

Faulty stoves, installation keep firefighters busy

Every winter, the fire departments in Halton answer several fire calls in homes that were caused by wood burning stoves and free-standing fireplaces. These items are enjoying immense popularity right now, among energy-conscious homeowners.

So Halton's Fire Prevention Committee has issued a few pointers on their safe use.

"Be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions," says Capt. Art McGlynn of Burlington, 1980 Chairman of the Regional Fire Prevention Committee. "Most of these fire calls could have been avoided, if people would only follow the directions," he said.

Free-standing fireplaces and wood stoves must be set up a certain distance from combustible materials, and this is clearly stated in the installation instructions.

Some fires have resulted from homeowners using the wrong type of chimney, or building a chimney in the wrong spot. And some calls resulted from chimneys which have not been cleaned.

"Clean your chimney at least once a season—more often if green or wet wood is used," he said.

For wood or oil fires, a "Class A" chimney is required. This is a masonry chimney or manufactured steel, built to Underwriters Laboratory of Canada (ULC) standards. The "B" type is used only for gas fires.

The Committee suggests homeowners who need advice on the installation of wood burning stoves should contact the local fire department, or building department.

The convenience and economy of manufactured wood-wax firelogs are causing more and more fireplace owners to use them instead of natural firewood. Like all fire products, these logs must be used carefully, and the Committee says it is very important that users read the directions, and follow them carefully.

Poking at the fire, breaking up a burning log and building too large a fire are the most serious mistakes, the Committee says.

Using more than one log at a time or adding a firelog to an existing fire are the major causes of difficulty. Most manufactured firelogs put out as much heat as two or three hardwood logs and

people can cause accidents if they light more than one at a time. Adding a wax wood log to an existing fire may result in a flare up or an excessively hot fire.

Firelog users should never poke a burning log. Firelogs are made of compressed sawdust and wax and when they are poked, bits of burning wax may stick to the fireplace tools and drip to the carpet. Poking may also break up the log, creating a larger burning surface and resulting in an intense heat flare-up. The logs are designed to burn fairly evenly for two or three hours, without special attention.

Consider the following list of cautions for using these logs, the Committee suggests:

1. Start with an open damper and a clean flue.
2. Use the right log for the fireplace. Small logs produce lower heat and are acceptable for small and free-standing fireplaces, such as those made of sheet metal.
3. Read the manufacturer's instructions, and follow them.
4. Place the log at the back of the fireplace, on a grate.
5. Don't unwrap the log,

slit the wrapper, or poke holes in it.

6. Never break up a burning log.
7. Don't try to move a burning log. It can break, thus increasing the heat beyond a safe limit.
8. Never overload your fireplace, and never add a manufactured log to an existing fire. A firelog or other fuel may be added to a manufactured firelog fire after two hours. But always ignite a fresh log when placed on an old, almost-out fire, or the heat from the old fire may vaporize the new log before it ignites, filling the fireplace and chimney with enough vapor to cause an explosion.
9. Never leave children unattended near a fireplace fire.
10. Make sure you have a good screen across the front of the fireplace, to keep sparks from igniting the floor.
11. To extinguish a log in an emergency, douse the flames with sand, water or chemical fire extinguisher. (Always keep something near the fireplace, just in case.) Do not break the log apart as this will just spread the fire.

