

THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM

Newsletter

Vol. 9, No. 7



July 2023

HAPPY 4th

BATHING

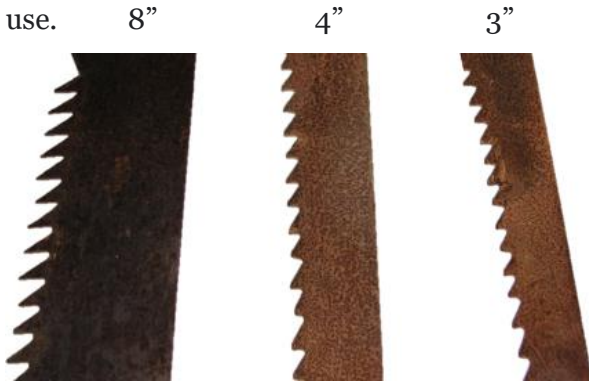
JUNE WHAT'Z IT – REVEALED

An important thing in identifying this was in one of the few clues we offered. “They have to be used in pairs.”



Remember that our ancestors were very thrifty. A habit that gave rise to the saying – “buy it new, wear it out, make it do, or do without”. Well that could not be more evident than with this WHAT'Z IT example.

A testimony to their hard work is shown below in the wear to these saws. On the left is a sawblade that when new was 8” wide. After much use, this steel blade was worn and sharpened down to the 4” wide blade in the center. Further use and sharpening reduce this once 8” blade down to 3”. The fourth picture on the right – well there is no fourth picture because the blade finally broke under the heavy use.



CONTINUED ON PAGE # 6

THE TUB –

In the “Nothing ventured, nothing gained” category, this month’s award for being cheeky goes to yours truly. The Ottone family has purchased a home here in town and is moving from Atlanta, GA to Frankestown, NH. As if the culture shock would not be enough, I sent them an e-mail in Georgia saying that I wanted the bathtub from their new home (the house dates to 1883) for the museum. Lo and behold they wrote back and said fine. As you have guessed by now, this is no ordinary tub. In fact it dates to 1883. In order to demonstrate how this tub fits into the overall scheme of things and will make an interesting exhibit in the museum we’ll take this opportunity to provide a picture of the evolution of bathing.

The first settlers to land in America were rather averse to baths. In fact they were sure that a wet naked body was an invitation for a cold or worse illness. Couple that with taking your scrub brush down to the local river, hanging your clothes on a handy tree branch and jumping in, the prospect of bathing was not very tempting – especially in, say, February.



CONTINUED ON PAGE # 2

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So our ever resourceful ancestor took to generally limiting bathing to once a year. This quite often took place when the weather and the river had warmed up some.

Now this is not to imply that our ancestors were gross. They wiped down their skin daily with clean cloths and changed undergarments almost daily (much to the chagrin of those who had to wash all that laundry). In addition to this wipe down and change of undergarments, our ancestors had the wash basin. Usually in the bedroom you would find a pitcher and a bowl, towel and soap. They would strip to the waist and wash their upper body, redress and repeat, removing their lower clothing and washing – simple, fast and easy. Still our ancestors were extremely hard working. No doubt perspiration and hard farm work made the thought of an occasional total washing up in warmer weather more pleasant.

This, it is said, led to the tradition of brides marrying in June. Having recently had their spring river bath people still smelled pretty good come June. However, some degree of odor may well have again begun setting in which is why brides carried bouquets (as they would hide the body odor). The custom remains today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.



However, an occasional total washing up was still desirable and the cold river baths were not. Soon our ancestors started making small wooden tubs into which they could pour water warmed on the fire and have a more pleasant bath experience. At least some folks could enjoy the experience.



Remember that back then the men had all the rights and privileges. First to get their bath in the fresh, hot water was the man of the house, followed by any other males (such as live-in farm workers) and the boys in the family.



Next came the woman of the house followed by the other girls in the family. Remember, same water as was originally placed in the tub, which by now was probably considerably cooler and dirtier.

