

THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM



Newsletter

February 2020

MILL #4

ANOTHER WHATZIT

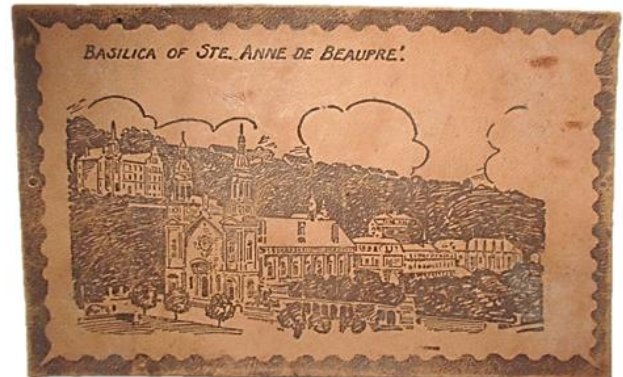
Visitors to the Museum are aware of our eclectic collection. But sometimes we are still amazed at items donated. At a recent get together I was approached by a local couple who had a few things they wanted to donate. The first item was something that they really didn't have any details about other than they remember a long-ago relative mention something about doing the laundry. Now our collection does include items going back to the days when they pounded the dirty clothes in a stream using rocks, the first electric washing machine ever made, et al. So where did this item fit in?



So now the donors could add one more name to their list of puzzled souls – me. However, knowing of a fellow in Colorado who has a museum devoted entirely to clothes washing, the answer was soon at hand. So the mystery is solved but you the reader will have to visit the Frankestown Heritage Museum or work this out for yourself. So anyone who sends me the correct name for this item will receive one of our coveted life time passes that includes free admission. This is not to be diminished by the fact that we already don't charge admission to anyone. Otherwise you'll have to wait until next month's newsletter.

The second item they donated was also a new one – at least to me. From their collection we received a number of leather postcards. Yes, my friend, starting in the 1880's people did in fact send leather postcards through the US Mail. It was not until the 1940's that the Post Office no longer accepted them.

Leather post cards were often the same size as a standard postcard and often had some scene or caption embossed into the leather on one side. On the other side was your written note and the address to the recipient.



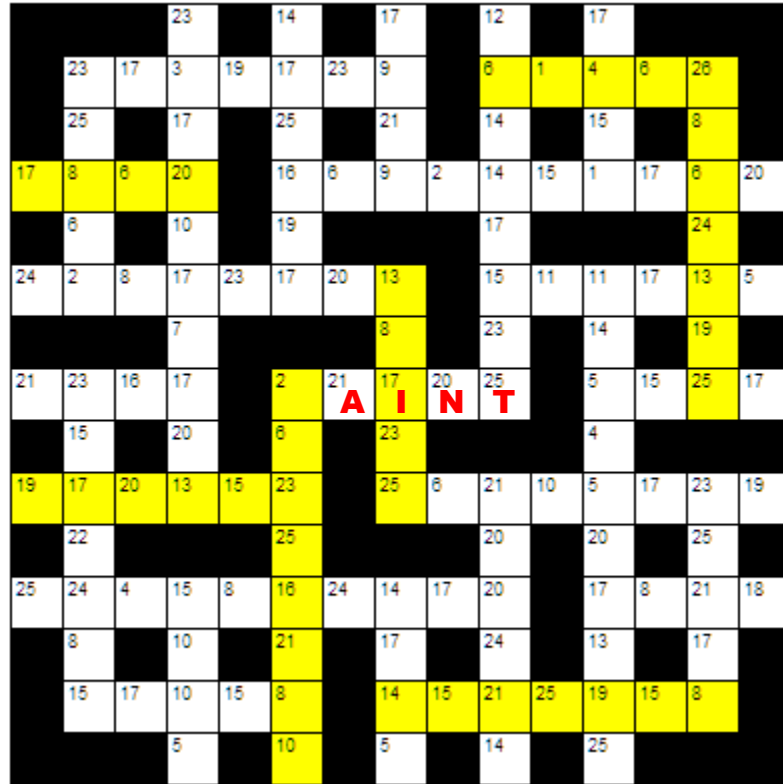
Others were cut to a particular shape such as the one shown below. Cut to resemble the sole of a foot it has embossed on the front a picture of the National Capitol and the words "Pon my sole, Washington is a great place".



While the reverse has the address and cancellation mark January 24, 1906

A CODED THEME PUZZLE

in a coded puzzle there are no clues. The answer words in the diagram are represented by numbers. Each number represents a different letter of the alphabet and all of the letters of the alphabet are used. When you are sure of a letter put it in the **Code Key Chart** and cross it off the **Alphabet Box**. A group of letters has been inserted to start you off. The theme words are in the yellow blocks.



CODE KEY CHART

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
			I			N	A				T	

ALPHABET

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR –

We recently received an e-mail from our friends at the New Boston Historical Society along with this photo.



The photo had been found at the Boston (as in Massachusetts) Public Library archives labelled as being taken in Woodstock, NH. On close inspection you can read a couple of signs on the building pointing towards New Boston and indicating the New Boston Tavern and New Boston Fair. Another sign pointing in the opposite direction says Francestown. The e-mail went on to ask if we knew the whereabouts of this blacksmith shop.

