

## The History of Irons

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Hand irons are device used for garment pressing, irons have been heated directly by gas flame, stove plate heat, or in the case of the modern iron by electricity. Henry W Seely patented the electric iron in 1882.

### The Electric Iron

On June 6, 1882, Henry W. Seely of NYC patented the electric iron, at the time it was called the electric flatiron. Early electric irons used a carbon arc to create heat, however, this was not a safe method. In 1892, hand irons using electrical resistance were introduced by Crompton and Co. and the General Electric Company. During the early 1950s electric steam irons were introduced.

### [Mrs. Potts Sad Irons](#)

Mrs. Potts invented the Potts Removable Handle Iron.

### [Streamlined Electric Irons](#)

Collectors page on early electric irons.

### [Antique Pressing Irons](#)

Collectors page that provides some history lower on the page. Smoothing Stones have been around since the 8th and 9th century and are known as the earliest western ironing devices, looking somewhat like a large mushroom.

### [Fluting & Gas Pressing Irons](#)

Photographs and information on gas pressing irons.

## Mrs. Potts Sad Irons



**Mrs. Potts Sad Irons Trade Cards**



### **Original Patent Model of Mrs. Potts Sad Iron Patented 1871 by Mary Potts**

This patent model shows that the body of the iron was cast hollow and was later filled with material that was a non-conductor of heat, such as plaster of Paris, cement or clay. Mrs. Potts claimed in her patent that this material held the heat longer so that more garments could be ironed without reheating the iron.

Mary Potts received a series of patents for variations on her iron. Some patents also were reissued. This item is part of the Homer Blair Patent Model Collection on exhibit at the Franklin Pierce Law Center Intellectual Property Library in Concord, New Hampshire.

[Click here to visit that collection - see Item #14](#)

Quote from their web page:

*"14. Sad Iron, U. S. Patent 113,448, April 4, 1871, Mary Florence Potts, Ottumwa, Iowa. The invention is a detachable handle for pressing irons. This permits a person to heat a number of iron bodies on a stove, attach the handle to one and iron with it until it cools, then attaching it to another heated iron body.*

*The model is 8" x 5" x 6" and has a metal body with a smooth bottom, a gold colored metal latch, and wood handle. The body is filled with a white non-conducting material, perhaps Plaster of Paris. The name "Mary Florence Potts" is engraved in script. This model is in very good condition.*

*This is the famous "Mrs. Potts' Sad Iron" that was widely manufactured and licensed in the United States and Europe. Her picture was featured in advertising. Her iron was exhibited in the Centennial Exhibition at the Smithsonian and also in the 1976 Bicentennial Exhibition. Mrs. Potts' iron is well known by antique dealers and collectors. "*

We encourage you to visit this fascinating site!

During the 1999 MSICC Convention in Lisle/Naperville, IL on July 23rd and 24th, Elizabeth Carlson portrayed Mrs. Potts. She is a researcher, published historian, educator and lecturer. She is a professional museum curator and holds a Bachelors degree in history. She does Mrs. Potts portrayals for Historical Societies, civic groups

and schools and we were thrilled to receive her visit during this meeting so that we could learn more about the life and inventions of Mrs. Potts.



**Elizabeth Carlson portraying Mrs. Potts**

## **Streamlined Electric Irons**

**from the collection of Jay Raymond  
Jenkintown, Pennsylvania**

This collection shows the great advance of American electric irons in the '30s and '40s in terms of styling, availability and innovation.

[Contact Jay directly](#) if you would like further information about the collection or streamlined irons in general.

**Collecting approach and scope**

The collection began in the early 1980s with a small cache of irons found at a church rummage sale. Since then it has grown to number near 250, with 80 or more different manufacturers represented.

When an iron is said to be 'early', 'late' or otherwise described, this applies to the development of streamlined design as it is seen in irons. It does not necessarily apply to actual year(s) the iron was produced. Some manufacturers used the idea earlier than others and others abandoned it sooner. The development was not linear at every point.

This collection is nearly all from the USA, and what is said here is about irons from the U.S. Irons from other countries show that they each had their own appealing answers to what a streamlined iron looks like.

### **What is 'streamlining'?**

Henry Dreyfuss, the pioneering and respected US industrial designer, is said to have called streamlining, 'cleanlining'. One can see it by thinking of what can be done to minimise the wind resistance of an object. The leading edge is pointed and smoothed; all is curved and curved softly. Details are minimised. The object does not convey 'heaviness'. It conveys 'lightness', 'speediness', 'simplicity', 'sleekness', 'frugality' and the like. It is ironic that an 'iron', a word conveying weight, should aspire to and appear non-weighty but it was as well suited to the idea as were train locomotives and graphics. (Later it would be learned that weight is virtually unnecessary for the chore of ironing wrinkled clothes: steam will enable fabric to straighten out almost by itself.)