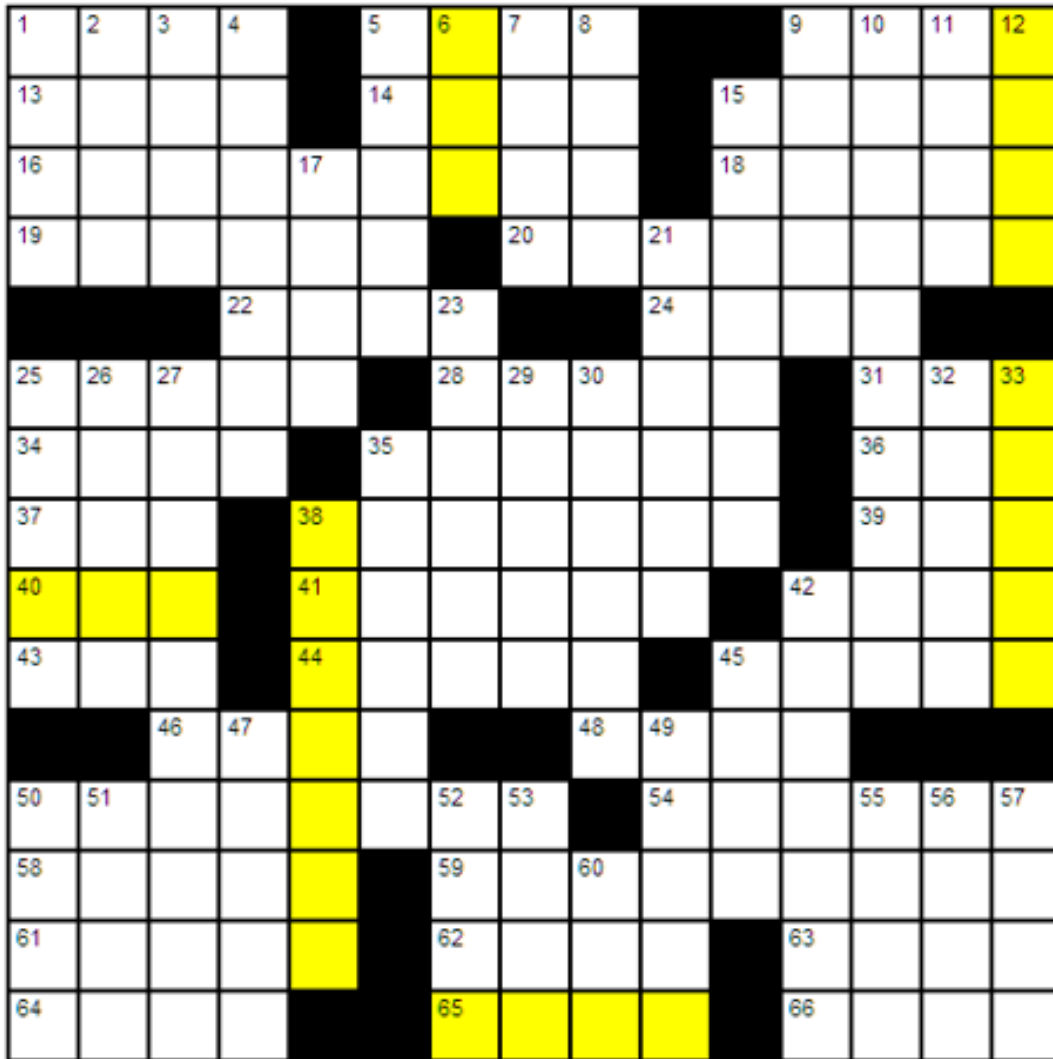


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(3)

JULY THEME CROSSWORD

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



ANSWERS ON PAGE #8

JULY CROSSWORD DEFINITIONS – Highlighted yellow definitions are theme words.

