

THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM



Newsletter

September 2020

After a couple of years of work and much donated labor and materials, the construction and expansion of the museum into the lower level is complete (well nearly so – an inside stairwell remains to be done).

While the outside looks pretty much the same -

The lower level has gone from this -



To taking on a new look:



SKIP CILLEY

For those who have had the opportunity to visit the Heritage Museum in person, you may have seen this fellow acting as a guide (the museum's answer for a docent) to answer questions concerning the various exhibits.



The quintessential “Old Yankee” who demonstrated that indeed “you can get there from here”, Skip was often found driving around the north country (in his old truck with the sign “Lost in the Woods”), in both VT and NH swapping stories with like-minded maple syrup producers, farmers, woodsmen and other old Yankees.

Skip passed away in August following an on-going health issue. He will be missed.

MUSEUM OPENING

So now that the lower level is set up and the upper level reorganized the question remains as to when visitors can come and see the many new exhibits that we have had donated since last summer. The status of Covid -19 seems to be somewhat in limbo with many concerns surrounding the reopening of school and the impact on the spread of the disease. We are pretty reluctant to set a firm time at which we will be open. We would like to do so over the Labor Day weekend but are not setting that in stone until more is known about the impact of schools opening. The best advice at this time would be to call ahead at (603) 566-1825.

Ultimately we still hope to make a virtual tour program that will be available on the town website. Needless to say we are looking to do this in a cost effective manner – i.e., for nothing. So anyone who has or knows somebody who has the equipment and experience in putting something like this together, and would like to volunteer their time and expertise, please contact Bill McAuley at 547-8320 or at wfm03043@comcast.net. A student interested in visual arts could earn community service credit.

We would like to take this opportunity to once again thank the many volunteers, contractors and town officials who helped make this expansion a reality. With thanks also to the many people who have given donations to the museum – both monetary and exhibit items.

A LIGHTER NOTE

In February of 2018 this newsletter featured a section on the origin of various common tropes. Most were things that this author had picked up in 50 years of work related travel around New England. Well we are fortunate to have been given a new set of tropes and several are provided here for the edification of all.

IT WILL COST YOU AN ARM and A LEG

In George Washington's day, there were no cameras. One's image was either sculpted or painted. Some paintings of George showed him standing behind a desk with one arm behind his back while others showed both legs and both arms. It turns out that artists of those days based their prices on how many limbs (arms and legs) had to be painted. Therefore it would cost the buyer more, the more limbs had to be painted. Hence the expression “it will cost you an arm and a leg”.

A BIG WIG

Early in our ancestors' day, men and women only bathed once, maybe twice, a year. Along with other obvious problems, this made keeping ones hair clean difficult. Women would just keep their hair covered while men would shave their heads and wear a wig. Wealthy and powerful men could afford good quality wigs made out of wool. They couldn't wash these wigs so to clean them they would hollow out a loaf of bread, put the wig inside the shell and bake it. The heat would make the wigs big and fluffy hence the term "big wig" and it soon became associated with the powerful and wealthy. Even today, people such as that are referred to as Big Wigs.

OK, one last trope for this month:

CHAIRMAN or CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

Back in the late 1600's and 1700's many houses consisted of a single room and many had only one chair. For dining they would have a large board that folded down from the wall and people would gather round it to eat. The head of the household got to sit in the chair while others stood and/or sat on the floor or anything else that was handy. Male guests would be invited to sit in this chair (and wouldn't Gloria Steinham have a field day with this arrangement) during the meal. To sit in the chair meant you were important and in charge. Even today we use the title of Chairman or Chairman of the Board.

SHAVING HORSE -

NO - it is not a bald horse nor is it a lesson on how to shave one (The SPCA and PETA would no doubt disapprove). Past newsletters have offered a look into some of the Francestown Heritage Museum's wooden wheeled vehicles and also a review of how a wheelwright goes about making a wooden wheel. However we didn't detail how they went about making the wooden spokes for the wheel. A shaving horse a/k/a spoke shave bench, to the rescue. No doubt you have surmised that the Heritage Museum has come into possession of one of these – a recent donation.

The shaving horse combines the best features of a workbench and a vise. It was generally used when the user had a square piece of wood that they wanted to turn into a rough round piece of wood such as was the case when the wheelwright was making spokes for wheels. Or a cooper was shaping the staves for a wooden barrel or keg. The worker would sit astride one end and pull/ draw the knife toward themselves over the wood being shaped.

