

THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM



Newsletter

MAY 2022

ROAD TRAVERSE

WHY DID THE CHICKEN CROSS THE ROAD?

No doubt many have heard this old vexing conundrum with many also thinking who cares? So let's put this on a more local level that involved our ancestors. Francestown was never known for its chickens but we were known for our sheep, as was much of New Hampshire.



HOB & NOB DORSET SHEEP

This 1100-acre farm was noted for its sheep, many of which were recognized as champions in international exhibitions. Hob & Nob Farm was widely known for its Cheviot and Dorset sheep.

However, Francestown was not alone in the sheep industry. While our first ancestors were busy clearing fields, building cabins and otherwise trying to survive, things changed in the early 1800s. (It looks like we have gotten off track since the opening to this article concerned road crossings by chickens, but we are leading into that.)

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ANOTHER WHAT'Z IT

This what'z it shows two separate tools. While they share a somewhat similar appearance they were designed for different purposes.

Both these tools exhibit the same degree of craftsmanship and pride that our ancestral workers took in their work.



The first tool is wood with a metal plate inlaid into the bottom surface. A single blade, adjustable cutter knife is located in a cutout in the center of the tool. The tool is 16" long, 4" wide and 2" thick. The metal blade is 3/4" wide and 3 3/4" long with a right angle bend at the bottom.

The next **What'z it** is also made of wood and also has a single blade, adjustable cutter knife located in the center of the tool. This tool is 14" long, 1 3/4" wide and 2" deep. The metal blade is 3/4" wide and 3 3/4" long but has no right angle bend at the bottom.

Both of these tools have contoured hand holds and have been carefully smoothed.

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There were a number of events which precipitated an economic crisis:

- The Embargo Act of 1807
- The Nonintercourse Act of 1807
- The War of 1812

All these prevented factories in the US from buying wool from Britain and US farmers could no longer sell their grain overseas.

OK, I can sense people's eyes glazing over; so much for history. All the above led to the "Great Sheep Boom" – come on now, how many knew there had been a great sheep boom?? Since farming was no longer profitable and we couldn't get any wool, our ancestors turned to raising sheep.

In the end nearly 80% of New Hampshire had been cleared and rocks were removed from the fields. At first sheep stock was hard to come by but soon VT had 1.7 million sheep and NH was catching up with over 600,000 by 1840.

Alas, one last digression from the point of this article, that being crossing the road.

As our ancestors cleared the fields, the stones were used to build stone walls. These served as enclosures for sheep and often had wooden fences placed on top of them. A project is underway in New England to map all the stone walls.

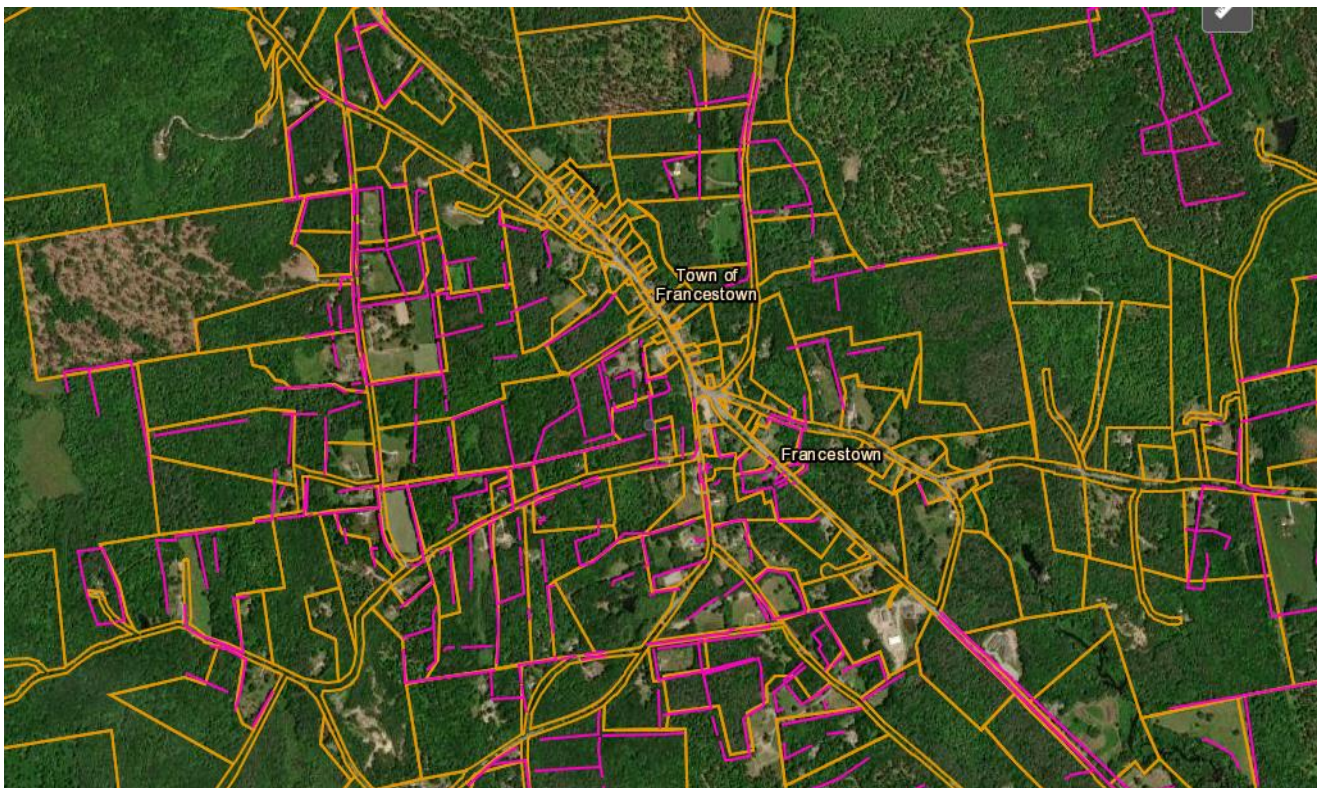
Known as LIDAR – NH Stone Wall Mapping. You can access this on the web. The URL address is:

<https://nhdes.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=f4d57ec1a6b8414190ca0662456dffbo>

Just enter your address and you will get a map of your address and the surrounding area showing these walls. The below map shows walls in the greater Francestown Village area.

This is still a work in progress and if you go to this site, you can add any missing walls.

CROSSING THE ROAD CONTINUES ON PAGE # 3



STONE WALLS IN FRANCESTOWN

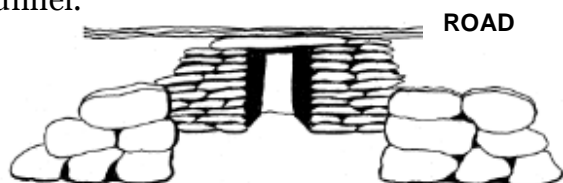
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Now we've already posed the question of why did the chicken cross the road. Presumably the answer is it wanted to get to the other side. But on a more local level we can expand this query as to why did the sheep want to get to the other side of the road? Or more to the point, how do you get the sheep to the other side of the road? Having sheep ambling around on the road is good for neither the sheep nor the people wanting to go down the road.



The problem of getting them from one side to the other was further compounded by all the rock walls that had been built. To cross the road you would have to first drive the sheep to the nearest break in the wall in order to cross. What if you didn't have to cross the road to get to the other side? How about making it so they could just walk under the road at will? What if you dug a deep trench across the road, lined the walls with heavy stones and put very large flat stones over the top and replaced the road?

So they did just that. Sheep no longer have to cross over the road, they just walk back and forth under it at will using a sheep tunnel.



What does this have to do with the Heritage Museum? Well, nothing directly but tunnels are historic. However, these sheep tunnels or "sheep runs" or "sheep passages" as they are sometimes called were well built and of course they still exist in Francetown. Unused for generations, most have been removed, collapsed or fallen into disrepair. Yet another was co-opted by our highway crew when a drainage culvert had to be installed under the Turnpike. Rather than close the road, dig up the Turnpike, put in a culvert and rebuild the road, all at considerable expense, they lined the sheep tunnel with a culvert to carry water under the Turnpike. Yet another sheep tunnel was known to still be in place. So in the name of history, we set out to document this remaining tunnel. Not all goes as planned. The tunnel was found – at least what little could be seen of it was found.



Decades of road runoff, debris from the forest and castings from the snow plows had pretty much obscured this bit of our history. The tunnel is now on private property and the owner could remember walking through this tunnel when she was a little girl. Her family was willing to let us see what could be done to restore the tunnel to its former configuration

CONTINUED ON PAGE #6

MAY CROSSWORD

THE TRIVIA ANSWER PUZZLE

The Trivia question on page #6 has two parts. The answer to the first part is found in the yellow highlighted letters and the answer to the second part is found in the green highlighted letters. Enjoy!