The idea of streamlining and the materials, Bakelite, chromium plated steel and cast aluminum, were compatible. The materials could be used plastically, that is moldable, so that soft curves could be produced and very wide variations in designs could be achieved.

### **Electric irons and streamlining**

Early on, streamlined irons were smoother versions of early electrics: the bases were made with softer edges. See the ['Winpower'](#) for an early convert. Its handle is old style and the base is new style. The ['GE 149F84'](#) successfully uses the new material Bakelite for its streamlined possibilities. Its base, though somewhat squared off, continues the line of the handle and so together a truly new (modern) look is seen. In fact, GE, called this iron 'The Moderne'.

Later, the handles became a single piece extending to the cowl at front and rear. Most irons of this period were like this. Four first rate examples of this are the ['Erla F10'](#), the ['Montgomery Ward 24-DE-2669'](#), the ['General Mfg. Co'](#) and most famously, the ['Petipoint'](#). At the end of the period the handle became completely integrated into the base: see the ['Westinghouse ID-72'](#) as the prime example.

Then there are the irons that had a way unto themselves, and the ['Lady Dover 380'](#) is one. Knapp-Monarch, who produced more variety in this field than any other manufacturer, used in this iron an unparalleled combination of multiple pieces of Bakelite, chrome bands, chrome leaves, color and texture. This, above a base used numerous times with completely different handles. See Knapp-Monarch's ['470R'](#) and ['19-504'](#).

Some attempts were made to use wood, a material of the previous generation, as a 'plastic' material. The results were usually awkward and not as cleanlined. See the ['Selwyn Chief'](#). A stunning exception to this is the Knapp-Monarch ['Steam King'](#), whose wood handle does not try beyond the wood's plasticity and achieves a wonderfully integrated and unique streamlined profile.

### **Streamlining and early electric steam irons**

Just as streamlining was enabled by new technology, so was its demise. The development of a steam iron that boiled one drop of water at a time, made the steam iron practical and very popular. Thus, the need to store water brought on larger and more squared off bases, which were now functioned as tanks. And the word 'tank' can be used to see what happened to the sleek beauties of the thirties and forties.

One iron solved this problem and managed to be one of the crowning achievements in streamlining, [General Mills' 'Tru Heat Iron'](#). Designed like no other iron, it stands out today both for its appearance and its current population. No other iron has survived in the numbers it has. [General Mills](#) also took a unique approach to the steam challenge and produced a streamlined attachment for the iron that had a stainless (then later, black plastic) tank attached at the rear, like an outboard motor, to hold the water. Proctor also thought to attach a tank to their fourth and last generation 'Never Lift'. See model ['990'](#). The profile of this iron already is more of the following generation, but the translucent blue tank is clearly of the now fading streamlined generation.

All in all, 'streamlining' began about 1934 and was mostly over by 1950. About three of those years, during WWII, saw little domestic production. So there were about 14 years when the irons were arriving in this style. In that time, in the USA, a very large, diverse and mostly independent manufacturing base produced an amazing array of speedy, clean and shiny implements of household labor and yet the chore of ironing was still not loved.

[Click on the thumbnail image to see the full-size image.](#)

### **Alcamatic**

Thermostat iron with phenolic resin handle that has unusual aluminum button at the tip. Chromed steel cowl. Design patent issued March 30, 1948 and assigned to Eastern Metal Products in Tuckahoe, N.Y. Very few samples known.



### **American Electrical Heater Co. 'American Beauty'**

Thermostat irons with black phenolic resin handles that have colored clear 'Lucite' center sections. The (more common) red is model 79AB and the orange is model 33AB. The center sections are purely decorative but apparently were a marketing success as this is one of the most common irons of this era found today. A model without the Lucite section was also produced. A design patent for the handle was issued to 'F. Kuhn et al' in June 1940 but there is no evidence that it was produced before WWII. Known to be made in the early fifties and probably in the late forties. In about 1894 this company produced one of the earliest electric irons.



### **American Electric Supply Co. "Princess De Luxe"**

Steam iron with phenolic resin handle and cast aluminum body. This is a unique combination of hammered and smooth finishes and the boundary between the two makes the iron the eye-pleaser that it is. This iron and the Cardinal 333 have the same rear end and probably came from the same "hand." There were numerous companies with similar names in St. Louis that produced cast aluminum steam irons. This is most likely a pre-War item.



