

From The Grove Archives

What's New in the Archives?

I am sure that many of you are familiar with “Baby Bouncers” or “Baby Jumpers.” But did you know that this “modern” way of exercising your baby goes all the way back to the mid-19th century?

In the August 1846 edition of the *Prairie Farmer* (Vol. VI, page 249), there is an article entitled The Baby Jumper. The magazine warned their readers not to consider this object as trivial because “what is useful is never trivial.” The author wrote that the plight of a young mother of “The West” is a hard one. There are many tasks to accomplish while they also have to care for an infant. To aid the “weary arms and aching shoulders” of a mother or nurse, and gratify baby’s desire for exercise, *Prairie Farmer* introduced its readers to an apparatus called the Baby Jumper.

There are several paragraphs describing how to construct a Baby Jumper. Next the infant is hung at such a height so that it can touch its feet to the floor. The baby will discover the “slight spring” which will then lead to a “pleasant jumping motion.” Soon the baby will be “dancing like a puppet.” The article goes on to say that “A strong infant three months old will learn in a day to enjoy itself in this swing, and will soon spend an hour at a time with little attention. A judicious mother will not however allow it to tire itself too much at first.” The article also cautioned mothers not to fear that so much use of the limbs might “crook them.” Rather it was suggested



that it will strengthen the limbs “by giving exercise to their muscles.”

Now for the interesting part of the *Prairie Farmer* article. *Prairie Farmer* writes that “We do not know who ‘got up’ this apparatus; but we first saw it in use at the house of Dr. J.A. Kennicut, of Wheeling, this county, and for what we know he may be its inventor.” Bruno Kennicott was born in 1845, so he may have been the baby using it when *Prairie Farmer* came to their house.

Come see the Baby Jumper in person at The Grove Archives. The building is open for tours on Saturdays and Sundays from 11:00 am to 3:00 pm.

What in the World is this?



Can you recognize this very important item? Our “hungry” forefathers would have had a very difficult time getting through the day without it. Let me know what you think by emailing at Elizabeth.kopp@glenviewparks.org and if you cannot guess what it is, I will reveal all in the next issue of the *Leaf*.

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