

The Atom Vacuum Cleaner: Advertisement by the Firm L.F. Nissen (1906)

Abstract

Consumerism became a prominent part of industrial Germany. This advertisement for the “Atom” vacuum cleaner illustrates both the promises of consumer devices and the rise of modern advertising. Like many early attempts to address the citizen as consumer, the advertisement stresses technological superiority and low prices.

Source

What is the “Atom”? It is a device that removes dust from all objects in accordance with the highest technical and hygienic standards.

The importance of this device becomes clear when we consider the human health risks associated with dust. One of the main objectives of hygiene is to ensure good, sufficient and, most importantly, clean air. Dust irritates the mucous membranes of the respiratory organs, causing chronic inflammations. Dust also carries innumerable microbes and germs that carry the risk of infection. It also contains tubercle bacillus.

Today’s method of removing dust – by sweeping floors and beating carpets – simply stirs it up. Dust is not removed but transferred from one object to the next, and the stirred-up dust increases the risk of infection.

The Atom vacuum cleaner meets all scientific standards of dust removal by sucking in the dust without stirring it up – and by sealing the dust inside its frame to eliminate all additional dust-related dangers. From time to time, the dust, kept in an airtight container, can be emptied into a trashcan or burned.

The Atom vacuum cleaner cleans dust from all household objects (carpets, upholstered furniture, curtains, billiard felt, clothing). It can also be used for successful dust removal in businesses, extracting dust from type cases in printing shops, cleaning machines, and so on. The cleaning process is thorough: carpets, upholstered furniture, etc., look brand-new after being vacuumed by the Atom vacuum cleaner.

The Atom vacuum cleaner features easy manual operation and a dust-free cleaning process that is safe, effective and noiseless. The suction bellows inside the apparatus work smoothly and precisely. Even a child can operate this household machine.

The Atom vacuum cleaner comes in two sizes and suction levels. Even the larger devices can be easily transported from place to place.

Even with all these advantages, the Atom vacuum cleaner is very inexpensive, with an extremely low purchase price. It is so sturdily built that it sustains absolutely no wear and tear.

Complete with all accessories, the vacuums cost, depending on size: Size I, 190 marks, Size II, 390 marks.

Source: “The Atom Vacuum Cleaner,” advertisement for the firm L.F. Nissen, September 17, 1906.

Staatsarchiv Hamburg, Medizinalkollegium II G 18; reprinted in Jens Flemming, Klaus Saul, and Peter-Christian Witt, eds. *Quellen zur Alltagsgeschichte der Deutschen 1871–1914*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1997, pp. 53–54.

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