

THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM

Newsletter



September 2018

SOAPSTONE – Part III

This copy of the newsletter is the third of a three part series on Soapstone and will focus on the mill itself. Located in the “Mill Village” area of Franconia off Potash Road the original mill was built in 1785 as a grist mill and later became a sawmill and remained such until destroyed by a flood in 1796. It was soon replaced by George Dean who continued to operate it as a sawmill until 1889 when he sold it to Charles Williams who converted the mill for cutting soapstone. This was the mill that stood beside the Piscataquog River in Mill Village.

Up until this time the stone from the quarry was shipped to a factory in Nashua for the manufacture of soapstone products and the quarried stone was taken by six-team horse-drawn wagons to the railroad station in Greenfield for rail transport to Nashua for cutting. For a period in the 1880's there was also a soapstone mill in Greenfield.

Once George Dean converted the Mill Village mill in Franconia for cutting soapstone, there was no longer a need to ship it to other towns for cutting.



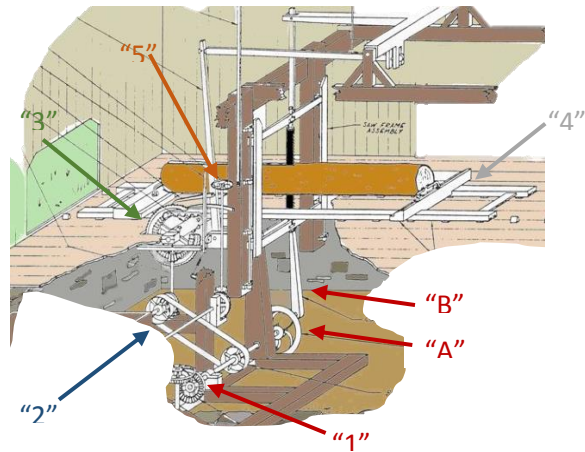
The mill was forced to close in 1906 when the quarry shut down and the company declared bankruptcy. It remained idle for decades and in 1936 a flood washed away the dam which formed the mill pond at the Mill Village mill and also the water wheel. The interior of the mill and its mechanical equipment, which was already in partial ruin after sitting idle for 30 years, was also further damaged. However, like the Phoenix rising from the ashes, in 1946 a George Newell from Warren, VT bought the property and made necessary repairs to get the mill back into production. Some more modern machinery/equipment was installed in the mill. Since the flood had destroyed the dam and water wheel a gasoline engine was installed to power the mill. The revitalized mill sawed soapstone until the existing supply was gone (some 8-10 tons) and then closed for the last time. In 2016 the mill succumbed to time and neglect and collapsed into the Piscataquog River.



There follows on page 2 details on what we would consider today to be the primitive workings of the mill. Yet another theme crossword follows on pages 3 and 4.

The mill converted for sawing soapstone was originally used as a grist mill and later a sawmill. During all these applications the mill was powered by water. The Mill Village dam held back the Piscataquog River and formed the mill pond. The mill itself was built on the edge of the river below the dam with its water wheel turned by the flow of water from the dam.

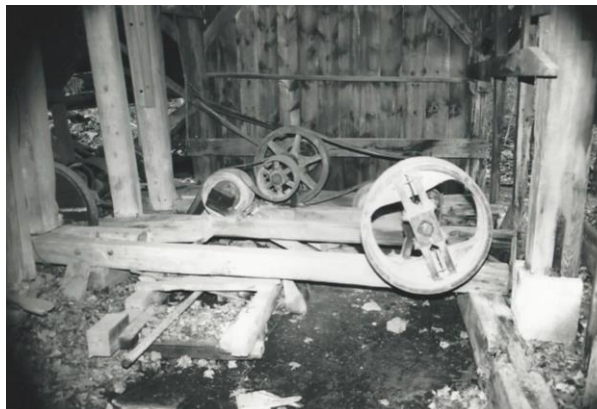
The drawing at right depicts a water power mill apparatus similar to that used in the Mill Village soapstone mill. The numbered items on this drawing correspond to the photos below taken in the Francestown Mill shortly before its final collapse. The drawing at left shows a log being sawn while in the Francestown Mill this log would be replaced by the piece of soapstone that was to be sawn.



