

“A Useful Domestic Exercise”

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Spec/Text Sheet

Hand and machine stitched bed coverings. Machine embroidered text.

Antique brass bed with wheels: 17” (H) x 14” (W) x 20” (L)

Sham Pillow Case (*antique linen napkin*): 6 1/2” (W) x 10” (L)

Sham Pillow (*vintage cotton sheeting, poly fiber fill, digital ink jet printed image*): 6” (W) x 8” (L)

Pillow Case (*vintage embroidered edged cotton handkerchief*): 5 1/2” (W) x 8” (L)

Pillow (*vintage cotton sheeting, poly fiber fill, digital ink jet printed image*): 5” (W) x 7” (L)

Bedsread (*vintage green/white grid patterned cotton curtain, white lace scallop trim*):
26” (W) x 30” (L)

Quilt Cover (*vintage flower/checked patterned feed sack cotton*): 16” (W) x 25” (L)

Quilt (*vintage 100 lb Vitality Brand feed sack bag, stuffed with cotton batting*): 15” (W) x 23 1/2” (L)

Top Sheet (*vintage white cotton bed sheet with embroidered scalloped edge*): 22 1/2” (W) x 30 1/2” (L)

Bottom sheet (*vintage white cotton bed sheet*): 22 1/2” (W) x 30 1/2” (L)

Mattress (*red and beige stripped cotton mattress ticking, stuffed with cotton batting, machine embroidered ants*): 3” (H) x 14” (W) x 20” (L)

Bibliography Books

The American Frugal Housewife: dedicated to those who are not ashamed of economy,
Lydia Maria Child, 1838

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Confidential Chats with Girls, William Lee Howard, 1911

Godey's Lady's Book, Vol 51, No 2 August 1855

Harper's household handbook; a guide to easy ways of doing woman's work,
Martha McCulloch Williams, 1913

Harriet Hubbard Ayer's Book: A complete and authentic treatise on the laws of health and beauty,
Harriet Hubbard Ayer, 1899

Homemakers, the forgotten workers, Rae Andre, 1982

Household Engineering; Scientific Management in the Home, Christine Frederick, 1928

Our homes, and how to make them healthy, Robert Brudenell Carter, Edited by Shirley Forster Murphy, 1885

Training the little home maker, by kitchengarden methods, Mabel Louise Keech, 1912
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The Ways of Women in their Physical, Moral and Intellectual Relations, by a Medical Man, 1873

The Yorkshire Book of the Bed, Ian & Jill Brown Clayton, ed., 1991

Other

Diary of Margaret Gilpin Hazelton, Newfoundland PA, June 17, 1915 entry

Pillow Image: New York Public Library/Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture/General Research and Reference Division: "*A lesson in bed making in the housekeeping suite, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College, Tallahassee, Fla.*" 1923

Digital ID: 1257332

Source: A study of home-economics education in teacher-training institutions for Negroes, February, 1923. Issued by the Federal Board for Vocational Education, Washington, D.C.

Sham Pillowcase front

[tan linen fabric with decorative edge]

They call it the Business of Housekeeping.
One thing that contributes to being *businesslike* is
to have the right "business" atmosphere...

Sham Pillowcase back

The homemaker needs an "office" corner,
no matter how humble, where she can go ...
(a few shelves and a table will suffice)
To increase her system and pride in the
"business" end of housekeeping ..."

Christine F., 1928

Sham Pillow front

[white sheet with printed double images]

Square pillows are most generally seen...
though they cannot be as healthful,
as they make an almost an upright posture.

Sham Pillow back

To use the bolster alone at night,
or one pillow, will preserve the figure best
against curvature...

GLB, 1855

Pillowcase front

[cotton handkerchief with embroidered edge]

I never throw away
bed sheets that have worn
in the middle.

