

THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM



Newsletter

December 2020

Mill #9 – Clark’s Earthenware Factory

Happy Holidays

Sharp eyed readers will notice that we seem to have skipped Mill #8 (The Lewis Grist Mill). This is not a slight to David Lewis but rather an attempt to avoid duplication as we have already discussed grist mills in the July 2019 Newsletter. But a short synopsis of the Lewis Grist Mill (Mill #8) follows:

	①		②		③		④		⑤		⑥			⑦	
														Mill was abandoned much of this time	
1		1		1 1		1		1 1							1
7		8		8 8		8		8 8							9
7		1		3 4		5		6 6							6
2		0		6 0		5		6 7							9

David Lewis ① built the first Grist Mill in 1772 in Francestown on the Piscataquog River. It was destroyed by a spring flood in 1774 but he rebuilt it later that year. In 1810 he turned the mill over to his son David Jr. ② who operated it. This mill burned and in 1836 David Jr. sold the land to Dudley Carlton ③ who in turn sold the land to John Fisher ④ in 1840 and he rebuilt the mill and operated it until 1855 when he sold it to William McAlvin ⑤ who operated the mill until 1865 when it burned to the ground. In 1866 McAlvin sold the land to Harlan Downes ⑥ who turned around and sold it to Hiram Clark ⑦ in 1867. Clark rebuilt the mill but not as a grist mill but instead one where pails and fancy boxes were produced. It is unknown when this mill ceased operation but the building remained deserted and fell into decay until 1969 when a house was erected on the site.

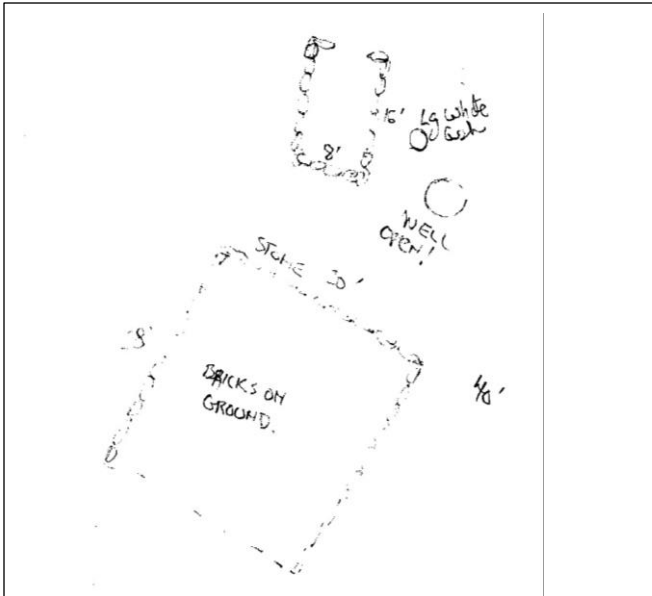
So for 95 years Mill #8 was a grist mill and we have already covered that type of mill so we’ll move on to Mill #9, Clark’s Earthenware Factory.



PETER CLARK EARTHENWARE FACTORY

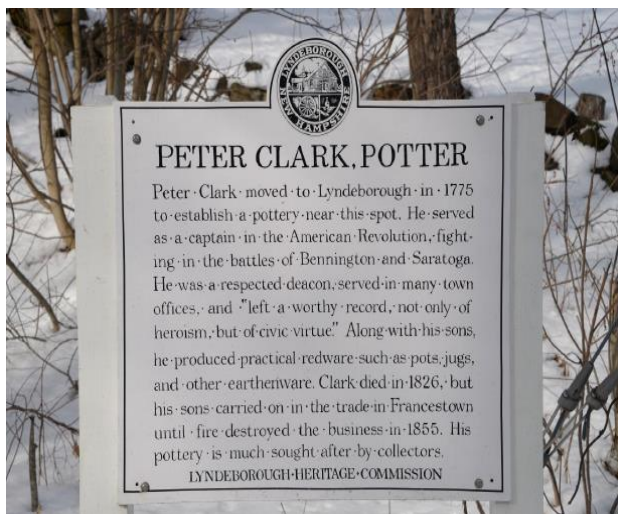
Before we get too involved in the Clark family and the pottery we need to answer the question, why a pottery? After all, the mills we have been looking into in this series have all been large operations such as sawmills, grist mills, carding and fulling mills, etc. This was a typical scenario for new towns back in the 1700’s and 1800’s. Most first established sawmills and grist mills to generate lumber for their homes and food for their tables. However, next built were potteries. Plain red ware or earthenware is a nonvitreous pottery that was essential to colonial housewives. It was used for pots, jugs, bowls, etc.