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			27	28		29		30	31	32
33	34	35	36			37				38				
39						40					41			
42				43		44				45				
46						47			48					
			49		50			51			52	53	54	55
56	57	58				59	60		61					
62					63			64						
65					66						67			
68					69						70			

MAY CROSSWORD

THE TRIVIA ANSWER CLUES

Across

1. Home for teeth
5. Condescending one
10. Tried to get home, maybe
14. Asian nurse
15. = 20 sols in old France
16. Southeast Asian parrot
17. Basic sense word interpretation
19. Clickable image
20. Pay
21. Feel good brain chemical
23. Person doing postdoctoral research
25. **RESPONSIBLE FOR NH ROCKS(2)**
26. Legislate
29. Thermonuclear weapon
33. Fabricator or creator
37. "___ any drop to drink": Coleridge
38. Web service provider
39. Bibliographical abbr.
40. Black bird of cuckoo family
41. "Schindler's ___"
42. People person
44. Center of a ball?
45. Spill over
46. Ring shaped reef
47. "Haste makes waste," e.g.
49. Moo goo gai pan pan
51. Drops trash
56. Change into during full moon
61. Stradivarian instrument
62. So. American palm tree berry
63. **RESPONSIBLE FOR NH ROCKS(1)**
65. "Get ___!"
66. Pear variety
67. Rim
68. A load
69. Cut corners
70. White tail _____

Down

1. Purgative drug
2. Kind of group, in chemistry
3. Light bulb units
4. **RESPONSIBLE FOR NH ROCKS(3)**
5. _____ the wrist
6. Nothing
7. "Ars amatoria" poet
8. About
9. Adagio and allegro
10. Repulsive person
11. Centers of activity
12. "Pumping ___"
13. Fraction of a newton
18. Less polite
22. Hurting
24. **SOURCE OF NH ROCKS**
27. Funnel-shaped
28. _____ totem pole
30. State bordering on Lake Erie
31. Forest growth
32. Not just one
33. Flexible mineral
34. Assist in wrong doing
35. Narc's find, perhaps
36. European mountain plant
43. Hard punch
45. Arrive, as darkness
48. Cede
50. The man served by a valet
52. Bore
53. Leave out
54. An arete
55. Contemptuous look
56. Unit of power
57. Bounce back, in a way
58. Drops from the sky
59. Skinny
60. Film maker
64. CD follower

CONTINUED FROM PAGE #3

The Town was requested to help with the preservation of this bit of our history and the highway department set out to open up this long abandoned sheep tunnel.



Debris was dug out, stones reset and the area generally opened up.

And so in answer to the original question of “why did the chicken (or sheep in our case) cross the road” – they did not cross it, they passed under it.

In the case of this tunnel above there was a good reason for its construction. There were two large sheep farms on one side of this road and the water supply for them was on the other side. This tunnel allowed the sheep to go between the pastures and the water source at will.

Many thanks to our road agent and his

highway crew for restoring this bit of our history.

But there is an epilogue to this story. The sheep boom was a profitable venture for our ancestors. Thanks to the great sheep boom, from early in the 1800s the price of wool continued to rise and by 1835 was 57¢ a pound. But like many booms, they are followed by a bust and by 1840 the price had fallen by over half to 25¢ a pound.

What caused this bust? In a word, competition. Big farms out west and in Australia and Argentina could produce wool far more cheaply.

So by 1850 the Great Sheep Boom was over. In 1840 there were 4 million sheep in New England and by 1860 less than half that. Of even greater significance was the start of an exodus out of NH when farmers moved west for the richer soil. This was further aided by the expansion of the railroads and canals which allowed products to be shipped east more easily.

This article has a related trivia question:

New Hampshire is known for its rocky soil. What is responsible for all these rocks and where did they originate? The answer lies embedded in this month’s Crossword Puzzle. Solve the crossword and you will see the answer to the trivia question.

And finally, in researching this article the historic records were viewed to obtain the population figures and those of the number of sheep. Yes, they did record the number of sheep each year in town. In fact they had an annual animal census and recorded the numbers of all types of farm animals. A small graph follows that will show the rapid decline in the sheep population starting in

CONTINUED ON PAGE #8

OUR ANCESTORS – a remembrance

A former resident who grew up here in Francestown was celebrating her 93rd birthday and related some things she recalled from many years ago.

While the parties in this remembrance have all passed on, the names have been changed out of respect for any relatives who may still be in the area.

Mrs. Jones lived in a large house in Francestown. She had grown up in Boston where she learned to play the organ and did so at the Old Meeting House when she moved here.

Mr. Jones’ job caused him to travel throughout the countryside and he had an eye for antique furniture. This was back in a time when Francestown was growing and many people had become somewhat prosperous and were looking for new furniture to replace older pieces. At the same time many others had fallen on hard times and needed to sell some of their furniture.

Mr. Jones spent years on the road buying this antique furniture and filled their home with his purchases. Room after room in the house became stacked with this furniture. He told Mrs. Jones that he was building her inheritance and these pieces were to be hers when he died.

Well die he did but by then Mrs. Jones had gotten so attached to these old pieces that she couldn’t bear to sell any of them. She ended up living in only one room of the house.