ACROSS

1. After-bath powder
5. Cuff fastener
9. Baby sheep
13. Hip Bone
14. 100 kurus
15. Eyelashes
16. Black lung patient
18. Thermo-nuclear weapon
19. Stretch marks
20. Lawyer
22. A town
24. Heroin
25. Confusion of language
28. Billy Club in India
31. Mineral spring resort
34. Aroma
35. Decoration of arranged pieces
36. Sewn cloth edge
37. Much ___ about nothing
38. Without doubt
39. Peruvian edible tuber (I know unfair, but it's the only word that would fit)
40. **A PLACE TO BATHE**
41. Align or position
42. Bikini parts
43. 007 for one
44. Smallest amount
45. Events venue
46. Ocean movement
48. Type of lily
50. Helpings of food
54. Female friend in Latin
58. Teach behavior through practice
59. A magnet _____ the metal
61. Unfasten in a way
62. Beat badly
63. Response in a roll call
64. Adjective suffix denoting quality
65. **TAKEN INFREQUENTLY BY COLONISTS**
66. Portent

DOWN

1. Nervous twitches
2. "Thanks _ _ _ _"
3. Pinocchio, at times
4. Internal gun barrel diameter
5. More cunning or wily
6. **MUSEUM DONATION MADE OF THIS**
7. Component of urine
8. Flit about
9. Zodiac symbol is scales
10. Waters near the shore
11. Acting using only gestures
12. **CAN GET LOST IN BATH WATER**
15. Chocolate covered ice cream block
17. Type of sledgehammer
21. Casual top
23. "All in the Family" role
25. Marina sight
26. Total
27. Traps for the unwary
29. Long eared braying animals
30. Provoke with insulting remarks
32. Oblong nut
33. **MAN WHO NEEDED A BIG TUB**
35. Cotton curtain cloth
38. **TYPE OF VICTORIAN BATH TUB**
42. Tube directing air to your lung
45. Site of Taj Mahal
47. Certain group of colleges
49. Mother _____
50. Stupefy or daze
51. Sea eagle
52. Clothing
53. Portico
55. Thing or object
56. Beak
57. Yemen port
60. Criticize or frown

CONTINUED FROM PAGE # 2

Once the men, women and children were done it was time for the babies to get their bath. It can only be imagined how dirty and cold the bath water was by then.



It was said you could lose the baby in the murky waters which gave rise to the old saying, “Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water”.

This leads to the logical question, why didn’t they change the water after each use? Well (and that is where you had to go to get more water), you would need several pails of water to fill the tub even half way. Somebody had to go back and forth to the well to get this. Now somebody had to go and fetch in enough wood for the fire to heat all this water. All this requires considerable time fetching, heating and filling the tub. If you were to do this after each bath you could easily spend the entire day. So it didn’t get changed – there were chores to do.

There was also a small matter of logistics. Since everyone was working from sunup to sundown there was not a lot of free time to bathe. Usually a bath took place in the parlor, or kitchen next to the fireplace or stove where it was warm and the water could be warmed nearby. Finally, when the bathing is over you need a couple of people to carry the heavy tub of water outside and dump it (careful about the baby).

Now that everyone has realized we haven’t said a word about our latest museum acquisition, here we go:

Back in the 1880’s a fellow named Amasa Downes built a house on the 2nd NH Turnpike and not far from the general store (which he owned). Amasa was apparently a tall fellow and could not find a tub to accommodate him for a bath. About the same time a company known as Ronald & Company in Syracuse, NY started to make a new type of tub. This metal tub was deep, wide and over 6’ long and surrounded in a tight enclosure. Amasa immediately ordered one for his new home and it was installed in 1883. Once installed another benefit was found. While you had to heat a good deal of water, once filled, the metal tub held the heat. One could slide in and relax. A soaking tub for lack of a better name but frequently referred to as a “tin plunge tub”.



Well apparently Amasa was not the only person happy with his tub as it remained in the house until this year. So for its 140th birthday, the tub was removed and now resides in the Heritage Museum.

CONTINUED ON PAGE # 6

TUBS

Now you know the story behind one of our latest donations. We welcome you to stop by the museum and see this tub for yourself, bearing in mind that we are a museum and not a spa – no bathing is allowed.

One last thing – if in the Victorian era, you walked into a home and spotted this item in the kitchen. . . .



What would you think it was???

An armoire – good guess but not it. A storage cupboard/cabinet – another good guess but not it. Remember this is the Victorian era with their tendency to be a bit over the top on decorative and ornate features.

This blade lived up to the Yankee adage. ¹ They bought it new (the 8” blade), ² They wore it out (the 4” blade). ³ They made it do (the 3” blade). ⁴ They did without (broken and gone).