The Clark family was prominent in both Francestown and our neighboring town of Lyndeborough. Lyndeborough was noted for its glassworks but Peter Clark was a potter as well as a businessman. In 1775 he opened his pottery factory in Lyndeborough. The family also opened a pottery in 1800 in Francestown on what is now known as Clarkville Road. The following sketch of the site was made some years after the business ceased operation sometime after 1817. Exact dates are unknown but it is believed to have been 1820.



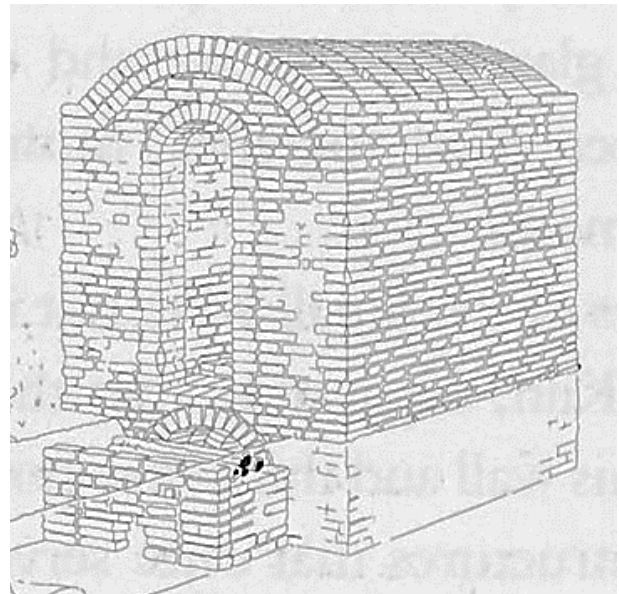
The large square appears to be a stone building foundation while the small square appears to have been the kiln. The round circle is an open dug well.

The business closed in 1820, reportedly due to the poor quality of the clay available in this area. The family pottery in Lyndeborough remained open and operated there until it burned in 1855. Today a historical marker is located where the pottery once stood in Lyndeborough at the corner of 2nd NH Turnpike and Sharpe Road @ New Road.



THE POTTERY

Specifics concerning the Francestown Pottery are not detailed. It is reported that Peter dug the necessary clay on the site. While the quality of the clay was often marginal it proved satisfactory and some interesting pieces were made. On the site he erected a potter's shop and a kiln – see details above. This was not a large operation and it is likely from the footprint of the kiln on the sketch that it was a standard square kiln made of brick and marl (an earthy clay). While we have no photo or drawing of the Clark kiln, given the dimensions on the sketch and material remains found, the kiln may have resembled this one:

