

Sugar Bucket, or Firkin

This bucket may have been used in the kitchen for sugar, which then came in a loaf. In colonial America, these came to be called "firkins". A firkin was originally $\frac{1}{4}$ of a barrel or 8 gallons. The root of the word "firkin" is the same as the root of the words "fourth" and "farthing" (a quarter of a penny). An 8-gallon firkin would have been used for butter or even beer. This bucket actually holds four gallons.

The bucket was used by former Historical Society secretary Pat Smith as her sewing basket for many years before she donated it to the society. It can be seen in the photo behind the rocking chair and next to the dog.



A man who made things like this was known as a bender, who bent wood using steam and clamps.

Prices per pound in 1861:
Beef 3 cents; Salt 3 cents;
Sugar 15 cents



The price of sugar dropped dramatically around 1820, due to production on Caribbean islands. The smaller the loaf, the more expensive the sugar. The biggest were 14 inches in diameter and 3 feet tall. Sugar was made by pouring into cone shaped mold, then washing impurities down until white. Granulation, using a centrifuge, was invented in the 20th century.