

Bethinking of Old Orleans

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"The Only Servant You'll Ever Need" An Electrical Exhibition

With the production of electricity, the world changed almost over night. For years and years everything had been done the same, but with the advent of electricity, new generations emerged in a world of wonders. What the early promoters of electricity said, indeed, became a reality in that "Electricity is the only servant you'll ever need". With this new-found servant came not only light, but a hord of electrical home appliances, tools and gadgets. Anything that was done by hand could be done with electricity for only pennies. It took the drudgery out of work and in essence actually helped liberate the housewife. For instance, with refrigeration, the housewife had only to go to market once or twice a week instead of every day. Instead of beating her carpets once a year, she could suck the dirt out with an electric vacuum cleaner any time she felt like it. I'm sure too, we live in a much brighter world than our Victorian ancestors did under the illumination of gas, whale oil or candles.

With the onslaught of electricity came some of the most ingenious inventions ever known to man and it came very quickly once Thomas Edison created the first light bulb. And of course, what perfect Christmas gifts all these items made when first on the market. If you'd like to see what sort of electrical Christmas gifts would have been given from the turn of the century through the 1930's, then take note of this forthcoming Electrical Exhibition of Home Appliances.

On Sunday, December 21 from noon until 5:00 p.m. a special exhibition of early electrical appliances will be displayed at the Pullman Memorial Universalist Church in Albion. Mr. Rene' J. Schasel, a collector of such equipment will be on hand to speak to the public informally about this collection and to answer questions about early electrical appliances. This unique exhibit is being sponsored by the Orleans County Department of History in concurrence with the Pullman Memorial Church as a free, fun, educational, learning experience along with refreshments.

What then will you see at this electrical exhibit? From the turn of the century through the teens, the twenties, the thirties, you will see a host of appliances both large and small. Remember, all these items are prior to 1940. Here is a partial list: Early electric lamps, hot plates, heaters, heating pad, toasters, waffle irons, vacuum cleaners, fans, popcorn poppers, sewing machine, mixers, radios, stove, refrigerator, defroster, washers, irons, ironer, coffee pots, vibrator, hair dryer and Christmas lights, all in working condition.

You will see that since the 1920's things haven't really changed that much except with refinements. Because many of these common, everyday items have been with us, some for 50, 60, 70, or 80 years, we've become accustomed to take them for granted.

As county historian, I take this opportunity to invite you to come see for yourself "the only servant you'll ever need" and to learn more about the age in which we live - a more recent history.

*"Is it a fact, or have
I dreamt it, that by means
of electricity the world of matter
has become a great nerve,
vibrating thousands of miles in
a breathless point of time?
Rather, the round globe is a vast
head, a brain, instinct with
intelligence; or shall we say
it is itself a thought, and no
longer the substance which
we dreamed it.*

--Nathaniel Hawthorne