

Josephine Cochrane

(1841-1913)

Sources:

- The Robinson Library, "Josephine Cochrane: inventor of the automatic dishwashing machine." (<http://www.robinsonlibrary.com/technology/mechanical/biography/cochrane.htm>)
- Forgotten Newsmakers, "Josephine Cochrane invented the dishwasher." (<https://forgottennewsmakers.com/2010/04/20/josephine-cochrane-1839-1913-invented-the-dishwasher/>)



Photo Courtesy: The Robinson Library

Josephine Cochrane was born on March 8, 1841, in Ashtabula County, Ohio. After her mother died and her sister moved out, she lived with her father, John Garis, living for a time in Valparaiso, Indiana. After high school graduation, Cochrane married 27 year old William Cochran. She assumed her husband's name but preferred spelling it with an "e" on the end, which became a point of contention with his family.

The Cochrans enjoyed a busy social life and entertained frequently. After one event, one of the servants doing the dishwashing carelessly chipped some of her heirloom dishes. After discovering what had happened, Cochrane was furious and refused to let the servants handle the china any more. So, the morning after every subsequent dinner party she would wash and put the dishes away herself. She later was inspired to design and construct the first model of her dishwasher with the help of a local mechanic. She named it Cochrane's dishwasher, which was the first mechanical device to use water pressure in place of scrubbers.

After receiving a patent on December 28, 1886, Josephine was honored for her futuristic invention at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and was awarded one of the highest prizes for "best mechanical construction, durability, and adaptation to its line of work. After word spread, she was getting so many orders for the machine, she opened a factory business, Garis-Cochran, which began production in 1897. At 73 years of age, Cochran was still personally selling her machines in 1912, but died in 1913. In 1916, her company was bought out by Hobart which became KitchenAid and is now Whirlpool Corporation. Cochrane is considered the founder. In 2006, she was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame, which is located in North Canton, OH.