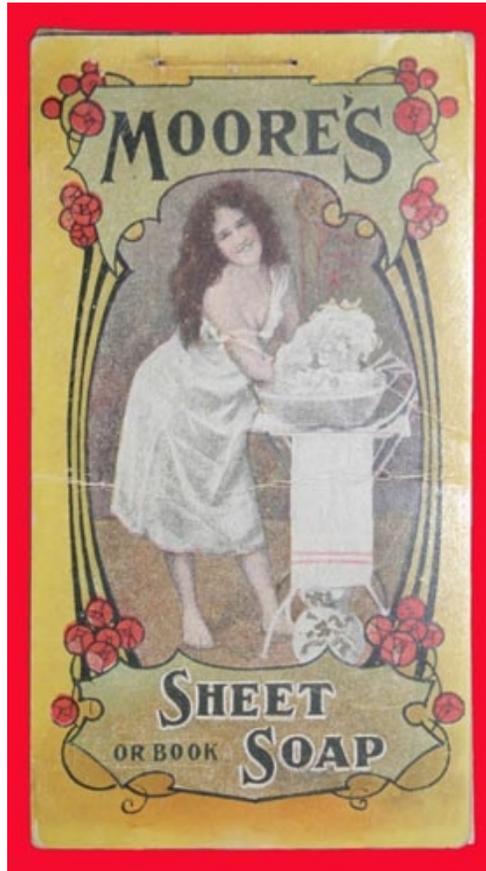


## Donation of the Month

### Soap

1996.59.1, Joan Jessup

1976.500.5, Lillian Figge



Cleanliness is next godliness as the saying goes. And while a few civilizations for a brief moment did not adhere to this philosophy, it is known that bathing has been a way of life since ancient times. The first of the famous Roman baths, supplied with water from their aqueducts, was built about 312 B.C, but it is known that the ancient Egyptians bathed on a daily basis. By the second century A.D., the Greek physician, Galen, recommended soap for both medicinal and cleansing purposes. And since modern times soap has been made and used across the globe to cleanse the body.

Soap is a combination of animal fat or vegetable oil and caustic soda. It can be made at home as it was for years by women mixing oils, fats and other materials in giant steaming hot cast-iron kettles. Soap today comes in bar or liquid form and contains much of the same ingredients handmade soap contains but also with added ingredients such as pumice or aluminum. These and other added ingredients give the soap a gritty property for extra cleaning power, or make the soap anti-bacterial by reacting with bacteria and killing the organisms.

Of course, when you travel you want to continue to enjoy the clean feeling of washing with soap. Most hotels provide miniature bars of soap for their guests and most bathrooms at airports and rest stops have liquid soap. This wasn't always the case; and some people due to allergies or habit still travel with their own.

Traveling with soap can be tricky. Especially if you are traveling with a full bar of soap; while contained in its packaging the soap poses no problem, but once you use it the oil and leftover soap suds make traveling difficult. So a metal container such as the one pictured here comes in handy. Just the right size for a bar of soap it keeps all the oils and left over soap suds contained. If you are only traveling for a few days you can take along a package of paper soap. Paper soap is thin sheets of soap just the right size for one application. Each sheet isn't large enough to take a shower with, but you can wash your hands. This small package will fit neatly anywhere and will probably pass airport security (I haven't tried so don't hold me to it).

Soap is something most people don't think about, because it has always been there. And it has, soap has been a part of ancient and modern culture for so long we take it for granted. Soap is so important people take it with them on trips, just in case the hotel doesn't provide any. So next time you reach for the soap imagine all the people across the globe who are doing the exact same action.