

THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM

Newsletter

Vol. 9, No. 12



December 2023

DOWSING

DOWSING

No doubt you are asking yourselves how on earth this topic came up. Glad you asked. You will recall that last month we had a letter from a reader in California who related a reminiscence about the trials of bathing in the good old days. What you didn't see was the second part of that letter where she went on to discuss the sometimes role the scarcity of water played in this. Once you have read this you will understand how we got on the topic of dowsing. Part II, the recollection of a California girl:

“I was five years old when my family moved to Seattle and for the first time I enjoyed water coming out of faucets in the kitchen and bathrooms and I got baths, and later showers in a tub built into the bathroom. Of course that meant indoor plumbed toilets too. Then again when I was seven and eight I visited my dad's parents who had a farm east of Sandpoint, Idaho. The farm had had a well in the front of the house providing the farm with water, but that well went dry. I arrived for summer vacation (so I wasn't at home alone in Seattle because my mother worked and my father was on a ship delivering oil to Alaska). That summer my grandfather drove to a small, small town between the farm and the town where his sister lived – she had lots of water in her well. So on Sundays I went with him in his truck to get water for the week to use on the farm. He filled up two or three barrels.



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SCARECROW CONTEST – and the winner is?

Pictured below is the proud winner of this year's Halloween Scarecrow Contest – Demetra Law.

