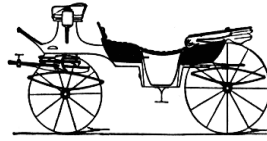


THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM



Newsletter

AUGUST 2021

HOME AT LAST

A HOMECOMING . . .

A lifetime journey - starting in 1850 in Ogantz, PA destined for Hob & Nob Farm in Frankestown, NH, then on to Charleston, SC from where it once again returned to Frankestown, NH for quite likely what will be its final home in the Frankestown Heritage Museum.



This is a vis-à-vis (French for face-to-face which is how the passengers are seated) carriage made by Horace Ervien who was a Brewster Carriage maker. It dates to between 1850-1860's. It was considered to be a summer carriage due to its light construction with wicker body on steel frame. It belonged to the Winslow family of Brookline, MA and Hob and Nob Farm in Frankestown where it was kept and used. It was taken to Charleston, SC in 1984 by a friend of the Winslow family, Jane Evans Hamilton. It was damaged by hurricane Hugo in 1989 and sent to

CONTINUED

A HOMECOMING - Con't . . .

Thomas Shelton, a carriage restoration expert in Asheboro, SC. He completely restored/refurbished the carriage. The carriage exhibits the distinctive fringed parasol top and the two Brewster lamps. The restoration was completed in 1990 and the carriage returned to Jane in Charleston, SC. It has been in her carriage house ever since, until this year when she decided to sell the carriage as part of a downsizing effort. She contacted the Heritage Museum and offered us first refusal on the sale as she preferred to see it returned to Frankestown and discounted her asking price for us. We immediately started a fund raising drive and within 2 weeks had received the necessary pledges from many contributors. Among these was a sizeable 1:1 matching donation offer by the Thulander family in memory of O. Alan Thulander who spearheaded the original building of the Heritage Museum.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

COMMUNITY MARKET

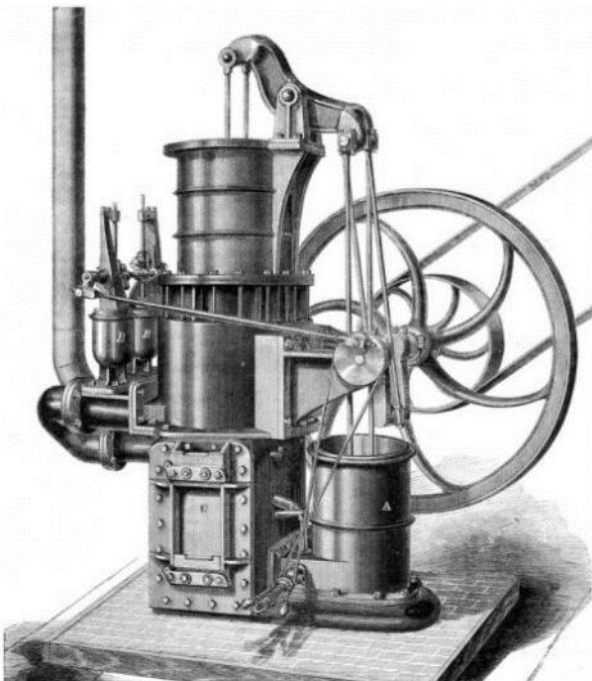
The Frankestown Community Market opened earlier this year and the Town Horse Sheds remain the venue for the market which is open from 4:00 – 7:00 PM on Fridays. As the Heritage Museum is virtually next door we have partnered with the Market and will be open with our hours coinciding with those of the market. Please plan to come down to the Common on Fridays and take advantage of the many fine products in the market all made and/or grown locally. You will not only be supporting the local economy but will also have the opportunity to visit the museum and immerse yourself in the past. A time when life itself depended on the local community.