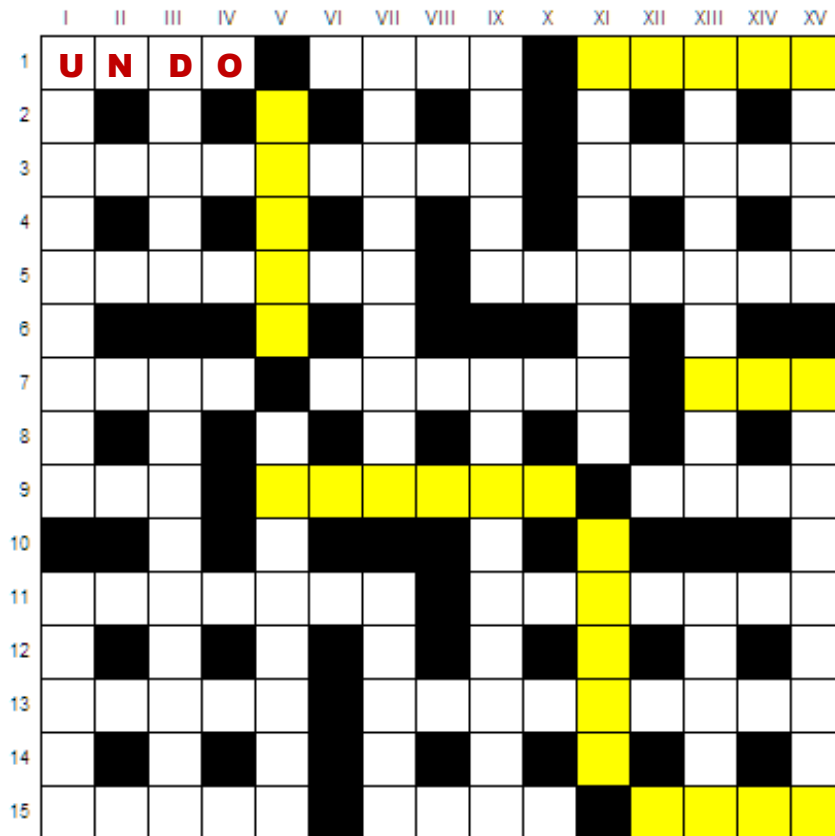


CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



THE SEPTEMBER THEME CROSSWORD

We covered a number of topics this month so there is no central theme and the puzzle words could come from anywhere in the text but these words will be the ones in the yellow blocks and will pertain to one of the topics covered. Oh, by the way: This is a French grid crossword (it's not that hard – we have 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 4 adjoining open spaces and also has another 4 adjoining open spaces followed by 5 adjoining open spaces (a theme word). This line has three words and in looking at the clues you see there are 3 clues for 1 across. The first clue is "Annul" and the answer is "undo". The same procedure would be used for the Down words. For example, Column I has nine 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.



Across

- 1. Annul
"... happily ___ after"
BARREL PART
- 3. Able to sail on ocean
Scarlett O'Hara, e.g.
- 5. Commonly torn cartilage
Fastened the gate
- 7. Curse
type of Gold mine claim
BAKED IN BREAD
TO CLEAN
- 9. Coke's partner
MUSEUM GUIDE
Combustible heap

- 11. Ship's topmast sail
Imitator
- 13. Uniform shade
Cache
- 15. "The Canterbury Tales" pilgrim
Coarse file
___ DE FORCE

Down

- I. The great bear
Selfish sort
- III. Exhaust
Plaquette
- V. TRIGGER, FOR ONE
Romanticize

- VII. Hateful
Doofus
- IX. Kind of pain
Aware
- XI. Elicits sympathy
WOODEN WHEEL NEED
- XIII. Totally
Durable fabric
- XV. Correct, as text
Ursa Maior



SHAVING HORSE TOOLING

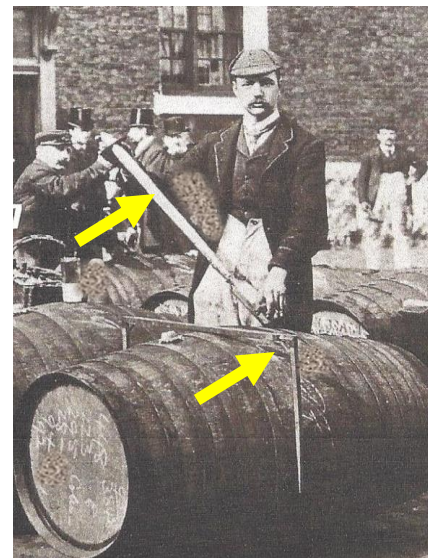
Once the user of the shaving bench is comfortably seated on the hard wooden bench that may contain splinters, what tools does he use?



The top tool is a 24" wide Barton with a 7" cutting edge dating to the 1800's. This was quite likely used by a cooper to form the curved portion of a stave for the barrel. The middle tool is a 16" wide Gardner shave knife dating to the 1800's. The curve in the knife cutting area is clearly visible and would be very similar to the curve of a barrel stave. The bottom tool is a Bachelder double spokeshave dating to the late 1800's and would have been used by a wheelwright in the forming of spokes for a wheel he was building.

