

THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM



NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2021

LABOR DAY

LABOR DAY – was established as **A WAY TO RECOGNIZE AND HONOR THE WORKERS**. This was at a time when the industrial revolution was at its peak and an average work week was 60-80 hours. The work was often grueling and included young children. Labor Day was to recognize these labors and provide a day off for the workers. A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America on **September 5, 1882** marked what is thought to be the first Labor Day. Of course there is far more to Labor Day than this. But what about our early ancestors in the 1700s and early 1800s?

Long-time readers of this newsletter know that a common theme has been just how hard life was for our early ancestors. So in recognition of Labor Day, let's look at the toils of our ancestors through the lens of some of the Museum's exhibits. We'll choose one from each of our major exhibit areas.

From our **Agriculture Exhibit** why don't we take a look at the **SEEDER**? Not very exciting to look at but a back saver for the farmer.



We can think back to our elementary school days (some of us of course will have to think a lot further back than others) when we were told that the Native Americans taught the colonists how to plant corn. *Dig a small hole and put a fish in the bottom, place the corn kernel (seed) in the hole and cover it with soil.* How would you all like to do that one hole after the other over an entire acre or more of field? No aspirin, liniment, heating pads, etc. in those days.

But eventually along comes the Acme Hand Corn Planter, manufactured by the Potato Implement. Co. and patented.

As an aside, there is no record of this patent as it is believed to have been issued prior to 1836 when the US Patent Office burned and destroyed all the records.

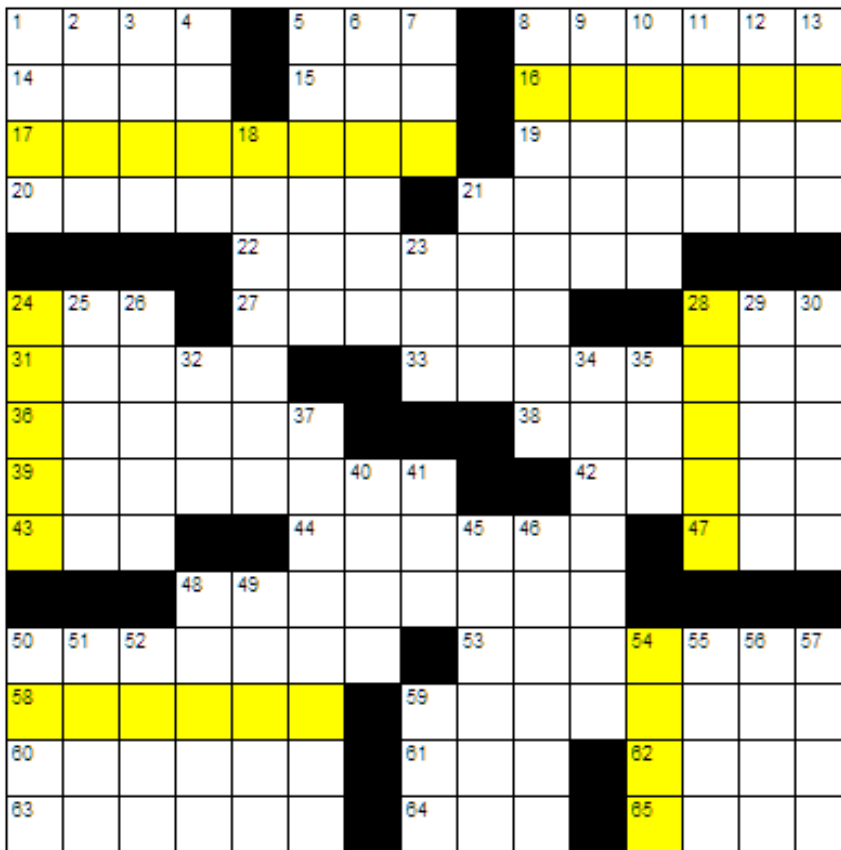
With a seeder, rows are marked out in areas to be planted and seed is placed in the **seed holder**. The **digger** is placed on the spot where you want to sow the seed. Pressing downward on the **handle** pushes the **digger** into the ground and the **shoe** is pushed upward causing the **seed dispenser** to release a seed down into the hole dug by the digger. Setting the **depth adjustment** controls how deep the digger will place the seed. Once seed is sown, move on to the next seed location and repeat the above.



