

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY

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NEWS RELEASE

February 5, 1998

THE SMITHSONIAN ACCEPTS 75,000th BARBER POLE

The Smithsonian's National Museum of American History (14th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW) will receive yet another piece of Americana, two barber poles manufactured by the William Marvy Company, at a donation ceremony on February 5, at 2 p.m.

The museum will receive two barber poles, one of which is the 75,000th pole manufactured by the Marvy Company. "Barbershop poles evoke many memories of the American main street. It is a symbol of American life and is a complement to our existing barbershop collection," said David Shayt, curator in the museum's Division of Cultural History. These swirly red, white, and blue poles, recognized outside of barbershops across America, will become a part of the permanent collections in the museum's Division of Cultural History.

The William Marvy Company, of St. Paul, Minnesota, is the only commercial manufacturer of barber poles in the Western hemisphere. In 1950, a traveling salesman named William Marvy developed the barber poles we see today. The rust-proof pole, which Marvy called "Six Ways Better," was made of stainless steel, aluminum, and glass. Until Marvy made his pole, barbers relied upon poles made of enamel, porcelain, and glass, which couldn't withstand the elements. Marvy's poles have been shipped to barbers in all 50 states and internationally, including Australia, Norway, Mexico, Canada, Spain, and Holland, even The White House barbershop has a Marvy pole.

Throughout his 70 years in the barber industry, William Marvy never stopped selling the many virtues of his barber poles. The Wall Street Journal hailed Marvy's design as "the first real improvement in the barber pole in a quarter century." William Marvy died in 1993. His son Bob Marvy is continuing the Marvy tradition.

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