Well not personally but there was a photo in the Schotts History book that was very similar and this photo was taken in Mill Village.

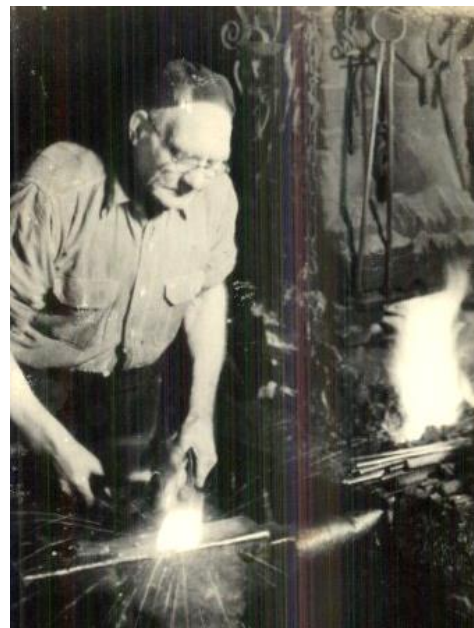




So a phone call to a local resident in the village confirmed that indeed this shop had been on his property located across from the bridge in mill village and further that it was operated by a fellow named Converse Trufant.

So with mystery solved the question then became what were the two piles that the ox yokes were fastened to? Well if you enlarge this photo enough, they are clearly old horseshoes. But there-in lay another tale. It was known that Mr. Trufant had been thrown by a horse on several occasions. So much so that he detested horses and would not let one near his shop which is why he referred to himself as an “Ironworker” and not a blacksmith. It is also reported that in the early 1940’s these piles of horseshoes were sold off as scrap to help the war effort.

So what you may ask does an ironworker do in days past if he doesn’t do horse shoes. Glad you asked. Mr. Trufant gained a reputation as a world class maker of hand wrought items – candlesticks, hinges, andirons, etc. all made from wrought iron. So much so that he became one of the most widely known blacksmiths in the United States. His reputation was so large that in 1939 he was invited to the New York World’s Fair where he performed as a blacksmith in the “Electrified Farm” exhibition.



MILL #4

What better way to get into the New Year than by a return to our Mill series. Mill #4, which is #5 on your mill map (don't ask) is the Carson Saw and Grist Mill. This mill had a couple of iterations over the years. It was first (1785) a saw mill and grist mill owned by John Carson. Local residents are all familiar with its next life as it was converted to a soapstone mill. Now we've covered saw mills in the April 2019 newsletter. We discussed grist mills in the July 2019 newsletter issue. We pretty much beat to death the soapstone mill in the September 2019 newsletter issue. So rather than go over the workings of these mills again we offer the following brief history of this mill (and its many owners and disasters) with this excerpt from Greg Thulander's thesis.

CARSON SAW and GRIST MILL

- Built in 1785 by John Carson, Jr. who used it as both a saw mill and a grist mill.
- A flood in 1796 destroyed the stone dam and much of the mill (this would have been by the current Mill Village bridge on the New Boston Road) effectively putting the mill out of business.
- In 1800 George Dean bought the property, rebuilt the mill and operated it as a saw mill and grist mill.
- 1816 the property was purchased and continued to be operated by Jabez Fairbanks.
- 1838 the property was purchased by Ebenezer Pettee who kept the operation going.
- 1843 the property was purchased by Joseph Kingsbury who ran the operation.
- 1853 the property was sold to James Starrett who continued the operation.
- 1863 the property was sold to John West who also continued the operation.
- 1870 the property was sold to Horace Manahan but burned later that year. But they immediately rebuilt the mill and continued the operation.
- 1886 the property was bought by the New England Soapstone Company (Francestown Soapstone Company). Charles Williams, President of the Francestown Soapstone Co. purchased it in 1888 and added to the mill so it was a place to saw soapstone. He purchased the entire holdings of the company for \$28,000.
- 1906 saw a Mr. Garmon and a Mr. Dodge purchase the property from the now defunct soapstone company. They continued to operate the quarry but not the mill.
- 1930 was the year of the bankruptcy of the Soapstone Company.
- 1943 the property was purchased by Gerald Newell who just held onto it until his death when the property passed to his daughter who still owns it and lives out of state.
- 2017, after over a half century of neglect the old mill finally collapses under the weight of winter snow, ending a long running part of Francestown history.

The mill certainly had a long series of owners and transfer of property. Given the relatively short lifespan of our ancestors back then and the grueling work of operating a mill this does not appear unusual. The photo below is the mill as it appears today. A truly sad sight.



- THE 2ND NH TURNPIKE -

The Franconstown Heritage Museum and
Mont Vernon Historical Society
Would like to take you on a ride . . .

From 1799



To 2019



A program and slides on the history of the 2nd NH Turnpike and it's impact on the citizens and their communities through which it passed from "The Plain" in Amherst to "The Lottery Bridge" in Claremont. Join us at the Franconstown Town Hall on February 23rd at 1:30 PM
ADMISSION TO THE PUBLIC IS FREE