Metal Cookware From The End Of The Eighteenth Century To The Beginning of the Nineteenth Century

Jeffery W. Gustafson

Dr. McDaniels

Spring 377

June 2, 1979
This paper of Metal Cookware has been divided into four sections. A category analysis begins each section and a description of articles which were in use during the period of Liberty Hall Academy follows.

Sketches follow the last section, giving a record of the articles that pertain to Metal Cookware. The location of the articles is also given. It is interesting to note that the thirteen articles sketched fit into three of the four categories.
Hollow ware

The term hollow ware applies to cast-iron kitchen utensils such as pots, pans, and kettles. The articles were hollow in design and held above the embers of a fireplace by either a hoop handle, connected to a crane, or by an iron trivet.

Until the invention of the French biggin in 1800, coffee was made by boiling coffee grounds in water. The biggin was a tin coffee pot with a separate compartment that held the grounds so that percolating water would cause the coffee to drip down to the pot below. Coffee pots of this type were not produced in the United States until Manning-Bowman & Company began producing similar pots in 1873.

The teakettle was a very common item which was used not only to boil water for tea, but also to heat water for cleaning. It was forged from copper, brass, or iron, having a hoop handle connected to the top opening. A utensil called a rachette pot-hook was used for tipping the teakettle as it hung over the fireplace.

Two types of double boilers were used following the Revolutionary War; one which was used for the fireplace and one which was used on a charcoal stove. The first consisted of a large kettle with a hoop handle connected to the crane by two pot-hooks. The handle was dipped in the middle to allow for the second, smaller kettle to hang freely within the larger by having a third pot-hook attached to the two
handles. The second type of double boiler consisted of a small kettle held within a larger kettle, the two edges resting upon each other. Three small legs were at the bottom of this boiler, so that it could rest upon the charcoal stove. As the popularity of the charcoal stove increased, the stove top boiler replaced the fireplace boiler.

The iron frying pan was a common utensil. It was not very deep and had sides which were straight. The bottom of the pan was flat. The frying pan's three foot handle enabled the person using it to stand far away from the fire while he cooked. At the tip of the handle was a hole, so that the pan could be hung next to the fireplace when stored. Near the beginning of the Nineteenth century, a smaller design of frying pan came out for use above a charcoal stove. Its handle was shorter than the previous frying pan, as there was less concern about the heat radiated from the charcoal stove than there was for the heat coming from the fireplace.
Pot Hooks

In 1720, an iron crane was invented by an American. The crane was a device in which an iron frame fastened to the wall of the fireplace extending horizontally across the fireplace. It was designed so that utensils, by means of a pot-hook, could hang while being suspended by the crane. The pot-hook was, perhaps, the most common of all the cookware devices in use, because the tool could be used so many ways. In addition to its support of utensils, the length of the pot-hook regulated the cooking temperature, depending on how far the pot was held from the flames.

The "S" hook was a piece of wrought iron twisted to form an "S" shape. One end was fastened to the crane and the other end was fastened to the hoop handle of a kettle or pot. The pot-hook was many different sizes, ranging from a few inches to a few feet. The pot chain which was the longest of the hooks, consisted of several links of chain, connecting a hook at each end. This type of hook was used in fireplaces that had an unusually high mantel.

The trammel was a hook that could be lengthened or shortened. It was referred to as a "hole and peg" hook because one hook fastened into a series of vertical holes cut into the other. Another type of trammel was one that was fitted with saw teeth. Length could be adjusted depending on which direction the hook was moved along the teeth.

The use of the pot-hook was not confined to only that of connecting a pot to the iron crane. Other devices were used for cooking which incorporated some form of the pot-hook.
in its design. The dangle-spit, for example, was a combination of the pot chain, the trammel, and the spit. One end had a hook that fastened to the iron crane, and the other end had a meat-spit with three or four sharp hooks. This dangle-spit was adjusted by a trammel. The crane hook was connected to the trammel by a chain. The trammel was directly linked to the spit. The adjustable bird-spit differed from the dangle-spit in that the chain was omitted. Also, the hooks of the bird-spit were connected to a triangular spit-hook frame.
Down-hearth Ware

Articles which were employed in the embers of the fireplace were called down hearth utensils. A common characteristic of these utensils was the three or four legs that supported them. Some down-hearth ware was of tin or cast-iron.

The griddle was a utensil used for baking. Its name was derived from the Scotch word girdle. It had a flat surface and a round edge. There were three legs on the bottom. The three different griddles still around after the Revolutionary War, did not have the same type of handle. The hoop handle griddle hung from the iron crane or rested in the embers of the fireplace. The half-loop handle griddle had a ring at the top of the handle, so that it could swivel while attached to the iron crane. The extended handle griddle had a handle like a small frying pan. It rested in the embers. In addition to being used for baking bread, griddles were also used for baking oat cakes and buckwheat cakes.