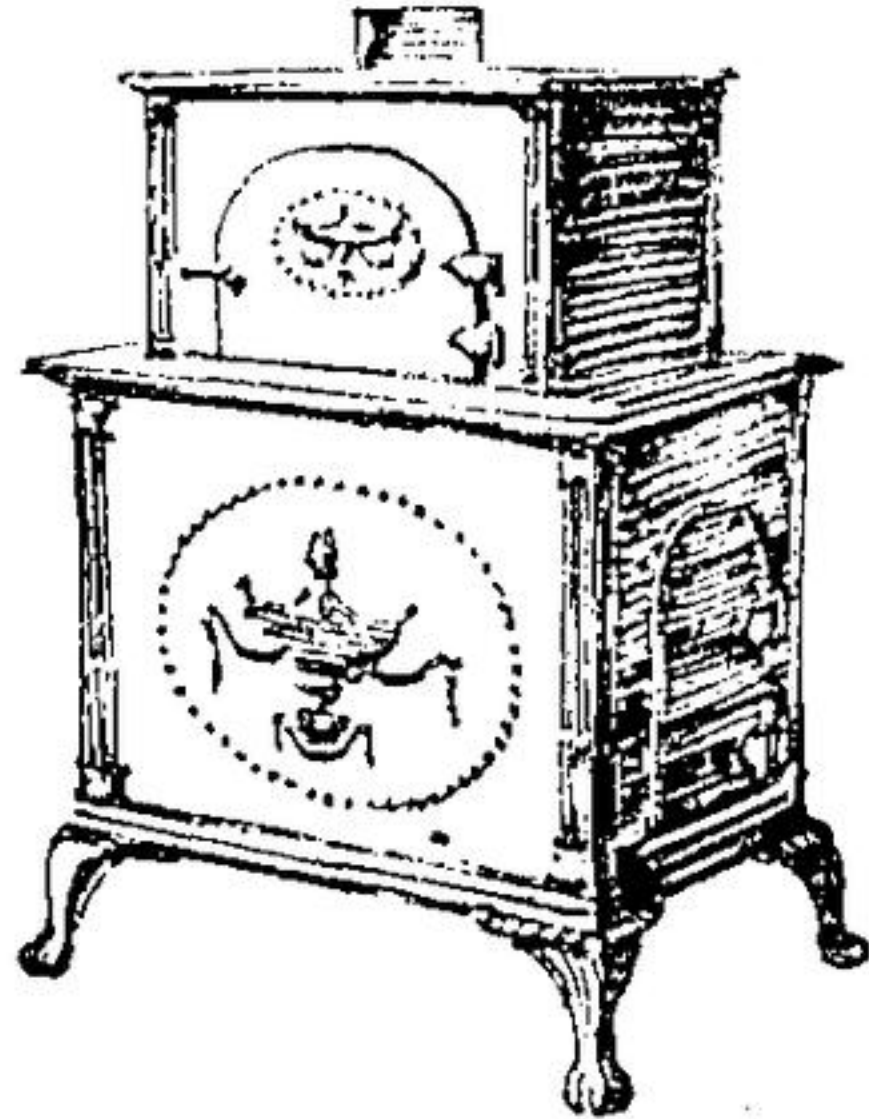
What to look for

A woodstove, fuel survey

By R.C. (BOB) OLLIVIER
Herald Columnist

outdoors while gathering the wood can be exhilarating and the pleasure of a wood fire on a cold winter's night is incalculable.

There are two main types of fireplaces, the built-in-the-wall



An example of the early 19th century box stove, popular because it gave much more efficient heat for cooking and warmth than the open fireplace of many pioneer homes. This model was manufactured by the earliest iron foundry in Canada, St. Maurice Forges of Quebec, established in 1737.

Heating value of different woods

Gross Heating Value For Air Dry Cord (BTU)

Rock Elm	32,000,000
Shagbark Hickory	30,600,000
White Oak	30,600,000
Bitternut Hickory	29,200,000
Sugar Maple	29,000,000
Beech	27,800,000
Red Oak	27,300,000
Yellow Birch	26,200,000
Red Elm	25,400,000
White Ash	25,000,000
White Elm	24,500,000
Red Maple	24,000,000
Tamarack	24,000,000
Black Cherry	23,500,000
White Birch	23,400,000
Black Ash	22,600,000
Green Ash	22,100,000
Silver Maple	21,700,000
Manitoba Maple	19,300,000
Large Tooth Aspen	18,200,000
Hemlock	17,900,000
Trembling Aspen	17,700,000
Butternut	17,400,000
Balsam Poplar	17,200,000
White Pine	17,100,000
Basswood	17,000,000
White Cedar	16,300,000
White Spruce	16,200,000
Balsam Fir	15,500,000

stone or brick unit and the cheaper and very popular woodstove. The latter comes in a wide variety of sizes, styles and performance qualities.

