

Gasoline Self-Heating Irons

An item found in many antique shops and flea markets is the non-electrified self-heating iron. Questions most often asked about the iron are what is it, what did it burn, how was it used and when was it made?

The self-heating iron was a noble effort to free housewives from the drudgery that went with ironing day.

Long after the invention of the electric iron, millions of homemakers were, of necessity, still using sad irons. Sad irons were heated on the flat surface of a coal or wood-burning cook stove. The homemaker trudged back and forth between ironing board and stove exchanging cool for hot irons.

Probably nothing in those days did more to drive women from the farm than the toil accompanying wash day.

With the invention late in the

19th century of the gasoline burner, conditions were right for applying the burner to the domestic iron.

Among the earliest gasoline-fueled irons were the American, Peerless and Monitor brands. All date back to pre-World War I days.

Coleman entered the market with the Peerless iron. Somewhat later, Coleman introduced the Hydro-Carbon model and about 1925 introduced the Coleman Model No. 1.

The irons sold during this period were manufactured by an Ohio company. After three years, the owner of the Ohio company came to Coleman with a design for an improved self-heating iron. He proposed that Coleman do the manufacturing as well as the marketing. Coleman, which then was well along on developing the instant lighting principal for its lamps and lanterns, accepted the

suggestion and added the Ohio man to the organization.

The combination of experience and production capabilities proved effective. Coleman Models 2 and 3 were produced in 1928; Model No. 4 in 1929 and the following year, 1930, saw the first in a long line of 4A models.

The 4A proved to be the best iron of its kind and the longest lived. Production continued almost without interruption for the next 20 years.

Long after electric service extended to even remote farms and ranches, markets overseas were served by the Canadian Coleman Company.

Although production records are incomplete, the combined output of Coleman gasoline irons is estimated at more than one million units. Iron production ended in 1985.

