

# THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM

Newsletter



April 2022

## THE CENTER CHIMNEY FIREPLACE

### OLD HOUSE SURPRISE

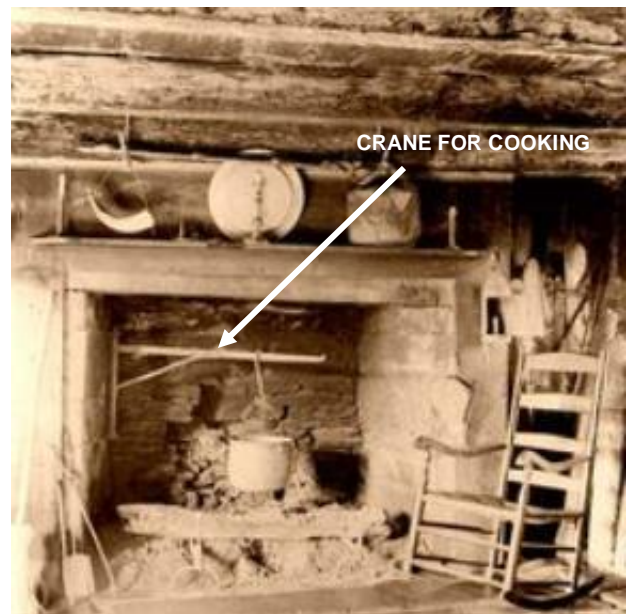
Those of us who live in 200+ year old houses (a/k/a money pits) know that there are no end of surprises. The center chimney fireplace is a common feature in many of these homes. These center chimneys had multiple flues and usually served several fireplaces in various rooms in the house.



A FIREPLACE FOUND IN A CENTER CHIMNEY

These large fireplaces not only provided heat for the house, but in early times a place to also cook food. Pots for stew and other meals were hung from the metal crane fastened to the masonry walls of the fireplace. This crane would pivot so that the pot could be positioned over the fire or swung out into the room to ladle the food out in safety.

Fireplaces such as this were good for cooking items over the flame, but not so for baking.

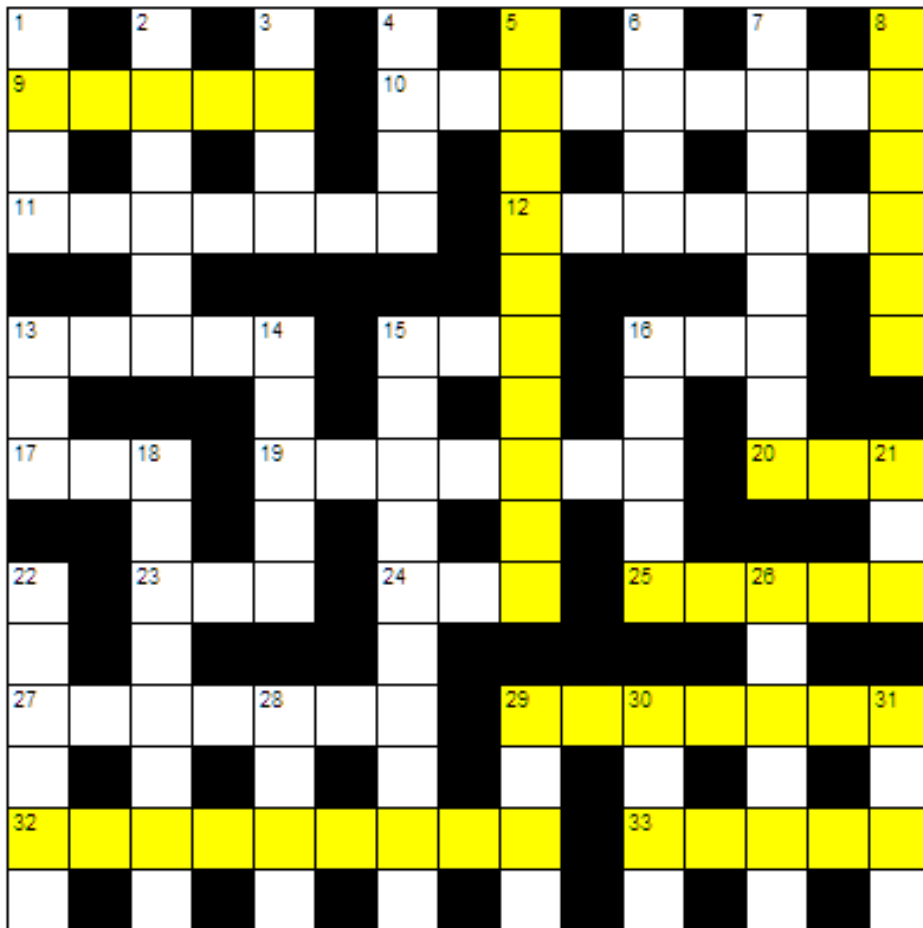


Soon the ingenious Yankees added side baking chambers constructing them beside the fireplace proper.



