Part 4. Timeline in the Development of Home and Household Items

*Note: the italic letters at the end of each entry refer to the references.*

c. 1610  Self-regulating oven invented by Dutchman Cornelius Drebbel, 1572-1634.  

1679  Pressure cooker invented by Frenchman Denis Papin, 1647-1712.  

1733  Patent for flying shuttle, which led to automatic weaving, granted to Englishman John Kay, 1705-c.1764.  

1740  Franklin stove, invented by Benjamin Franklin, 1706-1790; originally called the Pennsylvania fireplace.  

1758  An early artificial refrigeration method that used ethyl ether as a refrigerant developed by Scot William Collins for general use.  

1761  Cast steel scissors made for domestic use by Englishman Robert Henchiffe.  

1764  Spinning jenny invented by Englishman James Hargreaves, 1720-1778; provided multiple spinning into several threads of wool, cotton, or flax.  

1769  Water-powered spinning machine invented by Englishman Richard Arkwright, 1752-1792.  

1774  Spinning mule invented by Samuel Crompton, 1733-1827.  

1775  Patent for a flushing toilet granted to Englishman Alexander Cumming. Three years later Englishman Joseph Bramah, 1748-1814, made improvements on the Cumming design and successfully manufactured flush toilets in 1778, internationally labeled a Bramah.  

1779  Spinning mule that could draw out and give a final twist to cotton fibers invented, leading to the manufacture of high quality thread and yarn by Englishman Samuel Crompton, 1753-1827.  

1785  Successful power loom built by Englishman Edmund Cartwright, 1743-1823.  

1795  Method of hermetically sealing food in glass containers and placing them in boiling water, which led to development of canning procedure and industry, invented by Frenchman Nicolas-Francois Appert, c. 1750-1841.  

1797  Washing machine patented by Nathaniel Briggs of New Hampshire.  

1799  Clothes dryer with hand-cranked cylinder invented by Frenchman Pochon.  

1801, 1803  Refrigerator using ice invented by Thomas Moore, Baltimore, MD.  

1805  Jacquard loom for figured weaving invented by Frenchman Joseph Marie Jacquard, 1770-1840. He developed punched cards for controlling its operation. Punched cards were...
later used by Englishman Charles Babbage, 1792-1871, for calculators and by American Herman Hollerith, 1860-1929, to feed data into census machines.

1809 Canning of foods, first in glass and later in metal cans, invented by Frenchman Nicolas-Francois Appert, c. 1750-1841, first widely used in the home, then became commercially important (see 1795, 1804).

1810 Method developed for processing or preserving food in sealed jars immersed in boiling water for an extended time, after 14 yr. of experimentation. Frenchman Nicolas-Francois Appert, c. 1750-1841, claimed French prize for his work.

1810 Machine for making shoes, which attaches the sides to the soles, invented by French-Englishman Marc Isambard Brunel, 1769-1849.

1825 Use of tin cans for preserving foods patented by Thomas Kensett.

1830 Patent issued in France to Frenchman Barthelemy Thimonnier, 1793-1857, on a sewing machine that used two threads.

1832 Power knitting machine put in operation in Cohoes, NY, by Egbert Egberts, Timothy Bailey, and his brother.

1832 Lock-stitch sewing machine invented by Walter Hunt, 1796-1859 (he preceded Howe by 12 yr. but did not get patent).

1832 Improvements on hand chain pump used on farmstead and in home invented by Hiram Avery Pitts, 1799-1859.

1833 Washboard consisting of a corrugated surface used for scrubbing clothes patented in USA.

1846 Practical lock-stitch sewing machine invented and patented in USA by Elias Howe, Jr., 1819-1867 (see 1832).


1849 Safety pin, involving bent wire that acts as a coil-spring and prevents the pin from slipping, invented by Walter Hunt, 1796-1859, USA.

c. 1850 American churns with wooden paddles manufactured for making butter.

