

THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM



NEWSLETTER

JULY 2022

THE COOPER'S TOOLS

BARRELS and CASKS

A Francestown cooperage was located on the banks of the South Branch of the Piscataquog River in Clark's Village. Hiram Clark bought this property in 1867 and built this mill for use as a cooperage making fancy boxes and pails. It was razed early in the 1900s for its lumber. The mill was noted for its fancy lock corner wooden boxes and apple barrels, but also for its wooden casks and barrels. And so begins our tale of the Cooper.

HIRAM CLARK'S COOPERAGE



The importance of barrels and casks to our ancestors cannot be overstated. They were used to ship and store many goods essential to daily life. These wooden barrel and cask containers were used to store oil, flour, grains, salted meats and fish, water, nails, beer, spirits – the list was endless. Such was the skill needed to make these containers that our average ancestor lacked the needed skills and tools to do the job. Of special importance to Francestown was the need for barrels for the shipping of apples grown in our many orchards.

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THE COOPER

Now that the Heritage Museum has a cooper related exhibit, let's start with some background – housekeeping if you will. First, let's consider the cooper. What is a cooper and what does he do?

In colonial times, a principle means of storing and shipping goods was in wooden casks, kegs and barrels. Everyday life required the use of buckets, tubs, vats, et al. Providing these items to the settlers fell on the local cooper – a person trained in the making of these wooden containers. The main component of these items was wood; cut, shaped and formed as needed. Other materials would include some iron items.



The importance of barrels cannot be overstated as they are still used today for the aging of good beer, some liquors and wine et al.

So how does the cooper fit into all this? A cooper is someone who makes wooden, staved vessels, held together with wooden or metal hoops and possessing flat ends or heads.

One of the key components being the **stave**. Shaping a rectangular piece of wood into a stave is an art form and what defines a cooper's skill.

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FRANCESTOWNS 250TH ANNIVERSARY SCAVENGER HISTORY HUNT

The 250th Sestercentennial scavenger history hunt was won by the Vadney Family (yes that Vadney who many years owned and operated our general store). The entry submission was well presented and so informative that it is reproduced here in full and details much of our town's history.

1. Find the picture of the woman for whom Francestown was named. What is her name?

- Francis Deering Wentworth



2. Francestown was part of what town before 1772? Describe how you found this answer.

- New Boston

- History of Francestown, NH 1758-1891 – Cochrane & Wood

3. Find the picture of the woman who gave our town its library in memory of her father. What is her name?

- Alison Bixby Hill



4. Find the name of the Francestown native who had many patented inventions. Name 5 inventions.

- Sylvester H. Roper

- Knitting Machine (Pat. #94135)

- Padlock (Pat. #2848)

- Metal-Screw Machine (Pat. #262321)

- Fire Escape (Pat. #514094)

- Improvement in Hot-Air Engines (Pat. #34723)

(3)

5. Find the site where Francestown families tied up their horses and wagons when coming to the village to go to the store, pick up their mail, and bring their kids to school.

- Main Street, across from 40 Main Street



6. Find the building where grades 1-8 attended school in 1940. Find the blackboards.

- Main Street ("Red School House")

- Blackboards are inside on the back wall, behind the Town Clerk



7. Find the original gold and ebony Boston Post Cane and note the requirement to receive it. Name a recipient.

- Located in Town Hall

- Is presented to oldest resident in Town

- Franny Prest was a recipient



8. Find the memorial to Harding Foote. What war did he fight in?

- Located under the tree in front of Town Hall

- WWII



(4)

9. Find the bust of the man who set the record for the number of state and federal offices held by one individual. What is his name?

- Located in the FIHS Beehive
- Levi Woodbury



10. Find the Golden Eagle which never leaves its perch and has multiple bullet holes. Where was it mounted originally?

- Located in the back of the Heritage Museum
- Originally on top of The Francestown Academy building



11. Find the monument of men marching off to World War I. Name a soldier.

- Located next to the Old Meeting House
- Frederick A. Vanderheyden, Soldier



(5)

12. Find two of Francestown's Revolutionary War soldiers buried in Cemetery #1.

- John McAlvin (also spelled McIlvain per Cochrane & Wood)
- Deacon John Smith
- Nathan Fisher Sr.