SYLVESTER ROPER –

So just who was this little known, well known Francestonian? An informal inquiry around town revealed that few people recognized the name. So a little mundane background before we get to the good stuff (the reason for his fame). Sylvester's father was a cabinetmaker who moved to Francestown in 1807 and married a local girl – Susan Fairbanks in 1817. A prolific pairing that saw the birth of five children including Sylvester who was born in 1823. Sylvester demonstrated an acute mechanical ability and built his own steam engine when he was 12 years old. At 14 years old he built a locomotive engine.

And this is where Sylvester's fame lay. He was on the road to becoming an inveterate inventor. His interests included far more than just steam power and while working at the Springfield Armory during the Civil War his inventiveness continued with his inventing the shotgun choke and a revolver repeating shotgun.

Mr. Roper was also involved with the caloric engine which substituted air instead of steam for power. The atmospheric engine had already been invented in 1816 but never worked satisfactorily until Sylvester Roper made modifications that resulted in an effective caloric engine¹.



But his love of steam continued and between 1860 and 1894 he built 10 steam-powered road vehicles. The first was the steam velocipede that he built in 1867. This vehicle now resides in the National Museum of American History².



Readers should remember that in those days the motorcycle had not been invented so the velocipede was a technical marvel for that time.

During the same time period he also added a steam engine to a carriage and is credited with the first steam buggy. This buggy now resides in the Henry Ford Museum of America³.



While Mr. Roper was born and raised in Francestown, it must be said that most of his inventing took place in MA and RI. That said he started on his career of inventiveness here where he built his first steam engine when only 12 years of age.

His was a productive life. He was awarded 13 patents which, in addition to those related to what we have discussed here, included the padlock, knitting machine, metal screw machine and fire escapes. In 2002 he was inducted into the Motorcycle Hall of Fame.

**THE FRANCETOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM CENTERFOLD
NO BIKINI ON THIS BEAUTY**



**The Hob & Nob Farm vis-à-vis in front of the Heritage Museum 7/23/2021
A WELL TRAVELED CARRIAGE**



The vis-à-vis started life in Ogontz, PA where it was built and sold to Mrs. Sidney Winslow of Brookline, MA and Hob & Nob Farm in Francetown, NH. Mrs. Winslow was an accomplished driver and is seen here in one of her carriages.



The last known use of the carriage in Francetown was for this wedding in 1946. Soon after the carriage was taken to the home of Jane Evans Hamilton in Charleston, SC where it resided in her carriage house until Hurricane Hugo in 1989 damaged the carriage.



The carriage underwent a complete restoration. It was dewatered to remove all traces of the seawater that had flooded the carriage house. The iron work and wicker were restored. The seats were reupholstered and covered in the same material as was original to the carriage, as was the parasol top. The lanterns were also restored and the pin-striping was redone after repainting of the carriage.



The carriage loaded onto the transport (6/17/2021) for its trip back north to its "roots" and the Francetown Heritage Museum. Thank you to the many contributors who made this possible.



In its new home at the Heritage Museum

Come visit us soon and enjoy this and over 250 other exhibits. Remember that we are open every Friday from 4-6 PM concurrent with the Farmer's Market, and by appointment.

A HOMECOMING - Con't . . .

Once the needed fund raising pledges were secured the Board of Selectmen approved our proceeding with the purchase. Throughout that process the Board was supportive of our efforts and needed only the assurance that the town taxpayers were not going to become responsible for any monetary deficit. In the spirit of "due diligence" we contacted Ken Wheeling at the Carriage Association of America. Photos were sent to him along with the history of the carriage to see if he thought the asking price was fair. He agreed that this was an exceptional carriage and along with the historical value to the town was worth the price.

The owner, Jane Evans Hamilton, was in agreement and the next step was to transfer the carriage itself.