1850 Ether-compressor that could be used for making ice and cooling food developed by Scot James Harrison, Glasgow, who emigrated to Australia.

1850 Sewing machine that would sew leather and upholstery continuously invented (pat. 1851ff.) by Isaac Merritt Singer, 1812-1875.

1851 Practical successful sewing machine for home use invented by Isaac Merritt Singer, 1811-1875, Boston, MA, who introduced the foot treadle and in 1899 the electric motor drive.

1851 Washing machine using a rotating cylinder, hand operated for home use, invented by James T. King, USA.

1852 Discovery of “coal oil,” or kerosene distilled from coal tar, which was initially used for lamps (see 1957).
1853 Potato chips first made, by George Crumb in New York.  

1855 Can opener invented by Englishman Robert Yeates.  


Oil lamp for burning kerosene developed and merchandized by A. C. Ferris and Co.

1858 Can opener patented in the USA by Ezra J. Warner, Waterbury, CT (see 1855).  

1858 White sewing machine invented by Thomas H. White, 1836-1914.  

1858 Threaded-top glass Mason jars for home canning invented by John Mason, 1832-1902, NY.  

1859 Invention and patent of an electric range by George B. Simpson, Washington, DC. (see 1896).

1859 Rotary-motion washing machine made by Hamilton E. Smith, Philadelphia, PA (patented in 1858). In 1863 he secured patent protection for self-reversing attachment (see 1851).

1860 Electric lamp using carbon filament made of paper produced; patented by Englishman Joseph W. Swan, 1828-1914, leading to development of an incandescent light (see 1879, 1880).

1865 Washing machine patented by Laroy S. Starrett, 1836-1922.  

1865 Coffee percolator patented by James H. Nason, Franklin, MA.  

1867 Typewriter invented by Christopher L. Sholes, 1819-1890, with co-inventors Carlos Glidden, 1834-1877, and Samuel W. Soule, in Milwaukee, WI. The rights were sold to E. Remington & Sons Co., Ilion, NY, in 1873, and it became well known as the Remington typewriter.

1869 Suction vacuum cleaner invented by Ives W. McGaffey, Chicago, IL.

1870 Rotary can opener invented by William Lyman, USA.

c. 1870 Simple butter worker developed, used to expel whey from the butter.

1872 Preservation of food in jars for home use invented. Amanda T. Jones, 1835-1914, invented a vacuum method patented in 1873 and formed Women's Canning and Preserving Co., Chicago, IL, in 1890.

1872 Mail-order firm started by Aaron Montgomery Ward, 1843-1913, issuing first catalog in 1874.

1873 Boiling of milk for infant feeding advised by Dr. Abraham Jacobi, New York, NY.  

1874 Pressure cooker originally invented in 1679 by Frenchman Denis Papin, 1647-c. 1712, became commercially available with patent issued in 1902.

1876 Successful home carpet sweeper patented and introduced by Melville R. Bissell, 1843-1889, USA.
1876 Telephone patented by Alexander Graham Bell, 1847-1922.  

1879 Joseph W. Swan, 1828-1914, England, patented an experimental incandescent light bulb using a thread filament, demonstrated the following year (see 1860, 1880).  

1879 Glass milk bottles for home use made by Louis P. Whiteman, Warren Glass Works, Cumberland, MD.  

1880 Incandescent light bulb with carbon filament patented (first demonstrated in 1879) by Thomas A. Edison, 1847-1931, Menlo Park, NJ, with commercial production beginning immediately. Joseph W. Swan and Thomas A. Edison, working independently, are generally given credit for invention of the incandescent light bulb. Together they formed United Electric Light Co. in 1883 to develop and produce the incandescent light bulb (see 1879).  

