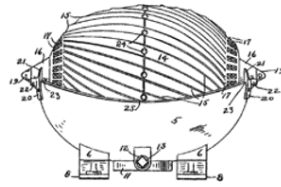


THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM

Newsletter

Vol. 10, No. 3



HOG OILERS

March 2024

THE HOG OILER

We discussed some superstitions last month and their bearing on concealment shoes. It comes into play again this month to a lesser degree but is still relevant to this month's topic of Hog Oilers. In this case it is a superstition of a sort based on lack of accurate information. While our ancestors were certainly hard-working folks, the overall lack of sophisticated and in-depth knowledge of medicine put people at a disadvantage – much to the delight of snake oil salesmen and traveling medicine shows.

So how are you feeling today? What's that, you say you feel a bit queasy, in fact you feel downright ill. You think it must have something to do with the big roast pork dinner you had. Well haven't you heard that there has been an outbreak of lice in pigs? Why just the other day, a traveling medicine man who was in town was saying that it is this outbreak of lice in pigs that is causing people to get salmonella.



PIG LOUSE

CONTINUED ON PAGE # 4

MARCH WHAT'Z IT

We just couldn't let winter go without one more bit of Yankee ingenuity. Yes, you are correct – it is a sled. However, can you name this type of sled and who it was made for and used by??



Let us know what you think.

THE FEBRUARY WHAT'Z IT REVEALED

Elly Miles

The February What'z It is a drop spindle. These spindles have a long history stretching back to the Stone Age and are still popular with handcrafters today. Usually made of wood they are used for twisting fibers from plants or fleece into spun strands for weaving.

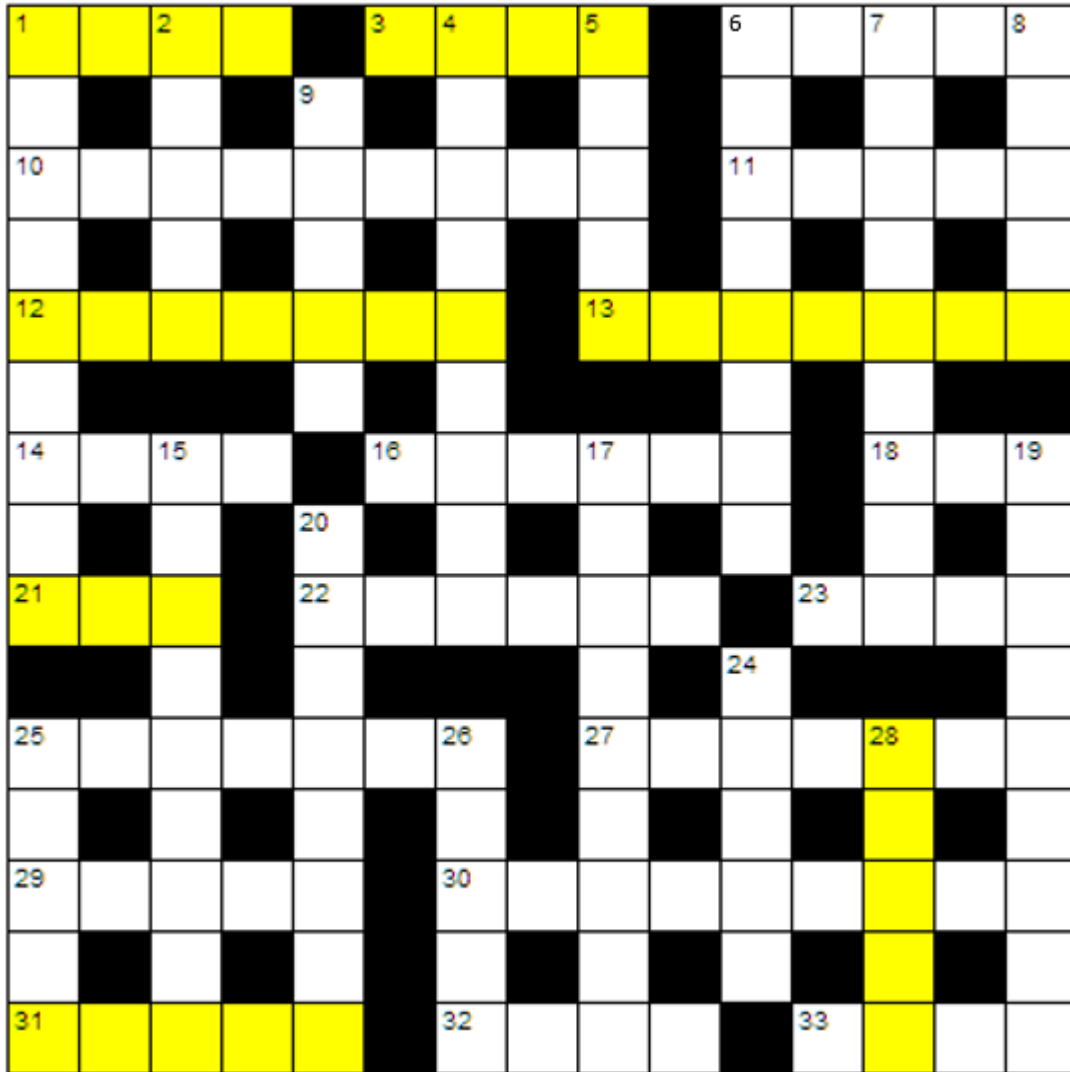
The drop spindle is a straight hand spindle with either a bottom-whorl (disc) or a top-whorl, such as you see here, attached for weight.



