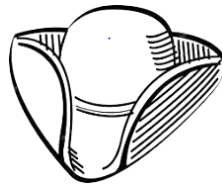


THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM



Newsletter

August 2022

Vol. 8, No. 8

THE HATTERY

THE HATTER

A recent visitor to the museum commented on the beaver top hat which is part of our vis-à-vis carriage exhibit.



So the question arose as to where a colonist would obtain such a hat. Well the hat in the museum came from a famous Paris Hattery, and was purchased in Boston.



THE INSIDE CROWN OF THE HAT – MAKERS MARK

CONTINUED ON PAGE # 4



People have earmuffs, why not horses?

The museum has received a recent donation of items including these hand-made crochet ear muffs for your horse. Hey, (or maybe that should be hay), horses were important back then.

Our thanks to the model, Harold's Indy a/k/a Indy and the folks at Kingsbury Hill Farm for the photo of the ear wear. Ω

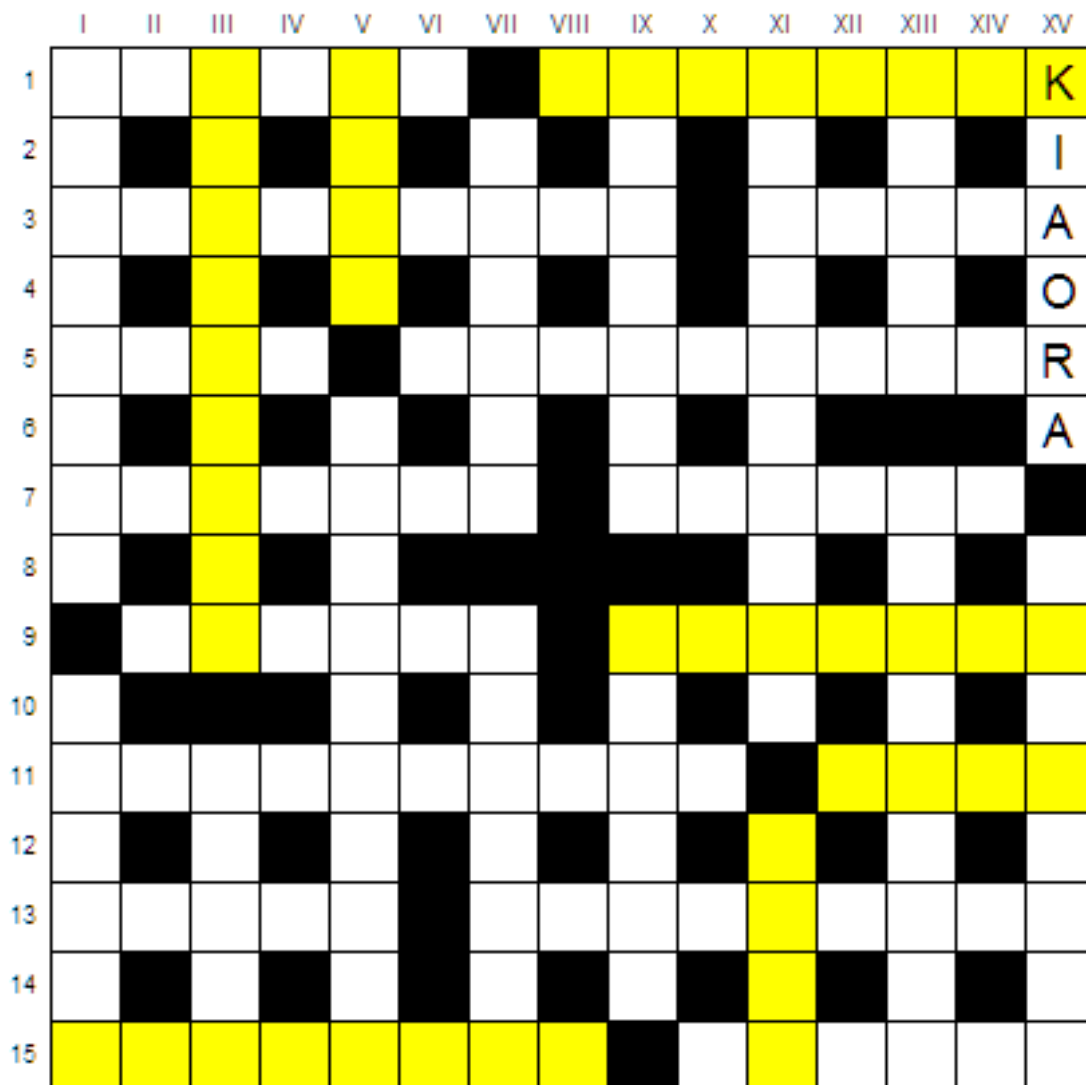
AUGUST THEME CROSSWORD

The **yellow** blocks contain the theme words and all come from the text of this newsletter.

