



Martha Ponge
Director of Apprenticeship

Downton Abbey Revisited



On a recent trip to Asheville, NC my husband and I visited the Biltmore Estate. While touring the estate we were introduced to the inner workings of the vast household staff that attended to the needs of the Vanderbilt family. It reminded me of one of my favorite shows – Downton Abbey. I am a self-described Downton Abbey crazy. I enjoyed every minute of the journey through the daily household happenings at the Crawley Family Estate. The Biltmore Estate gave me the opportunity to witness firsthand a view of those responsibilities and the tools with minimal technological capabilities that helped them do their jobs. I am ever amazed at the ability of a staff to organize and manage the daily needs of such a large home with little to no technological advances that make those chores manageable. Laundry for instance. Laundry may be the only household chore I do really well, but I can't imagine how I would manage without my front load washer with "add a garment" feature, my gas powered "non-fabric-shrinking" dryer, and my "can't live without it" Rowenta iron. I spend a great deal of my allotted chore time managing the laundry needs of two adults (plus a dog) and I am amazed at how it was done way back when and I am so thankful for those who made the ease of throwing in a Tide Pod and hitting start an option.

I am eternally grateful to the engineer who transformed the theoretical idea of "Isn't there an easier way to do this?" into the practical building of technologically advanced equipment for the benefit of all. It reminds us that engineers and the manufacturers they work for have an enormous impact on the day to day workings of our modern lives and our subsequent quality of life. Finding and implementing creative solutions to our real-world problems is what our manufacturers do and one of the reasons we as a community need to support their ability to be competitive and grow right here in Central New York.

My laundry example can be seen right here in Syracuse as you tour the plant floor at G.A. Braun. The products made there are a direct result of needing to create a solution for handling large amounts of laundry efficiently and consistently while utilizing less people to do so. Their large machines handle the cleaning for the estates of modern day America - hospitals, hotels, and cruise ships who need to prepare clean linens on a daily basis. The machines not only wash, but dry and fold automatically. If I only had a 1,000 square foot laundry room I'd be all set!

G.A. Braun is a participant in our apprenticeship program and a supporter of MACNY's ongoing efforts to support workforce training in Central New York.

