

Bath once a luxury

Technological progress has been responsible for some interesting changes in attitude about a lot of common-place things in our lives. Bathing is one of them.

Monroe Countians would wrinkle up their noses at the crude homemade soap used by our ancestors.

But an essential part of a frontier housewife's know-how was the tedious process of

Looking Back

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making soap. You may recall that the process involved saving ashes from the fireplace and mixing them with lye. Spring and autumn were better suited for the chore, since the ingredients had to be simmered in a large kettle.

Except for clothing that had been made "back East," the frontier men and women wore homespun linsey-woolsey suits and dresses that were not plentiful. For a female, one everyday dress and one for Sunday was not at all unusual.

TO HISTORIANS TELL US that the average student arrived in Bloomington with two shirts — one on his back and the other tied up in a bundle. The university catalogue for 1846 lists the going rate for laundry at \$2 a session or \$4 for the year.

If our ancestors smelled a little "gamey," it is certainly understandable, since deodorants hadn't been invented and the once-a-week, Saturday night bath in preparation for Sunday was a "cleanliness is next to Godliness" ritual. In warm weather rural Monroe Countians had the advantage of town folks in that