

Sarah E. Goode, Inventor and Entrepreneur

Historical records about Sarah E. Goode are hard to find. According to the United States Census, though, she was born in Ohio during the 1850s. As an adult, Sarah married Archibald Goode, and the couple lived in Chicago, a bustling, crowded city. In 1885, Sarah Goode became the first African-American woman to receive a patent from the United States Patent and Trademark Office. Her invention was the cabinet bed. Historians know this for sure because Goode's patent is dated July 14, 1885. It is patent number 322177.

Some reports say that Sarah Goode's husband and father were carpenters. The family owned a successful furniture store in Chicago. At the time, it was very unusual for an African-American woman to own a business or receive a patent. However, there is a wise saying, "Necessity is the mother of invention." This truly applies to Sarah Goode's unique idea.

Chicago was an industrial city that experienced a tremendous influx of people during the late 1800s. In this jam-packed city, people often lived in tight quarters. It was expensive to rent an apartment, even a small one. Sometimes, many family members lived together in one cramped place. As a result, they needed ways to save space. The cabinet bed was a clever and efficient way to help a family do this. It was a single piece of furniture that could function as a storage cabinet, a desk, and a bed.

Goode's cabinet bed had sections with hinges. When the cabinet was unfolded, the whole thing became a handy bed with a mattress included. When it was not being used as a bed, the owner could take the mattress out. The cabinet also worked as a desk. There were even small compartments in it for supplies. Over the years, other inventors created space-saving furniture, such as daybeds, sofa beds, and pull-out beds. One of the most famous was a bed that folded upwards and disappeared into a wall. William Murphy received a patent for this innovation in the early 1900s, around the time that Goode died.

Sarah Goode is buried in Chicago's Graceland Cemetery.

S. E. GOODE.
No. 322,177. CABINET BED.
Fig 1 Patented July 14, 1885.

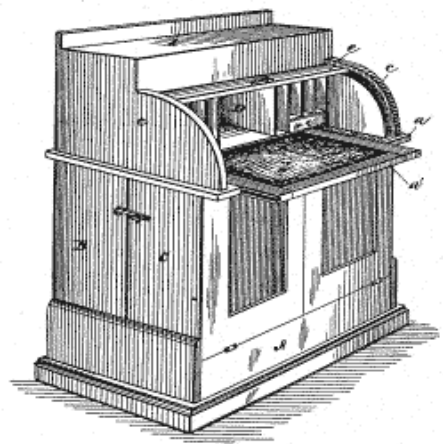
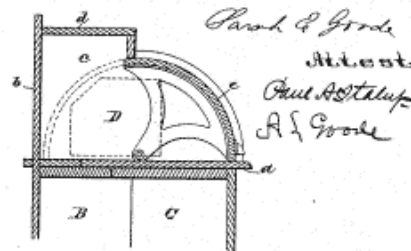


Fig 2



Sarah E. Goode's Cabinet Bed, 1885

Courtesy of US Patent and Trademark Office

Name: _____

1. Sarah Goode's invention allowed people to _____.
 - A) be more comfortable in their homes
 - B) build furniture for their children
 - C) find apartments and other homes in Chicago
 - D) learn how a woman could apply for a patent

In the passage, number the paragraphs from 1 to 5.

2. Which paragraph explains why Chicagoans in the 1800s needed ways to save space? 1 2 3 4 5
3. Which paragraph tells a little about Sarah Goode before she created her invention? 1 2 3 4 5
4. Which paragraph describes other space-saving inventions? 1 2 3 4 5

5. Study the detailed drawing of the cabinet bed. Why do you think a patent drawing and patent number are so important?
 - A) so everyone else can duplicate the bed
 - B) so no one else tries to duplicate the bed
 - C) none of these

6. Underline words in the passage that describe crowded places.

7. What primary source document lets us know that Sarah Goode really invented the cabinet bed? _____

8. What factors may have helped Sarah develop her cabinet bed?
 - A) Her husband and father were both carpenters.
 - B) The family owned a furniture store.
 - C) She was tired of sleeping on inflatable beds.
 - D) both A and B

9. Think about the saying, "Necessity is the mother of invention." On a separate sheet of paper, write a paragraph about how it applies to Goode's invention.