

A Hundred Years Ago

I'm sure we have all heard older people recounting all the wonders that were new to the world during their lifetime. There is a tendency to think that this is something that suddenly appeared around the beginning of the twentieth century, but that is not so. In the library of the Colebrook Historical Society is a volume that began its life as a math book entitled "Eaton's Common School Arithmetic", probably written about 1840, but converted into a scrapbook having the penciled-in date of Nov. 15, 1877 on the first page.

None of the clippings, except the one here, have dates, so we must assume that most were printed in the period immediately following the Civil War. With that in mind, read a poem entitled "A Hundred Years Ago", which would place the time period about the beginning of the War of Independence.

No steamboat crossed the ocean o'er,
 A hundred years ago;
No cable stretched from shore to shore,
 A hundred years ago;
All freights and passengers and mails
Were borne in ships with masts and sails,
Propelled by heaven's uncertain gales,
 A hundred years ago.

No railroads passed our country through,
 A hundred years ago;
No trains were regularly due,
 A hundred years ago;
No locomotive engine's scream
Dispelled the dusky hunter's dream,
Nor broke his camp by western stream
 A hundred years ago.

No gas nor gasoline for light,
 A hundred years ago;
No stoves to burn the anthracite,
 A hundred years ago;
But cheerful fires of forest wood,
Both warmed the house and cooked the food,
And candles on the table stood,
 A hundred years ago.

No factories were run by steam,
 A hundred years ago;
Of things like this they did not dream,
 A hundred years ago;
But many a rushing mountain rill'
That always was, is running still.

Was used in turning many a mill.
A hundred years ago.

No Wheeler-Wilson sewing machine,
A hundred years ago;
No Howe nor Secor could be seen,
A hundred years ago;
But lady's fingers, deft and light,
Plied thread and needle day and night,
To fashion garments neat and right,
A hundred years ago.

No ironclads were used in war,
A hundred years ago;
To stand the cannon's crash and jar,
A hundred years ago;
But ship of oak unclad in mail,
And men of steel that would not quail,
Both gave and took the iron hail,
A hundred years ago.

No detonating guns were made,
A hundred years ago;
No breechloader of any grade,
A hundred years ago;
With flint and steel and priming pan,
The sportsman or the soldier ran
To bag his game or shoot his man,
A hundred years ago.

No steam engine to quench a fire,
A hundred years ago;
No fire alarm electric wire,
A hundred years ago;
With tub and pan and water pail
The burning building men would scale,
And fight the fire-fiend tooth and nail,
A hundred years ago.

No strife for office in our land,
A hundred years ago;
A nobler strife they had on hand,
A hundred years ago;
A strife against King George's might,
A strife for liberty and right,
An honorable, glorious fight,

A hundred years ago.

Our ship of state launched on the waves,
A hundred years ago;
Abaft the binnacle no knaves,
A hundred years ago;
But trusty officers and true,
Led on a faithful, gallant crew,
By precept and example too,
A hundred years ago.

Few diamonds dazzled people's eyes,
A hundred years ago;
Few counted riches million wise,
A hundred years ago;
Still some things are, as they were then,
For there were mountain, plain and glen,
And lovely women and brave men,
A hundred years ago.

This poem is attributed to Malcolm Mollan, along with a note that it was published in Bridgeport, Connecticut on March 16, 1876.

Historic Bytes
Bob Grigg