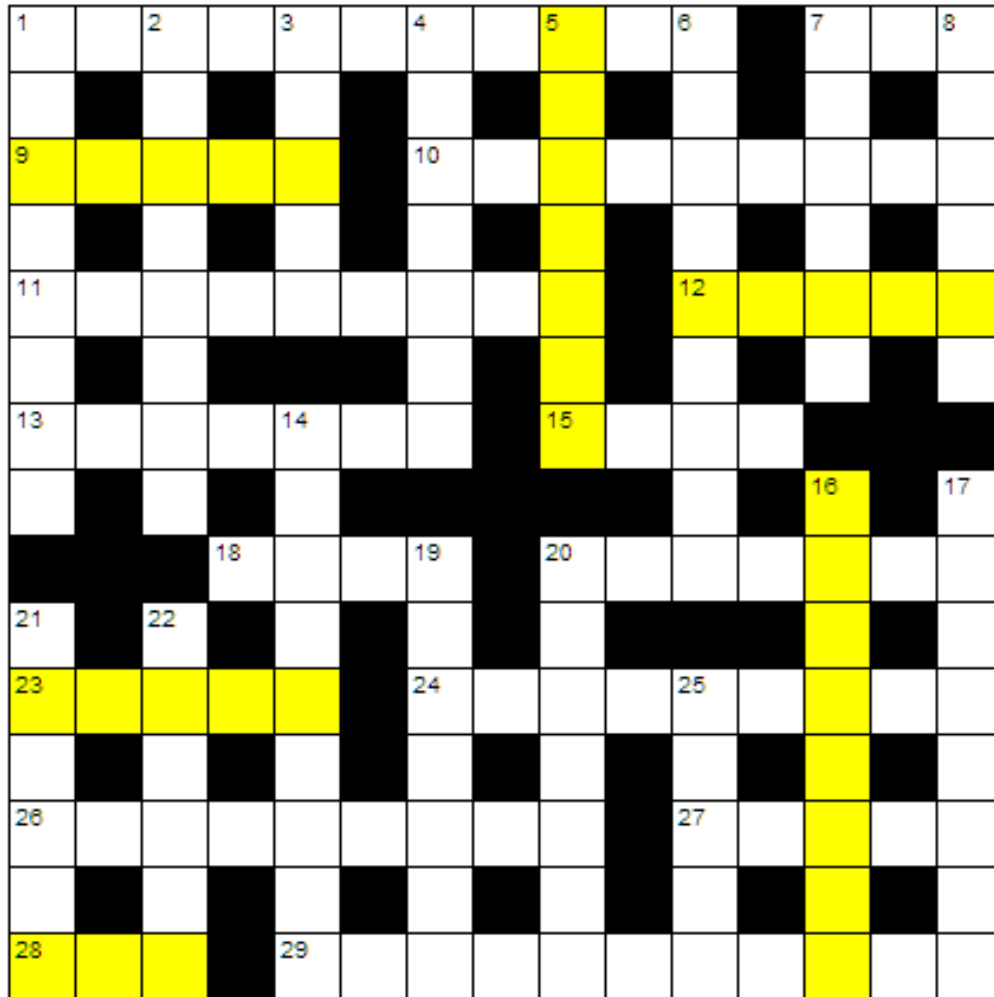


The scarecrow contest was part of the overall Halloween festivities sponsored by the Rec Department and culminated with the “trunk or treat” at the horse sheds.

The Heritage Museum is open concurrently with the Farmers Market which has proven beneficial for our visitors. While the Farmers Market has ended for the season there will be one last event this December 2nd from 10AM – 2PM when a German Christmas Market is planned and the Museum will again be open. See page 5 for details.

DECEMBER THEME CROSSWORD

The **yellow** blocks contain the theme words and all come from the text of this newsletter. Since everyone is busy with the holidays, this is a “Cryptic Quick” format crossword and should go pretty easily. HAPPY HOLIDAYS!



(3)

Clues to the December Crossword. The theme word definitions are in BOLD letters. The solution is on page #7

Across

- 1 Event that attracts people's attention
- 7 Give unofficial name to someone
- 9 **SOME CONSIDER DOWSING TO BE**
- 10 Surrounded in something
- 11 Slender pasta strings
- 12 **WITH 23 ACROSS, ONE WHO DOWSES**
- 13 All thumbs
- 15 Spiritual teacher
- 18 Grand saga
- 20 Give evidence
- 23 **WITH 12 ACROSS, ONE WHO DOWSES**
- 24 One who makes void
- 26 Cop controlling traffic at intersection has
- 27 Person of low intelligence
- 28 **HAPPENS WHERE DOWSER MARKS SPOT**
- 29 Stone tomb

Down

- 1 A dealer in seeds
- 2 Designates
- 3 Bloodsucker
- 4 Formed conception of
- 5 **SEARCHING FOR UNDERGROUND WATER**
- 6 Work repairing streets
- 7 Superior's second-in-command
- 8 Religious teacher k/a "The awakened"
- 14 Complex mechanism
- 16 **A SYNONYM FOR 5 DOWN**
- 17 Provides someone with water
- 19 Overcome
- 20 A huntsman's cry
- 21 Used a credit card
- 22 A thin cord
- 25 Coffee with whiskey and whipped cream

CELEBRITY QUOTES:

GEORGE BURNS -

The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending; and to have the two as close together as possible.

ALEX LEVINE -

Only Irish coffee provides in a single glass all four essential food groups: Alcohol, caffeine, sugar and fat.

ZSA ZSA GABOR -

I have never hated a man enough to give his diamonds back.

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So on Sundays I went with him in his truck to get water for the week to use on the farm. He filled up two or three barrels.



The next summer Grandpa gave me a water witch and taught me how to use it as I walked around all over the farm. One day the witch did its job: I held it up and it pulled down on me (it was a twig shaped like a “Y”). I couldn’t stop its move down. I told my grandfather what had happened, and he wanted to see it, so the next day I took him to the spot! Well, he couldn’t dig for water, and he didn’t have the money to hire someone, but a couple of years later the diggers at the spot got water, a CONTINUAL SOURCE for as long as they lived there. But I have never forgotten my “water witch experience”.

After such a tale you no doubt can’t wait to hear more about just what a water witch is and about dowsing.

Well plenty of folks think it is just a bunch of hocus-pocus but dowsing remains in use literally around the world and has for over five centuries.

To better form your own opinion we’ll start with some terminology:

DOWSING - a technique for searching for underground water by observing the motion of a pointer.

WATER WITCH – this refers to the dowser – the person who is actually doing the dowsing.

DIVINING ROD - a stick or rod used for dowsing. Now think about that for a minute; a

“divining” rod from the word divination. Thus dowsing had been considered a technique of divination used to locate subterranean sources of water through magic or supernatural phenomenon. Centuries ago some religions considered it to be satanic.