The trivet was essential for its many cooking uses, however, it was of a very simple design. Three legs supported a top that could be round, square, triangular, or whatever other shape the designer wanted. Sometimes tin or iron tops were made with different decorations, perforating or cutting the top to form patterns. The trivet was set into the coals in order to heat kettles, pots, plates, or griddles. Trivets
with different length legs were used to vary the temperature, according to the distance from the flames.

Griddles or broilers were used for broiling fish or meat. Those, which were round, had three legs and those, which were square, had four legs. The round broiler had a pivot in the center so that the meat could be turned by a wand. Both broilers stood over a flat bed of coals in order for the meat to be browned. A swivel-brace broiler was one that had two support legs and a smaller one to lean against. It faced the fire. Meat was able to be rotated because of a pivot bolt. The meat was secured by using several skewers which were a common instrument used in spits.

The iron plate warmer was set on the bar that was between the andirons or set in front of the stone hearth. The plate warmer was an iron rack that faced the fire. It was sometimes painted the same color as the dishes. When tinware began to be produced in 1798, by Zachariah Stevens, the plate warmer acquired a moveable tin shelf.

Even though the colonists had a tool for toasting bread when they came over to America, the toasters they used changed. First there was the hand-wrought toaster that could hold two pieces of bread. It either had a pivot head used to turn the side of the bread, or it had a hinged arm that was used to turn the bread. This type of toaster had scroll work that made it an attractive piece for the fire place. The later toaster, which was used from the time of the Revolutionary War and on, was of a less artistic design. Unlike the first toaster, its handle was of wood instead of iron. Bread had
to be removed from the toaster in order to be turned.
Both toasters, however, rested on four iron feet in front of the fire.

The fish roaster was quite similar to the later toaster and it could be used in place of the toaster if desired. The main difference was that the hooks of the roaster had curved points. Also, the fish roaster had a hinged handle like the early bread toaster.
Accessories

Accessories were such items which were necessary in aiding to prepare a meal. They were not used in the fire and they were hand held.

The kettle lifter was a tool similar to that which is found in camping kits today. It functions like a pair of plier as it clamps the hoop handles of griddles, pots and kettles. A kitchen had two or three different sized kettle lifters, depending on the size of the cookware being used. The kettle lifter was more commonly made of wrought iron.

The spatula was a utensil used for turning and flipping oat cakes and buckwheat cakes. It was also used while preparing meals with the skillet. Many times the head was made of either iron or tin. The handle was of wood.

The skimmer and the colander were similar utensils, both being crafted from the same materials. They had a round, perforated head of copper or brass. In addition to being perforated, the head of the skimmer was slightly concave. It was used for skimming skin and other particles that collected at the top of soups and stews. The colander was much more concave than the skimmer because it was used for straining liquids from foods. Sometimes the head of both of these utensils were perforated to form a pattern. The handles were of wood with decoratively carved designs or they were of wrought iron.

There were two designs for ladles; the stem-handle design and the rivet-handle design. The stem-handle ladle was of lesser quality than the rivet-handle ladle. The former was
cast from iron, making it a one piece utensil. In order to make it durable to last, this cast ladle could not be very thin. As a result, it was heavy and cumbersome. On the other hand, the rivet-handle could be made very light because the strength of the ladle was dependent upon the strength of the rivot and not upon the thickness of the metal. Ladles were either single nosed or double nosed. The fine ones were of silver, brass, or copper.

Knives, spoons, and forks were not always considered to belong together as they do today. First came the knife which was a utensil used at the table for eating the entire meal. It had a sharp point at the end so that meat could be speared after it was cut. By the turn of the Eighteenth century, forks were occasionally seen at the table. After the Revolutionary War, the two-tine fork was common and so was the spoon. Knives were no longer pointed at the tip and were rounded. Near the end of the Eighteenth century, it was common to see a table setting with a knife, spoon, and fork.
Metal Trivet Handle

operation 35
Trench 64

Sketch 2
Operation 35
Trench 49
Cast iron Stem-Handle
Castle Bowl

Sketch 3

Operation 35
Trench 35
Metal Griddle Handle

Sketch 4
two prong metal fork

operation 35
Trench II

Sketch 5
wooden handle, metal blades

operation 35
Trench 05

Sketch 6
metal knife

operation 35
Trench 16

Sketch 7
metal knife

operation 35
Trench 51

Sketch 8
metal frog

scale ½ size
Operation 35
Trench 05
Metal knife

Sketch 9 resembles knife dated at 1832
Operation 35
Trench 05
Metal knife

Sketch 10
Pewter spoon
Operation 35
Trench 05

Sketch 11
Pewter spoon
Operation 35
Trench 05

Sketch 12
Pewter spoon
Operation 35
Trench 05

Sketch 13
Operation 35
Trench 05
Metal knife
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Gould, Mary Earle, Early American Wooden Ware & Other Kitchen Utensils, Springfield, Mass., Pond-Ekberg Co., 1942


Lifshey, Earl, The Housewares Story, National Housewares Manufacturers Association, Chicago, 1973


Rumford, Benjamin Thompson, Essays, Political, Economical, Philosophical, London, Cadell, 1800