Pillowcase back

Out of the good pieces,
I make pillow cases,
dusters, cot sheets and lots
of other things.

n/d

Pillow front

A Useful



Domestic Exercise

Pillow back

Tamar Stone
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Bedspread top side

[vintage green plaid curtain fabric]

Men don't think women get tired.
I mean they think that we have this constitution
that just goes and goes....
I do make them [the kids] change their sheets
when I wash sheets, and make their beds
which 98% of the time the beds
are not made.
But I don't go around every day making them —
there are seven beds in this house!
I'd be hunchbacked!
They say it's good for your stomach muscles....
For thirty years I kept looking
at my stomach muscles!

Bedspread back side

But I like housework.
You know this is a really weird thing.
You know how many people, women,
complain about it, because they say
*"It's unfulfilling, it's unrewarding,
I hate it, it's monotonous."*
Well so is typing, and so is running a computer.
Any job can be.
It's what you make out of a job.
I love housework....
I think if you're going to do it, do it right.
If you're going to be a homemaker, take pride in it.
If you're going to be a career girl take pride in that.
Whatever you want to be, if you don't take pride in it
then you're going to look like a slob.

Carole S., 1979, age 43

Down Quilt Cover top side

[flower/checked patterned feed sack cotton, buttons]

To sleep prone upon the back is unhygienic...
propped up with many pillows and the knees
raised,
it is impossible to obtain beneficial sleep.
This position sends the blood to the brain,
and induces nightmares and bad dreams.
Sleeping on the stomach is also unhealthful.
It hinders digestion and circulation,
and renders breathing difficult.
Sleeping on the right side stretches the muscles
about the heart, and increases any trouble
one may have with that organ.
The correct way to sleep is on the left side
with the arm thrown behind...this brings the body
nearly but not quite over the chest.
This is the best position for promoting health
and a fine figure.
That the brain may receive more perfect rest,
the room should always be darkened,
during the hours of slumber.
For those who are bad sleepers,
this precaution should especially be taken.

Harriet H. A, 1899

Down Quilt Cover back side

Here are a few practical things to do and
not to do to keep the nerve cells
so you can develop them.
Sleep always alone.
Sleeping with another person is unsanitary.
The skin needs to get rid of its natural poisons
and not take up any from another person.
You would not think of breathing the air coming from
another person's lungs.
Well, when you are under the sheets and blankets with
another person, you can breathe through your skin the
poisons coming from this companion.
If you have to sleep in a room with another person, you
must have your own little bed.
Sleep with as little covering over you
as is possible with comfort;
window, of course, *as I have warned you*,
wide open at the top.
You can become accustomed to lighter clothing
by gradual methods
of reducing the number of blankets.

William L.H., 1911

Down Quilt *top side*

[*Vitality Brand feed sack with house image*]

Useful domestic exercise at home –
god who “made woman to do the work
of the family...had so formed her body...
that family labor and care
tend not only to good health,
but to the *highest culture of mind*”

Harriet and Catherine B.S., 1869

The bed should not be soft and down,
and girls and women must not...
as they are apt to do, surround themselves
with a great many pillows.
This is enervating, prevents ventilation,
hinders circulation and renders
the flesh flabby.

A hard bed is best
for making firm flesh.

Harriet H.A., 1899

Down Quilt *back side*

Mending Bed Clothes

Fine threadbare blankets are worth darning.
Wash well and darn with soft wool,
using a large-eyed needle. Avoid puckering.
Darn warp way first, then go across.
Cut ragged edges smooth and overcast loosely
with colored wool rather than bind.
Darn tears on net, using silk or flax, rather fine.
Beware making mends hard and lumpy.
Comforts should be untacked, the stuffing,
whether cotton, wool, or down,
aired and washed at need,
the outsides made into rags and new covers
provided for the padding.
Cheesecloth unbleached lasts and launders well.
Make pocket covers of it, half a yard deep,
for the tops of comforts breaking there
and nowhere else.

