

FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM

GREAT WHEEL (Spinning Wheel) EXHIBIT

The spinning wheel replaced the early method of spinning by hand with a spindle. The Great Wheel is one of the earlier types of spinning wheel. The Great Wheel is the result of trying to mechanize the process. The spindle was mounted horizontally and connected to a large hand-driven wheel (The great wheel) by a cord that encircled the two. Due to the difference in size between the great wheel and the spindle, the spindle revolves many times for each turn of the great wheel.

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In the spinning process the fiber is spun at an angle off the tip of the spindle and then stored on the spindle. The fiber is held in the spinner's left hand while the great wheel is turned slowly with the right hand. Holding the fiber at an angle to the spindle creates the "twist" in the yarn. The great wheel spinning wheel is sometimes referred to as the "walking wheel spinning wheel". The use of this wheel requires the spinner to constantly walk a few feet away from the spindle and then back towards the spindle while continuing to rotate the great wheel by hand. This helps to play out the fiber and keep the proper tension. It is said that a person who spent the day spinning could walk several miles in the course of this back and forth motion.

Donated by the Tartalis Family