1882 Electric clothes iron patented by Henry W. Seely, NY.  

1885 Patent filed for the first commercially produced dishwashing machine, by Josephine G. Cochran, 1842-1913, USA.  

1887 Screen door invented and patented by Hannah Harger, Manchester, IA.  


1891 Crown cork cap for bottles invented by William Painter (USA) and produced in 1892 by Crown Cork & Seal Co., Baltimore, MD.  

1891 Domestic electric stove and oven built by the Carpenter Electric Manufacturing Co., MN.  

1891 Clothing zipper invented by Whitcomb L. Judson, ??-1909, USA.  

1893 Improved method of home pasteurizer invented by Howland C. Freeman.  

1893 Electric bread toaster marketed in England by the Crompton Company (see 1909, 1919).  

1894 Power loom invented and built in USA by James H. Northrop, English American.  

1896 Electric stove, a one-ring coil that provided uniform heat, invented/patented by William S. Hadaway, Jr., New York, NY (see 1859).  

1898 Ironing board with legs produced by J. R. Clark Co., USA.  

1899 Motor-driven vacuum cleaner invented by John S. Thurman, General Compressed Air Co., St. Louis, MO.  

1900 Hershey chocolate bar produced by Milton S. Hershey, 1857-1945, USA.  

1900 Cellophane (based on development of viscose rayon) invented by Englishman Charles F. Cross, 1855-1935.  

1901 Successful engine-powered suction vacuum cleaning device invented by Britisher Hubert Cecil Booth, 1871-1955.
1902 Bakelite, a synthetic resin, invented by Leo H. Baekeland, 1863-1944, with manufacturing unit becoming a part of Union Carbide and Carbon Co.  

1903 Industrial fabrication of artificial silk (viscose rayon) by C. H. Stearn and F. Topham.  

1903 Lightweight electric iron introduced by Earl Richardson, Ontario, CA.  

1903 Decaffeinated coffee developed by German Ludwig Roselius, marketed in 1906 as Sanka (sans caffeine), introduced in USA in 1923 where it was often called decaf.  

1904 Self-contained household mechanical refrigerator using ammonia exhibited by Brunswick Refrigerating Co.  

1905 Domestic portable vacuum cleaner produced by Chapman and Skinner in San Francisco, CA.  

1907 Self-contained electric-driven washing machine marketed by Thor Corp., developed by Hurley Machine Co. of Chicago, IL, patented in 1908. Patent granted to Alva J. Fisher of Chicago in 1910 for a drive mechanism for washing machines.  

1908 After purchasing the rights of the upright model of a vacuum sweeper from James M. Spangler, William Henry Hoover, 1849-1932, inaugurated the Electric Suction Sweeper, the beginning of the Hoover Cleaner Co.  

1908 Practical motor-driven home washer for laundry introduced.  


1910 Light bulbs with tungsten filament and vacuum-filled nitrogen developed by Irving Langmuir, General Electric Co.  

1913 Cylinder-type vacuum sweeper produced by Swedish company later known as Electrolux.  

1913 Domestic refrigerator for home use invented by Fred W. Wolfe, Jr., Ft. Wayne, IN, named Domelre, marketed by Domestic Electric Refrigerator Co., Chicago, IL.  

1913 Electric dishwasher marketed by Walker Brothers, Philadelphia, PA, with full-scale production by Hotpoint and others in 1930.  

1915 Pyrex developed by Jesse Littlebon, Corning Glass, NY.  

1915 Calrod developed by Charles C. Abbot, General Electric Co., widely used in household and industrial heating applications.  

1916 Delco units for producing electricity for light and power invented by Charles F. Kettering, 1876-1958, of the Dayton Engineering Laboratories, Dayton, OH. In 1919 Delco was purchased by General Motors Corp.  

1917 Process for flash-freezing food in small packages for retail invented and developed by Clarence Birdseye, 1886-1956, leading to the formation of General Seafoods Co., and later General Food Co.
1919 Rotary dial telephones with switching systems installed by Bell System.  