13. Find the location of the first fire station.

- South end of Village Store / Three Sisters Building`



14. Find one of the three homes, ells, or sheds in the village which were moved down from Bullard Hill (the deserted Lost Village settlement).

- 210 Main Street, Ebenezer Bullard House



(6)

15. Find the Blacksmith Shop.

- 201 Main Street



16. Find the old stagecoach stop where you can still buy food and drink.

- Toll Booth Tavern, Second New Hampshire Turnpike



17. Find a carving on Signature Rock on Old Turnpike Road (across from #362 Bennington Rd).

- Located off of Rt. 47, or Old Fisher Hill Road



18. Find a remaining metal structure at the unloading area of the lower T-Bar, at the original Crooked Mountain East Ski Area.

- Located on East Road, just past town parking on the left



(7)



19. Find one of the last remaining lakeshore ice storage houses.

- Located at Pleasant Pond, Pleasant Pond Road (2nd structure to right from boat launch)



20. Find one of the locations of the 12 district school houses. Describe the location.

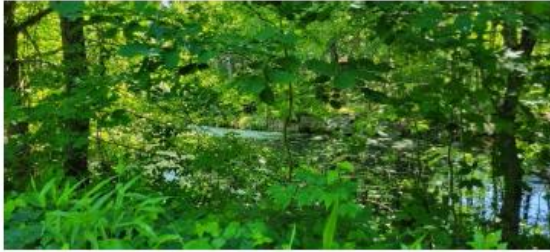
- School House #4, Woodward Hill Road



(8)

21. Find the quarry where Francestown's famous soapstone was discovered or the mill where it was prepared for transport. Find a display showing many examples of useful soapstone objects.

- Located on Bible Hill Road
- Mill was located in Mill Village at intersection of Rt. 136 & Potash Rd.
- Display on exhibit at the FIHS Beehive



22. Find the Poor Farm. Describe its purpose.

- At the end of Poor Farm Road
- Depository for indigent and dependent members of society



23. Find the old sheep tunnel on Poor Farm Road from the heyday of the wool industry in Francestown.

- Located on Poor Farm Road



Bonus Questions:

24. Find one of the two known stops on the Underground Railroad. Describe the location.

- **Blue Bear Inn**
- **Mountain Road**



25. Find one of the 6 Lost Village cellar holes. Describe its location.

- **Bullard Hill Road**
- **Located four cellar holes**



BARRELS and CASKS

FROM PAGE #1

It was a common expression “that the coopers had the colonists over a barrel”.

So what’s the fuss here – what would be the Francestown Heritage Museum connection to all this? Well you may ask. As Francestown had a cooperage, our ancestors were certainly involved in this trade. Given the skill and tools needed to be a cooper, we set out to obtain the tools used by the cooper in the making of barrels - a project that lent itself to being done while riding out a pandemic. There are some 22 steps and each has its own unique tool(s).



We are aiming to have this exhibit in place by July 4th. Stop by! Ω

**FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM
NEWSLETTER**

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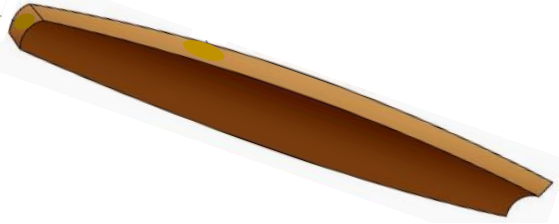
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THE COOPER

FROM PAGE #1

The key lies in the shape of the stave.



Both edges have to taper from the middle to the ends getting evenly narrower on both sides. They must then hollow out the inside of the stave while curving the outside of the stave and next beveling the rim. All these are accomplished with individual tools guided only by the cooper’s good eye.

Even a person with a good eye had to complete an apprenticeship that lasted four to five years. Ω

FRANCESTOWN SESTERCENTENNIAL . . .

By all accounts the celebration on June 25 was enjoyed by all. You can read all about it in the Francestown News and to that the Heritage Museum Newsletter will only add the finale: Ω



SOMETHING TO PONDER

If two vegans are having a heated argument, can it still be said that they have “a beef with one another”?