

# On being a farm wife - And other hazards Joyce Bupp



Few things brighten a day more than pleasant surprises — like one that arrived here recently.

A knock at the front door brought the delivery of a hard-backed volume titled ALLOWAY REMEMBERS. It's a collection of tales and facts of the history of New Jersey's Alloway Township, an area just across the Delaware River from Philadelphia. Sender Bill Haskett keeps in touch here periodically via personal notes and chaired the township's bicentennial celebration in 1988.

While we have no personal ancestral roots in New Jersey, the book is nevertheless fascinating. It's chocked full of interesting old

photos, excerpts from diaries, local significant inventions, census records of early settlers, histories of foundation families, important deeds, development of towns and transportation - the sort of historic record any community could potentially put together. This one is superbly done.

Of special interest to this food lover and cookbook collector is a section devoted to heirloom recipes taken from what were known as "keeping books." Keeping books — a term I'd never heard used before — were painstakingly hand-copied recipe collections, the kind a mother would pass on to her daughter long

before anyone had heard of Betty Crocker, index card files or recipe management software for PCs.

In this age of microwave soups and instant bouillion cubes, directions for making "veal glue," "cake soup," or "pocket soup" totally intrigued me. While the directions suggest using a leg of veal, early pioneers were probably as likely to utilize a leg of venison.

After stripping the skin and fat, the flesh was removed and boiled gently for a long time, until the resulting broth would set up into a firm gel when chilled. After the broth was allowed to settle, the clear jelly was drawn off the top and placed in small amounts in tea cups. Those cups were placed in a kettle with some water in the bottom, and the water gently boiled until the jelly in the cups evaporated into a thick, gluey consistency.

After cooling, the resulting "glue" patties were turned out onto clean, dry flannel, which would draw out remaining moisture. They were to be turned every six to eight hours and put on new, dry flannel as needed until firm and dry. The resulting pieces could be conveniently carried along in a pocket until a traveler became hungry. A small-walnut-sized piece of the glue could then be heated and dissolved in a pint of water to provide the equivalent of instant soup for our forefathers. And we thought fast food was new.

Not only did pioneer homemak-

ers brew up food, with the absence of pharmacies and discount stores, they had to resort to devising their own medicinal and cosmetic substances.

Let's say you ran out of cold cream. You could take equal amounts of lard (rendered from the hogs you helped raise and butcher) and spermaceti (an oil taken from the head of a whale), add some blanched almonds ground into a fine powder, then mix than altogether with a little honey and rose water.

Rose water was made by steeping rose petals, preferably red Damask roses, in simmering water, straining out the spent pet-

als and adding more periodically until the desired strength was reached. It was used in everything from cosmetics to cookies as a flavoring or fragrance.

This wonderful volume of history and nostalgia was a delightful surprise to receive and a timely reminder of wisdom long ago shared by The Farmer's grandmother, a super lady, still sadly missed.

"Don't tell me about the good old days," she would chuckle. "I've lived them."

After the "old fashioned" winter we've had, who'd argue with that?

## Antique Apple Tree Demonstration

YORK (York Co.) — York Countians are invited to the Landis Valley Museum in cooperation with the Lancaster-based Back Yard Fruit Growers (BYFG). A workshop that will teach fruit tree grafting will occur Saturday, March 19, from 1-4:30 p.m. at the Museum's Visitor Center, 2 1/2 miles North of Lancaster on Route 272. The workshop shows gardeners interested in preserving "Antique" apple how to graft or attach old scion wood to a modern, healthy rootstock. The tree which is produced out of this union will have all the characteristics of the old tree — fruit color, taste, shape

and size — only on a smaller and healthier tree; a tree that could be planted in the backyard, large or small.

Workshop attendees may bring pencil-sized sticks from a favorite apple tree they knew on the farm, or obtain from the museum and the fruit growers a scion from among 100 plus choices of historical apple trees. The BYFG and the museum staff will offer instruction, hands-on assistance, hand-outs and two ready-to-plant, labeled trees for \$15 on Saturday afternoon, March 19. For reservations, call (717) 569-0401.

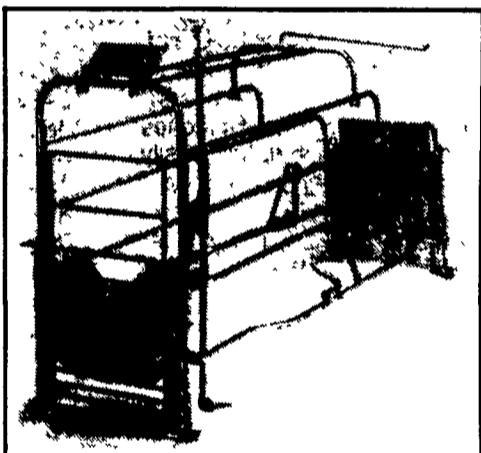
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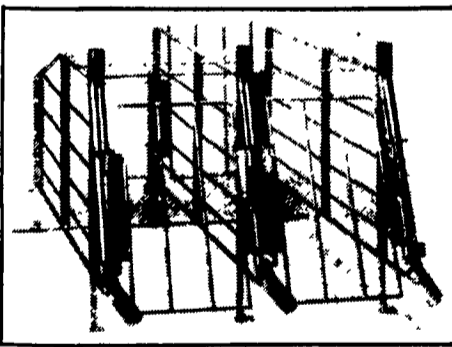
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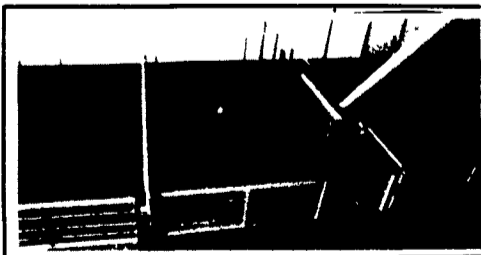
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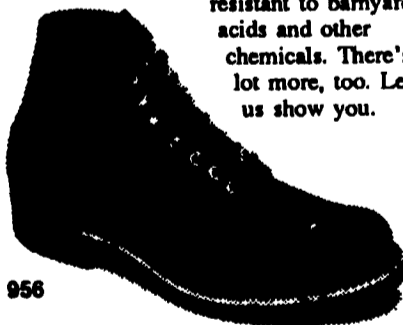
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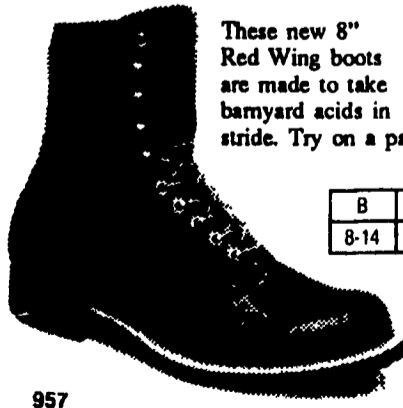


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