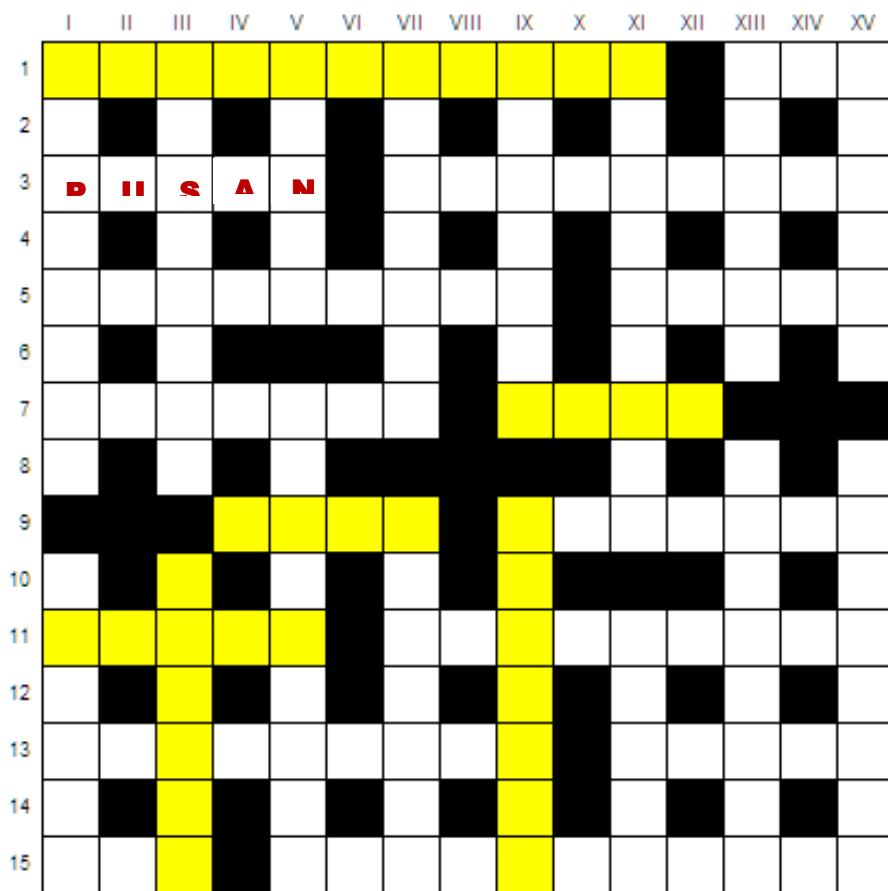


Turning of the pottery was done using a simple wheel powered by a foot treadle.

Also on the site would have been a “waster” pit where broken and unusable pieces of pottery were disposed of. The Heritage Museum has a number of shards of earthenware from this site. See photo on Page #4.

DECEMBER THEME CROSSWORD

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've done these before 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 11 adjoining open spaces and also has another 3 adjoining open spaces. This line has two words and in looking at the clues you see there are 2 clues for 1 across. Line 2 has no open adjoining spaces so there are no words going across in line 2. Line 3 has 5 adjoining open spaces and also has another 9 adjoining open spaces so this line also has two words. The first clue is "Industrial city in SO. Korea" and the answer is "Pusan". The same procedure would be used for the Down words. For example, Column I has 8 adjoining spaces and also has another 6 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 4.



Across

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. NONVITREOUS POTTERY
Three less one | 13. Followers
Close | VII. Flammable hydrocarbon
Football stat |
| 3. Industrial city in So. Korea
Medieval writing surface | 15. "Dear" one
Teenage schoolgirl | IX. A fly-in community
VESSELS MADE OF CLAY |
| 5. Group of instrumentalists
Doofus | Down | XI. Repetition of another's speech
Foreword, for short |
| 7. Largest continental area
OAST | I. Member of staff
Gauge | XIII. Belief in a supreme being
Suspend something |
| 9. KIND OF COURT
Large oval dish | III. Spa treatment
SCRAP POTTERY PIT | XV. Uproar
More intelligent |
| 11. ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIND | V. Door part | |

SUPPLEMENT – A SYNOPSIS OF MILLS IN FRANCESTOWN

Lest anyone doubt that Frankestown was a center of commerce and industry at the turn of the century (1800 that is), attached here is a list of the various mills and factories in Frankestown in the 1700'S and 1800's:

- 1) The David Lewis Sawmill (1770) – this was the first mill of any type in Frankestown. This was an old fashioned up and down saw mill operated by a mill crank mechanism (you do of course remember our discussion of this type mill back in the April 2019 issue of the Newsletter).
- 2) The Butterfield Sawmill (1772) – this mill was instrumental in the development of the southwestern part of Frankestown and adjoining areas in neighboring Greenfield.
- 3) David Lewis Corn/Grist Mill (1772) – David was a busy boy in the 1770's having both a sawmill and a grist mill operating in town. This is the mill described on page one of this newsletter.
- 4) Cram's Oil Mill (1800) – No doubt you all remember our discussion of this mill in our May 2020 Newsletter edition. There were a number of different kinds of oil mills operating in the Frankestown vicinity between 1795 and 1835. The advent of cotton superseded flax and brought flax seed production to a halt. It was the flax seed that most of the oils were derived from.
- 5) Dodge's Carding & Grist Mill (1816) – Built by Simeon Dodge.
- 6) Thorndyke's Carding Mill (1816) – this was a prosperous and long running mill that saw use in a number of different ways – a carding and fulling mill, later converted to a planer and grist mill and finally to a shingle mill and wheelwright shop. This mill was discussed in the 2019 June, July and August issues of this newsletter.
- 7) Captain Carson's Mill (the Grist and Sawmill in Mill Village) (1785) – The dam supplying water for the mill power was destroyed by a spring flood a few years after this mill was built. A town road passed over the top of the dam (today's New Boston Road). The town and the mill owner split the expense to rebuild the dam as it was in both parties' interest. Ultimately this mill was sold to Charles Williams in 1889 and was converted to the sawing of the soapstone for which Frankestown is so well known. This mill was discussed in the 2018 June, July and August issues of this newsletter.