This a FRENCH GRID puzzle. Rather than tiny little numbers inside individual squares like in the American puzzle you just have neat column and row numbers. There are no numbers in the cubes but rather along the margins. Therefore any one line or column can have multiple words in it. For example Line 1 across has 6 adjoining spaces, a blocked out square, then 8 more adjoining spaces. So looking at the clues you see that there are two separate clues for 1 across one for the 6 letter word and one for the 8 letter word in line one. The same procedure would be used for the Down words. For example, Column I has 8 adjoining spaces, another 3 adjoining spaces. A blocked out square and then another 6 adjoining open spaces. So the column has two words and in looking at the clues you see that there are 2 clues for I Down. All clues for theme words are in capital letters. XV Down is a gimme.

Enjoy!

Remember the museum is open 4-6 PM every Friday. Stop in and see us.



(3)

AUGUST THEME CROSSWORD CLUES

Definitions in all capitals are theme words.

ACROSS

1. Ploy to gain advantage
ABSURDLY EASY THING
3. Inner cell layer of an embryos
“La Bohème”, for example
5. Downer
Caped skeleton with scythe
7. Scuba gear item
E-business
9. Judger
THREE SIDED HAT
11. Terrific
THERE ARE TWO OF THEM
13. Be bombastic
Female toe dancer
15. A/K/A BEAVER WOOL
Mark of disgrace
- VII. Fungal decomposition
Both sexes deer with antlers
- IX. A reasoned outcome
Soft ringing sound
- XI. Having I-strain?
BEAVER COVERING
- XIII. Consumed
Enriching with ozone
- XV. Maori language greeting
Five Nations tribe (*a gimme*)

DOWN

- I. Event unfolds
Gilding gold
- III. PERSON WITH
“HATTERS SHAKES”
Checkered cloth
- V. HORSE WITH EARMUFFS
Seeker of bids

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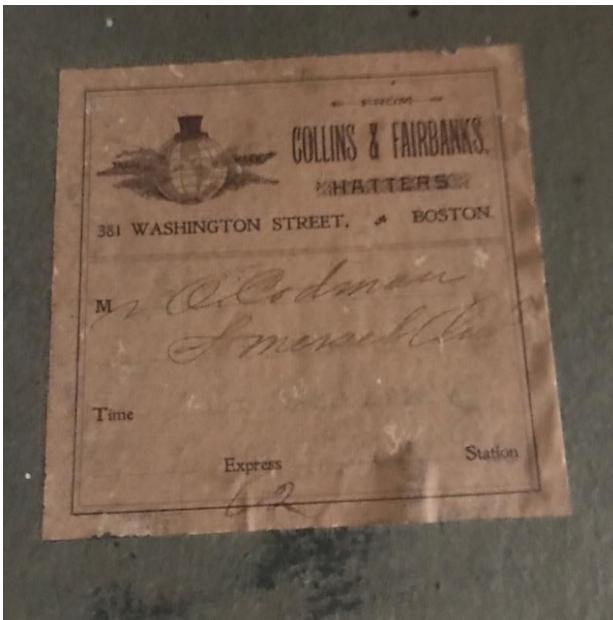
Receive a Past Issue - they will be sent upon request. An index of past issues is also available.
Ω

THE HATTER –

CONTINUED FROM PAGE #1



THE ORIGINAL HAT BOX



THE ORIGINAL INVOICE

However, traveling to Boston for such a hat was not necessary as Francestown was home to many different trades and shops including several hatters.

A respectable trade making a needed product. So how much controversy could possibly be involved in the making of hats..... plenty!

But first a little background concerning the humble hat in colonial times.

- A man's hat advertised his social status (the more elaborate the greater the wealth and/or status).

