

“PLEASE, BOB, BUY ME A WHITE FROST REFRIGERATOR”

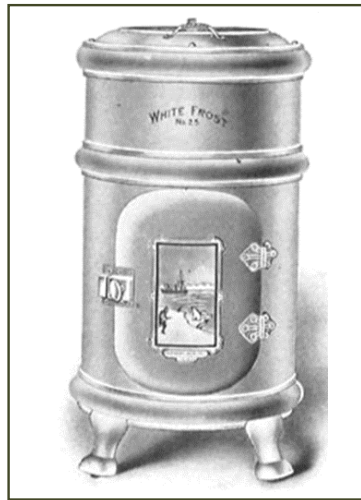
One of the Arizona Historical Society’s highlighted objects from the Pioneer Museum collection is Ida Tillman’s 1905 White Frost Refrigerator, the only cylinder-shaped, non-electric icebox made during the early 1900s.

People have needed to keep perishable food cold for generations. Most relied on underground storage via a root cellar or basement to preserve home-canned goods and hardy vegetables at a constant cool temperature. By the late 1890s, many American households used a traditional metal-lined, wooden cabinet that held a block of ice as well as food. What made the White Frost Refrigerator stand out from the competition was its styling. As with



common ice boxes, a block of ice sat in a lidded compartment atop the unit, and the cold air traveled by vents into the food storage space in the main part of the refrigerator. White Frost advertisements touted the appliance’s cleaner, sleeker, and more efficient design than its square, wooden predecessor: “more hygienic” with its easy-to-clean enameled steel construction; “more scientific” due to its increased insulation value; and “desirable yet affordable” stylish appearance and low price.

The first White Frosts were made in Jackson, Michigan and were sold through dealers and available by mail order. During the first several years of production, the price was about \$30.00.



A White Frost Refrigerator from 1906 sported two revolving shelves and an internal water cooler.

Ida Tillman donated a number of items, including the White Frost refrigerator, to Pioneer Museum in 1966. She was a longtime member of the Northern Arizona Pioneers’ Historical Society (NAPHS) until her death in 1971. Even though she had moved to the Phoenix area in 1960, Ms. Tillman (then remarried to

Harry Woodley) travelled to Flagstaff regularly to attend the Pioneer Picnic held by NAPHS and to attend Rebekah lodge meetings.

Ida Adella McMahon was born August 2, 1892 in Missouri to Albert F. and Susie McMahon. Ida’s father was an insurance agent, which kept the family moving from state-to-state during her early childhood. The family eventually settled in Oklahoma by 1910 and had taken up farming.

It was there that she met Robert Tillman whom she married in 1913. Bob was 11 years Ida’s senior and was an accomplished stone mason. The couple relocated to Flagstaff during the late 1910s and moved to a ranch in Kendrick Park, north of town.

Ida and Bob divorced around 1931, and Ida began looking after Albert Lee “Barney” Tillman (no relation to Bob) and his five children after Barney’s wife died unexpectedly in 1932. The two married, and the family moved to Ida’s Kendrick Park homestead. Barney and Ida built a

hunting lodge with cabins on their ranch, which is where this White Frost icebox was used during the 1940s-1950s.