- 8) Scoby Mill (1780) – Built by David Scoby as a saw and grist mill that was sold to Daniel Fuller in 1832 who used it only for personal needs until 1860 when it was no longer used.
- 9) The Nail Factory (1817) – originally built as a chair and bobbin shop and was converted to a machine shop by Daniel and Levi Bixby where they worked at cutting and heading nails. It is believed to have been taken down in 1840.
- 10) Bixby's Wheelwright Shop (1830) – was Located in Mill Village and sold to Daniel Moody who operated it until 1890. The operation of this shop and the craft of the wheelwright is discussed in detail in the November 2019 edition of this newsletter.

11) Sleeper Saw Mill (1806) – this mill was built and operated by John Sleeper, et al, for about 70 years. It stood at the mouth of Pleasant Pond. More important than its role in sawing lumber was that it controlled the flowage rights draining from Pleasant Pond. This mill was discussed in detail in the April 2019 issue of this newsletter

12) Fisher’s Saw Mill (1800) – Was built by David Fisher about 1800 and sold to Samuel Bryant who put up a new mill in place of the old.

13) White’s Saw and Shingle Mill (1855) – this mill is located on Old County Road North about mile north of Mill #12 (discussed above) and closer to the Deering Line. Sited on Shattuck Brook that connects with Collins Brook. Parts of the old dam and mill foundation are all that remain today.



14) Dutton’s Grist Mill (1810) – was built by Israel Fairbanks. This mill was located on Rand Brook on the south side of Driscoll Hill.

15) Mitchell’s Grist Mill (1790) – This mill was built by Thomas Mitchell and operated for ~60 years. This mill was located on Collins Brook at the current corner of School House Road and Bennington Road.

16) Willard’s Furniture Shop (1806) – Built by Joseph Willard and operated for ~44 years. This mill was located on Bixby Brook just off Poor Farm Road in the Village.

17) Bixby Box Shop (1821) - Built by Daniel Bixby as a furniture manufactory and later for making fancy boxes. It was used for a Creamery from 1896-1889 and then a planing mill following that. It was located at the site of the current Bixby Dam on Bixby Brook in the village.

18) The Clark Bobbin Mill (1829) – Built by Warner Clark on the Piscataquog River - South Branch at the intersection of the river and the Francestown Turnpike So. This mill was discussed in detail in the April 2020 edition of the Francestown Heritage Museum newsletter.

19) The Starrett Bobbin Mill (1846) – this mill burned in 1861 and was not rebuilt.

20) The Axe Shop (1831) – Built by Hammon Starrett. At some point he relocated this small business to a building near the current former brick blacksmith’s shop. He worked alone and no great number of axes was ever made.

21) The Vose Hat Shop (1802) – this business was started by Josiah Vose and continued by his son Elisha until 1847.

- *St. Clement, (the fourth bishop of Rome) stumbled across the process of making felt completely by accident. Apparently, he filled his sandals with tow (short flax or linen fibers) in an attempt to make them more comfortable. He discovered that a type of cloth was produced by the combination of moisture from perspiration and moisture from the ground. This moisture and the pressure from his feet matted the fibers from the tow together, producing a cloth. Short flax was commonly found in Francestown. Mercury was also used until the late nineteenth century in the processing of felt for hat making. However,*

Mercury was found to have serious effects on the batter manifesting in tremors, hallucinations, and/or other psychotic symptoms. As such, this is where the term “mad batter”, (as found in Alice in Wonderland) originated. They would often appear to act in psychotic ways due to the effects of handling mercury every day.

22) Haseltine Hat Shop (1812) – this business was started by James Hazeltine and later taken over by Jonah Davis who ran the business until 1834 when control was turned over to Charles Howard for him to run it until Jonah returned from New Orleans in 1838. Francestown became quite noted for these hats.