- Hats in those days were made primarily of beaver skin, wool. Cotton or straw.
- The hatter had to be skilled in the use of all these materials when making the various kinds of hats worn in those days (knitted, broad-brim, upturned brim, tricorin, etc.).

Among these hats the beaver skin ones were quite popular. The hatter could also easily obtain the beaver skins as beavers were abundant in the new world. This did not sit well with the British hat makers who loathed the competition. Hence the controversy which came to a head in 1732 when the British passed the HAT ACT. Like many British regulations enacted to protect British trade the Hat Act sought to subordinate colonies economically. It

- 1) Forbade exportation of hats from the colonies.
- 2) Limited the number of permissible apprenticeships for hatters.
- 3) Forbade hatters from the hiring of blacks (to preclude competition from cheap labor).

These restrictions allowed the London Hatters to take over the markets of southern Europe that were being supplied by New England.

A skirmish that came to be known as the American Revolutionary War brought this to an end. Lest you think New England was only a small player in the international hat trade, at one point Danbury, CT was making and shipping over 4½ million hats a year.

What went into the making of a beaver skin hat – well I thought you'd never ask, so here goes. In the early days of our colonies, if you needed something you generally had to make it yourself or rely on local tradesmen. The hatter was such a tradesman.

The colonies had an abundance of beavers and a number of colonists who were trappers and could supply the pelts. The Hatter could then set about making the beaver hat. This was a multi-step process and most of the work was done by journeymen, albeit in a small shop it was often the hatter himself who performed all the steps in three stages. STAGE #1:

Step #1 PREPARING THE PELT -

CONTINUED ON PAGE # 5

THE HATTER –

CONTINUED FROM PAGE #4

Beavers trapped in the winter months yielded the best pelts. The beaver had two types of fur: the outer guard hair was coarse and the underfur, known as beaver wool or duvet was soft.



OUTER GUARD HAIR BEAVER WOOL UNDERFUR

Many were shipped to the European market. The pelts would be graded into three different categories but we'll skip all that lest we get buried in minutia here. Suffice it to say the three categories are "coat", "parchment" and "band or strip".

Once the beaver was separated from his pelt and the pelts were graded, a fortunate hatter would receive the most desirable coat pelts known as castor grass which were those that had come from beavers trapped in winter and then worn by the trapper for the rest of the winter thus losing most of the coarse outer guard hair. These were desirable as it meant the hatter had fewer guard hairs to remove and the beaver wool underfur required little extra processing before felting.

Step #2 PULLING and SHAVING –

This step entailed pulling any remaining guard hairs from the pelt. They would then tear the beaver wool off the pelt. Once the beaver wool had been removed from the pelt it became known as beaver fluff (no doubt you readers already knew that).

CONTINUED ON PAGE # 6

THE CAKEWALK –

Most readers have no doubt heard the term "it was a cakewalk" or "it was a piece of cake", denoting something that was absurdly easy. Do you know the origin of the term? Well read on, and with thanks to the Hillsboro Historical Society, you will.

A cakewalk was a pre-Civil War dance contest. It was performed by slaves on southern plantations who lampooned the ballroom dances of the slave owners.



The slave owners were the judges of the dancing and the winners of the contest received a decorated cake. Variations later became a staple in minstrel shows and other venues.

Of course the reverse can also be true such as saying "the Francestown 250th anniversary celebration scavenger hunt was no cakewalk" to which participants would probably agree. Ω

A SECOND SIGN?

A recent visitor to the museum noticed the large "Vadney General Store" sign hanging in the museum and commented that it was not the sign they remembered and asked where the second sign was. As you may know, a Heritage Museum co-curator is a direct descendant of the family that owned and operated the store for over 40 years. Indeed, she has the second sign proudly hung in her home. Ω



THE HATTER . . .