### Ataco Steel Products Co. "Feather Way" model 140

Thermostat steam iron with phenolic resin handle over aluminum body. A design patent was issued to Fred W. Busch on October 12, 1948 for a dry version. It was also labeled "Feather Way", was model 110 and made by American Thermo Appliance in Milwaukee. Ataco was in Grafton, Wisconsin. Few samples known of the 140: the 110 is easier to find.



### Bersted Mfg. Co 'Patrician'

Standard iron with temperature indicator dial on top of cowl. Painted wood handle and chrome steel cowl. Produced in 1939 and perhaps other years.



### Calor (France) 'Calormatic' model 32

Thermostat iron with burgundy phenolic resin handle incorporating a red pilot light. Unknown production but appears pre WWII.



### Cardinal Mfg. Co. "Cardinal" model 333

Thermostat steam iron with phenolic resin handle over smooth-finished, cast aluminum body. Made in St. Louis, probably pre-War.



### Casco Products Co. "Casco N4"

A steam iron made in Bridgeport, Connecticut. Plastic handle of unknown material over a stainless steel body. The handle is hinged at the rear and lifts up to reveal the port for water. Made in several colors: common in red and black, not so common in caramel and olive, rare in white and not yet seen in grey and teal. Produced from 1949 until sometime in the mid-fifties.



### Century (Australia)

A liquid fuel fired iron made in Australia. Liquid or gaseous fueled irons of the period were hindered in adopting streamlining due to the fuel burning apparatus, but adapt they did. Nothing is known about this version except its name and country of origin. It has a dark red phenolic resin handle over a chromed cast iron body. The iron is opened for lighting by pressing down on the knob under the handle: this releases a latch and the entire top lifts off.



### Chicago Electric Mfg. Co. 'Handyhot' model 1501-SA-4270

Thermostat iron with phenolic resin handle and chrome steel base. Mechanical patent issued 1942, design patent issued to 'E.S. Preston' in April 1939. Manufactured in 1948 and perhaps just before and after. A textbook use of the streamlined design ethic.



### Coleman Lantern and Stove Co. "Coleman" model 41

Automatic iron with phenolic resin handle over chromed steel cowl. The same company that sells camping equipment sold electric irons, and their streamlined versions appeared in 1938 or 1939. Their model 40 is identical in appearance but operates at 800 watts instead of the 1100 watts of the 41. I suspect this iron may have been made by Westinghouse for Coleman, as it has striking similarities to the Westinghouse LPC-414.



### Connecticut Appliance Co. model 361

Thermostat iron with phenolic resin handle. A small regional manufacturer produced this somewhat outrageous iron. A very simple base is crowned by a complex handle and control knob. Unknown dates. Produced under several different names.



### Eatonia (Canada)

Standard iron with painted wood handle over chromed steel cowl. The thumb rest is plastic. C.S.A. approval no. 348. In Canada, all electrical appliances had to be approved by the government and the approval number stamped on the item. The five holes at the front of the cowl are reminiscent of the holes in the side of the hoods of the post-War Buick automobiles and just as (non) functional.



### Dover Appliance Co. 'Lady Dover' model 380

Made by Knapp-Monarch. Thermostat iron with a black two-piece phenolic resin handle, that is painted with red accents and incorporates a red pilot light: a tour de force in streamlining. Knapp-Monarch, the king of streamlining irons, made this base with many different handles, including an earlier version of this model that used wood (in a more simplified shape) as the upper half of the handle. This iron is usually seen without the red accents and is somewhat common in that variety.



### Erla Corp. 'Erla' model F10

Thermostat iron with phenolic resin handle and aluminum cowl and soleplate. Only known model produced by this Los Angeles, California Co. Zippy control knob and overall elegant realisation of the streamlined ethic. Probably a post WWII item.



### General Electric model 126F115

Thermostat iron with phenolic resin handle. The cowl is dark bluish grey and it is unknown how this finish was accomplished. GE was a dominant manufacturer and its designs showed the conservatism of a large corporation. This is one of the few that stands out of the crowd. This iron is somewhat rare and was produced in far greater numbers with a standard chrome finish. Also made with a white enamel finish. Uncertain production but approximately 1941.