23) True’s Tannery (1805) – This tannery was built by Thomas Bixby and was one of four tanneries operating in Francestown. These were all small tanneries but in total added considerable value to the town. It eventually passed into the hands of Dea. John True who ran it until 1830. The tannery was located about a mile north of town just before Campbell Hill Road.

24) The Gibson Tannery – The date this business was started/built is not known but it operated until 1827. It was located across the road (the 2nd NH Turnpike No.) from the Gibson Tavern/toll booth at the site of the present day golf course pond.

25) Ewell Tannery – This was built by Perez Ewell and taken over by Amasa Downes Sr. in 1811. The tannery operated until 1850. Unlike many of the mills/businesses in town that relied on water power, energy for this mill was supplied by horsepower for grinding the bark. The operator would have to break up the bark with an ax and toss it into the hopper where it was ground, as well as keep the horse going.



ILLUSTRATION OF HORSE BEING USE TO GRIND BARK

We will detail more about the bark tanning process in a future newsletter.

26) Farnum Tannery – The beginning date of this tannery is unknown but it is listed in the 1817 Gazetteer and did not cease operation until 1860. Built by Peter Farnum, it was later taken over by Mr. Downes. This and the preceding three tanneries (True’s, Gibson’s and Ewell’s) were called “large tanneries” by the Gazetteer.

27) Musical Instrument Shop (1790) – Operated by Ezra Barrett and reported to be “in vigorous operation in 1817”. This was a small shop located just north of the current general store (“The Long Store”).

28) Potash Factories (1790) – there were three of these in Francestown operating during the same time period. The first was owned and operated by Peter Clark in 1790. It was soon followed by one owned and operated by Peter Woodbury while the third was owned and operated by Ebenezer Pettee in Mill Village. All three ceased operation ~1835.

- *Prior to the industrial era potash was derived from plant ashes or wood ash soaked in water in a pot. The liquid would then be boiled off and what remained was potash, which could be used for everything from soap to gun powder to leavening for cooking, etc. Today potash is also a key ingredient in many fertilizers. Potash was an export commodity for the colonists as the English wool industry used it to clean raw wool before spinning. It was reported that the potash produced*

by an acre of woodland could be sold for more than the purchase price of the land. This provided income for cash poor farmers who had to clear the land anyways in order to plant their crop.

29) The Earthenware Factory (1800) – started by Peter Clark this is the factory detailed in this issue of the Heritage Museum Newsletter.

30) Brick-making Establishment (~1800) – This was owned and operated by Saville Starrett and finally closed in ~1860.

- *Colonial brick-makers made their products by digging clay from the ground. The clay was mixed with water and mashed. This was often done with their feet to produce a mash with the right consistency. The area where this was done was known as a treading pit.*



A TREADING PIT RE-ENACTMENT
AT COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG



Debris such as sticks, rocks, and leaves would then be removed. Different colored bricks were made by adding sand or ashes to the mixture. The mixture would then be placed in a wooden mold to make the right shape. Within the molds, the brick mixtures would dry for a week or so before being moved to a drying shed where they would be stored for up to six weeks. When they were fully dried, they would be fired in a brick kiln sealed with clay for up to six days at temperatures approaching 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit where they would glow yellow from the intense heat. Up to 20,000 bricks could be fired at a time, though not all would be usable.

31) Everett's Mill (1799) – This sawmill was built by Eleazer Everett on the Piscataquog River at the Lyndeborough Line (today's High Bridge Road). This mill had ceased operation by 1876 and was replaced by a mill built and operated by Phinehas Kidder. This mill was a carding, threshing and cider mill. While the mill pond was in Francestown, the actual buildings are over the line in Lyndeborough.

32) Whip Factory (1833) – Owned and operated by William Anderson and ceased operation in 1845. The factory was located next to the Gibson Tavern (the current golf course). Reportedly Mr. Anderson did not make a large number of whips but those that he did make were of the finest quality. They were mostly sold in Boston and "the Francestown Whips had quite a reputation".

The above synopsis mainly summarizes the mills, factories and manufactories of the 1700's and 1800's. It does not include the many stores, banks, accommodation businesses, et al, nor does it contemplate those in the 1900's.

In putting together this synopsis of the mills and businesses of Francestown, reference was made to more detailed discussions of several of these mills in past issues of this Newsletter. If any of our readers have missed one of these past issues and would like a reprint of any of those issues please send an e-mail to wfm03043@comcast.net and they will be sent to you.