



Figure 1

PEDIATRIC ARTIFACTS

In 1973 Dr Robert D. Gauchat donated his valuable collection of pediatric artifacts to the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). The collection consists of more than 600 feeding utensils and infantalia, primarily from the 19th and 20th century, with some dating back to the time of the Roman Empire. The collection provides a fascinating insight into the changes in infant care and feeding over the centuries, including the increasing awareness of the importance of hygiene.

The Gauchat collection has been augmented over the years by additional donations of more recent bottles from Dr Morris Price and the purchase of the collection of Dr Larrie Sarff and is now a part of the AAP Pediatric History Center (PHC), which seeks to preserve the history of the health care of children in the United States. Portions of the collection are currently on display on the ground floor of the AAP building in Elk Grove Village and in the AAP Washington Office.

In pursuit of its mission to preserve the history of the health care of children in the United States, the PHC makes portions of this collection available on loan to qualified institutions. For further information on the collection, please contact the archivist at

American Academy of Pediatrics
Pediatric History Center
141 Northwest Point Blvd
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007
847/434-7093



Figure 2



Over the centuries, it was recognized that breastfed babies survived, while artificially fed infants survived poorly. Indeed, breastfeeding remains the gold standard of infant feeding today and producers of artificial milk have strived to emulate nature's product. Figures 1 and 2 show examples of early feeding devices from more than 2,000 years ago. Their primary use may have been in weaning from the breast and rarely for initial feeding of newborns.



Figure 3

During the middle ages, there were few significant changes except increased use of feeders provided by nature, such as animal horns and gourds. Infants in those years had the advantage of large extended families in close proximity allowing for wet nursing if the biologic mother was not available. Factors such as the Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution, and migration for religious reasons broke the bond of the close extended family, necessitating the use of nonfamily wet-nursing.



Figure 4

Solicitations for wet nurses were on the common advertisements in colonial newspapers, usually resulting in unsatisfactory results for the common family. Thus began the need for other feeders and, in the late 1600s and 1700s, a profusion of bottles were marketed, including ceramic, metal, and glass types (Figures 3, 4, and 5). Glass-blown products were preferred, blowing glass into molds allowed for a large variety of feeders, including the Windship feeder (Figure 6). This was the first US patented feeder. It was mammary shaped and meant to be worn under the clothing, the nipple protruding through, fooling the infant into pseudo-nursing!



Figure 5





Elijah Pratt patented the first rubber nipple in 1845, after which the long-tube feeder became popular. This was finally outlawed by the city of Buffalo, NY, in 1897, being labeled the “murder bottle” (Figure 7)! (The rubber tubing developed small cracks allowing a haven for bacteria.)



Figure 6

Sterilizers became popular as did bottles that would fit into them. William Decker, MD, of Kingston, NY, introduced the “Hygeia” feeder (Figure 8) that allowed ease of cleaning. Although the nipples were also improving, they were often dislodged by the infant’s sucking action, until the clamped-on nipple was developed in 1937. Glass feeders were totally phased out by the mid-1970s in favor of plastics.

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Figure 7


During the mid-1900s, breastfeeding incidence dropped to a low of 20%. The urgings of pediatricians, certified lactation consultants, and the La Leche League deserve credit for the resurgence in nursing. Will the 1900s be remembered as the century where the majority of infants were fed milk from other species in a plethora of oddly-shaped bottles?!



Figure 8






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