# APRIL THEME CROSSWORD

The **yellow** blocks contain the theme words and all come from the text of this newsletter. This is not an April Fool Crossword – 31 down is not a common word but see how you do. Also, 10 across is so unusual that I am just giving you that one – it is KSHATRIYA . **Enjoy!**



ANSWERS ON PAGE #8

**Across**

- 9 CURED IN A SMOKE CHAMBER
- 10 Hindu military caste member
- 11 Copy
- 12 Woodpecker family bird
- 13 Fundamental
- 15 \_\_\_ Wednesday
- 16 \_\_\_ green
- 17 Balloon filler
- 19 Transmissible bird virus
- 20 A BIXBY BUSINESS
- 23 Carry on
- 24 Perform
- 25 FROM THE MOUTHS OF \_\_\_\_
- 27 Make use of
- 29 FLUE for 33 across
- 32 \_\_\_ HUNT
- 33 TREAT MEAT

**Down**

- 1 Alpine transport
- 2 Extents of the areas
- 3 Against
- 4 Creole vegetable
- 5 WHAT FRIENDS DID BY THE FIRE
- 6 "Don't go!"
- 7 Intellectuals
- 8 SELL
- 13 Constrictor
- 14 Uber driver
- 15 Travel by air
- 16 Perpendicular
- 18 Wetlands adjacent to rivers
- 21 Dissenting votes
- 22 Reuse old ideas
- 26 American folk music instruments
- 28 "... happily \_\_\_ after"
- 29 Given on special occasions
- 30 Acad.
- 31 Primordial matter

Some sharp eyed readers may have noticed that this crossword does look exactly like a standard "American Crossword" and they would be correct. This form of crossword is known as a "Quick Crossword". It has fewer words (more blank spaces) than a standard American Crossword and is designed to be completed relatively quickly. That doesn't mean the words/definitions are necessarily easier, but being fewer of them it should be quicker to solve.



CONTINUED FROM PAGE # 1

As you know, the title of this article was “**OLD HOUSE SURPRISE**” and here we are a page later and there has still been no mention of what was surprising. We have outlined the characteristics of the center chimney fireplace, so what more could be needed – well long time readers of this newsletter may recall the February 2018 edition where the virtues of smoked meat were extolled:

“In prior times, they cooked in the kitchen with a large kettle that always hung over the fire. Every day they lit the fire and added things to the pot - they ate mostly vegetables. They could eat the stew for dinner, leaving leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight and then start over the next day.

Repeating this meant that sometimes the pot had food in it that had been there quite a while. The rhyme that evolved is probably familiar to all:

“Peas porridge hot, peas porridge cold, peas porridge in the pot nine days old.”

Sometimes they could obtain pork, which made them feel quite special. When visitors came over, they would hang up their pork bacon to show off. The host would cut off a little to share with the guests and they would then all sit around the fireplace and “chew the fat”. It was a sign of wealth if a man “could bring home the bacon”.

This raises the obvious question – how did that pork bacon get smoked. Well in the case of Francestown we know of at least two houses where this could be done.

We’ve seen that the fireplace and adjacent baking chamber were of prime importance. But suppose you discover that your 200 year old money pit also has a small door in the room that was at one side of the center chimney fireplace.

But suppose indeed – open it and take a look. That is what Frank and Sharon Riley did when they bought the old Bixby Inn.



SMALL DOOR IN WALL OF ROOM AT SIDE OF FIREPLACE

This small door opened into a brick enclosure where the brickwork was blackened from years of smoke.



SMOKE BLACKENED CHAMBER

Further investigation showed that this beehive shaped chamber had a number of metal hooks.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE # 4

spaced along the top of the dome.



HOOKS ALONG THE ROOF OF THE CHAMBER

It was also noted that on one side of the brick chamber in the middle of the smoke blackened brick wall was a square white piece of masonry (much like an adobe brick) which was loose.



LOOSE SQUARE BRICK

Remove this brick and you were looking into what was the rear of the firebox of the fireplace in the other room.

So how did they smoke that nice fresh piece of pork? Simple as 1, 2, 3 . . . . .

- 1) Hang that fresh piece of pork bacon on one of the hooks in this small chamber
- 2) Remove the white adobe brick
- 3) Light a fire in the fireplace and let the heat and smoke flow into the smoke chamber.