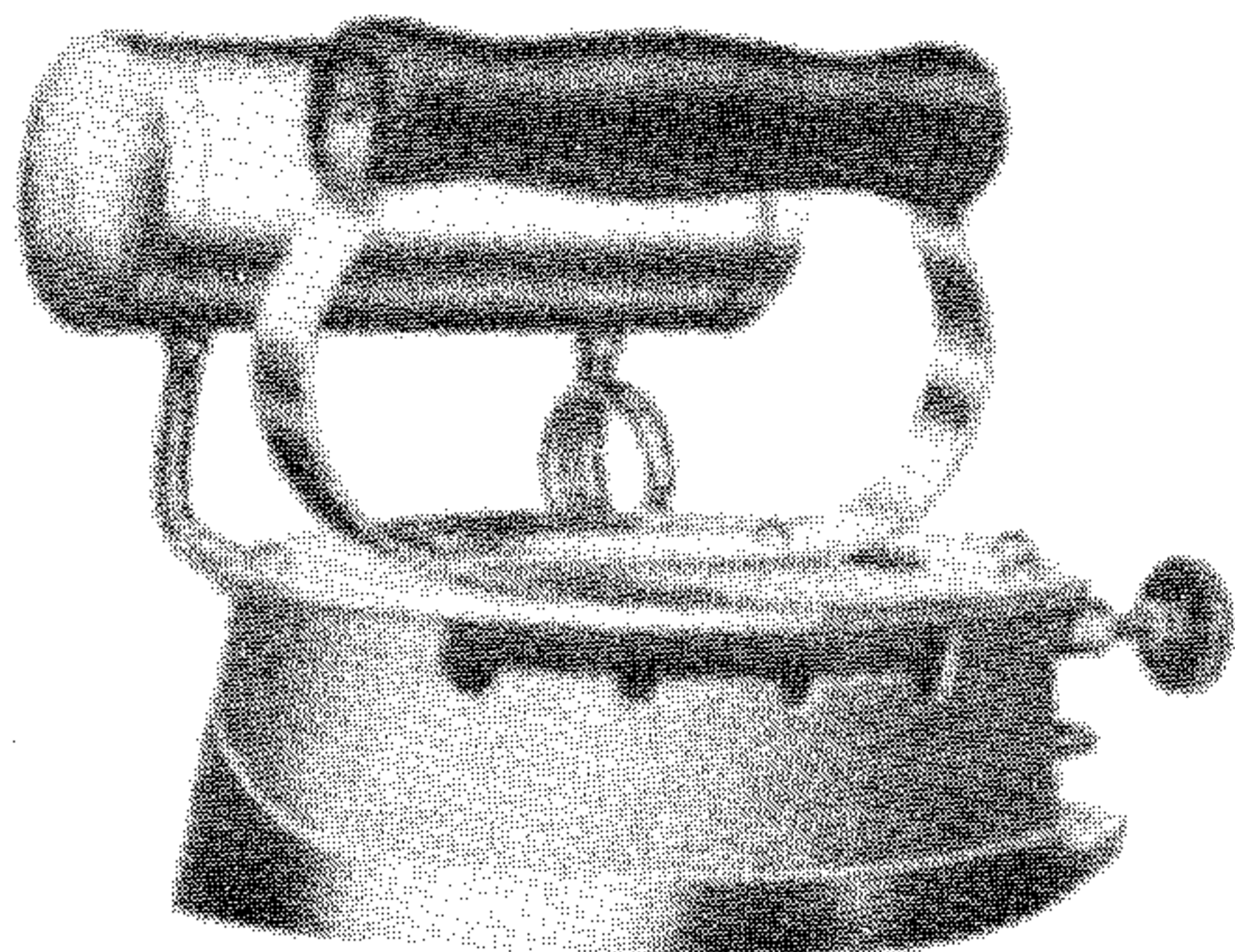


Fig. 1 — Early-day Peerless self-heating iron (circa 1912-1920) was first to be marketed by Coleman. It also was sold under the brand name "American." Another early Coleman iron carried the name "Hydrocarbon."

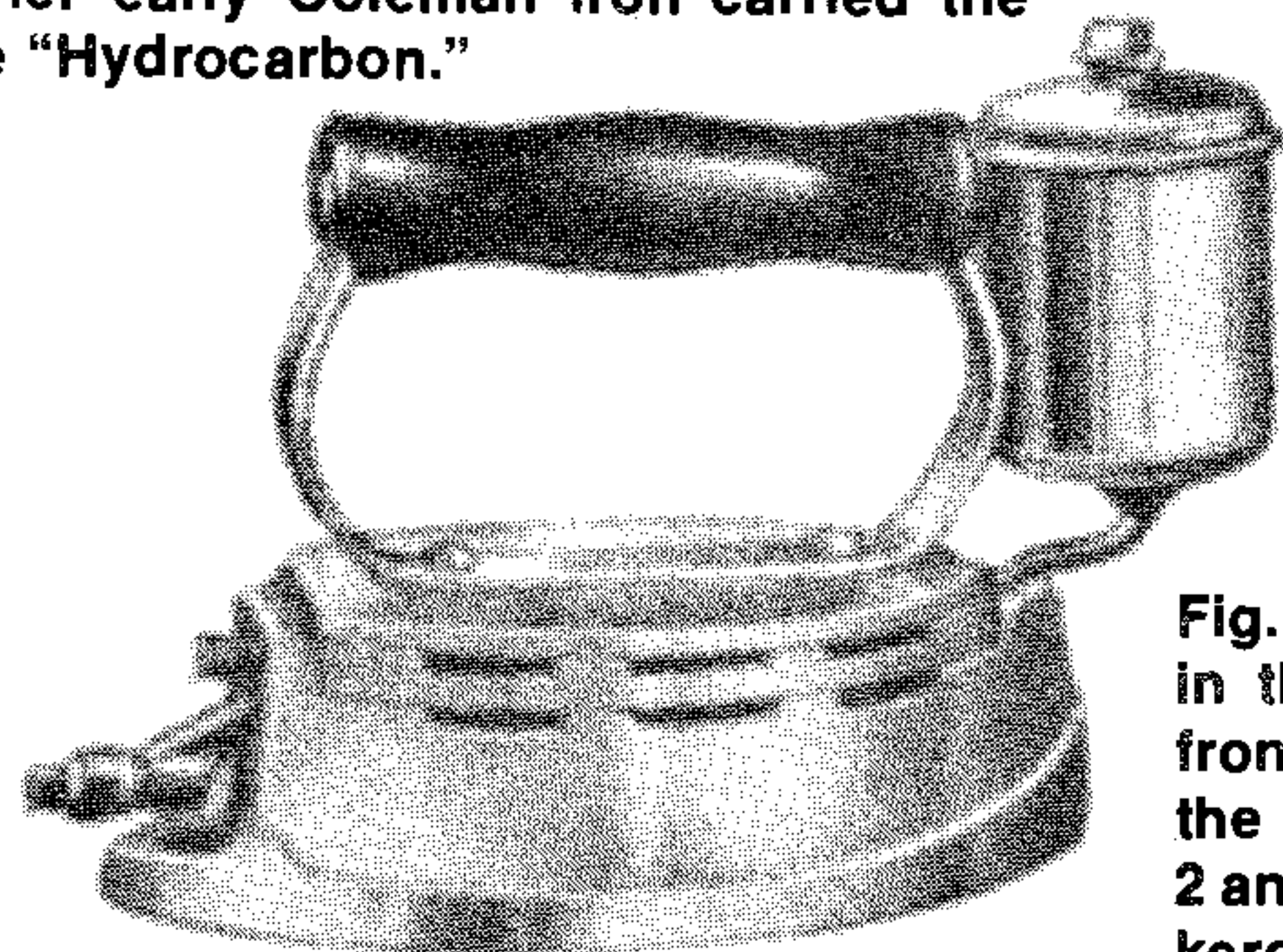


Fig. 2 — Model No. 1 Coleman iron, made in the early 1920s, put the fuel tank up front. Model No. 2 (not illustrated) had the tank above the iron's heel. Models 1, 2 and 5 had to be preheated with alcohol or kerosene before burner could function.

