

THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM



Newsletter

October 2020

FRANCESTOWN STORE

FRANCESTOWN GENERAL STORE . . .



The Fracestown General Store was established in 1814 and until a few years ago, when it was forced to close, was the second oldest continuously operated general store in the US. Once again reopened it seems appropriate to learn more about this significant part of our heritage. Over the years the general store, which was originally k/a “The Long Store”, shared part of the building with many different occupants including: two banks, a harness maker, the US Post Office and notably the Mt. Crotchet Engine Company No. 1. The engine company was the Town Fire Department and the hand pumper seen in this photo has been restored and is in the Heritage Museum for viewing.



One of the longest owner/operators of the store was the Vadney family.

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THE LONG CALIPER . . .

Last month you were introduced to the cross caliper. We opined that the collection at the Heritage Museum lacked one of its mates – the long caliper. Well it is time to rejoice – we now have a long caliper to show you when you next visit the Heritage Museum.



We are also fortunate this month to have a guest contributor to the newsletter who writes on this very topic. Jane Butler is the owner of an antique tool business - *Timeless Tools and Treasures* located in Bennington, NH. Jane is also an officer of the Early American Industrial Association whose purpose is to preserve and present historic trades, crafts, and tools and interprets their impact on our lives.

This article details English customs and the Port of London but the Colonies would soon follow. Jane writes:

“Casks, which encompass many sizes of containers including *barrels*, have been used for holding wine and many other products since first developed by Celtic craftsmen in the Second Century A.D. They gradually replaced the Roman amphora used to carry liquids for trade and remained the main shipping container type until the late 19th Century. For centuries, hundreds of ships would arrive at the port of London loaded with wine and the king’s representatives would choose some for the royal cellar – executing the Right of Prilage¹ which preceded customs and duty taxes. Then the ships could unload the remaining casks which would have been distributed to the various wholesalers and other customers. **CONTINUED ON PAGE 7**

FRANCESTOWN GENERAL STORE – CONTINUED:

The museum is fortunate to have a relative of two of the previous owners on our staff. So we asked Jennifer Vadney if she would provide some history.



THIS SIGN FROM THE STORE IS A MUSEUM EXHIBIT

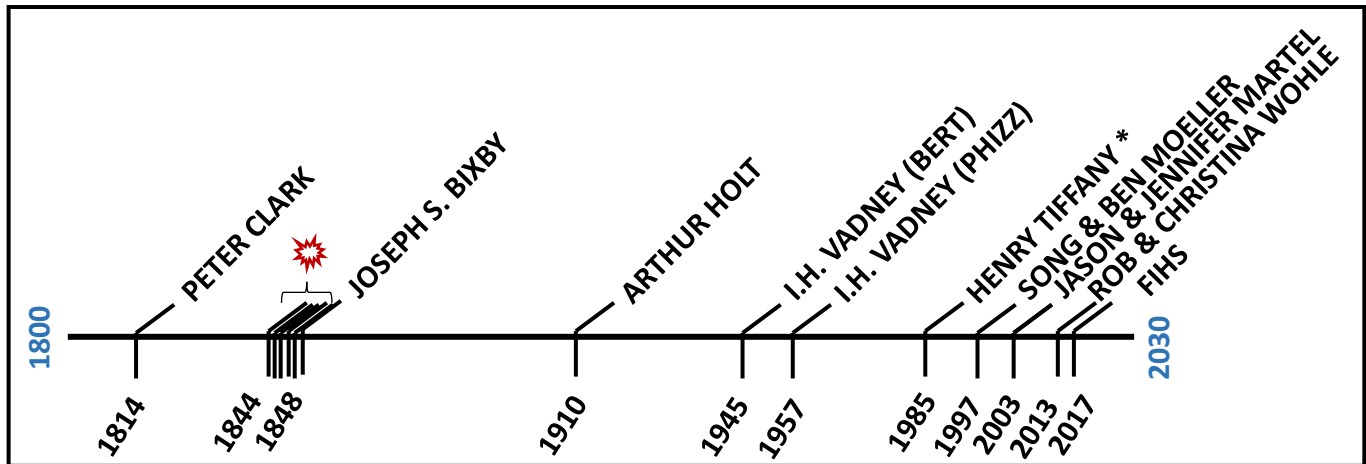
So we not only got a history but a number of old photos:



The date of this photo is unknown but from the young lady's dress we are guessing ~1880 – 1890. Notice the metal hitching post for the horse which in later years was replaced by gas pumps, and the horse drawn buggy which in later years was replaced by the "Tin Lizzie".