Oh yes and step 2A – close the little door leading into the chamber before you light the fire.

A few hours later remove the now smoked pork bacon, sit down with your friends and “chew the fat”.

The only other mystery to this was you no doubt noted how small that little door was going into the chamber so how on earth did you get in there to hang up the meat? Remember that in Colonial times, if nothing else they had many children. Push the smallest child through the small door and hand them the meat to hang on the hook. Oh yes, remember to help the child back out before lighting the fire.

Our thanks to Frank and Sharon Riley for letting us photograph one of the unique features of their old house.

As a side note, this house with the smoke chamber was the Bixby Inn back in the days when the Second New Hampshire Turnpike was an active stage road and Frankestown was an overnight stopping point on the trip from Boston to Montreal.

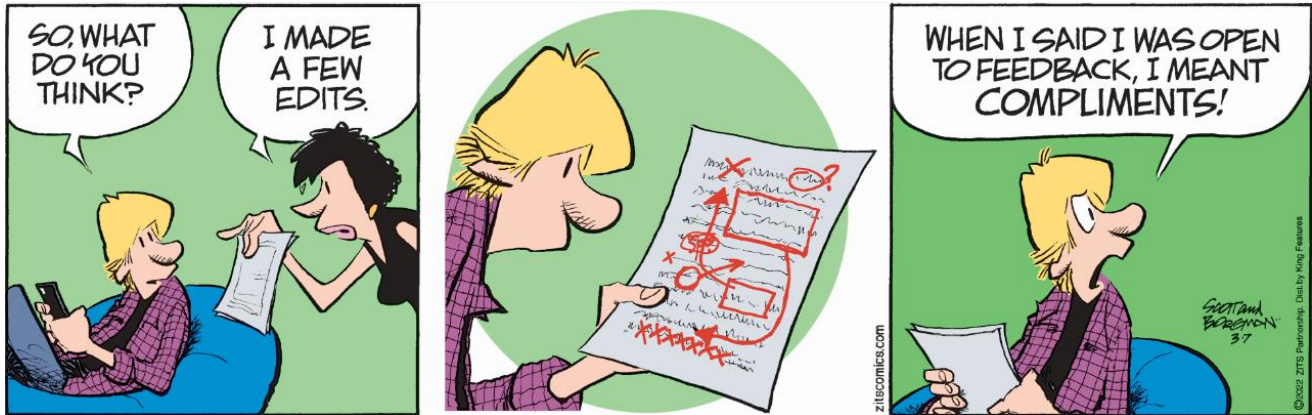
The historical significance of the Bixby Inn-





## THE NEWSLETTER

Over the years a number of folks have asked me, “where do I get the material for a newsletter every month”. Well readers, it generally comes from you all asking questions. Often about something of which I haven’t the foggiest idea. Never wanting to admit that I don’t know (it’s a male trait you know – it is inherent and we can never admit we don’t know something), some research into the question is initiated. Once that is done I often use what I find as the main article for the next newsletter and write it down. The next step is to ask my wife if she would please proof read the results and comment. Well in a recent newspaper, a comic strip appeared that pretty much summarizes what happens next:



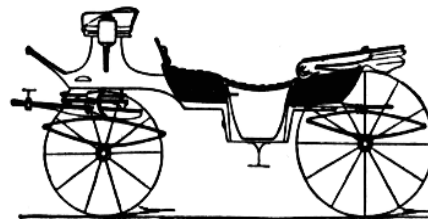
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## FRANCESTOWN COMMUNITY MARKET



The folks who operate the Francestown Farmers Market have set the tentative schedule for this year. The market will continue with its Friday schedule and will open for the first time this year on May 6<sup>th</sup>. The Town Horse Sheds will again be the venue and they expect many of the familiar stands to be open again this year. **The hours will be from 4-6:30 PM each Friday, May 6th through the Fall Season.**

## FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM



As we did last year, the Francestown Heritage Museum will be open concurrent with the Farmers Market. We have a number of new exhibits and something for all interests. **4-6:30 PM each Friday.**

MORE FROM THE MOUTHS OF BABESI



➤ HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHO TO MARRY?

You got to find somebody who likes the same stuff. Like, if you like sports, she should like it that you like sports, and she should keep the chips and dip coming.

Alan, age 10

➤ HOW WOULD THE WORLD BE DIFFERENT IF PEOPLE DIDN'T GET MARRIED?

There sure would be a lot of kids to explain, wouldn't there?

