

Miscellaneous Information

Black Powder

Ingredients of gunpowder (proportions): saltpeter, 78; charcoal, 12; sulfur, 10.
Diameter of sieve holes for rifle powder: .025 to .035 inches.
Diameter of powder barrels: length, 20.5 inches, diameter of interior at head, 14 inches, middle (bilge), 16 inches; thickness of staves and heads: .5 inch, weight 25 lbs.

Charcoal used for the manufacture of gunpowder was made differently from conventional charcoal. If it was intended for gunpowder, alder, willow and buckthorn was preferred, otherwise beech, oak, maple and ash predominated.

Calendar Time

Calendar reform took place in 1752, prior to that, each town determined the beginning of the new year. Some began March 1st, but most chose March 25th, and called the days from January 1st through March 24 “mongrel time”. This was written as a fraction, for example February 17, 174½, where the upper fraction denotes the year 1741 beginning March 25th, the lower the year, 1742 beginning with January 1st.

Historical Weights and Measures

An inch is sometimes divided into 3 barley corns, or 12 lines; a hair’s breadth is 1/48 of an inch.

Gunter’s chain is 7.92 inches, equal to 1 link; 100 links equals 4 rods, or 22 yards.

Geographical and Nautical Measure: 1° of a great circle of the earth equals 69.77 statute miles.

Cloth Measurement

1 nail equals 2¼ inches, which equals 1/16 of a yard.

1 quarter equals 4 nails

5 quarters equals 1 ell (English)

Shoemaker’s Measurements

Shoemakers use numbers to designate specific sizes. They begin with “Number one”, which is 4½ inches in length, and each succeeding number equals 1/3 of an inch. There are 28 divisions, in two series of numbers; from 1 to 13, and from 1 to 15.

Plasterer’s Formulas

Brown mortar (under the plaster) consists of 1/3 Thompson lime, 2/3 sand, with a small quantity of hair, which consisted of cow’s hair, procured at the nearest tannery. This served to bond the mixture together.

General

23 cubic feet of sand, or 19 cubic feet of earth, or 17 cubic feet of clay equals 1 ton.

18 cubic feet of gravel or earth before digging, make 27 cubic feet when dug.

Laths are 1¼ to 1½ inches wide by 4 feet long, They are set ¼ inch apart. A bundle consists of 100.

A man travels without a load, on level ground, during 8½-hour day at the rate of 3.7 mph, or 31 ¼ per day. He can carry 111 lbs. 11 miles in a day.

In a horse mill, a horse moves at the rate of 3 feet per second. The diameter of the track should not be less than 25 feet.

John Hooker, a member of James Ross' crew who explored Antarctica for 4 years (1839-42), later wrote up botanical finds he had made in the southern portions of the Himalayas. He introduced most varieties of rhododendron to the rest of the world, probably during the 1850s. He also helped organize the smuggling of rubber trees out of Brazil and introduced them into the Malay Archipelago. [Sci. Am., Sept. 1996, p.182.]

Clocks and watches were rare prior to the War of Independence. Sundials and hour glasses were used if at all.

The use of middle names came into use during the eighteenth century.

Food

Preservation of food as we know it began in 1811 in England, where tin cans were first used. Polar exploration, which held avid public interest, used them during the first 1/3 of the 19th century. [Scientific American, Sept. 1996, p. 182.]

Folk Medicine

For Camp Distemper: take the bark of sumac roots that bears berries [red sumac], low mallace *, common plantain and mullein in equal quantity. Boil in milk and water, sweeten with molasses. * I believe what is meant here is one of the mallows (there are about 16). The plant naturally contains aspirin and the root contains about 25% starch and 25% mucilage (which traditionally formed a favorite domestic remedy for colds and sore throats). This description was taken from the 1911 edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica, vol. 17, p. 492.

Any term using the word distemper probably meant a viral infection causing excessive mucus formation, loss of appetite, fever, vomiting and diarrhea.

Lumbering, Notes on

From a letter written to Ted Vail's column in the *Winsted Evening Citizen* in May 1964 we have the following:

Dear Tee Vee: Clingan's mill on Sandy Brook was a water wheel mill situated about 200 feet west of where Charles Newman now lives [today 371 Sandy Brook Road] and the house next west to Newman's was for some years owned by Howard Clingan. [Today 374 Sandy Brook Road.]

I helped to draw logs to that mill when I was 11 or 12 years old and the sawing there used to start as soon as the ice went out in the spring and continued until the logs were all sawed, the ones which had been piled up during the previous winter.

Clingan bought all the cherry logs he could, as well as other hard woods, and the mill also did custom sawing. The cherry and other hard woods were sawed 2 ¼ inches thick and up, and stacked to dry near where Newman's house now is.

In the summer the planks were taken back to the mill to a small woodworking room and split into lengths of about six inches, then they were sold to the Winsted Edge Tool Works on Meadow Street where they were used for chisel handles. I used to deliver them, one or two loads a week, with a one-horse wagon.

The birch mill must have been in Robertsville before 1904. I remember hearing of it, but never saw it and I was pretty well aware of what went on in Robertsville after 1904 or so. John Newth

The Board Foot Unit A board one foot long, one foot wide and one inch thick, but in reality it is equivalent to 144 cubic inches of manufactured lumber in any form. To purchase logs by this measure you have to know about what each log will yield in one-inch boards. For this purpose, a scale or table is used, which gives the contents of logs of various diameters and lengths in board feet. Under this standard the purchaser pays for nothing but the saleable lumber in each log, the inevitable waste in slabs and sawdust costing him nothing. EB, 11th ed., vol. 6, p.658

Water Wheels

Overshot wheels—The water fall must range between 10 – 70 feet, with a water supply between 3 – 25 cubic feet per second.

The efficiency is 0.75. If h. p. is the effective horsepower, H is the available fall, and Q the available water supply per second. $h. p. = 0.75 (GQH/550) = 0.85 QH$

These wheels work poorly in back water, so if the tailrace water level varies, it is better to reduce the diameter of the wheel so that its greatest immersion in flood is not more than one foot.

Undershot wheels When the fall does not exceed 6 feet, the water is guided down a slope of 1 in 10, or a curved race. The efficiency is 0.60. If h. p. is the effective horsepower, H is the available fall and Q the water supply per second, $h.p. = 0.68 QH$.

The diameter of the wheel should not be less than twice the fall, and is more often 4 times the fall. For ordinary cases, the smallest convenient diameter is 14 feet with a straight, or 10 feet with a curved approach channel. The buckets are usually one foot apart.

Encyclopedia Britannica, (1911 ed.) vol. 14, p. 95