### General Electric model 149F84

Thermostat iron with blood red phenolic resin handle. This iron was produced at least as early as 1935 (and perhaps until 1939) making it one of the early great and uncompromised uses of streamlining. GE continued to produce other more conservative designs but sold this as their top-of-the-line, usually referred to as the 'Moderne'. A common iron in black: quite rare in red.



### General Electric (Canada) Cat. no. F41A

Thermostat iron, black phenolic resin handle, chromed steel cowl, cord is attached in such a way that it can swivel from right to left. Production dates unknown.



### General Mills "Tru-Heat Iron" model 1B

Thermostat iron with phenolic resin handle and chromed steel cowl. The facilities and people General Mills had from War production were put to work producing home appliances after the War, a new venture for this breakfast cereal company. Designed by John Polivka and Francesco Collura, a great deal of effort went into product research and the iron was a sales sensation. A steam attachment, first with a stainless steel (model 4A) and then a black plastic (model 4B) tank, was made to slip on the sole plate of the iron. Introduced in 1946 as model 1A, it then became 1B (upper picture) and then 1BB (lower picture). By 1954 the appliance division was sold to McGraw Electric and relabeld "Fostoria." Perhaps the most distinctive form and profile of the era: it uses elements of Deco, industrial design and streamlining. Perhaps because of its look people saved them, as there seems to be more of these around today than any other streamlined iron.



### General Mfg. Co. (no model number)

Thermostat iron with dark brown phenolic resin handle and smooth finish cast aluminum base. Very unusual organically shaped handle, the product of a small Midwestern US manufacturer. Unknown production dates but the style suggests late thirties to early forties.



### Gilson-Waage Appliance Co. (no model number)

Thermostat iron with control knob in handle near top front edge. Painted wood handle and chrome steel base. Unknown production dates but design suggests mid to late thirties.



### Gloria (Australia)

A liquid fuel iron that shows a bit of streamlining in the sweep of the curve on the side of the body, echoed in the front support for the handle, and the upward tilt of the handle itself. The upper knob at the rear is a set screw that, when loosened, allows the top of the iron to be removed for lighting. Also seen with a chromed tank. A pre-War iron.



### Hartford Products Corp. 'Dream Automatic Speed Iron' model 1947

Thermostat iron, phenolic resin handle, chrome steel cowl, aluminum sole plate. Made by a regional manufacturer in the eastern U.S. Unknown production dates, but design and 'cat.no. 1947' suggests mid to late forties.



### Hope Products. 'Mermaid' (no model number)

Steam iron (without thermostat) in 'hammered' cast aluminum with black phenolic resin handle. An elegant use of materials. Unknown production. Identical model produced by American Electric Mfg as 'The Chief' (model 501) which is common.



### Jackson Appliance Mfg. Co. "Jackson" model 638

Thermostat iron with painted wood handle and chromed steel body. This iron, like the Heatmaster 644, is an intermediate, (but more tentative), step towards streamlining. It was sold in 1946 by a small regional manufacturer in Brooklyn, New York. This is one of two samples seen.



### Knapp-Monarch model 19-504

Thermostat iron with dark brown phenolic resin handle that incorporates a pilot light. Knapp-Monarch produced several irons with the same base and completely different handles, (see its model 470R, below). They also produced irons labeled for other brands, such as 'Lady Dover, (see Lady Dover #380). The variety of their designs is unsurpassed by any manufacturer. This iron was made in 1946 and perhaps other years.



### Knapp-Monarch model 470R

Thermostat iron with dark brown phenolic resin handle that incorporates a pilot light. Identical base to K-M 19-504 with more conservative handle. This iron is dated '2-42' and was probably not produced for more than a total of twelve months as K-M seemed to change designs frequently.



### Knapp Monarch 'Steam King' model 475R

Thermostat steam iron with painted (brown) wood handle and 'hammered' cast aluminum base. Unique in its design and use of materials. A design patent was issued to 'R.I. Huffman' in April 1941. Standing taller than all other irons this combines streamlining and an industrial look in an extraordinary way: this from a manufacturer that produced a wide array of irons in an equally wide array of styles. Production dates unknown..



### Knapp-Monarch "Copper-Magik" model 19-509

Thermostat iron with brown phenolic resin handle. Unusual for the control knob incorporated into the front of the handle and designed to be rested on its side, like the General Mills. This was made in at least two variations; the other has a black handle, a different identification plate on top and a different model number: 19-510A. Made in 1951 and, perhaps, other years.



