

The 75th Anniversary of "A Neglected Anniversary" by Mencken

A Neglected Anniversary is an extremely informative book written by Henry Mencken about the history of Bathtubs. It might just be one of the most useful inventions humankind has ever created.

The story begins with a bright man by the name of Thompson who had an addiction to bathtubs. He was such a bright fellow that he even invented the machine that we use for bagging hams. He was a tradesman who often travelled to Britain and often took baths there. He had gotten addicted to taking baths. So, why not take the tradition back home to Cincinnati? At the time, a bathtub was no bigger than a dishpan. Of course, this could not do for Thompson. He decided to make the bathtub a lot bigger. In fact, it had a modest length of 7 feet, a reasonable width of 4 feet, and a light weight of just 1750 pounds. For a simple and safe finish, he decided to line it with lead and fully polish it. As there were no bathtub makers in his town, Thompson had the bright idea of hiring a cabinetmaker. Brilliant! I mean, a bathtub is really just a sideways cabinet. They made it out of the cheap material of mahogany imported straight from Nicaragua.

It was really too bad that his fellow Cincinnatians did not approve of this bathtub. Were they, perhaps, envious? Either way, they were fearful of the very real possibility that the bathtub would infect Thompson with diseases that would spread throughout Cincinnati. On the other hand, some rebellious rich Cincinnatians were all for bathtubs and even had their own installed. The invention of bathtubs soon spread like a virus to other cities while the opposition for them had also spread. The opposition grew so loud that bills were passed to regulate the use of bathtubs. People even started to believe that the bathtub was a British invention designed to corrupt the democratic simplicity of America. Politicians started catching on and the bathtub started causing justified political unrest.

Soon, the opposition started to die down as the president of America even had one installed in the white house. Data started to come in. It turned out that 55% of foolish medical staff had believed that the bathtub was harmless. The president even decided to take a bath in Thompson's house! How silly of him. Doesn't he know that bathtubs can cause zymotic diseases? Installing a bathtub in the White House meant admitting defeat to the British. It enabled them to corrupt the United States of America. Suspiciously, British agents secretly trained American plumbers to install them; consequently, bathtubs conquered the once free nation of America.

Of course, this was all exactly 75 years ago. This raises the question of why nobody was celebrating this invention. It's not like bathtubs were invented thousands of years ago in ancient Rome, right?