But remember they were forever thrifty. Just because the steel blade was gone didn't mean the handles were no good. So take them off the broken, worn blade and reuse them. And that is the June WHAT'Z IT. A set of universal saw handles for a two-man saw. No matter how many saw blades you had, you only needed one set of these handles. Ω

We received in our e-mail a small packet of 40 some odd aphorisms. Now we are a town owned Museum and to avoid taking any position or stand we weeded out all those with an overt or implied political and/or poor taste message. We thought you might enjoy it if we occasionally passed one of those remaining along to you.

So for those times when you are just having “one of those days” you might consider

Instead of a sign
that says 'do not disturb'
I need one that says
'already disturbed
proceed with caution'



CONTINUED FROM PAGE # 6

TUBS

If you undid the latch at the top you would see that your days of bathing in a small wooden tub in the kitchen were over.



THE FOLDING BATHTUB!

Made by the Mosely Folding Bath it was billed as being in a handsome cabinet which could be turned into a hot bath at a minute's notice. Inside the copper tank pictured here in the cabinet was a small gas heater.

The tub was advertised in the 1895 Montgomery Ward Catalog (remember them)?

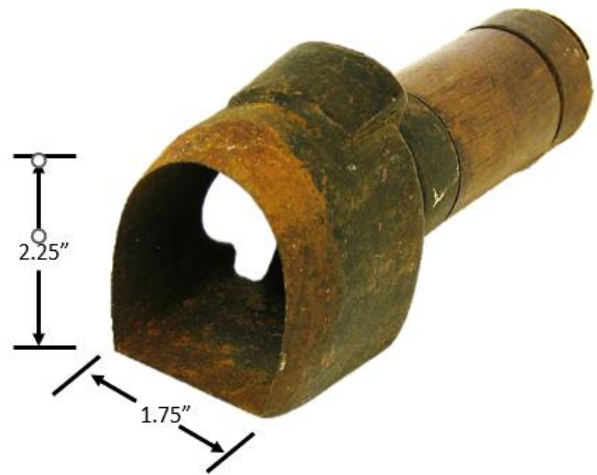
One company went so far as manufacturing one that combined the bath tub with a sofa into which it could be folded when not in use. Unfortunately there were numerous tales of ensuing fires.

But through all this and well into the 1900's, the tin tub in the wood enclosure remained in prevalent use.

At this point we'll end our history of bathing and let you all go and take a shower. But don't forget. If you are in the area of the Heritage Museum, stop by and see the "tin tub". Ω

JULY WHAT'Z IT

Since we are on the topic of WHAT'Z IT. For July we have this little item.



This item was retrieved from the scrap metal pile at the local recycling center. Most folks were sure it was some kind of punch, but if so it was for something soft or was little used as the end that would be struck was in good condition.

It is steel except for the wood in the handle and quite heavy for its size. Dimensions are included in the photos. Can you identify the JULY WHAT'Z IT? Ω

DONATION:

Yet another unique recent donation to the Museum was received. As you may already know, Francestown had quite an apple farming presence back in the day. While most of the apple tree orchards are gone, some of the old apple barns remain. One of which was down at the Elm Farm. Sad to say the farm has been sold and the occupants are relocating. However, in the course of clearing things out an old stencil was located dating back to the days of the apple orchards in town. This stencil was used to paint the proud owners name and product information on the head of the wooded casks used to ship the apples to market.



PUZZLE SOLUTION

N	E	M	O		H	T	A	B		S	S	E	N
E	R	E	H		U	O	R		G		P	E	U
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A	C	A	R		N	S	G		I		R	V	S
	O	G	E		S		E		D		I	T	S
A	N	E	A		R	S	A		L		E	P	S
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JULY 4TH CELEBRATION
FRIENDS, FAMILIES
and
FIREWORKS

A supplemental insert is included in this newsletter. Sponsored by the Francestown Recreation Commission, there appears to be something for everyone.

- For the gourmet there is a hot dog eating contest, apple pie judging, and all types of food.
- For the athletically inclined there is a Pickleball tournament, home run derby as well as a skate and bike demonstration.
- Even something for pets with a Patriotic Pet Parade.
- Kids games and a dance at the Town Hall
- And of course FIREWORKS

THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

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