

THE FRANCESTOWN HERITAGE MUSEUM

Newsletter

Vol. 10, No. 4



QUILL

April 2024

A NIBBER

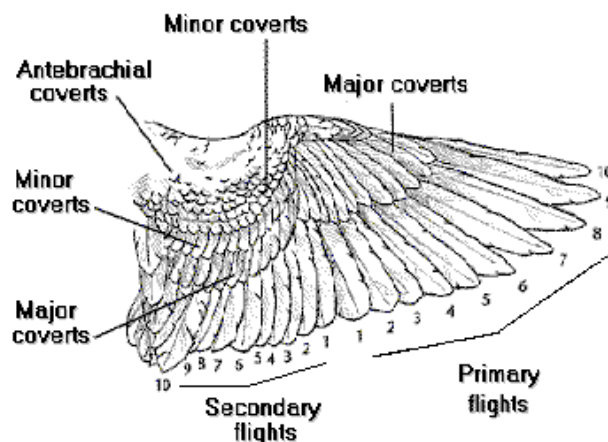
No doubt, at some point your trusty BIC ran out of ink and you had to trudge off to the store to replace same. Now if this were still colonial times you could have saved yourself the trip. Number one they didn't have ballpoint pens. Number two you could have made your own.

How would you do that? Glad you asked. First take a healthy walk down to the local pond (or in these days the golf course) and look for some geese. What you want is one of their feathers. Now if you are agile enough you can catch a goose and pick out a really long, strong feather and remove it from the goose.



Careful now, geese don't take kindly to this.

What you want is a primary flight feather. One of the first five feathers is best.



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CONCEALMENT SHOES REVISITED –

You may recall that the Heritage Museum February Newsletter had an article on concealment shoes, where they are found, why they were put there and other details. That article ended with the not so thinly disguised plea that the Museum did not have a concealment shoe exhibit and if anyone had same, to please consider donating it to the museum.

Well, thanks to the generosity of the Edward and Ashley Hardwick family, the Museum now has a concealment shoe, plus



During some home renovations they found it necessary to open up a staircase wall and behind that wall was the shoe. Not only the shoe but also other children's items. The house dates to the 1840s which is a time when secreting children's shoes inside buildings was common. So it fits the definition of a concealment shoe - "the odd shoe in a seemingly odd place in your home or other building".

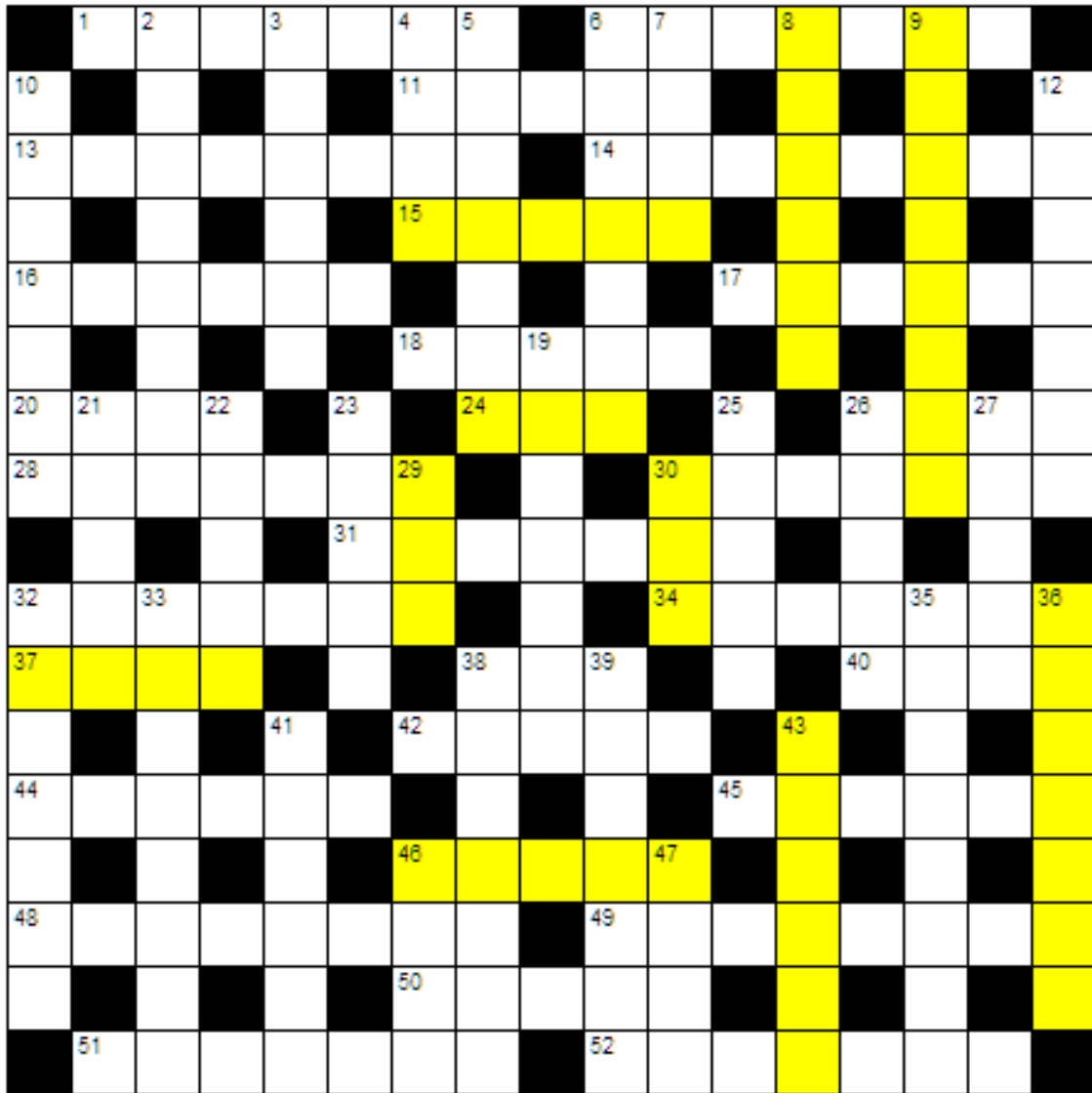
Often found within walls, around door lintels and window sill casings, behind wainscoting, beneath floor boards, in stairways and in chimney breasts, the location also fits the definition of concealment shoes.