The traditional picture people have of dowsing seems to be that of a forked stick (or divining rod) being held with hands up and the dowser (the water witch) walking around the area waiting for the stick to twitch.



Some misconceptions include:

- “it has to be a wooden stick”; in fact dowsers use not only wooden sticks but also metal rods, pendulums and even bent coat hangers.
- “dowsing is used to locate water”; in fact dowsing has been used to locate buried metals or ores, gemstones, oil, gravesites, and many other things including water.

The scientific community tends to pooh-pooh this and attributes it to an “ideomotor phenomenon”. To avoid getting too “deep into the weeds” we’ll avoid getting into that. Suffice it to say an idiomatic phenomenon is an unconscious movement by the body.

But before the reader joins the scientific community, remember our letter writer’s experience as a little girl and two more local instances.

One local instance being your writer here was always a doubter of dowsing as a way to find water, until. . . .

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Francesstown Christmas Market

December 2, 2023
10am-2pm

In the Horse Sheds
rain, snow, or shine!

**Twenty-three vendors in the spirit of a
German Christmas Market**

Olive & Honey
Kringle's Cookies
Lily's Loops
Jem's by Jeri
Cards by Pam
Hey Sugar
Night Owl Rustics

Cooper & Sophie's Kitchen
Queen of Tarts
Choo-Choo's Cheesecakes
She Shed Candle Company
Wild Way Farm & Apiary
Frogton Pond Horse Farm
Theo's Deutsche Küche
Woodworks by Steve
Jim's Jewelry Boxes

Paige Makes That
Carbee Farms
Smiles for Art
Brian Murphy
Michelle Clark
Lisa Federico
Cyrena Arnold

**Come enjoy German fare such as bratwurst,
sauerkraut, mulled cider, hot cocoa, cookies, and more!**



(6)

THE FRANCESTOWN 4H CLUB would like to invite you to a –
HOT CHOCOLATE SOCIAL – COOKIE
PARTY – MOVIE AFTERNOON December
10, 2023 @ 4PM



We want to thank everybody for helping to make our Lemonade Stand at the Farmers Market over the past summer a success!



We invite you to come and watch the original "White Christmas" with Bing Crosby, Rosemary Clooney and Danny Kaye with us at the Frankestown Town Hall.

We are providing hot chocolate and cookies to enjoy along with the movie. There will also be a selection of teas as well as popcorn to enjoy during the show.

It is a cookie party and we would love it if you could bring some cookies to contribute to the table.

We hope to see you there!

THE EVENT IS FREE TO ALL AND ALL ARE WELCOME TO ATTEND

CONTINUED FROM PAGE # 4

DOWSING

About 20 years ago, the NH State DOT stepped up and said they were going to rebuild the main street through the Village of Francestown. However, they would need to know where all the water department pipes were in the Village. As the then head of the water company this chore fell to me. Of course we had no plans or other engineering data showing where these pipes were when the system was built years before. We hired a company to come in with their sophisticated electronic equipment, locate and map the system which they did, well almost. For some reason, three service lines could not be found. An old timer suggested to me that I try dowsing for them. Now I mentioned above that I was a firm disbeliever in dowsing. But he insisted I take two metal coat hangers and bend them like this:



So what the heck, we had to find those lines before they got damaged by the digging so I set off with my coat hangers in hand and walked around the general area where we thought the lines were located (I did this one evening in the dark, hoping that nobody would see me). Well, in three areas those coat hangers swung around in my hands and crossed each other. I could not believe it but when we dug down to the water main, sure enough, those three service lines headed off in their respective directions right where those coat hangers had crossed in my hands.

There is nothing else to say here. The readers will have to decide for themselves whether to believe the scientists who say it is hocus-pocus or to ponder the stories of the lady in California and that of your writer here and that of the other lady in this area. I don't intend to try and find water somewhere else but will just let the matter rest. I'm not saying dowsing works, nor am I saying it doesn't: to me it's just eerie.