### Landers, Frary & Clark "Universal" model E-9191

Standard iron with wood handle and brass plated cowl. This iron, probably from the twenties or early thirties shows early influence of streamlining. The handle, instead of being a simple, straight wood turning, is mildly curved. The leading edge slopes gently. The back end is rounded (which the manufacturer claimed) and thus was sold as "wrinkle proof." This is the only U.S. electric iron I am aware of that used brass. It was also made with a chromed steel cowl.



### **Manning Bowman cat.no. 2492**

Thermostat iron with phenolic resin handle. This iron is date stamped Jan. 1948 and may have been produced in adjacent years.



### **Manning-Bowman Co. model 2494**

Thermostat iron with phenolic resin handle. This Meriden, Connecticut company sold this as "The IRONS-THAT-WAGS-ITS-TAIL!" since the cord could swing 180° to accommodate left or right-handed users. It was sold just pre and post-War.



### **Montgomery Ward model 25-DE-2669**

Thermostat iron with phenolic resin handle and a pilot light just behind temperature control. Montgomery Ward was a department store and had their irons made for them. This one was produced by 'Dominion' which also labeled it with their own name. Although the handle on this model is unusual, the identical base is found on many other irons made by Dominion with different wood and plastic handles.



### **Montgomery Ward model 86-2612**

Thermostat iron with black phenolic resin handle painted red at rear and on temperature control (located at front of rear base of handle). Made by Landers, Frary and Clark for Montgomery Ward. Produced in 1949 and perhaps adjacent years.



### **Montgomery Ward model 86-5091**

Thermostat iron, painted wood handle with chrome steel handle supports and base. Almost certainly made by 'Dominion' for Ward. U.S. design patent issued to 'W.A. Barnes' and assigned to Dominion in April 1938. Unknown production dates but probably late thirties, early forties. A classic in 'streamlining': all elements including the control knob suggest speed.



### **Montgomery Ward Cat. No. 86-D5113**

Thermostat iron with a wood handle and chromed steel cowl. A design patent was issued to F.D. Chapman on July 28, 1936 and assigned to Montgomery Ward. This large chain of department stores hired a variety of manufacturers to make their designs, which were often quite distinctive. This one was probably made by Dover and certainly pre-War, though exact dates not yet discovered.



### National Stamping and Electrical Works "White Cross" model 351

Automatic iron with phenolic resin handle. Made in Chicago. An iron with elegant lines: it was also produced with a gunmetal dark grey body. Both versions are difficult to find.



### Novex-Siebert "Ultramatic" model 44 (France)

Thermostat iron with a single piece phenolic resin body. This maroon beauty, reportedly made circa 1935, makes it clear again that the U.S. was not alone in producing streamlined irons of the first rank. It's complex shape shows the streamlines, while the handle and body terminate in truncated wings.



### Proctor Electric Co. 'Never-Lift' model 960

Thermostat iron with phenolic resin handle that has painted red stripes on the side. This is the second generation of Proctor irons that incorporated built in spring loaded supports. The first generation was called the 'Snap Stand' and the second through fourth, the 'Never Lift'. The legs were released from their retracted and locked position by pushing the small red button at the top front of the handle. When resuming ironing, one would push down on the iron until it contacted the surface and then pressed with the heel of one's hand on the large knob at the top rear of the handle which would lock the now retracted legs. This dominant manufacturer was successful in marketing this feature and this pre War version was sold from about 1939 to 1942. The post war version is nearly identical but with the elimination of the chrome leaves at the base of the handle and other minor changes that made it less expensive to produce. A common iron, even nowadays, though less so than its post War sister.



### Proctor Electric Co. 'Never-Lift' model 965

Thermostat steam iron with the 'Never Lift' feature. Black phenolic resin handle incorporating a 'headlight' in one of the more organic shapes seen in the era. The water supply was stored in a tank that was clamped to the ironing board and fed through a tube to a small port in the top right hand side of the iron. This port can be just seen between the back of the temperature control and the base of the handle. Produced just before and during the early years of WWII. A somewhat rare iron: more so with its accessories.



### Proctor Electric Co. 'Mary Proctor Never Lift' Steamer, model 990

Steam iron, phenolic resin handle, chrome steel cowl. This is the fourth and last generation of Proctor's 'Never Lift' series, produced beginning about 1952. This



generation offered a steam version by attaching a translucent plastic water reservoir to the back of the iron. The Never Lift feature was the most sophisticated in that no release was required to retract the post (vs. legs in the earlier generations). The user would simply push down on the iron until the sole plate contacted the surface and the post would remain retracted until the small red lever under the front of the handle was pulled again. Made with a green tank and an almost identical version under the 'Windsor' name that had a red reservoir..