Think that farmer deserved a day to recognize him for his labors – a **Labor Day**?

SEPTEMBER THEME CROSSWORD

The yellow blocks contain the theme words and all come from the text of this Newsletter. Enjoy and Happy Labor Day!



Across

- | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. Stroll | 38. Unemotional |
| 5. ___ gestae | 39. Most humane |
| 8. Store, as corn | 42. Gown fabric |
| 14. Clickable image | 43. Baseball stat |
| 15. Social insect. | 44. Grew fond of |
| 16. BLADE USED BY 2 MEN | 47. Bow wood |
| 17. HOLIDAY for WORKERS | 48. Worship of evil |
| 19. King Mark's bride | 50. Helmsman |
| 20. Joins rafters | 53. More celibate |
| 21. Futile | 58. HUNNEMAN VEHICLE |
| 22. Beam under railroad track | 59. Loss of voluntary movement |
| 24. Absorb, with "up" | 60. Calming drug |
| 27. Country founded in 1948 | 61. Prickly seed case |
| 28. Give an unofficial name | 62. Make, as money |
| 31. Chubby Checker's dance | 63. Called |
| 33. Oily wood preservative | 64. Appropriate |
| 36. Temper, as metal | 65. Remnant |

Down

1. Droop
2. S. American palm berries
3. Brain area
4. Door feature
5. Devices used by police
6. Bewitch
7. Swine's home
8. Missives
9. Japanese-American
10. Lifted, so to speak
11. Bermuda, e.g.
12. Boys
13. Lambs' moms
18. Program of music
21. ___-friendly
23. Amniotic ___
24. OATER TRANSPORT
25. Dog tag datum
26. Feather, zoologically
28. TYPE OF WASHER
29. Handy
30. Moisten
32. Arrange
34. Place to put the feet up
35. Former French coin
37. Formally educated
40. Fly high
41. Great quantity or weight
45. Stir up a fuss
46. Casual top
48. Calyx part
49. Mountain ridge
50. Small roundish mark
51. People of the Amazon
52. Give off, as light
54. USED FOR SOWING LAND
55. Ivan the terrible
56. Cork's country
57. "You ___?"
59. "The ___ Daba Honeymoon"

For the next step in our recognition of Labor Day, let's look at colonial era labor through the lens of our **Commerce Exhibits** and take a look at **FOREST PRODUCTS**. For all you DIY folks who think nothing of going to the lumber yard and being able to select the board you want, consider the source.

Your board quite likely came to you from a modern mechanized sawmill which got its logs from a fully mechanized logging operation transported by trucks with their own crane mechanisms to move the heavy materials. Needless to say, such was not the case for our ancestors.

In colonial times the board needed started with a tree in the forest felled by hand. The two-man saw was one tool of choice.



Lumbering in the old days was not for the faint of heart or those with a weak back. For felling trees the preferred tools were the axe and the two-man saw. A two-man saw is designed for use by two loggers/sawyers. Two-man saws were designed to cut in both directions. Careful tooth design was necessary to clear the sawdust during the cut. Using a two-man saw involved a logger/sawyer standing at each end. Together they would alternate pulling the saw through the wood.

The felled tree then had to be delimbed and hauled from the woods to an area where it could be cut into boards and other useable sizes.

Given our many rivers, New England has always been known for its water-powered mills. Our early ancestors did not yet have the luxury of a

Water-powered mill and had to rely on their physical strength to mill the lumber. The most common early method was the use of a pit saw. A distinguishing feature of the pit saw is the end handles are at right angles to the saw blade.