Folks believed that hiding a shoe would protect them from evil. This it did because a well-worn

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APRIL THEME CROSSWORD

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



April Crossword Clues

ACROSS

1. Sleeping attire
6. Bashfulness
11. Strong meat flavor or smell
13. Only a slight chance of winning
14. Get close to
15. RELUCTANT SUPPLIER OF QUILLS
16. Sweater material
17. Cloth produced by weaving or knitting
18. Dense
20. Parts of a play
24. WRITING FLUID
26. Super hero need
28. Thorough examination
30. Particle travel faster than light
31. Bring up
32. Election loser
34. Misrepresent
37. THIS ONE MADE FOR HUNTERS & TRAPPERS
38. They ___ well at the diner
40. Cogitate
42. Part of a stair
44. Counting frame with beads
45. Fur or wool stole
46. PART OF QUILL BELOW FEATHERS
48. Defined standards
49. Berate
50. 1933 Physics Nobelist
51. Moderately sweet champagne
52. Most impoverished

DOWN

2. Renounce or reject
3. Soak up
4. All excited
5. Smallest unit of Bitcoin
6. Needing Dramamine
7. Intense or extreme publicity
8. THIS MAINE TOWN MAKES SLEDS
9. CONCEALMENT SHOE FOUND HERE
10. Annual reference book
12. Increase the density
19. Administer oath of office
21. Recipe direction
22. Small whitefish
23. Some of these plants are poisonous
25. Boring and unoriginal
26. Gorge
27. Shower scrubs
29. QUILL CAN BE USED FOR THIS
30. CHILD'S TOY
32. Sideways
33. Save for a particular purpose
35. Frontier bases
36. PART OF A BIRD'S WING
38. Antiquated
39. Cold weather protector
41. Arm bones
43. TOOL TO PREPARE FEATHER AS A QUILL PEN
46. Choose a _____
47. _____ Bell

CONTINUED FROM PAGE # 1

Once you have obtained the goose feather it is fresh and full of goose juice so you have to let it cure. There are a number of involved ways to do this involving sand and heat, but just let it sit – it will dry.

Oh, and did I mention that if you are right handed the feather should be from the left wing? This is so after the feather is made into a quill pen, when you hold the feather it will naturally curve away and over the back of your hand and not be in your sight line. Assuming you are righthanded, you did take the feather from the left wing, didn't you?

Now you are ready to make a quill ink pen from your feather.

1. Use a knife to scrape the ribbing off the bottom of the shaft.



2. Strip enough feathers off the bottom of the shaft to make room for your hand when holding it as a pen. Then you can sand it smooth.

3. Use a knife to cut a primary angle into the bottom of the feather.



4. The quick within the quill must be removed. It can be pulled out with the point of a sharp knife.

5. Now the difficult part - with a sharp knife shape the end of the quill into a pen point.



6. Cut a slit in the quill so ink can flow down the barrel of the quill shaft to the point.

7. Lastly – make a final cut with a knife to make a point (nib) with the very tip squared.



Congratulations! You have made a quill ink pen from a feather. But, no doubt you are thinking there has got to be a better way (especially having to deal with the goose). Our ancestors were hard working but they were also adept at creating ways to make life easier. Which brings us to the title of this article THE NIBBER. So what is a nibber and what does it have to do with needing a pen? The answer to the first part of the question, this is a nibber.



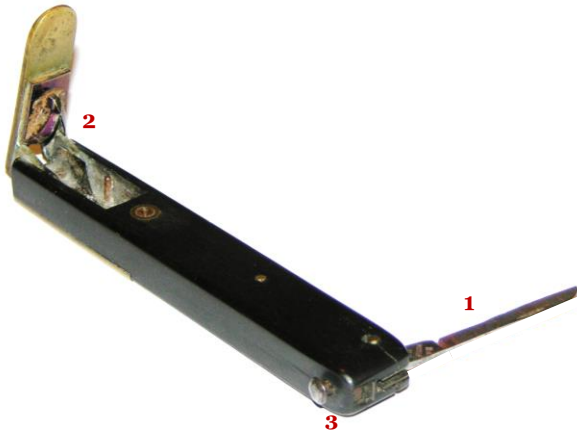
A NIBBER TOOL

About the size of a pocket knife, it could make a quill pen with just a few clips and could also sharpen a quill pen on which the point had become dull.

