

THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM

Newsletter

Vol. 9, No. 4



April 2023

SUGARING

CONTINUED FROM MARCH ISSUE

SUGARING



In the March issue we left you with your wooden sap bucket and it looked like rain so you needed to cover it.

So before we get too far into the woods here, what's the big deal with a bucket cover? Glad you asked - once the sap bucket was hung from the spile on the tree, sap dripped into the bucket to be collected. Without a lid the bucket would also collect snow and rainwater as well as tree bark and other impurities. Since it can take from 20-40 gallons of sap to make a gallon of maple syrup, the maker wanted to keep everything possible out of the bucket except the sap and to keep rain water from diluting the sap.

Now if you are collecting sap (standing in thigh deep snow trying to lift the full bucket off the tree and get the sap in the gathering tank), the last thing you want to deal with is a stuck bucket cover that you have to juggle in one hand while holding the heavy bucket of sap at the same time.

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THE APRIL WHAT'Z IT -

Memory test here. Do you recall old movies where a person was walking with a handheld lamp. You do? Good! This month's what'z it should be easy for you. Better yet, you can come to the Heritage Museum and see these first hand.



At the museum you will see three different WHAT'Z ITS. While a bit different they belong the same class of items.

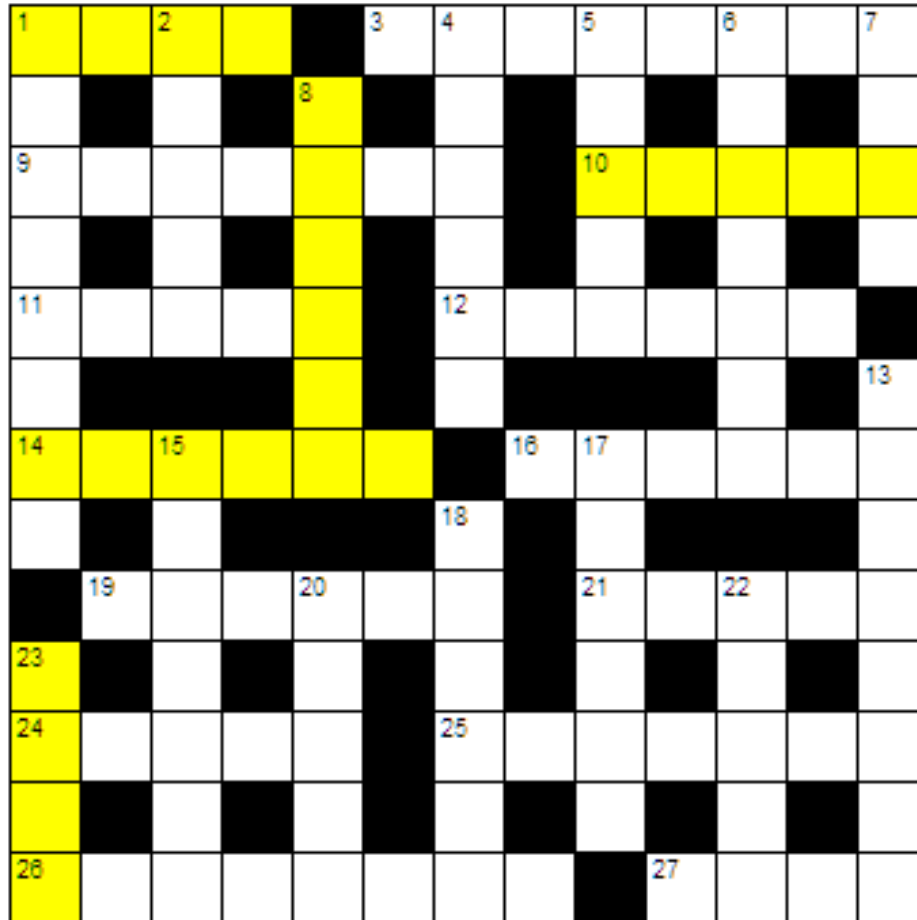


In other words, WHAT'Z IT?

Ω

APRIL THEME CROSSWORD

The **yellow** blocks contain the theme words and all come from the text of this newsletter. Enjoy and Happy Passover or Happy Easter.