Martha M.W., 1913

Top sheet *top side*

[vintage white cotton sheet]

One of the latest and best yet presented
for acceptance is the metallic.
In appearance it is wire tick, woven, or made
of rings linked together, fastened by its edges
to the inner margins for the bedstead.
They are always clean and free from collections
which attach to other beds.
Being galvanized, they neither rust nor become
dark-colored.
Water beds, which were thought particularly
valuable for hospitals, have not been
in general use.
The metallic bed addresses itself to the
commonsense of a very limited intelligence
as valuable.
A mattress is rarely required on them.
A few thicknesses of soft woolen blankets are
quite sufficient; they are soft and yielding
to the form of the sleeper.
In a word, they are admirable and appear
destined to be extensively adopted wherever
large numbers of beds are required
in any one place – as on shipboard,
hospitals, barracks, and hotels.

Top sheet *back side*

Families ought to give them
a decided preference.
There is immense economy in them.
Besides all the properties found in other beds,
of giving ease and comfort, they present none of the
objections cited in reference to feathers, hair, wool,
cotton, rattan, husks, or straw.
No insects will ever burrow upon them; and when
injured or broken, or they become valueless
for the purposes for which they were made,
they may then be sold for old iron.
In fitting up a private dwelling,
the economy of the iron bed is apparent.
They are the least objectionable; and the very best for
young persons, especially children, because they would
be perfectly free from moisture and vermin.
They can be set into any kind of bedstead,
wood or iron, but iron should take the place of
wooden bedsteads.
It is the bed for women – in comparatively
superior to any other kind in use.

M.M., 1873

Bottom sheet *top side*

[vintage white cotton sheet]

Bugs –

When beds and bed-rooms are kept clean and are thoroughly ventilated, there is not the slightest fear of annoyance from bugs.

If however, through neglect these insect pests do effect a lodgment, vigorous steps must be taken to eradicate them. The bed must be taken to pieces at once, and any wanderers which can be captured, as well as the nits or eggs of the insect, must be destroyed.

The framework of the bed must be washed with chloride of lime and water, and Keatings insect-powder must be sprinkled into all the joints, cracks, and crevices. After this is done, the bed, mattress, and framework must be carefully looked over everyday, and, if necessary, the bed must be taken to pieces a second time and the process repeated.

1885

Bottom sheet *back side*

Fleas may be got rid of by washing the bedstead and the floor of the bed-room daily with either strong salt and water or chloride of lime and water.

Blankets must either be washed or sent to the cleaners every spring. Very great care must be taken to air them thoroughly after washing.

Each blanket should be hung two days in the fresh air and one day before the fire.

1885

An ounce of quicksilver, beat up with the white of two eggs, and put on with a feather, is the cleanest and surest bed-bug poison.

What is left should be thrown away; it is dangerous to have it about the house.

Lydia, M. C., 1838

Mattress top side

*[red/beige stripped mattress ticking
w/embroidered ants]*

Additional suggestions:

It is sometimes impossible to buy a good square mattress to fit the bed. One may be made by sewing a strip of the ticking two or three inches wide between the two sides, and sewing in strips of cardboard the same width, so as to form a box mattress.

Fill in with layers of cotton and tuft it.

Mabel L.K., 1912

The days of feather beds may be considered as entirely past, at least among people who have sufficient good sense and education to understand their enervating unhealthiness.

It requires a little courage to first to persist in the use of a mattress when a person has been other wise educated, but the gain of comfort more than repays the trial, leaving all other advantages aside.

GLB, 1855

Mattress back side

If properly cared for,
the mattresses will last from
five to ten years,
without the necessity of being remade.

Even when seeming hopeless,
they may be repacked, washed, and,
with a fresh tick, are as good as new,
without going to any great expense.

Most careful housekeepers
use bed-covers of stout
domestic muslin or check;
that secures the tick from accident,
and can be washed
as easily as a sheet.

GLB, 1855

Thursday, 17 hot....
cut a piece off the side of my mattress
to make it Fit the bed.

Margaret G. H., 1915

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