



Home Life in Colonial Days

Alice Morse Earle

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Could you identify a sausage gun if you had to? How about a plate warmer or a well-sweep? Any idea how the term log-rolling *really* originated? Alice Morse Earle (1851–1911), a prolific popular historian and the first American to chronicle everyday life and customs of the colonial era, describes what these and many other obscure utensils were and how they were used. She also conveys a vivid picture of home production of textiles, colonial dress, transportation, religious and social practices, the care of flower gardens, colonial neighborliness, and other aspects of early American life.

Widely read when it was first published in 1898, this fascinating and wonderfully readable guide was instrumental in promoting a renewed interest in everyday life of bygone times. Today, it offers history buffs, collectors, and other interested readers a feast of delightful information.

Home Life in Colonial Days Details

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From Reader Review Home Life in Colonial Days for online ebook

Renata Shura says

A fascinating read and a reference book of great value. I expect to come back to this tome time and time again.

Indispensable for one interested in the "other side" of history.

Robin says

Not an easy read and it spent too much time on stuff like telling the reader how to make soap when I was more interested in stuff like how often they used the soap to wash their clothes - which was also included but I just could have done without the soap making instructions. So I wound up skimming over some parts like that. But there were some details here and there of interest. I am finding the modern textbook *Family Life in 17th- And 18th-Century America* much more focused on things of interest but of course it's expensive whereas this is free as an ebook.

Diann says

Note: This book was written in the late 1800's, and so unless you are truly peaked by learning about Colonial life (as I am), this book will likely not be for you.

If you are interested, this book is more approachable in print, because you can so easily open it up at random, or search for your topics of interest by hand and eye. It is fascinating to do the former.

There are a lot of details explored in this book, and it is a great resource for those interested in how people lived back a hundred years (more or less) than Alice Morse Earle wrote.

Reedy says

disclaimer: i'm fascinated by colonial america.

i would generally assume that if you're looking this book up in the first place, you'd also be interested in the subject. still, if you're not into the details of life during colonial america, you won't like this. this has a lot of great detail. a great source of information from a time that was as far removed from the colonial period.

Tim Forrest says

As dry as it is informative, and it is very informative. 10/10 will read again.

Genetta Coleman says

VERY useful to me, as I normally write and read historical fiction. Love it!!

Maureen says

I read this book for research purposes. Very informative!

Coralie says

Although this book was written in the late 1800's, and I know a really lot about colonial life, I loved this book. Mrs Earle goes over all the mundane details of running a household in early America, and never once is it dry and boring. I learned a few new things and I was reminded of a lot of things I knew and had forgotten. I read this book at the perfect time, since we're doing American Heritage in school this semester. Really, really interesting book. This is a women's history without being "Women's History". The descriptions of everything are good enough that you can picture everything the author describes, without being overly wordy. There were two full chapters on weaving and spinning. I read the first one, and read half of the second one, and decided I'd had enough. If you skip some stuff in a book, that's okay. Highly recommended.

Lexish says

I read through a few of these because I used to teach units on colonial America and was interested to see how this author (writing in the late 1800s) portrayed this period in history that was much closer to her than it is to us! Unless you're very interested in this topic, though, I wouldn't recommend it as a casual read.

Danielle says

Dry but interesting.

Joshua says

(Notes refer to the Project Gutenberg edition <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/22675>)

Charming, non-scholarly introduction to lifeways in Colonial America. I really enjoyed reading this one day while in bed with a cold, and it fits in with my recent viewings of the BBC Victorian Farm, Edwardian Farm, etc. series.

Does anyone else see the "proto-maker" sentiment, on the boy with the jack-knife section? Would we rewrite this as a boy with a CNC machine or a 3D printer?

Also, was encouraged to read that local economies and local investment are not a new idea, in the section on the communal sawmill in Gloucester, and other examples, such as "Other towns ordered certain persons to buy provisions "of the towns-men in preference." and Reading would not sell any of its felled timber out of the town."

Maryclaire says

This book was written in the 1890's. The author covers the daily life in Colonial America. She writes about their customs, their different type of homes, the raising of the food, it's preparation and it's serving style. Their are chapters on the style of lamps, from Betty lamps, Bull's Eye Lamps and of course tinder box and candles. It is a very informative book in all aspects of early life. I will refer to it many times.

Holly says

I have read this book more times than any non-children's book I've ever read. This is the bible of everyday life in colonial times. The detail, the coverage, the research are all so thorough and well written. I LOVE THIS BOOK. (quirky, I know, but what the hell....)

Derek says

The descriptions start without preamble or overview, launching immediately into detailed discussion of the shapes and sizes of the Colonials' homes. It is a dense reading, usually difficult to wade through, with only the broadest sense of structure: this chapter is houses, the next is food, then the tools, then the cloth, and so forth.

This crowd of facts and their relentless march is an unyielding reminder: life was harsh and full of work, and the people who lived during this time were both made of stern stuff and were possessed of skills that is awesome to consider.

It certainly makes it clear to this reader--who, on this lazy Saturday evening in August, sits in air conditioning, sipping a yogurt smoothie made of out-of-season fruit transported across continents and watching dancing cat videos--that we sit at the top of a long climb. At the base of this is the unending labor of Colonial times.

Just the production of clothes is something. Going from the flax plant itself to linen thread is twenty step process.

The author herself speaks from a nearly lost era itself, at a crossroads between the Colonial and the recognizably modern era. She seems almost wistful, with a sense of loss of the practical skills of the era--they made their own ribbons, for crying out loud--as well as its sensibilities in terms of the personal relationships that was its foundation. It seems to be a complaint made by all who yearn for the old times:

these people now don't care for one another and nobody knows how to make anything themselves.

Occasionally a difficult read, but a worthwhile or even necessary one. It certainly puts many modern hardships into perspective.

Steven Yenzer says

I loved this 1895 history of Colonial times. Earle's 19th-century nostalgia for the 18th century is all the more interesting from a 21st-century perspective.