ACROSS

1. TOME
3. The man in Belafonte's "Banana Boat" song
9. Bell Ringers
10. WOODEN TAP
11. Wheel spokes, essentially
12. Flash
14. SAP CONTAINER
16. Swollen
19. Novice

21. PROTECTS 14 ACROSS

24. Fall Flower
25. A conscript
26. Acme
27. +

DOWN

1. After shower wear
2. Lubricated
4. To tax or fine
5. Worthless person

6. Mailman's container

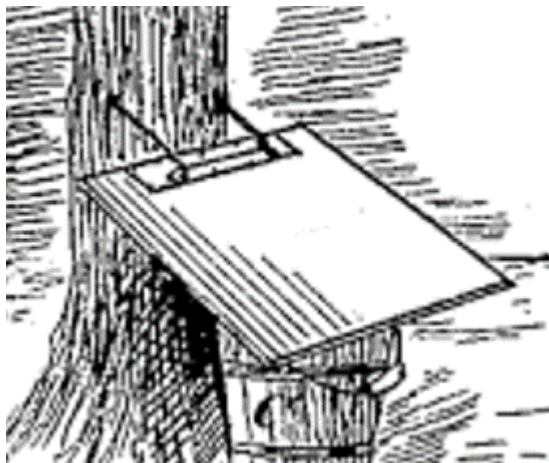
7. Christmas
- 8 FOOD DIRECTIONS
13. No smell
15. Toasted Bread in soup
17. Bare
18. _____ ages of serfs and vassals
20. "M*A*S*H" setting
22. Like some organs
23. LIGHT

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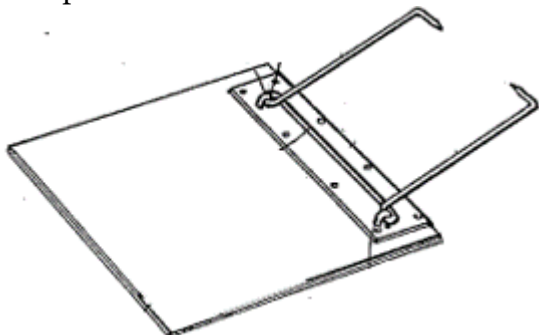
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Titus Stowe of Vermont to your rescue. No doubt Titus had found himself in the same situation enough times that he decided to do something about it. What was needed was a top for the bucket that was easy to set aside while the bucket was emptied.

In 1891 he succeeded. A simple flat wooden cover that was attached to the tree rather than the bucket. Wildly embraced by syrup makers he patented his cover (US Patent 462514; Nov. 3, 1891). The design was simple. . .



a single 2' long 1/8" diameter steel wire bent into a U-shape with diagonally cut sharp ends with spring loop corners. The wire was in turned fastened to the wooden lid in such a way that it could be lifted up out of the way without having to take it off the tree. Once your sap bucket was empty, you hung the bucket on a spiel and folded the wood cover back down over the top of the bucket.



Simple but extremely popular, in one week in 1893 Titus took orders for 8,000 of these bucket covers.

The next photos are of a bucket and cover from the Heritage Museum collection showing what this looks like in use. The top photo shows the bucket with the hood in the down position covering the open top of the bucket. While the second photo shows the cover in the up position where it is out of the way and enables the person collecting the sap to empty the bucket.



With the top in the down position covering the bucket it will shed snow and rain. The wires holding the lid to the tree are visible.



With the top in the up position you can easily remove and empty the bucket.

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If only it was that easy. Much preparation needs to be done to get ready for the warming days of spring when the sap will start to rise in the trees. Before you hang your bucket you first have to visit your local cooper and have them made – remember the buckets were wood back in those days. The cooper will also have to make you a wooden tank in which to gather your sap and take it back to the sugar house for boiling. Once spring arrives you have to trudge through the snow to drill a hole in the tree and drive in your spiel (also wood). What better way to spend the long winter days than to sit in front of the fire and carve the spiles?



Looking closely, the work that went into a single spile is clear. The squared spout with the channel down the middle, the curved groove around the entire spiel to hold the bucket in place, the rounding and tapering of the end that will be driven into the tree and the small hole (not visible) that leads from the channel all the way back through the end that is driven into the tree.

