

Designing Outhouses 101

As said before, an outhouse is designed like a shed, but instead of holding tools it holds a toilet. The toilet seat inside of an outhouse was once just a raised hole above the ground, but then it became more. Some were built to accommodate both adults and children so the seat was built with varying hole sizes.

Once outhouses were built, it was discovered that an outhouse did not need to fit only one person, but instead could hold many. Soon trenches were dug and outhouses built on top to accommodate multiple users.

Then came the two-story outhouse. The bottom toilet was installed like any ordinary outhouse, but the upstairs one was pushed back so the waste would fall down behind the bottom toilet instead of landing above the lower room. It had a separate entrance.

Since outhouses had such a pungent smell, many were built with lids to help moderate the smell and to try to keep the flies at bay. Unfortunately, not all outhouses had a lid and so many people would bring lime powder with them when they went to the washroom to sprinkle down the hole. This helped with the flies and also offered a more pleasant smell.



This outhouse is located in Nevada City, United States.

Bathroom Trivia & Humour

Did you know...

- Chamber pots were still used at the time of the Halifax Explosion?
- An average person visits the toilet 2500 times a year?
- Most toilets are designed incorrectly?
- You spend approximately 3 years of your life on the toilet?

Kids Say the Funniest Things: Bathroom Humour

- 1) What did one toilet say to the other?
- 2) What gets wetter the more it dries?
- 3) Which birds steal soap from the bath?
- 4) Why did the bank robber take a bath?

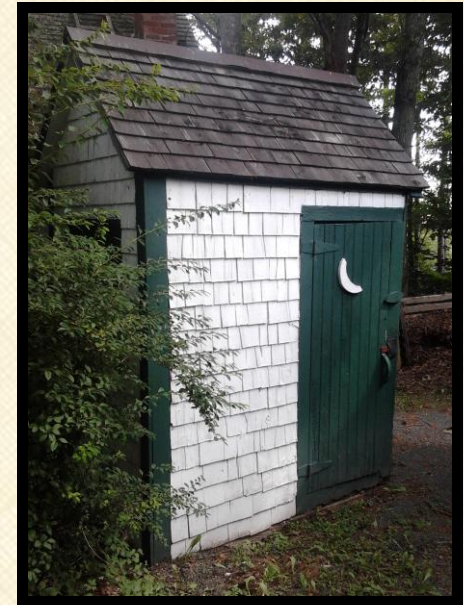


The above outhouse is located on the Fultz House Museum grounds. It is adjacent to the W.J. Grace Cooperage.

BATHROOM HUMOUR: THE ANSWERS

- 1) You look a bit flushed.
- 2) A towel.
- 3) Robber Ducks
- 4) So he could make a clean getaway!

HOW OUTHOUSES CAME TO BE



The Outhouse located on the grounds of the Fultz House Museum

*Fultz House
Museum*

Discovering the Outhouse!

It is believed that outhouses originated in the 15th century from Europe. The more sophisticated inns would have had two separate outhouses, one for men and the other for women. Each outhouse would have either a picture or cutout of wood on its door in the shape of a sun or a moon to designate the two. As time went on, it became apparent that the upkeep of two outhouses was time consuming and very difficult, so innkeepers decided to just have one outhouse for both genders. It was then that the crescent moon became popular as the sign that showed that the outhouse was universal.

Outhouses were built approximately the same size of a small shed. It was later discovered that they could serve more than one person at a time. Eventually in some areas, a bigger-sized outhouse could be built to accommodate multiple people, by digging a long trench and placing multiple holes above the ground. Aside from a very large outhouse there were also outhouses built as a two-story, so the outhouse could then serve two people at a time but take up the space of one. There is no reported mention of a two-story outhouse in the Sackville area.



From the Chamber Pot to the Outhouse

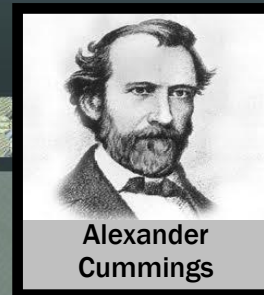
In the Victorian era when indoor plumbing was becoming popular, it was only available to the wealthy. Most people in Sackville would have used outhouses even then because they were too poor to afford this luxury. In Europe, the term “outhouse” would have been easily used to describe a shed that tools were kept in, but in North America, the term “outhouse” was used more accurately to describe a separate building that includes a hole above the ground.

The most noticeable aspect of an outhouse was their scent. When waste decomposes it emits two gases: methane and hydrogen sulfide. These two gases in turn smell like rotten eggs. It is because of their smell that outhouses were built between 50-150 feet away from the home but close enough for a sensible walking distance. On cold winter nights when the outhouse was too far away to access, one would use a chamber pot, which was kept under or beside the bed. As convenient as the chamber pot was, it was a very unpleasant job in the morning. The chore was to clean the pot each day and in some cases even more often than that. If someone in the house were ill, they would use the chamber pot all the time. In wealthier households, the chambermaid would have done the chore of cleaning the chamber pot.

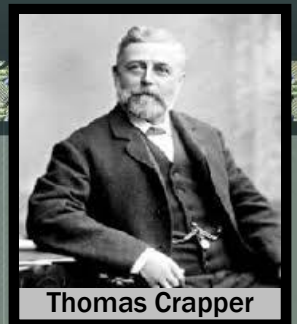
The Invention of the Flush Toilet

Even though early flush toilets were used by some ancient civilizations, the technology was still very new and therefore not introduced until the late 16th century when it was introduced to the western culture known as North America. Flush toilets became popular in Britain in the 1850's and then became a part of modern building upgrades. In rural areas, outhouses remained popular until the 20th century, and then slowly, the change was made from outhouses to flush toilets. In Sackville, flush toilets became popular in the 1940's and 1950's.

The inventor of the modern flush toilet is still unknown because there are some disagreements over who the inventor was. Many say it was Thomas Crapper (1837-1910), or Alexander Cummings, but others give credit to Sir John Harrington. Thomas Crapper was an English sanitary manager who invented the valve-and-siphon arrangement used for emptying the tank, and what made toilets today possible. Alexander Cummings patented a flushing device, which is quite useful and needed on the toilets today. Sir John Harrington published a pamphlet on how to construct a valve closet built with a procedure consisting of handles, levers and weights, which poured water into the cistern and opened the valve. Even though the inventor is unknown, all three men played a large part in building the modern flush toilet that is used and valued today.



Alexander
Cummings



Thomas Crapper