As far as we can tell, there have been 16 owners of the store over the past 206 years, not bad for a commercial building of this age.

Thanks to the research of John Schott and a couple of local assistants, we know the owners of the store. Local readers of this newsletter will no doubt recognize some of these names.



As you can see from the above time line the length of ownership by any one person varied widely. This is especially true in the 1844-1848 period when the store changed hands seven times in 4 years:

★ 1844-1844 Charles McKean; 1844-1845 M.C. Dodge; 1845-1845 Merrill Dodge; 1845-1847 Robert Bradford; 1847-1848 Thomas B. Bradford; 1848-1848 Levi Dodge; 1848-1910 Joseph S. Bixby.

* In the period from 1985-1997, Henry Tiffany owned the building but the store was operated by Kim and Kip Dalley.

Several additional items of information would include:

- In the period from 2003 – 2013, Jason and Jennifer Martel while operating the store embarked on a new venture, Francetown Village Foods. They prepared, packaged and marketed frozen prepared meals to other stores and vendors. The business quickly expanded and soon outgrew the space available. At that point the Martel's moved the frozen food business to Milford and sold the general store.
- In the period from 2013-2017, Rob and Christina Wohle owned and operated the store until July 6, 2017 when the store closed its doors for the first time in 203 years.
- In the period from 2017-today, a Nevada based philanthropist purchased the property from the bank and donated it to the Francetown Improvement and Historic Society (FIHS) to renovate and relet as a general store. For the next three years the FIHS set about an extensive rehabilitation using both private funds and grants. They now rent the building space to a CPA, an artist and the new general store operated by local resident Philip Lawrence and his family. The building has been completely remodeled. Just recently opened, Philip reports that they hope to soon open a diner section and expand the store line to include some hardware items and electronics as well as an expanded convenience store line of goods.

The following photos are courtesy of the Vadney family and depict the store in bygone days. This first photo does not have a known date but since the Vadney's did not purchase the store until 1945 this would be post World War II. Note that the hitching post in the photo at the beginning of this article has been replaced by gas pumps.



The below photo is the I.H. Vadney family (Evelyn, Etta & Bert) at the checkout counter. Note the old Regulator type clock on the wall of which a similar model can be seen at the Francestown Heritage Museum.



An interior photo of the store. Note the price on the loaves of bread - 29¢.



The last photo is that of the deli at the time Phizz Vadney owned the business. How many items of merchandise in this 50-year-old photo do you recognize as being available today even in similar packaging?



OCTOBER THEME CROSSWORD

Across

- 1. Thick piece of concrete
Amorphous mass
Slippery substance
- 3. Young man hired for errands
4:1, e.g.
- 5. INSTRUMENT FOR
LINEAR MEASURE
Dislodge from a saddle
- 7. Hot spot
Back problem
"The ___" (Uris novel)
- 9. 252 wine gallons
COOPER'S PRODUCT
Astringent
- 11. Unredeemed
LONG ESTABLISHED
PRACTICES
- 13. "All My Children" vixen
Time of one's life
- 15. Reside
100-meter, e.g.
Blue hue

Down

- I. Wide brimmed soft hat
Defeat
- III. Bad
Downsliding of an earth mass
- V. Check (out)
Chiefly
- VII. Emancipator
Like some stadiums
- IX. Water in marshy area
Telephone service regions
- XI. A SELLER OF GOODS
Church song
- XIII. Buildup of mucus
Egg producer
- XV. RETAIL ESTABLISHMENT
"Rebel Without a Cause" star

As usual the theme words come from this month's newsletter and the definitions and blocks on the grid for the theme words are in yellow. This is a French grid crossword (we did one of these last month so you should be an old hand at them by now). There are no numbers in the cubes but rather along the margins. Therefore any one line or column can have multiple words in it. For example line 1 has 4 adjoining open spaces and also has another 4 adjoining open spaces followed by 5 adjoining open spaces. This line has three words and in looking at the clues you see there are 3 clues for 1 across. The first clue is "thick piece of concrete" and the answer is "slab". The same procedure would be used for the Down words. For example, Column I has 9 adjoining spaces and also has another 5 adjoining spaces so the column has two words and in looking at the clues you see that there are 2 clues for I Down. All clues for theme words are in capital letters. The solution is on page 6.