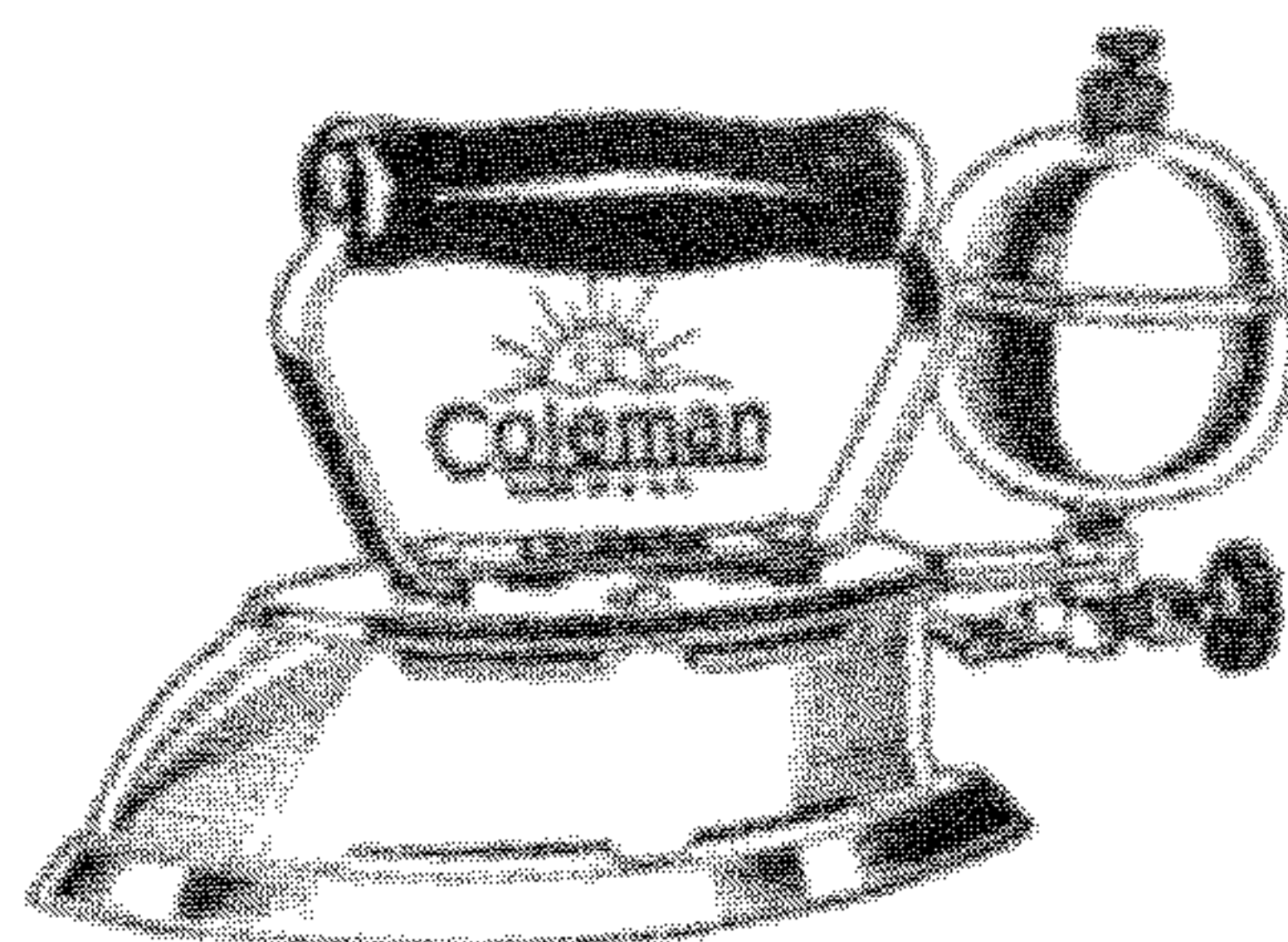


Fig. 3 — Model 4 (1929) and 4A (1930) were Coleman Instant-Lite irons. The 4A set the performance standard for all later models and remained in the line for over 20 years. Identifying characteristics are the light blue wooden handle and matching vitreous enameled body. Note also tapered ironing edge, ventilated body, pointed heel and generator cleaning lever. Iron weighs 6 pounds. The 4A was shipped with stand, pump, wrench and fuel measuring can. A filtering funnel with brass wire strainer and filtering fabric was offered as an accessory.