### **Samson-United (Canada) model 4341**

Thermostat iron, variegated brown 'Bakelite' handle, chrome steel cowl, U.S. Design patent issued December 1936 to A.O. Samuels. Production dates unknown.



### **Sears, Roebuck and Co. "Heatmaster" model 844**

Thermostat iron with painted wood handle. This pre-War iron is an intermediate step towards a fully streamlined profile. Like the old irons it uses metal standards for the handle, but they are sculpted. The handle too uses the old material, wood, but again it is shaped to become torpedo-like. Even the control knob shows some concession to the times. Heatmaster was Sears' house brand and so was made in large numbers, though this model has not been easy to find.



### **Selwyn Engineering Co. 'Chief' model A150**

Thermostat iron, painted wood handle, cast aluminum cowl. Produced by a small regional manufacturer in the midwestern U.S. Unknown production dates: probably mid to late thirties.



### **Silex Co. 'Silex' model 4144-244**

Thermostat steam iron with black phenolic resin handle with red accents and a cast aluminum base. The cord is attached so that it can swing from one side to the other. This was produced in 1947 and probably other years.



### **Steem Electric Co. "Steemx Automatic" model C-7**

Thermostat steam iron with phenolic resin handle and cast aluminum body, painted red. Reportedly also made in light green, this is the only painted iron of the times. Like all early steam irons, this boiled the whole tank of water which made for slow and erratic steam production. Using two "e"s to spell steam was used by several of the St. Louis companies. Probably pre-War.



### Rival Mfg. Co. "Steam-O-Matic" model R-500-A

Thermostat steam iron with phenolic resin handle and stainless steel body. The handle is hinged at the rear to lift and reveal the port for water. This company, in 1938, produced one of the first steam irons, (see the Steam-o-Matic without a model no. in this exhibition). Later, they went on to produce the Petipont. After starting out in New York City, then moving to Milwaukee and Sandusky, Ohio, they ended up in Kansas City, Missouri and remain in business there. The R-500, introduced in 1949, was soon changed to a simpler, less dramatic handle and produced for several years. The later versions are quite common: the first, not so common.



### Steam-O-Matic Corp. (no model number)

Very early steam iron that boils the entire reservoir to produce steam, a slow and erratic process. The cast 'hammered' aluminum base is filled with water through an opening in the top; a two-eared, threaded stopper can be seen below the painted wooden handle. This is probably model 'A' as later versions are 'B', 'C' and 'D'. Produced in 1938 and, perhaps, adjacent years



### Singer Sewing Machine Co. 'Singer' model D

Thermostat iron with black phenolic resin handle. Produced in 1947 and probably adjacent years. The best in streamlined temperature control knobs.



### Steam Electric Mfg. Co. "Steemco Steemette" model 700



Travel sized steam iron with phenolic resin handle and aluminum body. Unusual for its small size and a handle suspended at the front (vs. the rear), it has one of the cleanest profiles of any iron of the period. Another aluminum steamer made in St. Louis. Undiscovered dates.



### United Motors Service Inc. "Delco" model 94161

Thermostat iron with phenolic resin handle over a chromed steel cowl. A nearly identical version is found labeled "Lady Dover" which was made by The Dover Mfg. Co. in Dover, Ohio, who probably made this one as well. This company, Delco, was in Detroit but it is not known if it is any relation to General Motors. The control knob is heart-shaped in front with tail feathers shooting out the back. Unknown production dates.



### **Landers, Frary and Clark 'Universal' model EA-1203**

Thermostat iron with burgundy and black phenolic resin handle, sporting a grille in the front behind which is a 'headlight'. This is one of several irons from this period that were made with lights to illuminate the work for the user. Sold in the late forties.



### **Waverly Tool Co. 'Petipoint' model 410**

Thermostat iron with phenolic resin handle. Design patent issued to 'C.B. Stevens' in July 1941. Mr. (Brooks) Stevens is a well known industrial designer of the period and the Petipoint is seen by some as one of the premier achievements in iron design. The fins on the sides extend beyond the plane of the cowl, giving the appearance of wings and the flight theme is echoed in the 'duck tail' at the back of the iron. This iron was also produced with a black control knob and with the 'Edmilton Corp.' listed, a predecessor to the Waverly Tool Co. Sold just pre War, exact dates unknown.