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	XIV	XV
1	S	L	A	B											
2															
3															
4															
5															
6															
7															
8															
9															
10															
11															
12															
13															
14															
15															

LONG CALIPER - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

This system changed in 1641 when the government needed an income source and began to levy duties on alcoholic drinks, sugar and other commodities. The list of dutied goods continued to grow and Customs and Excise appointed officers known as *Gaugers* to collect the taxes. In order to determine the duty, the gaugers had to calculate the capacity of each cask and measure the amount of product within. They used several measuring devices including a *long caliper* to measure the height of the cask; a *head rod* to measure the diameter of the top, a *bung rod* to measure the inner diameter; and a *cross caliper* which measures the diameter of the cask. The barrel would be rolled a few times to measure at different places in case it had become elliptical. The calipers consisted of two L-shaped arms that slide beside each other to accommodate various diameters and have graduations on the top to read the resulting measurement.

The Frantown Heritage Museum recently acquired a boxwood and brass cross caliper made by the famous British company, Dring & Fage. Established by John Dring and William Fage, the company was active from 1790 to 1940 but their main period of production was 1792 to 1882. A large allotment of their output was for Customs and Excise to measure goods for taxation purposes.

While the US had not yet reached the degree of customs and taxation found in England, the barrel measuring devices soon became common in this country. Coopers had to ensure that the barrels and casks they were making would meet the standards required by these agents.



1. Prisaige - the right of the crown under old English law to take one tun of wine from every ship importing from 10 to 20 tuns and 2 tuns from every ship importing 20 or more.

THE COBURN STORE

Another exhibit in the Museum also relates to a Francestown General Store, this being the Coburn Store owned by Amasa Downes at that time - this wooden shipping crate.



An important link in commerce was being able to ship goods from a willing seller to a willing buyer. Many items not available in Francestown were made in Boston, MA and other more urban areas. Shipping goods was done primarily by railroad and then onto the local stage coach.

The Coburn Store in Francestown used to carry a line of Wedgewood type cups which were made in Boston. Carefully packed in this wooden crate they then either went by rail to NH and for the final leg of the journey to town by stage or the entire journey by stage. The thought of a wooden crate full of fragile Wedgewood type china bouncing over dirt and corduroy roads is not for the faint of heart.

The markings on this crate clearly indicate that this was sent from Boston with Wedgewood type china for the Coburn Store owned by Amasa Downes.



Solution to this month's crossword:

N	A	Y	C		H	S	V	A	D		L	L	E	W	D	15
A		R		M		E		E		L		D		N		14
E	G	A	E	L	D	D	M	I	D	A	V	C	R	I	C	13
D		V		A		O		O		E		L				12
S	W	O	T	O	M	S	C	U	S	D	E	V	S	A	U	11
E				P		A				O				D		10
M		L	U	A		L	E	L	B	A	R	R	E	N	T	9
A		A		T		R	O		A	V		A		A		8
J		H	A		N	A	I		S	T	R	A	L	L	H	7
		R		A					A		E				H	6
E		S		H	O	R	S	U	N		R	P	E	R	C	5
R		A		C		O			E		O			U	U	4
O		T	I	R	A	T	I	O	Y	B	O	E	F	I	C	3
T		A		E		A			S	I		W		L		2
S		U		M		U		B	L	O		G	L	B	S	1
AX	AIX	IIIX	IIIX	IX	X	XI	IIIA	IIA	IA	A	AI	III	II	I		

THIS MONTHS TROPES (sayings from our ancestors)

ENTERTAINMENT -

Common entertainment included playing cards. However, there was a tax levied when purchasing playing cards but it was only applicable to the Ace of Spades. To avoid paying the tax, people would purchase 51 cards instead of a full deck. Yet, since most games required 52 cards these people were thought to be stupid or dumb because they were **“not playing with a full deck”**.

ATTIRE -

Ladies wore corsets which would lace up. A proper and dignified woman wore a tightly laced corset and was thus considered to be **“straight laced”**.

Really folks, you can't make this stuff up.