

Blast from the Past

Have you ever cleaned your house with a hand-made broom made from coconut branch? Do you know what a 'goose' is, the type you iron with? How about a coal pot, ever use one of those to cook? These three items conjure up lots of memories for many.

The Flat Iron and the Charcoal Iron.

The flat iron was heated by fire usually after cooking was finished, as the charcoal was still hot or on a stove. Most people had 2 irons. You had to handle them very carefully to avoid being burnt as the handle itself was metal so it too got hot. It was sometimes called a sad iron, coming from an old word for solid – sadiron. It is also called a goose, this name coming from goose-neck curves in some of the handles. Flat irons had to be kept very clean and polished to avoid rusting. Charcoal irons have a hollow space in the case where you would put hot charcoal. The funnel functions to keep smoky smells away from the cloth. Charcoal irons are still manufactured and used today in some parts of the world.

Coal Pot

A coal pot is small, iron, charcoal burning cooking device that was very popular in Jamaica. The top container area is about 15 inches wide and 7 inches deep. It has a screen on the bottom that allows ashes to fall through and also allows for air circulation. The container is supported on a stand or neck that has an opening for air. A pot of food would be placed on top of the coal pot. The coal pot was used for cooking, and often to heat flat irons. Some people also had a little two burner stove with a glass vessel where kerosene or some other type of fuel would be placed to run the stove.

Coconut Broom

Back in the day we didn't have all these stores like there is today -- stores where you can go and find all types of different brooms. People made things themselves in the past. Early brooms might have been a branch from a tree; this is the case all over the world. But generally people got a bit more creative and found that some type of dry straw-like fibers bundled together did a better job. To make the Coconut Broom the pieces (of palm) were dried out and then they were woven around the base of a stick. The stick had been shaven and cleaned for use as the broom stick. The pieces (of palm) had to be tightly woven. Good Coconut Brooms lasted a long time.