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THE NOVEMBER WHAT'Z IT

Were you able to identify this:



This was the British answer to shaving when traveling. The "Rolls Razor" was promoted as the safety razor of its time, it was easy to use, fast and safe. Marketed as "The Whetter", the Rolls slogan was "The razor that is stropped and honed in its case", and so it was. Sold in a metal case with two detachable lids; one lid carried a whet stone and the other a leather strop. With a lid removed, sliding the handle back and forth would either push the blade against the stone or drag it against the strop. Changing the direction from pushing the blade to pulling it, automatically oscillated the blade.

Ω



PUZZLE SOLUTION

S	P	E	L	L	B	I	N	D	E	R		D	U	B	
E		A		E		D		O		O		E		U	
E	E	R	I	E		E	N	W	R	A	P	P	E	D	
D		M		C		A		S		D		U		D	
S	P	A	G	H	E	T	T	I		W	I	T	C	H	
M		R				E		N		O		Y		A	
A	W	K	W	A	R	D		G	U	R	U				
N		S		P						K		D		H	
			E	P	I	C		T	E	S	T	I	F	Y	
S		S		A		O		A				V		D	
W	A	T	E	R		N	U	L	L	I	F	I	E	R	
I	R		A		Q		L		R		N		A		
P	O	I	N	T	D	U	T	Y		I	D	I	O	T	
E		N		U		E		H		S		N		E	
D	I	G			S	A	R	C	O	P	H	A	G	U	S

CONTINUED FROM PAGE # 7

DOWSING

This has become an article that has taken on a life of its own. Once I related the two tales above I considered this done until someone here in town I mentioned the article and said "I'm a dowser". So I asked her to write up the story if she would and that is what follows. One more thing for you to consider when forming an opinion one way or the other as to whether dowsing is hocus-pocus or fact. This tale is sent to us by a local resident recalling an incident years ago when she was trying to manage her babies when her well went dry.

"With my well dry and babies disposables unheard of, it was imperative that I quickly have another way to wash my babies clothes other than the brook which ran through my yard. I called a well digging outfit named _____, and the owner came to my house where we discussed possible sites to dig for water. He was impressed that I was literally on an island with small rivers flowing on two sides of the property and yet the spring had run dry. It was then that he suggested I should try dowsing to find the best vein of water to supply a dug well. Trying not to show my ignorance I asked him silly questions like where would I get the equipment or why didn't his company do the dowsing? He said I had some nice woods and wetlands so we could go out and find just the right piece of equipment. That is when I learned that the best, most efficient piece of equipment is a witch hazel branch forked and somewhat flexible. Fresh cut with the bark still on. (There are dowsers who use other types of dowsing rods, i.e. bent wire hangers, magnetic steel rods, etc.)

To get back to Mr. _____. We did not have far to go before he spotted just the right witch hazel bush and he took out his knife and cut a top branch which had a fork to form the handles. The branch itself was over 2' long; it's called a dowsing rod around here but sometimes called a divining rod elsewhere. The next step was for me to hold the ends of the forked branches in each hand with my palms

upward and the single piece of the rod pointing heavenward. Now walk slowly, he tells me. Well! Two steps and that rod went from pointing heavenward to pointing earthward with a snap and a twist that took me by surprise so I held those ends even tighter, like two runaway dogs on a leash and that made the pull even stronger. Mr. _____ said you have the right negatives and positives – you are a dowser. After that I did dowse a few wells at Mr. _____ request. That was all good neighborly activity and I never knew how successful the dowsing had been. I kept my dowsing rod for a few years but like anything that falls into disuse, it is forgotten or mislaid. But if I ever need one again, those woods and wetlands have been put into conservation use so there should still be some witch hazel available.

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The Heritage Museum staff would like to wish one and all Seasons Greetings.

We have hitched the reindeer to the sleigh and installed an occupant.



We will be open concurrent with the Farmers Christmas Market on December 2nd from 10 AM – 2 PM, and again on December 10 from 4 PM – 6 PM concurrent with the 4H Club Hot Chocolate Social. Parents of small children (under 40 lbs.) can photograph their child sitting in the sleigh next to our driver. Ω