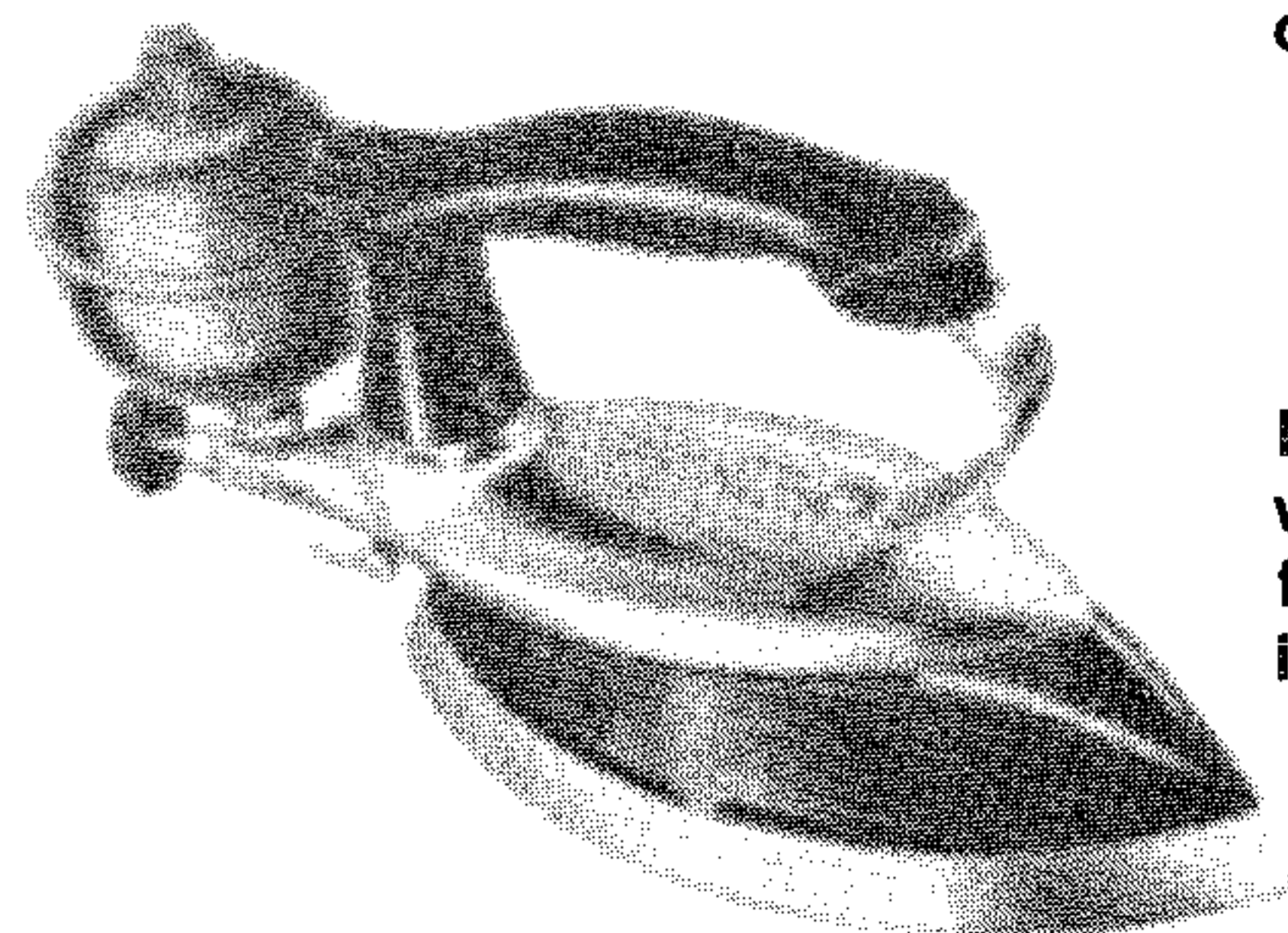


Fig. 4 — Models 609 and 609A (1940-1941) were given the deluxe treatment and followed styling used for Coleman electric irons made during the 1930s.

Models not shown were the No. 8 (1930) and the No. 12 "Good Value" iron made between 1947 and 1949. Both were economy models similar in appearance and function to the popular 4A but were offered at a reduced price.



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