So, just how does one transport an antique horse drawn carriage over a thousand miles? Well you might ask; we certainly did. NH has a notable carriage collector in Conway, NH, Sut Marshall, so he was contacted to find out how he moved his some 600+ carriages around. Wouldn't you know, there is a fellow in PA, Chris Gubala, who has spent a life-time doing just that – transporting antique, horse-drawn carriages around the country. For the last 25 years he has towed his enclosed, custom transport trailer around the country moving up to three carriages at a time. We asked Chris how often he was needed to make a transport. This was best summed up by showing us the odometer in his current truck (which is 7 years old) and read 650,000 miles). He has transported these antique horse-drawn carriages for customers in all 49 of the contiguous states.

His services include not only the transport but also the removal and separate packing of particularly fragile carriage components and reassembly at the destination. Such was the case with our vis-à-vis where he had to remove and pack the parasol top and also the two Brewster lanterns (valued at over \$1,000 each).

CONTINUED

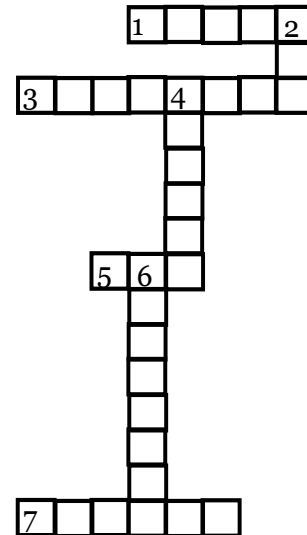
A HOMECOMING - Con't . . .

Given his familiarity with horse-drawn carriages we asked him what he thought of our new acquisition. He commented that it was a fairly rare type of carriage. Because of the wicker body it was very light weight and considered suitable only for summer use. As such not many were made and over the years many of those deteriorated and no longer existed. He in fact knew of only 3 such vis-à-vis (and at one time or other has transported 2 of them). Like Ken Wheeling of the Carriage Association, Chris also thought this to be an exceptional carriage and that the individual who did the restoration in 1990 was a true craftsman.

So that is the story of your Heritage Museum vis-à-vis. Enjoy the photos and better yet, come down to the museum and see for yourself.



Rather than the usual crossword let's convey a message to one and all. Word order in puzzle conveys the message



1. Go to see
2. "In ___ beginning . . ."
3. The vis-à-vis
4. Interior
5. From ___ start
6. Legacy
7. Historical repository

SYLVESTER ROPER –

But a connection to Francestown remains. A replica of Sylvester Roper’s first steam velocipede can be seen as you ride out of town on the Bennington Road where it resides as a garden ornament.



Roper lived larger than life and, his death too was hardly prosaic:

Sylvester H. Roper

ELVE PAGES. PRICE

DIED IN THE SADDLE.

Sylvester H. Roper Was Riding a Steam-Propelled Bicycle.

Had Made Fast Time on Charles River Park When He Suddenly Fell—Had Shut Off the Steam as If on Premonition of the End.

SYLVESTER H. ROPER AND HIS FATAL INVENTION.

After making a phenomenal mile on a ... was enough to find the machine for ...

Boston Daily Globe obituary

1. Scientific American No. 7, VOL VIII - Photo
2. National Museum of American History - Photo
3. Henry Ford Museum of America - Photo

T - SHIRTS

The origin of the T-Shirt, as near as possible, has been traced back to 1904 when an enterprising bachelor lost a button on his shirt and realized, as on previous occasions, that he had no idea how to sew on a new button and had to throw out the shirt. The light dawned



that if he had a shirt that didn't need buttons he would not have to learn to sew nor would he have to throw out a perfectly good shirt just because he had lost a button. Thus the T-shirt was born.

So why the name T-shirt – because if laid out flat it forms the shape of “T”.



We’ve since been told that the origin of the T-shirt as we know it goes, “in 1938, Sears Roebuck introduced their own T-shirt called the "gob" shirt. It sold for 24 cents”.

The true story may lie somewhere between. With the original idea dating to 1904 but commercial production not occurring until 1938.

MESSAGE IN PUZZLE.

“Visit the carriage inside the Heritage Museum”