About the size of a pocket knife, how could it do this?

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Opened it has a small knife¹ that can scrape off the ribbing, cut the taper, and cut the slot. There is also a chamber with tapered blades² in which you insert the feather, push down on the lever and snip, you have the point made. Finally, there is another chamber at the bottom of the tool into which you insert the pointed feather³, push the small button on the side of the tool and snip, the point is squared.

The best part is you could use a goose feather that you just found and picked up from the ground. No dealing directly with that less-than-cooperative goose.

Just to debunk an old wives' tale – it does not have to be a goose feather. The goose feathers work very well; however, the Cadillac of a quill pen was made with a swan feather. The poor man's quill was made with feathers from a crow. It does not seem like a good omen to use a black feathered pen. Can you imagine standing before a judge to be sentenced and see him write on your record with a black feathered pen? Not good, not good at all.

Now that we have taken you through all this, we are happy to say that the Heritage Museum does have a nibber so you can see for yourself what a labor saving tool it was before the days of the fountain or ballpoint pen.

Now go out and stock up on BIC pens.

Ω

THE MARCH WHAT'Z IT



Yes, we established it was a sled. But not just any sled. Would you know it was a sled if we had used the photo below?



This is a folding sled. Originally made for hunters and trappers, it was designed to fold up so that it could be easily carried. If the hunting or trapping was successful and they had game to carry back out of the woods, they had only to unfold the sled and load the game on it. The bounty could then be dragged from the woods on the sled vs. trying to carry the load which could be hundreds of pounds.

This sled was made in Norway, Maine by the Snocraft Manufacturing Company. Norway was known as the snowshoe capital and this company was a leading maker of snowshoes. The sled was a natural extension of that and grew to be a favorite of homeowners and others, especially when heading into the woods in search of that "perfect" Christmas tree. Easy

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CONCEALMENT SHOE, con't.

shoe has in the sole the imprint of the person who has been wearing it. Over time the leather of the inner sole molded to the wearer's foot. This, it was thought, led to the notion that the wearer's spiritual presence resided in the shoe and this acted as a protection against witchcraft. In the case of children's shoes it was a grieving memorial to the loss of the child. As such the location where this shoe was found also fits – in a stairway so as to keep evil spirits from accessing the second floor.

The February article also mentioned that the National Museum of Scotland has an exhibit of concealment shoes and along with the Northampton Museum maintains an international registry of the shoes. We have submitted photos and details of this shoe and location for inclusion in the registry.

The shoe was not the only thing found behind this wall. There was also a child's wooden top.



This top was hand carved from a wooden block. Someone spent a lot of time making this for their child.

Don't forget to add a trip to the Heritage Museum to your 2024 "to do" list where you can see these firsthand along with the numerous other new exhibits we have put on display. Ω

HOW TO KEEP ALL THE COOKIES FOR YOURSELF



THE MARCH WHAT'Z IT, con't.

to carry into the woods when folded on your back, once that perfect tree is found, unfold the sled, load the tree on it and off you go – over the river and through the woods. . . . Ω

PUZZLE SOLUTION

1	P	A	J	A	M	A	S		S	H	Y	N	E	S		
10	A	B	B	G	A	M	E	Y	O	T					12	
13	L	O	N	G	S	H	O	T	A	P	P	R	O	A	C	H
16	M	E	O	G	O	S	E	W	I							
17	A	N	G	O	R	A	S	I	F	A	B	R	I	C		
18	N	A	B	T	H	I	C	K	Y	W						
20	A	C	T	S	S	I	N	K	B	C	A	P	E			
21	C	H	E	C	K	U	P	S	T	A	C	H	Y	O	N	
22	I	R	M	E	N	T	I	O	N	A	U					
23	A	L	S	O	R	A	N	A	P	A	S	S	O	F	F	
24	S	L	E	D	C	A	T	E	L	M	U	S	E			
25	K	T	H	T	R	E	A	D	N	T	A					
26	A	B	A	C	U	S	C	R	T	I	P	P	E	T		
27	N	S	M	S	H	A	F	T	B	O	H					
28	C	R	I	T	E	R	I	A	L	A	M	B	A	S	T	E
29	E	D	R	D	I	R	A	C	E	T	R					
30	D	E	M	I	S	E	C	P	O	O	R	E	S	T		

DON'T YOU HATE IT WHEN PEOPLE ACT ALL INTELLECTUAL AND TALK ABOUT MOZART, WHILE THEY'VE NEVER EVEN SEEN ONE OF HIS PAINTINGS?

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Subscription – there is no subscription cost. For any of the following contact Bill McAuley at: wfm03043@comcast.net

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