our clothes, wash our clothes!
This is the way we wash our clothes,
so early Monday morning!*

Then, Tuesday we dry, Wednesday
we iron and Thursday we mend, etc.

What a fun little song we were taught in primary school to help learn the days of the week, but nearly a whole week to clean our clothes? It seemed laughable even in the early '50s. Probably not so fun or funny, though, to our ancestors, as evidenced by the appearance of the vintage wooden double rack clothes wringer washer located in the Primitive Kitchen of the Highland House.



A card on this old-fashioned two tub wringer credits Mrs. Cliff Lacy with donating it to the museum. The card reads, "This was considered a great help on wash day, since with it you did not have to wring the clothes by hand."

These machines operated by manually cranking clothes from the wash tub through a double roll wringer into a rinse tub and then back through the wringer, catching them to keep them from going back into the suds water. To us now in 2015, that still seems quite a chore, of course, but it must have seemed just about miraculous then. There have been nearly an unbelievable 900 or so manufacturers associated with making washing machines through the centuries.

The double-tub wringer washer in the museum is of the 1868-98 time frame and was probably made by the Lovell Manufacturing Company of Erie, Pa. Similar ones, with double racks and wringer, are now available online and priced up to \$500.

My mother's first washer was an electric double-tub wringer washer made of galvanized metal, clearly modeled and upgraded from the wooden hand-operated ones. I did love watching it operate and begged to help, but finger pinching was a hazard. Some purists still use these.

Lee M. Maxwell became fascinated with washing machines and along with his wife collected such a large number of them that he was listed in Guinness Book of World Records. He authored the book "Save Women's Lives; History of Washing Machines" c. 2003.

Yep, I'd call my automatic washer a life-saver, but it still sometimes takes me a week to get the laundry done.

Now, I am fascinated with their history and the actual machines, too. A new collection in my (or some reader's) future? Better yet, just come visit the museum!