### **Westinghouse model ID-72**

Thermostat iron with black and cream phenolic resin handle incorporated into the base. A striking use of materials. This was produced with minor variations including larger print 'Westinghouse' on top of the handle and a small Westinghouse badge mounted on the 'bow' of the handle. Also made in all black. Produced approximately 1949-50.



### **Winpower Mfg. Co. 'Winpower Select Heat' model 64PS**

Standard iron with painted wood handle and black ceramic finished base. This is a 32V DC iron, made (I am told) for a farm or wherever site-generated power was used. It has three prongs at the rear and three different wattages could be selected by using different pairs. A nearly identical 120VAC iron was made with the 'Waage' name. Unknown production but probably mid thirties.



### **Winsted Hardware Co. 'Durabilt' model 123**

Thermostat iron. Handle is mottled burgundy color and of unknown composition. Unknown production dates but is probably early in the streamlined era, i.e. mid thirties.



### **Yale & Towne Mfg. Co. 'Tip-Toe'**

Thermostat iron with black phenolic resin handle. Produced in 1947 and 1948 and perhaps after. This company, well known for its line of hardware and locks, entered the small appliance market by selling this one iron. Large one page colored ads in many variations were produced to sell its unique feature: the front section of the sole plate is attached separately and hinged so that it can remain in contact with the clothes when the rear of the iron is lifted slightly. This enabled the user to work in small areas. One of the more "over-the-top" uses of



streamlining it also featured a cord that swivels from right to left. The iron appears to have a headlamp but this is white painted stripes. Yale probably had this iron made for them as it was also produced as 'Bersted Mfg Co.'s model 530'. Bersted was a small appliance manufacturer.



The history of pressing irons is closely related to the history of fashion, and ironing devices have been produced throughout time in response to the need to press the specific styles of clothes that were in fashion at any particular time. Advances in technology and manufacturing led to an interesting and varied progression in the development of different means to heat the many different styles of irons. In addition to unusual fluting irons and gas or fuel heated irons we are also always looking for unusual patented antique flat irons or sadirons, early patented electric irons (pre-1907), unusual antique child-size irons, polishing irons, sleeve irons, or any other unique and early ironing related antique devices. We are also interested in buying any ironing related advertising or early store displays for ironing devices.

**If you have any unique or unusual antique pressing irons that are for sale, via email at [clm@antigbuyer.com](mailto:clm@antigbuyer.com) giving us as many details as possible including the asking price.**

**If you are interested in purchasing antique pressing irons be sure to go to our sister site at [www.patented-antiques.com](http://www.patented-antiques.com) to view our current offerings that we have available there.**

Fluting irons are one of the most interesting type of antique pressing irons ever invented, and were designed to crimp, ruffle and press little pleats into starched fabric. Used for collars, cuffs, etc. these vintage tools were an invention that saw their heyday in America from the 1860's through the 1880's, but some very rare and unusual ones were made right into the 1920's.

Pictured here are two different types of antique fluting irons. The Holly is a machine fluter--- it operates by means of a hand crank which crimps the fabric as it transports it between the two fluted rollers. These machine fluters are also referred to as pleaters, or pleating irons, crimpers, crimping irons, or rufflers and came in a myriad of designs---some had pedestal or tripod bases, some were clamp-on models, and there were even electric fluters, with each style having a rare and valuable variation or two amongst them. Values for machine fluters generally run from under \$100 for more common examples like the "American" and the "Crown", to well over \$1000 for very rare and desirable ones such as the Holly fluter pictured above. Today on the Internet the most common names that are almost always readily available in machine fluting irons are names such as Crown, American, Eagle, Knox and a few others. But there are many, many lesser known models that we are looking to buy---the Holly is just one, but there are dozens of others, like the Dion, or versions of the Meyer's patents---so if you have any antique fluting irons that you would like to sell be sure to [let us know](#).



The McClure fluting iron is an example of a pretty rare rocker fluter. It is the name and the maker that makes this fluter rare, not the style, which is the most commonly found design of all fluting irons. With this rocker

style of antique fluting iron the ironer would manually rock the top half of the iron over the bottom half with the fabric in-between. The iron pictured in the very top left corner of this page is another example of a desirable and interesting antique rocker fluter that we are seeking to buy known as the Dion, and like the McClure it too is named after the inventor who patented it. This Dion fluting iron was patented in 1868 and 1870 and is a highly sought after example. At the other end of the value spectrum is the Geneva Fluter, the most commonly found of this style of rocker fluter irons. However there are many others that at first glance look to be very similar to the Geneva that can actually be unusual variations. Most Geneva's bring under \$50 these days, but the Geneva Improved, a variation with brass plates, brings more, and the Howell version rocker fluter with wavy rather than straight line fluted brass plates has been know to sell for upwards of \$500. This is just one example of how small variations in a given model or subtle variations in features in an antique can widely affect value. There are other rocker fluters with concave / convex top and bottom plates, ones with upright or vertical rocker handles, and many others by little-known manufacturers that were are currently looking for.