You already knew that the Heritage Museum would also have these for your viewing.

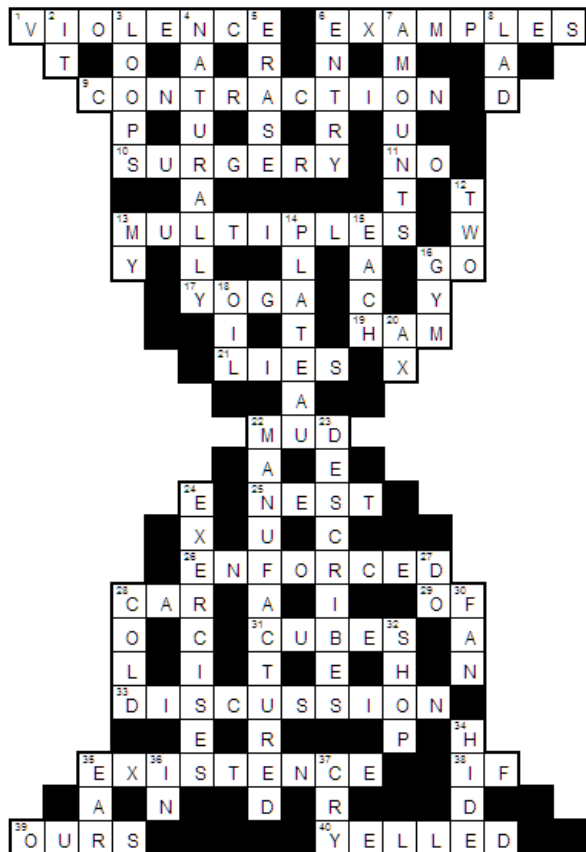
Speaking of a cooper making barrels and kegs: once he has finished shaping the staves on the shaving horse and assembled the barrel, how does the customer know how much the barrel will contain? This was especially important to excise agents when inspecting shipments of merchandise. Two essential tools for this task were the long caliper and the cross caliper. Measuring the length of a barrel was relatively easy using a "long caliper" which was little more than a fancy measuring stick, or a dip rod if they wanted to measure the height of the liquid inside the barrel. Measuring the diameter of the barrel was a bit more problematic due to the taper of the sides at the top and bottom. For this they used a cross caliper. The cross caliper is a sliding gauge with arms at both ends. It is placed on a lying barrel and a measurement is taken at the widest part of the barrel and at the end of the barrel so an average diameter can be obtained. It was good practice to take several measurements in case the barrel had become somewhat oval (see adjacent photo of an excise agent holding a long caliper and with a cross caliper lying on the barrel).



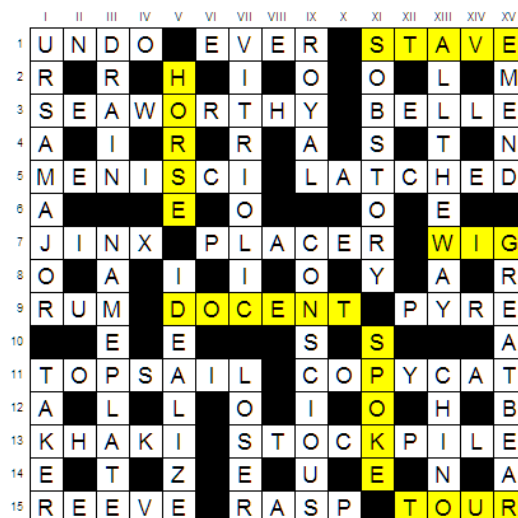
You would no doubt expect the Heritage Museum to have these gauges for your viewing. Well one out of two is not bad: we do have a cross caliper and are always on the lookout for a long caliper.

Here are the solutions to both this month's Theme Crossword and also last month's puzzle.

AUGUST PUZZLE SOLUTION



SEPTEMBER PUZZLE SOLUTION



MUSEUM MYSTERY

The museum has received an item for exhibit with an unknown provenance. This would not be our typical **What's it** – after all, it is clearly a quilt. The mystery is where did it come from – a **Who's it** if you will. This was found at the town transfer station by a local resident who brought it to us. It is hand-made and appears to be well made and in good condition. Questioning folks who had entries in our local quilt contest turned up no identification of who had left it at the transfer station.

We cannot even say for certain how old it is. It does seem a shame to have this nice quilt just thrown out and it does go well with our antique rope bed exhibit so it has been included in our domestic collection. However, if anyone can shed light as to the origin/provenance of this quilt why please let us know.

