In Olden Times…

One of many down-to-earth donations from our friend Edith Sillery was this enameled metal chamber pot! (We include it in our WHAT IS IT? display popular at school events. You can imagine some of the responses...)

In the days of outhouses, it must have been a welcome alternative to heading out in the cold, or in the dark, sure to be inhabited by monsters of some sort. Even just getting out of bed and dealing with a “cold pot” does not sound very inviting!

One wonders what the routine was for dealing with the pot once it was used. Where its contents were emptied is no mystery. But where/how (and how thoroughly) it was washed, and by whom?? Surely this varied between households. It is probably a good guess, however, that it was not the menfolk who stepped up for the task.

It was possible, of course, to be more elegant about the whole “toilet set,” as noted in the 1902 Sears, Roebuck ad shown below. Perhaps reserved for guests in most homes. Such pieces are likely to be spotted these days as décor in upscale bed-and-breakfast quarters.