A third style of fluting iron, is the roller style fluter, where a the top piece is manually rolled rather than rocked over the bottom to press the fabric into the flutes. Unusual irons of this style would be those with unique handle shapes, there is one with a thermometer built into the fluting plate, and another that has a double roller on the handle. We are always buying unusual examples of all styles of antique fluting irons, so if you have one that you think we would be interested in, please contact us at [clm@antigbuver.com](mailto:clm@antigbuver.com) with the details.

Another category of antique pressing irons we are always interested in buying are fuel irons of every type---antique irons that were heated by gasoline, kerosene, alcohol, natural gas, carbide-acetylene, or over a gas-jet or lamp, etc. Perhaps the best known and most commonly found or offered for sale of this style of iron is the blue enamel Coleman gasoline iron. In addition to making lanterns, Coleman made a myriad of models of fuel irons, many of them in assorted enamel colored finishes. Blue is by far the most commonly seen color, but Coleman also made irons in many other colors that are much more desirable---turquoise, red, green, tan, etc. Other manufacturers made colored enamel irons as well that are also eagerly sought. The tan or beige colored gas iron on the right was made by the American Machine Co. and an enameled gas iron called the Sunshine was produced in a beautiful burgundy color.



These irons range in value in good+ condition from as low as \$30 or so for a blue Coleman in typical used condition to several hundred dollars for an unusual color iron in pristine condition in its original box with accessories. We are always seeking to purchase these enameled gas irons in super condition, and in colors other than the typical and most common Coleman blue.

The antique gas iron pictured on the left is a fairly typical style fuel iron that has a large rear mounted tank. It is one example of the wide variety of styles of collectible fuel irons that can be found. Where to put the fuel was a major consideration in the design of these antique irons, and the different designs that evolved over time have made for a great collectable category in antique irons. Some fuel irons

seemed to work better if the tank was located in the front, but that led to the problem of the ironer not being able to see her work, so others were designed and patented with the fuel tanks in other locations---on top of the iron under the handle, on the back of the iron and sometimes offset toward the side of the iron (usually set up for the right handed ironer), on the side of the iron in a more cylindrical shape, or even with a tank incorporated into the handle of the iron. In this day and age it may seem incredible to think of ironing with a burning flame within the iron, but many of these so called "antique" liquid fuel irons were sold right up to WWII to rural families in the farm states, and today the Amish are big buyers and sellers of these antiques as "users". Gas or fuel irons range in value from under \$25 for very common and relatively late examples such as the gas iron named The Monitor or those marked with the names or those that were marketed by Montgomery Wards or Sears, who were major suppliers of these devices to the American consumer well into the 20th century in parts of the country where electricity was slow in coming, to several hundred dollars or even more for the few very rare examples in super condition that are only occasionally found anymore. Some examples of these rare fuel irons can be see on the other iron page at this site as well as on our collection pages at our sister site at [www.patented-antiques.com](http://www.patented-antiques.com). Please be sure to visit that site if you have the time.



Another type of gas heated vintage pressing iron that we are buying is the gas jet style. This style of antique iron at first glance resembles a common cast iron "doorstop" sadiron but closer inspection reveals a hollowed out, rather than solid body. These irons were designed to be heated directly by a kerosene lamp or by a wall-mounted gas jet apparatus, and were hung on the apparatus and inverted over it so the interior of the iron could be directly exposed to the hot flame. These gas jet irons come in both full size and smaller travel or portable sizes. The iron shown here is McCarty's patent, which was granted in 1879. Examples of smaller gas jet irons that we buy are the Acme and the Sultana. These hollowed out body gas jet irons are eagerly sought for purchase and addition to our collection.

**There are many different types of antique sadirons irons that we are interested in buying, so be sure to let us know if you have an antique fluting iron, any type of fuel iron, antique child-size or salesman sample small irons, special purpose irons of any sort, figural irons such as swans, goats, trains, flower irons or leaf irons, early electric irons (1907 or earlier) or patented antique irons in unusual shapes. We are also avidly seeking to buy a cast iron tobacco cutter made in the shape of a flatiron marked "Scotten Dillon Flat Iron Plug."**