



Growing up in the Coalfields of the Appalachian Mountains, we were screened from much of the problems of the world by our parents, the hollers, and the mountain itself. We gardened whatever the rocky, steep terrain was level enough to clear the debris from to plant. All of us each had our own mattock and hoe, with our names on them to prevent arguments among us. Dad made my hoe, which I still prefer to use to this day, out of a mat-



After drying the corn dad would use the gristmill in his workshop and grind it into cornmeal

tock collar and a piece of sawmill blade metal.

My Dad worked in the mines, Mom at home, but all of us worked gardening, canning and feeding the animals that were a large part of our daily meals. We raised chickens for eggs and meat, hogs and cows for milk and beef. Dad also hunted wild game. We foraged for mushrooms and ginseng in the spring and fall. Preserving the fruits of our labor was a family effort. We pickled, canned, dried and froze everything we grew and harvested.

Dad also grew corn just for drying and would grind it into cornmeal on the gristmill in his workshop. He still does this even to-day. Oh the joy of feeling it vibrate the floors and the smells. Dad grew up in the Depression Era, he and his brothers quit in Middle School to work to help support the family, but it seemed like there was nothing my Daddy couldn't do. He also went through the days of the ration books, so he could never tolerate anything going to waste. There were five kids in our family and we never went without a meal.

I have the benefit of canning in much better jars and equipment than they had even 60 years ago. Our collectible jars, crocks, and bottles were the only means in that era to preserve food or it was stored in a cold cellar. I cannot envision the care and attention to details that utilizing those jars must have taken. The effort of canning by a fire or wood stove without the benefits of modern amenities.



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Pressure canners and better closures allowed for safer and easier means for preserving.



Given the price of the canning jars back then and comparing the wages of the time period, jars were so expensive for the working poor, that few could afford to do so. As such the jars were protected as much as possible. Dad tells of seeing his Mom cry when one of her jars broke because they were so hard to come by. The advent of the machines jars, or what some in the collection world call “common” jars, paved the way for less expensive jars and more canning opportunities. Pressure canners and better closures allowed for safer and easier means for preserving. Jars and canning procedures from an era ago and holding one of these jars, one cannot help but reminisce how difficult it was in those days.

The hot, labor intensive working conditions in the factories, combined with, in my opinion, talented tradesmen, are what makes these jars stand the test of time. The time from conception of an idea to the execution, to see the designs of their minds come to fruition is remarkable. Molds were crafted, not machine made, so each worker had a hand in making the characteristics we enjoy so much, unique to each jar. Even the conditions the jars were made under, materials, affected the final product we see today.

With the internet’s powerful impact, information is readily available on any topic. EBAY, Facebook auction sites and collector sites have allowed jars that were once out of reach to collectors, the opportunity to expand their collections and new collectors to immerse. Some groups specialize in certain jars, “Atlas”, “TradeMark Lightning”, “Ball” to name a few. Some specialize in lids and inserts, there is probably one out there for any collector.

Until next time... I wish you Happy Collecting... and keep preserving the past.