

# ORBOST & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

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## NEWSLETTER

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### FROM THE COLLECTION

Ever since man stood up to peer over the tall Savannah grasses, it seems that we've been looking for a place to sit back down.

Once early nomadic peoples began to settle into a domesticated lifestyle, the humble chair became one mark of the "civilised" person. Early in their history, chairs were largely used by the higher strata of society. Even today a chair often denotes a position of authority. Simpler benches and stools were more likely to be used by the lower classes.

### CHAIRS IN OUR COLLECTION

In the Orbost Museum there is a small collection of chairs - including two designed especially for children.



#### Chair Fact

Joseph W. Kenna was granted a patent for a child's high chair and carriage on Feb. 24 1880 in the U.S.A.

This wooden highchair with its curved back and turned spokes was used in 1897 by Ossie Wehner and his brothers and sisters, Ida, Hilda, Elsa, Carl and Eric. It is painted in a pastel green colour and is still in good condition.

Ossie's father, Herman Wehner founded Wehner's Blacksmiths at Orbost in 1889 and it continued trading until 1991 when Ossie's son, Tom retired.



This is a small child's rocking chair, made of wood with metal coiled springs. It has a canvas seat and back. It was donated by Ruth Richardson and was probably used by her family.

#### Chair Fact

**The rocking chair is a relatively recent invention. Surprisingly, it wasn't invented until the early eighteenth century although rocking horses and cradles had been around for some time.**

**One of the earliest types of office chairs was invented in the 1800s by naturalist Charles Darwin. He added wheels (which would later become casters) to his personal lab chair so he could get to his specimens more quickly.**



*The Editor's Chair*

This office chair was used by Mr Billy Ross. It has a padded leather seat and curved padded back. It is on a metal swivel and has a spring suspension.

William Ross (1868-1957) was the editor of the Snowy River Mail for many years. He was also a talented musician and the Presbyterian church organist. He married Jessie Gray and brought up Jean, Les, Dave and Keith Gray.

The chair was donated by George Hollins.

Unlike today's office chairs it has no casters!

#### Chair Fact

**In 2009, the first German Office Chair Racing Championship was held in Bad Koenig-Zell, Germany. Seventy participants brought their office chairs out into the sun and put them through their paces. The downhill race started on a steep ramp before facing another ramp. The only rule was that everyone had to wear a crash helmet, which most participants needed. Dozens of racers fell off their chairs, and many didn't make it to the end of the 170-meter race.**

This portable dentist's chair was used in the 1890's. It, too, has a leather headrest and seat. It is a reclining chair with adjustable metal bolts to allow the patient to lie back in comfort! It was donated by Mrs Lorna Cameron.

#### Chair Fact

**In 1848, Waldo Hanchett patented the dental chair by attaching a neck extension to a four-legged chair. By the 1880s, chairs used a disc base and double clutch to raise and lower the patient. The first hydraulic system was introduced with the "Jackknife chair" of 1890.**



This large wicker wheelchair was used in the 1920's. It has large metal wheels and a wood frame. It also has a foot stand.

It has on it the inscription  
***S.L.C.L.***

*Do you recognise it?*

*Was it used in Orbost?*

*By whom?*



### Chair Fact

The first known dedicated wheelchair (invented in 1595 and called an invalids chair) was made for Phillip II of Spain by an unknown inventor.

In 1655, Stephen Farfler, a paraplegic watchmaker, built a self-propelling chair on a three wheel chassis.

In 1783, John Dawson of Bath, England, invented a wheelchair named after the town of Bath. Dawson designed a chair with two large wheels and one small one. The Bath wheelchair outsold all other wheelchairs throughout the early part of the 19th century.



This Bentwood chair was donated by the Harry Cameron family. Harry's father, James Cameron, came to Bellagoogan on Majors Creek in 1882. Harry died in 1964 aged 75.

The chair is in excellent condition.

It was manufactured in Estonia by Luterma. This well-known Estonian plywood furniture company was founded in 1883 and by the turn of the century had become the largest plywood and furniture manufacturer in Russia. Luterma was renowned for its high quality plywood, which was used for the manufacture of suitcases and pails as well as furniture. It also made "inexpensive furniture in good taste".

**Rocking Chairs were originally used in gardens and were just ordinary chairs with rockers attached. It was in 1725 that early rocking chairs first appeared in England. The production of wicker rocking chairs reached its peak in America during the middle of the 18th century.**

**Michael Thonet, a German craftsman, created the first bentwood rocking chair in 1860. This design is distinguished by its graceful shape and its light weight. These rocking chairs were influenced by Greek and Roman designs as well as Renaissance and colonial era artistry.**

## Rocking Chair Records

- The longest time spent non-stop rocking in a rocking chair is 480 hours. This record is held by Dennis Easterling of Atlanta, Georgia.
- The longest time without sleep is 18 days, 21 hours and 40 minutes. This was done in a rocking chair, and it was reported that the record holder suffered from hallucinations, slurred speech, and a number of other symptoms as well.
- The world's largest rocking chair is located in Cuba, Missouri, and is a steel 42 foot, 1 inch monster by the roadside which cost its owners \$22,000 to build.

Malcolm McLeod brought this wooden rocking chair from Skye, Scotland in the 1850's. His grand-daughter, Margaret, donated it to the Orbost Museum. The tapestry back was worked by Miss Grace Cameron, the daughter of John Cameron.

*What was the connection between Grace Cameron and the McLeods?*

*Where does Malcolm McLeod fit into the McLeod family?*



### Chair Fact

President John Kennedy so enjoyed his rocker he took it on Air Force One when he traveled around the country and the world. He bought additional rockers for Camp David and the Kennedy estates, and gave them as gifts to friends and heads of state.

## Australiana Chairs



**254**

*This wooden dining chair has lyre birds carved on its head rest.*

The Melbourne Chair Company was established in 1894 by Albert Benness, James Caskie McDonald and Frederick Johnson in the Melbourne suburb of Collingwood.



**253**

*This dining chair is carved with emus in a bush scene.*

In 1908 they applied to the Australian govt. to register various designs featuring Australian native fauna and flora. Registered numbers correspond to particular designs - No.252 for the kangaroo, No.253 for the emu and No.254 for the lyre bird.

These "Melbourne chairs" were made from 1908 until 1930.