CONTINUED ON PAGE # 6

MARCH THEME CROSSWORD

The **yellow** blocks contain the theme words and all come from the text of this newsletter. Enjoy and Happy St. Patrick's Day.



ANSWERS ON PAGE #5

(3)

CLUES IN YELLOW ARE THE THEME WORDS

ACROSS

1. THE MARCH WHAT'S IT
3. INFESTED HOGS IN 1800s
6. Contraption
10. Sour apple
11. Jewish religious leader
12. CAUSE OF SWINE FEVER
13. TOOL USED TO TWIST FIBER INTO
YARN OR THREAD
14. Units of electrical resistance
16. Poor urban areas
18. Scottish headwear
21. DOMESTIC SWINE IN THIS
NEWSLETTER
22. Clear a drain, e.g.
23. Crossword component
25. Seasoning filled beef intestine
27. Deodorant type
29. Dared, archaic
30. Asian peninsula
31. USED TO KILL LICE ON HOGS
32. Christian Science founder
35. Formally surrender

DOWN

1. THE MARCH WHAT'S IT
2. A muse
4. Charges public officials with misconduct
5. Levels off
6. Outpost group
7. Copy editor
8. State one's opinion
9. Dromedary
15. Authoritative
17. Ambidextrous
19. Time of one's life
20. Pushy or showy sales person
24. Building block
25. Condensing form of address
26. Ill-will
28. FEVER IS A VIRAL DISEASE OF PIGS



MARCH 2024

Who will usher the
month in and who will
usher the month out?



CONTINUED FROM PAGE # 1

HOG OILERS (cont.) –

Fast forward to today and this Newsletter article. There was in fact an infestation of lice on pigs back in the late 1800s and early 1900s. As late as 1923, 10% of the pigs in the US died from hog fever caused by the lice. So, in the interest of a factual article here, I called my local GP and asked her, “can lice on pigs cause salmonella in humans”? A short pause followed after which she opined that she never thought she would ever be having a conversation such as this with a patient. However she did confirm that it is not possible for lice on a pig to cause salmonella in a human.

So what is this about? It's about a combination of misinformation and superstition that was not uncommon in our history. We in our “wisdom” can say that would be silly. But, if you lived around the late 1800s this would seem a perfectly good explanation. This belief was furthered by the traveling medicine man trying to hawk his wares. You also quite likely knew a local farmer who raised pigs and that he was having trouble with lice. This was a serious concern for the hog farmers for while these lice seemingly did not cause salmonella in people, they did transmit hog fever among the pigs.

Solution: The Hog Oiler.

It was known that one way to prevent hog louse (lice on pigs) was to oil the pigs skin as this suffocated the lice. Now I'm not sure just how many of our readers have had the thrill of soaking a rag in old motor oil or some other similar oil, and then going out and wiping down a pig with it. Apparently it was not a pleasant task. It was not long before a machine was invented to take over this chore. In fact, the U.S. Patent Office issued the first patent for a hog oiler in 1902.