As Mr. Jones had spent his earnings on the antiques she ended up very cash poor. The house did not have running water and several neighbors in town took water to her every day.

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What’z it continued –

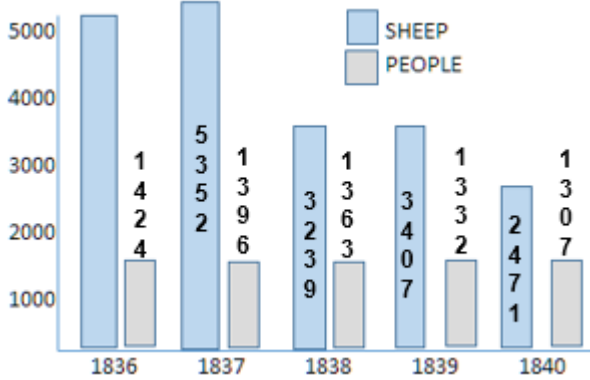


As usual, the first person to correctly identify these items will win one of the Heritage Museum’s coveted lifetime membership cards. These will entitle the holder a certain degree of prestige and also allow for unlimited free entry into the museum (not diminished by the fact we do not charge anyone admission). Ω

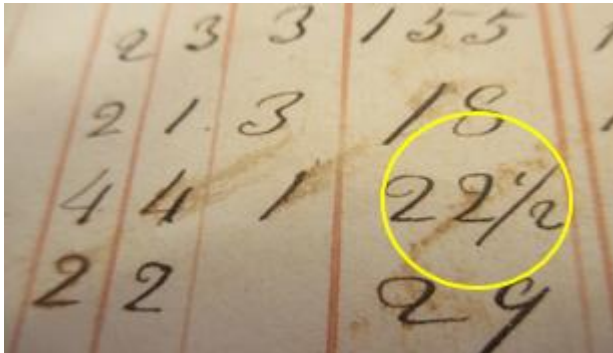
1	J	A	W	S	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	D
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Y
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	A
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	R
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	L
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	I
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	C
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	O
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	N
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	A
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	M
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	I
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	N
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	E
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	A
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	C
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	T
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	H
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	B
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	O
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	M
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	A
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	K
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	R
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	E
26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	O
27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	H
28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	A
29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	L
30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	I
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	D
32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	E
33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	S
34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	L
35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	A
36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	D
37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	E
38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	G
39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	A
40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	D
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	V
42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	I
43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	O
44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	L
45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	N
46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	E
47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	R
48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	S
49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	W
50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	O
51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	L
52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	A
53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	C
54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	E
55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	R
56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	E
57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	W
58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	O
59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	S
60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	N
61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	I
62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	D
63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	E
64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	R
65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	A
66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	C
67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	E
68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	S
69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	N
70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	O
71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	A
72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	C
73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	E
74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	R
75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	A
76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	C
77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	E
78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	S
79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	N
80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	O
81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	A
82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	C
83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	E
84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	R
85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	A
86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	C
87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	E
88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	S
89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	N
90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	O
91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	A
92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	C
93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	E
94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	R
95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	A
96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	C
97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	E
98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	S
99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	N
100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	O
101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	A
102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	C
103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	E
104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	R
105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	A
106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	C
107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	E
108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	S
109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	121	N
110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	121	122	O
111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	121	122	123	A
112													

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1836 and going through the end of the boom in 1840. While the population remained relatively stable, the number of sheep fell by over half.



But an interesting question arose concerning the census numbers. In a number of instances it showed citizens has having 4 1/2 or 20 1/2, etc. which brings up the question, what is 1/2 sheep?



This occurred in several areas so does not appear to be an erroneous entry. It was further noted that in one instance the record indicated a citizen had 4 2/3 cows.



We asked a number of people what they thought this indicated and most thought it must represent a pregnant lamb or cow and the lamb or calf to be. While this is certainly a logical conclusion, I would offer the following observation:

If the owner is being taxed on the animal I would think there would have been a whole lot of outcry if people got a tax bill for an animal that had not yet even been born (what if it was stillborn – would you get a rebate)? That seems like saying to the IRS that since my wife is 4.5 months pregnant I want to be able to take a deduction for 1/2 of a dependent now – good luck with that.

If anyone has a definitive answer as to what a half sheep is, please let us know. Ω

Our friend here is truly Baaaa ffiled as to what happened to her other half.



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OUR ANCESTORS – a remembrance

The time came when she eventually had to sell some of the furniture. She had learned a good deal from her husband and only sold the lesser pieces, continuing to keep the museum quality items.

She died without a will and the estate was appraised and put up for auction. Reportedly dealers came from New York, Boston and all over the country. Such was the accumulation that the auction lasted three days.

This remembrance of a former resident occurred in town many decades ago but illustrates the willingness of neighbors to help somebody in need. Ω