Kelvin, age 8

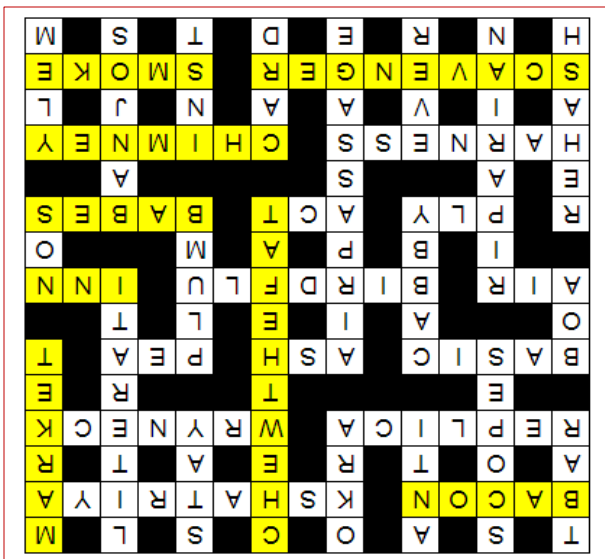
➤ WHEN IS IT OK TO KISS SOMEONE?

The rule goes like this: If you kiss someone, then you should marry them and have kids with them, it's the right thing to do.

Howard, age 8

The law says you have to be eighteen, so I wouldn't want to mess with that.

Curt, age 7 Ω



Preparation for the Children's Historic Scavenger Hunt / Seek and Find, at the Heritage Museum continues.

We have identified some 25 exhibits in various areas so there should be something of interest for boys and girls.

Photos of these exhibits along with a short description of each have been placed in a bound pamphlet. Each participant will be given their own booklet which they can keep. Once they find an item in the museum, a staff member will put a small sticker on that page in their book.

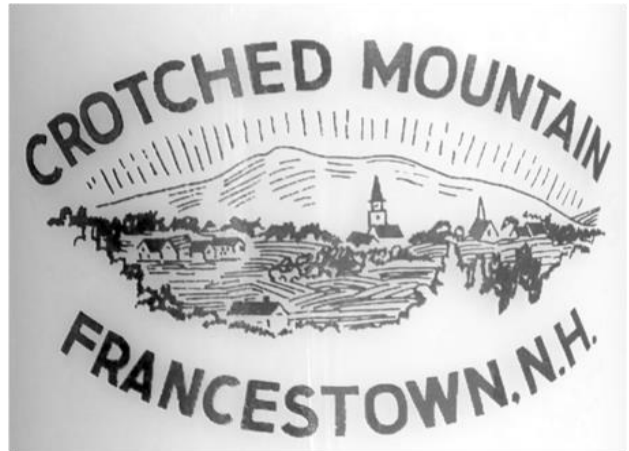


Once a participant finds all the items in their pamphlet, they can select a prize from a variety available. Ω

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**Find Francestown's Fun Facts on the 250th Anniversary of its Founding!**

Have fun on the hunt by yourself, with your family, or with a team. Pick up the information for the hunt from the town historian Priscilla Putnam Martin at the FIHS Beehive during the Farmers Market June 3, 10, 17, 2022, or call 603 547 3616 for a more convenient arrangement. Another option is to contact Jamie Pike to arrange your pick up of the information at [selectmenoffice@francestownnh.org](mailto:selectmenoffice@francestownnh.org)



**Find as many of the listed objects, items, and locations as you can! There are 25 tasks. Sign up and begin on Friday, June 3, 2022, & finish Thursday, June 23, 2022.**

**You will need a camera or phone camera to submit photos of your findings as proof. Captions or signs in your photos can contain the description required.**

**Turn in your findings anytime on or before June 23, 2022.**

**Points will be awarded for correct answers, there may be multiple winners, and the highest scores win!**

**Winners will be announced at the Sestercentennial Celebration, June 25, 2022.**

Event sponsored by the Francestown Sestercentennial Committee

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## **HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BIXBY INN – CON'T FROM PAGE #5**



The house described on page #5 is located on a site first settled by Samuel Lolly where in 1789 he built the fifth house in Francestown Village. In 1808 that house was moved further down the Second New Hampshire Turnpike where it remains today (owned and occupied by my wife and myself).

Once the original house had been moved, the now vacant site was purchased by Samuel Hodge and this is where the current structure (the one containing the smoke chamber described above) is located. In 1821 the property passed to Peter Clark who was the owner of the Long Store across the street (the current Francestown Village Store).

In 1845 the property again passed, this time to Paul H. Bixby (who was Peter Clark's partner in the Long Store). The Bixby family ran the property as an inn well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The current owners, Frank and Sharon Riley are having extensive historic restoration completed on this property. The current project is recreating the tavern that was in the building during the time it was an Inn.

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