The timber to be cut was positioned over a pit and a long two-handed saw was moved up and down by two men, one standing above the timber and the other below in the pit. The upper sawyer was called the 'Topman;' he followed the marked line to make a straight plank, and the 'Underman' pushed the pit saw upward.



This arrangement was improved upon by building a wood frame to hold the timber in an elevated position and the 'Topman' stood above the timber on the frame and the 'Underman' below.



So what do you all think – do these guys deserve a holiday to recognize their labors – a **Labor Day**?

Let's move on to our **Domestic Exhibits** and look at a task as arduous as those requiring brute strength. Much of the work undertaken by our colonial ancestors in order to survive got them and their clothing pretty dirty. Dirty laundry was a constant and frequent washing was required. Going back to those elementary school days again, you no doubt learned of the very early settlers taking their wash to the river and pounding it on rocks. Fortunately that didn't last long and the "Wash Board" came into favor.



This circa 1840s washboard shows the drudgery that was wash day in the past as the ribs are worn nearly smooth from years of hard scrubbing.

But some progress was on the horizon with the introduction of the 'Vacuum Stomper'



A revolution in clothes washing. You put the clothes to be washed in a tub with the suds and just push down on the plunger which agitates the soap and water forcing the suds through the clothing. The power for the vacuum stomper utilized the "Armstrong Method"*

But still greater innovations were on the way. This Dolly type washer on display in the Museum

**The energy supplied by the user's strong arm.*

dates to the 1850s.



This machine was certainly an improvement on the hard work of scrubbing clothes against a washboard in a tub but it still required a considerable amount of labor. There was stoking your kitchen range with fire wood in order to boil enough water to fill the Dolly twice (once for washing and once again for rinsing). This included filling and emptying the machine twice by hand (to wash, wring out, then rinse and pass it through the wringer again). Then hang it on the line.

This machine was also powered by the Armstrong Method – both to operate the crank which agitated the clothes in the washer as well as that on the wringer.

As another of our asides: The word dolly (for "milk stool" or "udder") refers to the type of paddles inside the tub that agitate the clothes as you crank the handle on top.



Families were larger in those days and no doubt the thought of 'Wash Day' was not wonderful.

So how about it readers. Do these domestic engineers deserve a holiday to recognize their labors – a **Labor Day**?

Next up are the **Fire Protection Exhibits**. Now we do not want to give the impression that fire-fighting today is easy but let's look at a scenario back in our ancestor's days.

It is winter in 1850 and you and your family awaken late at night and smell smoke. It is quickly determined that indeed there is a fire in your home. Dressing quickly you leave your home and run 1/2 mile through the snow to the Old Meetinghouse in the village. The bell is rung to awaken others and bring help to the fire station. As help arrives the Hunneman Pumper Hand Tub is pulled from the building.



The Hunneman is pulled by hand and dragged through the snow the half mile back to your burning home. A relay must be set up to supply water to the pumper while others do what they can to save your belongings and attack the fire. The efforts are valiant but due in part to the bad weather, the time necessary to assemble help and obtain water, these efforts are unsuccessful.

Now for those of you who have had the opportunity to trudge a half mile through deep snow, you should be well able to appreciate doing it while dragging a half-ton vehicle on narrow wooden wheels.

We can add to the scenario by telling you that once at the fire, the nearest water supply to set up a relay from is another few hundred feet away (through the same deep snow) and you will be using these to relay the water.



So what do you all say; do these fire fighters deserve a holiday to recognize their labors – a **Labor Day**?

This brings us to our final collection in the Museum, the **Transportation Exhibits**. We tend to forget that transportation extends to far more than getting people from one place to another. It is paramount in the moving of goods and essential to commerce.

Here again it may be helpful to look at a scenario to better appreciate those who transported our goods.

Soapstone was a significant industry in Francestown with demand for products from our quarries and mill coming from all over this country and abroad.