CONTINUED FROM PAGE #5

Step #3 CARROTING –

This step makes the felting process easier by breaking down some of the keratin present in the beaver fur. To do this they would dilute mercury salts in nitric acid and apply it to the beaver fluff. While this did dissolve some of the keratin it also tended to color the fur orange, but this could be addressed by applying steam to the fur as this would release the mercury. Unfortunately it created a cloud of mercury fumes into the air. Notice the young lad in the rear of this picture:



But first a review of your high school chemistry. As you know, mercury is poisonous. This is because it has an affinity for fatty tissue in the human body. What is the fattiest organ in the body? The brain where the mercury tends to travel and lodge causing serious damage to the nervous system. This can result in memory loss, tremors, unusual behavior, balance loss, personality changes, etc. This mercury poisoning disease was especially common in hatters back in colonial times and was referred to as “hatter’s shakes”. No doubt you all remember the character in Alice and Wonderland known as “The Mad Hatter”. It is

THE HATTER –

he who was displaying all the characteristics of mercury poisoning common to hatters in those days. As the saying goes, “and now you know the rest of the story”.



Step #4 MIXING and SORTING the final part of pelt preparation was to take the carroted fluff and sort it by color, mix it to redistribute the oils in the fluff and card it which agitates the fur and prepares it for the felting.

A recurring theme in both the museum and the newsletters is to make it clear just how difficult it was for our ancestors. It seems that every task essential to life was difficult and often dangerous. All the above outlines the work involved in Stage #1 of making a simple hat. There are still two more stage to go before you get to wear your hat. With that in mind and this being page 6 of this newsletter you may be getting a bit glassy eyed so we’ll save Stages #2 and #3 until the September Newsletter. We will get that to you at the end of August so you will have time to complete your new hat in time to wear it at the annual Labor Day Celebration. Ω

Answer to this month's Theme Crossword

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX	X	XI	XII	XIII	XIV	XV
1	G	A	M	B	I	T		C	A	K	E	W	A	L	K
2	O		A		N	D		S		G		T		I	
3	E	N	D	O	D	E	R	M	S		O	P	E	R	A
4	S		H		Y		Y		U		C		U		O
5	D	R	A	G		G	R	I	M	R	E	A	P	E	R
6	O		T		A		O		E		N			A	
7	W	E	T	S	U	I	T		D	O	T	C	O	M	
8	N		E		C						R		Z		O
9		C	R	I	T	I	C		T	R	I	C	O	R	N
10	O			I		A		I		C		N		O	
11	R	I	P	R	O	A	R	I	N	G		S	I	G	N
12	M		L		N		I		K		P		Z		D
13	O	R	A	T	E		B	A	L	L	E	R	I	N	A
14	L		I		E		O		E		L		N		G
15	U	N	D	E	R	F	U	R		S	T	I	G	M	A

DONATIONS

The museum has received a number of donations recently. This donation is not all that old (1921) but being over 100 years has been included in our tool display.

BLOWTORCH

Many of our readers may well remember seeing of these in use at their parents or grandparents homes.

Commonly used to deal with peeling paint and frozen pipes, these torches may have started more house fires than any other single cause.

Just why people thought directing a flame at dry wood was a good idea is not clear but it was a common way to deal with these problems.



Better home insulation and heat along with better and less peeling paint reduced the need for these torches but they remain in use today. Ω

Town Gardens

FRANCESTOWN FIRE DEPARTMENT 7/2022



CRAFTING DEMONSTRATION

SEPTEMBER 3rd

Traditional crafts will be demonstrated on Saturday, September 3rd on the Town Common in Frankestown from 10 am to 2 pm as part of the town's 250th birthday celebration. Come and visit with talented crafters who will take you back into history to see how many familiar items were made "back then".

Woodworkers will demonstrate wood turning and wood carving. You can also stop in the Heritage Museum and see the "Cooper's Exhibit" which shows the steps and tools needed to complete a cask or barrel from start to finish.

You can see how fiber becomes yarn for embroidery, knitting and weaving through carding the fleece, spinning it into yarn, and adding color through the natural dye process. Floor covers and quilts, candles and soaps are other familiar household items which will be made or exhibited by the crafters.



Laura Abramson
Carding fleece



Tina Daniels
Hand spinning



Nancy Gagnon
Needlework



Janet Hicks
Quilting



Scott Jenkins
Woodturning



Karen Steuer
Soap Making



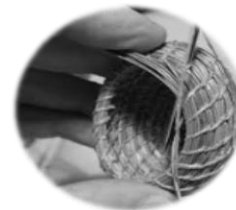
Brie Sullivan
Candle Making



Pat Talhauser
& Elly Miles
Natural Dyes
Natural Dyes



Eileen Koch
Rug Hooking



Lorraine Walker
Pine Needle
Basketry