

May 22, 2019

One of several chamberpots found in the Sullivan County Historical Society's Museum

TOURING SULLIVAN COUNTY'S MUSEUM . . . while dusting

As most of us are steeped in the modern age of Tec knowledge, many of you are aware of Facebook and other methods of communication. We at the Sullivan County Historical Society are no

different than any of you. Hence it was recommended that we share this quip from Facebook – not only for its insight but also for its humor. It comes from Moody, Missouri for the Center Grove Baptist Church and goes as follows:

People used to use urine to tan animal skins, so families used to urinate in a pot and then once a day it was taken and sold to the tannery . . . if you had to do this to survive then you were “P Poor”. But worse than that were the really poor folk who couldn't even afford to buy a pot . . . they “didn't have a pot to P in”.

Then starting in the fifteenth century and moving forward, most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May, thinking they'd still smell pretty good by June. However, since they may begin to smell – brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide whatever body odor they may have.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. It's been, in the past, a man's world so the man of the house bathed first, then sons, then women and finally children. Babies being last to use this now quite dirty water caused the phrase “Don't throw the baby out with the bath water!”.

Houses often had thatched roofs of thick straw, having no under cover of ceiling. So, for all sorts of animals to stay warm, it became a refuse for them to stay warm. During rain it could become quite slippery, hence the saying “It's raining cats and dogs!” for falling critters. For the bedroom this lent a special when you add that there were also bugs in this straw, so a high four poster bed came about with a canopy to catch unwanted (again) critters from sharing your sleep.

Floors in early homesteads were primarily dirt. Only wealthy persons could afford flooring material, hence the phrase “dirt poor”. One such flooring was of slate which when wet could be quite slippery. To solve that problem, floors were strewn with straw or thresh. As that got packed down, more thresh was added until it could spill out when a door was opened. At this point a board was placed at the entrance way, hence a thresh hold.



People who could afford pewter plates used them for eating from and very often had high acid content foods which cause some of the lead to leach out causing lead poisoning and death. So, for over 400 years folks thought that tomatoes were a poisonous food.

Bread was divided according to status. Workers got the burnt bottom of a loaf, family got the middle and guests got the top or the upper crust.

In England, they felt they were running out of burial space so they'd dig up the dead and take the bones to a bone house to reuse the gravesite. When they were opening these caskets, 1 out of 25 were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realized they had been burying people alive. Their solution was to tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it through the coffin and up through the ground to tie it to a bell. Someone would sit in the graveyard all night (hence the graveyard shift) to listen for the bell; thus, someone could be "saved by the bell" or was considered "a dead ringer".

Stories such as these abound in describing how a phrase comes about and we just thought you might enjoy these few.

We are officially opening for the summer on Thursday, May 30th from 1 to 5. And for the balance of summer on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 1 to 5. In the meantime, we'll be open for the Laporte Yard Sale on Sat. the 25th from 9 to 12. Should you needed another time or simply would like to contact us, phone 570-946-5020 or email museum@scpahistory.com and check out our website at www.scpahistory.com and like us on Facebook.