SOAPSTONE LOAD – Courtesy New Boston Historical Society

If destined for Boston, this driver will have several days on the road; a dirt road that in winter will not be plowed and in rain will be rutted and muddy. This is an open wagon offering no shelter from the elements.

But this driver is lucky. Larger loads might well be hauled by a team of oxen and that driver will spend most of the journey walking alongside them.

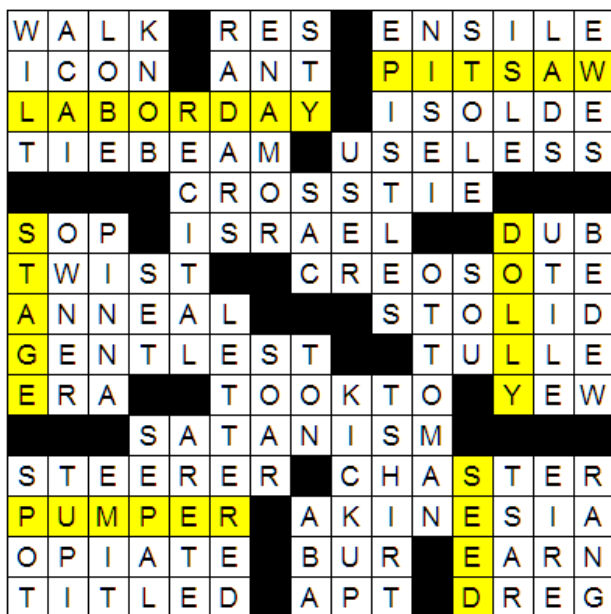
But the same fate could await the most affluent of travelers going by stage. If a hard rain was encountered and the road got really muddy, you would be asked to disembark and walk alongside the coach up any steep hills so the horses would be able to haul the stage up. Nor was it speedy - it is said that at the time of the Revolutionary War it took a traveler six days to go from Hanover to Boston.

And so again the familiar question; do the drivers deserve a holiday to recognize their labors – a **Labor Day**?

Given the above, when the holiday was proclaimed in 1882, do you think it was warranted? Regardless, enjoy the day, come to the FIHS 103rd Labor Day celebration, September 6, 2021, and while you are there come visit the Franceltown Heritage Museum.

GREEN HERON

Looking toward Labor Day. The Franceltown Heritage Museum will offer Folk and Bluegrass music by Green Heron. Scott and Betsy Heron will entertain you with harmonies accompanied by fiddle, banjo, guitar and mandolin.



103rd FIHS LABOR DAY CARNIVAL

Friday September 3, 2021

Bixby Memorial Library, 2 PM

- Varnum Art Display and Reception

Saturday September 4th

- Tennis Tournament, 8AM
- Dance, 7 PM @ Town Hall with Tom Hurley and the Hurlicanes

Sunday September 5, 2021

- Annual Mud Volley Ball Tournament, 10 AM @ Town Rec Fields
- Vespers, 7 PM @ Old Meeting House

Monday September 6th 2021

- Franceltown Five Road Race, 9 AM
- Baked good, Plants, White Elephant, 10 AM @ Town Horse Sheds
- Rummage Sale, 10 AM @ Town Hall
- Beehive & Heritage Museums, 10 AM
- Book signing with Lisa Judge, 10 AM @ The Bixby Memorial Library
- Book sale @ FIHS Lodge, 10 AM
- Dunk Tank @ Town Commons
- Ice Cream Social, 10:30 AM @ Old Meeting House
- Juried Arts and Crafts, 10 AM @ FIHS Park
- Parade, 2 PM on Main Street

ENTERTAINMENT

- 11:00 - Green Heron – Old-time, bluegrass, folk, country, Irish and blues music @ The Heritage Museum
- 11:30 - R. P. Hale – harpsichord & dulcimer @ The Old Meeting House
- 12:00 - Aaron Jones – Musician and Children's Entertainer
- 3 PM – Temple Band @ Town Common

PARADE PRIZES, 3:45 @ Town Hall