Now the waiting begins for those first few warm days of spring when the sap will begin to flow. Ideally with sunny days to warm the crown of the tree so the sap starts to rise up and a snow pack still around the base of the tree causing the sap to flow back down when

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the sun no longer shines at day's end. Only to repeat the next day (hopefully). Sap flows can be tricky but you are ready. Gathering up your spiles and a drill you set out through the snow to drill the hole in the tree and drive in the spile.



Note the slight downward angle of the drill so the sap can better flow into the spiel. The lad has a hammer with which to drive the spiel into the hole. The bucket will then be hung from the spiel and the top will be fastened to the tree just above.



Then . . .

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FRANCESTOWN COMMUNITY MARKET



With Spring knocking on the door, the folks at the farmers market are happy to announce the start of the 2023 Francestown Community Market Season. The market will officially **start on Friday, May 5th** and will continue to run every Friday 4:00 - 6:30 until October. The closing date of the market is yet to be determined.

We would like to extend a thank you to all the vendors and the Francestown Recreation Commission for making this market possible.

As in the past, The Francestown Heritage Museum will be open Friday concurrent with the market. So come on down.

This year we hope to make available to our visitors recipes from our colonial ancestors time that you can make with food stocks from the community market Much in the same manner as your ancestors had to do it.



So when at the Farmers Market, or better yet before you go to the Farmers Market, stop by the museum and pick up the recipes so you know what to purchase at the market. The recipes will also include the names of the various booths where the needed items could be obtained. Ω

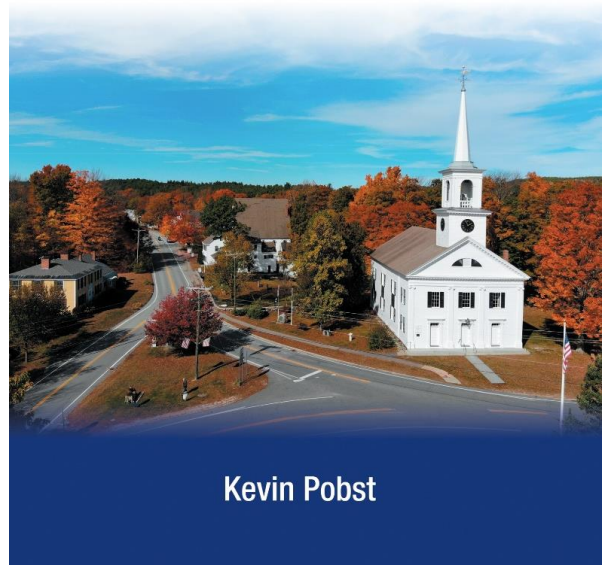
FRANCESTOWN – 50 YEARS OF GROWTH AND CHANGE

Good news the revised 2nd edition is available in hardcover.

Francestown

FIFTY YEARS OF GROWTH AND CHANGE

1970–2020



Kevin Pobst

Eight chapters cover topics ranging from “Projects that define the town” to “Key Organizations” and “Joyful Living. In addition, eight appendices present a plethora of facts and figures on subjects ranging from Budgets to Voting.

If you think you know Francestown or want to know more, you need this book. Available on Amazon or by contacting the author – Kevin Pobst ftown7020@gmail.com. Copies will also available in the Heritage Museum at \$16 for the soft cover and \$20 for the hardcover.

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wait. With luck, in a day or so your bucket will be full of sap. You can then hitch the horse or oxen to a sleigh and put your gathering tank on it.



PUZZLE SOLUTION

1	B	O	O	K		3	T	A	L	L	Y	M	A	N			
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	H		E		C		E			E		L		L			
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	M		O		E					A		D		A			S
26	P		I	N	N	A	C	L	E			27	P	L	U	S	

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You may also want to yoke yourself to a couple of other buckets, empty the tree buckets into them and trudge them back to the gathering tank.



Now you've read this newsletter long enough to know that we would not have gone into all this if you couldn't come to the museum and see all this first hand in our maple exhibit. So we hope to see you this season. Bring your family and friends. Ω

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