1924 Domestic spin-dryer for clothes manufactured by Savage Arms Corp., NY.  

1926 Pop-up toaster for domestic use manufactured and marketed by McGraw Electric Co. Minneapolis, MN.  

1926 Vacuum sweeper with a beater bar introduced by Hoover Cleaner Co. (William H. Hoover, 1849-1932).  

1926 Household gas-absorption system refrigerator (not requiring electricity), called the Electrolux, patented in Sweden by Electrolux Servel Corp., introduced by Electrolux Refrigerator Sales Co., Evansville, IN.  

1927 Electric iron with an adjustable temperature control introduced by Silex Co., with thermostat devised by Joseph Myers.  

1927 Wall can opener invented and produced by Central States Manufacturing Co., St. Louis, MO.  

1927 Garbage disposal unit for kitchen cleanup, developed by John W. Hammes, Racine, WI, introduced by Emerson Electric Co.  

1930 Electric food mixer known as Mixmaster, introduced by Sun Beam Co., USA.  

1934 Invention and patent of nylon by Wallace H. Carothers, 1896-1937, at Du Pont Co., Wilmington, DE. The product led to numerous applications followed by industrial manufacture in 1939.  

1935 Rural Electrification Administration (REA) established by executive order of the president, approved by Congress in 1936 and incorporated into the USDA in 1939.  

1935 Clothes dryer invented by J. Ross Moore of North Dakota, with design sold to Hamilton Manufacturing Co.  

mid-1930s Washing machine to wash, rinse, and extract water from clothes invented by John W. Chamberlain, Bendix Corp.  

1936 Fluorescent lighting introduced to the public by General Electric Co., USA, developed by many people; originally called Geissler tubes, based on the original research of German Heinrich Geissler, 1814-1879 (see 1910).  

1936 Plexiglass (polyvinyl methacrylate) developed by Rohm and Haas Co., Philadelphia, PA, used as a substitute for glass.  

1938 Teflon (tetrafluorethylene) used in the manufacture of cookware and numerous industrial applications, discovered by Roy J. Plunkett, Jr., 1910-1994, produced commercially by DuPont Co. beginning in 1948.  

1938 Microwave oven to cook food patented by American Percy L. Spencer , 1894-1970, manufactured for the commercial market by Raytheon Co., USA, in 1947, known as the Radar Range, introduced for broad domestic use in 1965.  

1938 Soluble instant coffee, called Nescafé, successfully produced by Swiss company Nestle, introduced in the USA.
1938  Electric sterilamp introduced by Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Co., Bloomfield, NJ, to reduce the germ population by bactericidal ultraviolet rays.  
1946  Tupperware, a pliable synthetic polymer, developed by Earl S. Tupper at DuPont Co. He formed Tupperware Corp. and produced considerable kitchenware.  
1947  Top-loading automatic laundry washer introduced by the Nineteen Hundred Corp., marketed under the Kenmore label.  
1947  Mass-produced, low cost window-mounted air conditioner developed based on the work of Henry Galson.  
1948  Velcro fastener idea advanced by Swiss Georges de Mestral, 1904-1990, originally for clothes but rapidly applied to many uses, patented in 1957.  
1952  Automatic coffee maker (pot), known as percolator, invented by Russell Hobbs.  
1953  High density polyethylene used to make dishes, soft plastic materials, bottles, and numerous industrial uses.  
1954  Geodesic dome patented by Richard Buckminster Fuller, 1895-1983, used for Dymaxion House which was originally introduced in 1927 with a pole-type structure. The geodesic dome was used for numerous applications.  
1963  Self-cleaning electric stove ovens introduced by General Electric Co.  
1963  Touch-tone telephones introduced commercially by Western Electric Co.  
1967  Beginning of era incorporating microprocessors in household appliances.  
1974  Bar codes for identification of products introduced at a supermarket checkout in Troy, OH.  
1983  Vacuum cleaner robot invented by Japanese company Automax in cooperation with Honda.