Installation of a wood stove is critical, and many safety and heat loss factors MUST be taken into consideration. If you feel you cannot install one without difficulty, have it done professionally. Your local fire department, as well as insurance companies, provide free information, as do stove companies. An often overlooked source of information is your public library. Study before you buy—it will prevent a lot of headaches.

Maintenance is of the utmost importance with a wood stove as well as the more formal fireplace. The chimney should be inspected often during the burning season, and may even need cleaning twice during the winter. The chimney should be checked for leaks and the stove inspected for breaks in the seals.

WHAT TO BURN?

What to burn? Well, don't burn artificial logs in a wood stove, or any of the things you might otherwise use to start a fire. Oils or combustible fuels will only cause problems, such as explosions in the firebox or even in the chimney. Paper or cardboard in large quantities will send flames up the chimney to cause fires.

Consider investing in tools such as a good axe, saw, chain saw, splitting wedges and hammer.

The ministry of natural resources, which administers our forests, is constantly plagued by problems caused by homeowners cutting their own wood. A lot of theft on ministry and private lands involving commercially valuable wood is prompting proposals for strong legal action.

The MNR has no policy concerning firewood; check your local office for its particular policy and the availability of firewood. The office at Cambridge only sells to commercial outfits at a minimum of 50 to 100 cords.

If you buy all or part of your fuelwood requirement, you should know what you're getting. This reporter did a lot of research for this article and found a wide variance in the amount of wood and the price. Be aware that there is only one size for a "cord": four

feet high by four feet wide by eight feet long. That totals 128 cubic feet of wood, including the bark and the space between the logs.

I was told by one retailer I could get a cord for \$37 delivered from Milton to Georgetown, but when I asked how big the advertised "cord" was it turned out to be a "face cord".

When told that there is no such thing as a face cord, the seller got upset. Upon further questioning, it was discovered that the amount measures 14 feet by eight feet by 14 inches.

MEASURE LOGS

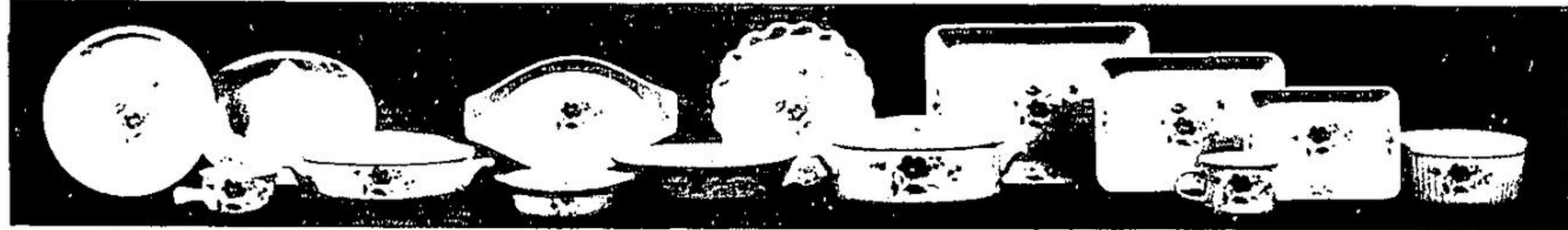
It must be noted that some agents sell 12-inch logs and some even 16 or 24-inch, but the legal size is 48 inches. So check around and compare the final value, whether split, hardwood, well-seasoned (should be dried 12 months) and the size of the cord, including the length of the pieces.

While talking to Al's Marine in Acton, I discovered a few things about chainsaws, and

found that about 90 per cent of his customers are "casual" cutters. These people need a place to have their chainsaw blades sharpened, and serviced, and a place to get advice on operation and use. There are several sizes of chainsaws; the use to which it is put decides the size.

One good guide is that the saw should cut ten inches in ten seconds and probably a 12-inch blade would be ideal for the casual cutter. Make sure that all wood you burn is "full dry", since green wood will burn with less efficiency, causing gases to escape up the chimney instead of being consumed to provide more heat value from the wood.

