



Can you guess what these are used for?

Feb. 3, 2016

TOURING SULLIVAN COUNTY'S MUSEUM ... while dusting

Ever hear the saying “The more things change, the more they stay the same.”? An interesting artifact has come to the museum that would seem to uphold that thought. It came to us in its original box, including utensils, along with the 1937 publication about the Capon Production in Pennsylvania at that time. This booklet was put out by the Pennsylvania State College, School of Agriculture, Division of Ag. Extension.

Some may ask what is caponizing and if you’ve a weak stomach this may be the point where you stop reading and pick us up again next week.

Ready to go forward? A capon chicken is a male that has been neutered, or caponized, to make the bird fatter and tenderer at slaughter. The testicles of a male chicken are located just under the backbone on either side and in line with the last two ribs of the bird. This is basically a surgical procedure. This act, besides growing a bigger bird, will also turn them into great brooders or surrogate mothers to hatchlings as their hormones are now equal to that of a hen. The best age to caponize a chicken is between six weeks to three months of age. One tricky thing to watch for is to avoid cutting a main artery that runs down the spine because if cut the bird will die on the table.

Many really old methods were used to produce capons. One such involved cutting a notch in your pinky fingernail and using a horse tail hair and reaching in to “hook” the testicles thus lassoing them for removal. The accompanying

booklet gives you pictures and diagrams to better explain the more modern method using the utensils with it.

Today electric clippers can be purchased to basically make this whole procedure even more efficient, with the added benefit of the utensil cauterizing the wound while it is cutting to reduce bleeding. And the diagrams for performing the act haven't really changed one iota.

So, the next time one of my roosters gets the sniffles or just seems to be having a bad day with the hens: I think I'll send him a get well card and tell him to get over it – things could be a lot worse, you could have been a capon!