

## Washing

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### From Peggy Regehr

Speaking of diapers, how did our ancestors manage without running water and easy access to hot water for washing clothes? There are three young children in my little family, and we do a minimum of two loads per day. It must have been brutal drudgery for our grandmothers, g.grandmothers, etc. I don't imagine that our fathers (g. fathers, etc.) helped out too much in the diaper-changing area. Or am I wrong?

Let me give you several examples from my own experience of how clothes were washed. When we were first married we lived in a rural school teacherage in which we had two tiny rooms and electricity but no running water or indoor toilet facilities. And our first child was born there.

We hauled in the water from a well with a bucket, put it in a big copper boiler on the wood stove to heat it, put the water in the washing machine (yes we already had an electric washing machine with an agitator and a wringer), put in the clothes and let it wash till clean. We then put the rinse water which was in a large metal wash tub. After rinsing we put the clothes through the wringer again and then hung them outside to dry (summer and winter). And - VERY IMPORTANT - we used the same wash water and rinse water for the next load of wash. That is why one always started with the white wash first and ended up with the dark clothes. And then we carried out all the water. Now this was a real improvement over what was done at the farm at my aunts place. She had a "stucksel" washer - one with no electric motor but a handle on the outside that was used to agitate the water and clothes in the machine. This was done by hand, and children were frequently used to help in this manner. In summer the machine was taken out of doors and in winter it was done indoors. And before that clothes were washed on a wood and metal washing scrub board.

With those kind of washing facilities, let me assure you that women worked very hard at toilet training their children at a very EARLY age.

We've come a long way, baby!!!!

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### From Duane Goertson

We have indeed come a long way. An example from our own experiences comes from a time when as a "telegrapher" at a small, northern railway station we lived in a 3 room cabin that was situated about 15 feet from the RR tracks, 40 feet above the lake level with a steep path leading from the cabin to the lake. Incidentally, the complete cabin would fit inside of our present "family room" quite comfortably.

Our running water was my wife, Martha, with a bucket in each hand running up and down to bring enough water to fill the galvanized "boiler" tub to heat the water on a very modern (at that time) electric hot plate (2 burner) to do the washing, using a washboard as described by Peggy.

We felt very lucky to have the use of a hand operated wringer to wring the water out of the clothes. (I was working about 14 hrs. a day if you wonder why it was not I who was doing the running.) With 3 children, 2 in diapers you can well imagine her efforts - they were herculean indeed.

Some years later we returned to the same station, this time I was the RR Agent and had a house supplied complete with an electric washing machine & running water (pumped from the same lake). Modern conveniences are certainly good to have!