These gases solidify on the walls of the chimney and leave a deposit of creosote, which in this form is highly combustible. As mentioned previously, check everything and learn as much as possible about woods and the dangers of wood stove operation.



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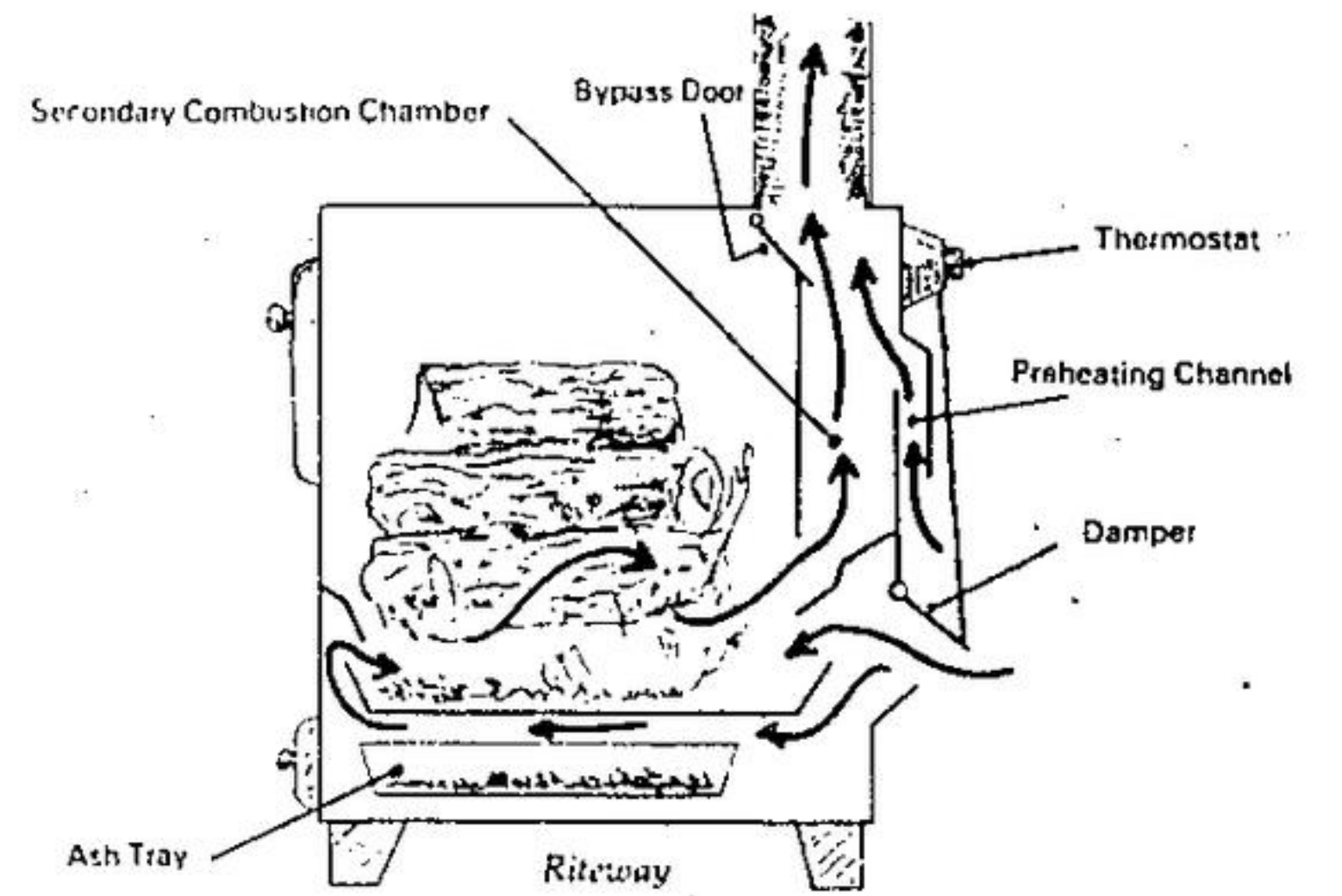
10" Divided Baker \$7.99