#1 This is the main drive shaft from the water wheel and shows the flywheel and crankarm "A" and the saw connecting links "B".



#2 This is the belt drive for the reversing of the motion of the carriage.



#3 This is the clutch lever assembly for the carriage rail drive assembly that makes the saw carriage move back and forth.



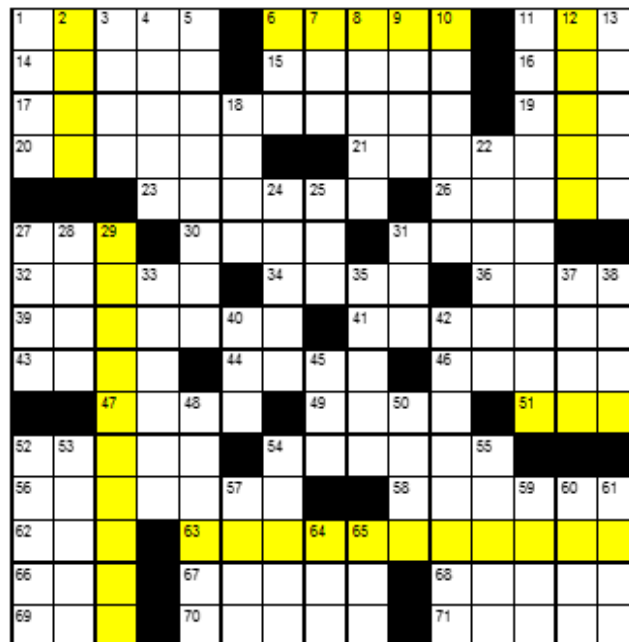
#4 This is the saw carriage and frame assembly with a slab of stone being sawn. Also shown is #5, the hand wheel to control the flow of water.



SOAPSTONE MILL THEME CROSSWORD

Across

1. Plain folk
6. ORIGINAL SOAPSTONE MILL
11. "I ___ you one"
14. Slip up to
15. Bridal path
16. Some college degrees
17. Why Rick Gates testified
19. "___ alive!"
20. Roof material
21. Many an Iraq veteran
23. Interference
26. Bury
27. ___ degree
30. "Once ___ a time..."
31. Ancient Andean
32. Cy Young, e.g.
34. ___-friendly
36. Electrical discharge
39. Smallest
41. Savior of a group of people
43. Bounds
44. Has left port
46. Annoy
47. ___ Bank
49. Abounding
51. SOAPSTONE TOOL
52. "Yeah"
54. Light medieval helmet
56. No trespassing
58. "Potemkin" setting
62. "___ we having fun yet?"
63. AREA KNOWN FOR FREESTONE
66. Costa del ___
67. "Farewell, mon ami"
68. Densely populated
69. "Star Trek" rank: Abbr.
70. Less polite



71. Ziti, e.g.

Down

1. Dangerous biters
2. A STEATITE PROCESSING PLACE
3. "I had no ___!"
4. Blind parts
5. Lethargic
6. Long-jawed fish
7. Fix, in a way
8. Bartender on TV's Pacific Princess
9. Willowy
10. Type of bowling
11. Final writings
12. POWERED SOME MILLS
13. Big Bertha's birthplace
18. "By yesterday!"
22. Open
24. Racetrack figures
25. ___ and outs
27. ___ Archibald
28. Double
29. CONTROL DEVICES

31. Anger

33. Rebel

35. In-box contents

37. ___ ~~canem~~ (Beware of the dog)

38. Ed Sullivan's really big ___

40. College entrance exam

42. Accelerates

45. Baseball stat

48. Rams horn trumpet

50. Arctic sight

52. Decree (Russian origin)

53. Graceful bird

54. Sedate

55. Aquarium fish

57. Language of Pakistan

59. Breaks down, in a way

60. Belt

61. "___ and the King of Siam"

64. Wedding announcement word

65. Blackguard

**SOLUTION IN NEXT
MONTH'S NEWSLETTER**

FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM
FORGET THIS SUMMER HEAT
OUR STUFF IS ALWAYS COOL



FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM
COME VISIT US THIS LABOR DAY
AND EXPERIENCE OUR COOL
OPEN MONDAY 10-2