One popular model of hog oiler is shown here.

The machine was simple in its design. Hogs seeking relief from their lice would rub up against the serrated wheels causing the wheel to rotate and dispense oil onto their bodies as depicted in this ad.



Nor was this the only type/style of Hog Oiler available. By 1923 there were some 157 patents issued for different types of hog oilers.



Vertical model – no doubt for tall pigs

Horizontal model – perfect for piglets



CONTINUED FROM PAGE # 4

HOG OILERS (cont.) –

As modern medicine advanced, hog or swine fever was soon identified as being hog cholera. In 1928 a serum was developed that would prevent hogs from getting swine fever. The pandemic of hog lice and cholera soon declined and the age of the hog oiler was drawing to a close. Incidentally, it was also determined that there was no way the bites from lice could be linked to salmonella.

Pigs no doubt appreciated no longer having their coats caked in oil. Now I'm not saying, but . . . could this era have seen the start of the "greased pig" contests at local fairs???

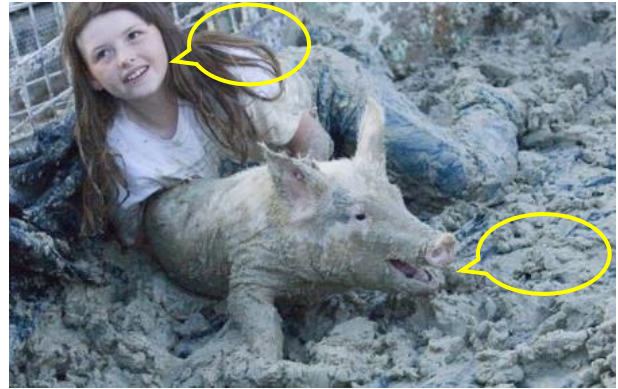


Perhaps the next Francestown Labor Day celebration will see the reintroduction of a greased pig contest. That way the participants of the mud volleyball tournament will have to clean up not only themselves but their kids also.

The sad fact is, the Heritage Museum has no hog oiler for you to see first-hand. However, several owners of old farms in the area have been asked to look around their barns and storage buildings and see if they can come up with one and donate it to the museum – stay tuned. Ω

TIRED OF WINTER YET?

This year's farmers community market will open May, 5th at the common horse stalls.

CAPTION THIS

We ran across this photo when searching for a greased pig image. What do you think the young lady and pig have to say about this? Submit your answer and our renowned panel of judges will choose a winner. The winner will receive one of the museum's life membership cards and one of our legendary rock candy lollipops. Ω

PUZZLE SOLUTION

1	S	2	L	3	E	4	D	5	L	6	I	7	C	8	E	9	G	10	I	11	S	12	M	13	O
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10	C	R	A	B	A	P	P	L	E	11	R	A	B	B	I										
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I	T	S																							
28	D	U	R	S	T	30	I	N	D	O	C	H	I	N	A										
D	A	E																							
31	O	I	L	E	R	32	E	D	D	Y	33	C	E	D	E										

THINK SPRING



CONTINUED FROM PAGE # 1

FEBRUARY WHAT'Z IT REVEALED cont..

If dropped spinning from a standing position a longer yarn length can be spun before stopping to wind the yarn around the spindle length into a ball known as a cop. ↓



Before spinning, the fleece is washed, brushed and picked free of twigs, straw, bugs, etc.

In colonial times this pre-spun fiber was often stored on a distaff or it could be wrapped around the lower arm or suspended from the wrist by a bracelet.

**FLEECE ON DISTAFF**

To start spinning, a short leader yarn or string is attached to the top of the spindle. 5" or 6" of fiber is pulled out and securely fastened to the leader string.



While pinching the spot where the leader joins the fleece, the person spinning rolls the drop spindle counter-clockwise against a nearby surface, then releases the pinch and lets the spindle unwind which makes a twist creating the yarn.

This process is repeated, wrapping the spun yarn around the spindle, until the desired amount of yarn is obtained.

Creating stronger, multi-ply yarn can also be done with a drop spindle. Two or more single strands of yarn are intertwined together. The twist in the single strands combined with the spindle's weight makes the spindle turn in the opposite direction from the turn for the single twist and plies the two singles together. Ω

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