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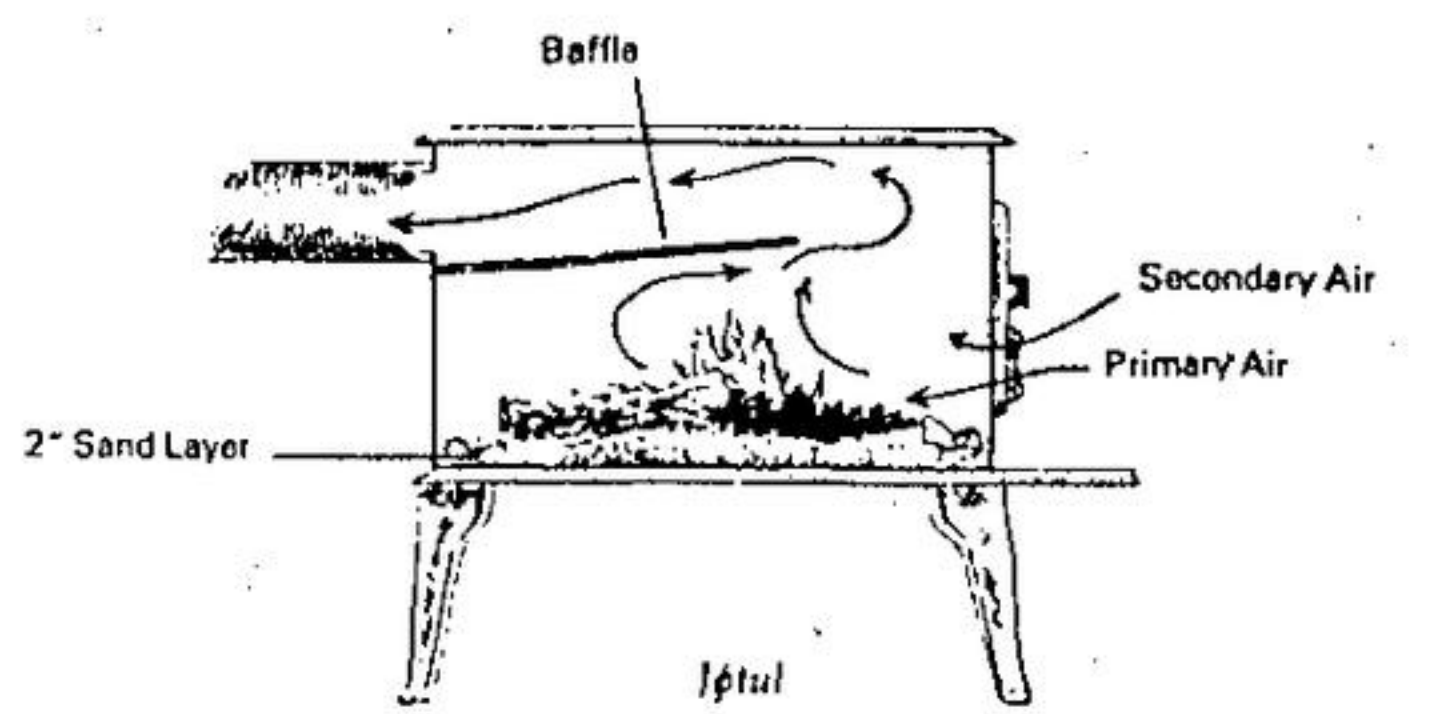
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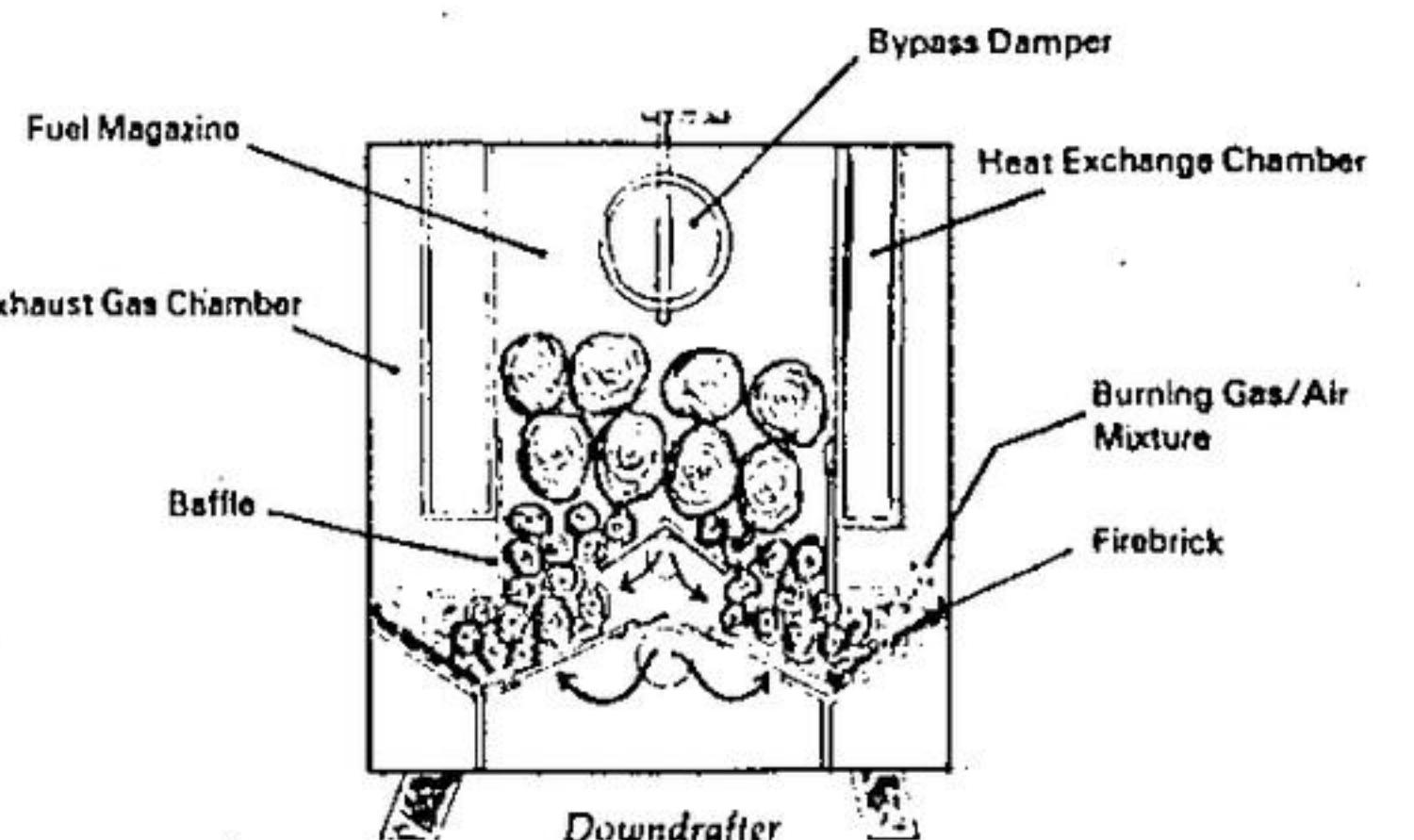
Some stove designs



Ashley and Riteway models are good examples of the airtight stove, constructed with efficiency in mind and many featuring thermostatically-controlled inlets which control the rate of burning.



The Scandinavian-made front-end burner is an adaptation of the basic airtight principle. It uses internal baffles to direct air flow, making the fire burn from front to back (though not always on the schedule claimed or expected).



A third type is also airtight, but because of its flow pattern, is called a downdraft stove, exemplified by this Downdrafter from the Vermont Woodstove Company. The wood rests on grates and volatile gas from the fire is forced downward, thus increasing the amount of fuel burned.



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