

NEW THINGS STRANGE & CURIOUS.

THE OLDEST AMERICAN INN.

West Brookfield, Mass., claims the distinction of having the oldest hotel in the United States. It is a typical colonial tavern, which for nearly a century and a half has never closed its doors to the stranger.

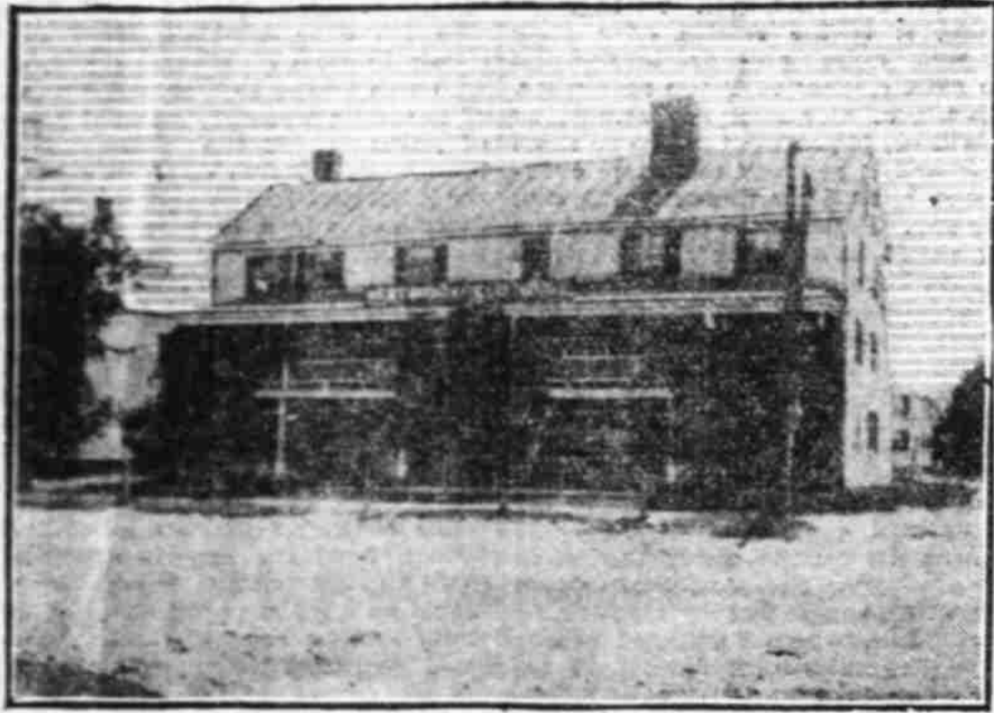
It was built in 1760 by Capt. David Hitchcock, who was its host for 31 years, and during his time he entertained many distinguished guests. Gen. George Washington stopped there October 22, 1780, on his way to Boston, and entered in his diary: "We were fed on the best the town affords." A short time afterward Martha Washington spent the night there.

In 1790 President John Adams drove into town with his coach and four, and Landlord Hitchcock gave him the "best room in the house." Jerome Bonaparte, who was appointed King of Westphalia in 1807, spent the night there with his American bride, Miss Elizabeth Patterson, in 1804, and tradition shows the place where his coach ran into a fence and demolished it.

General Lafayette on his visit to America in 1824 stopped there, and many other notable personages have partaken of its hospitality.

For 134 years the hotel had only three different landlords, an average proprietorship of nearly 33 years apiece.

The Wayside Inn, made immortal by Longfellow, antedates the West Brookfield house, but it never had a continuous career as a hotel.



ENGINE DRIVERS AS OCULISTS.

Most people know of the more apparent dangers to which railway engine drivers and stokers are exposed, but few know that the form of accident to which they are, beyond all others, most subject is injury to the eyes.

Small particles of cinder and metal are constantly getting into the eyes of the drivers and stokers, and sometimes, when the pain is agonizing and difficult signals have to be understood, the danger and inconvenience are not small.

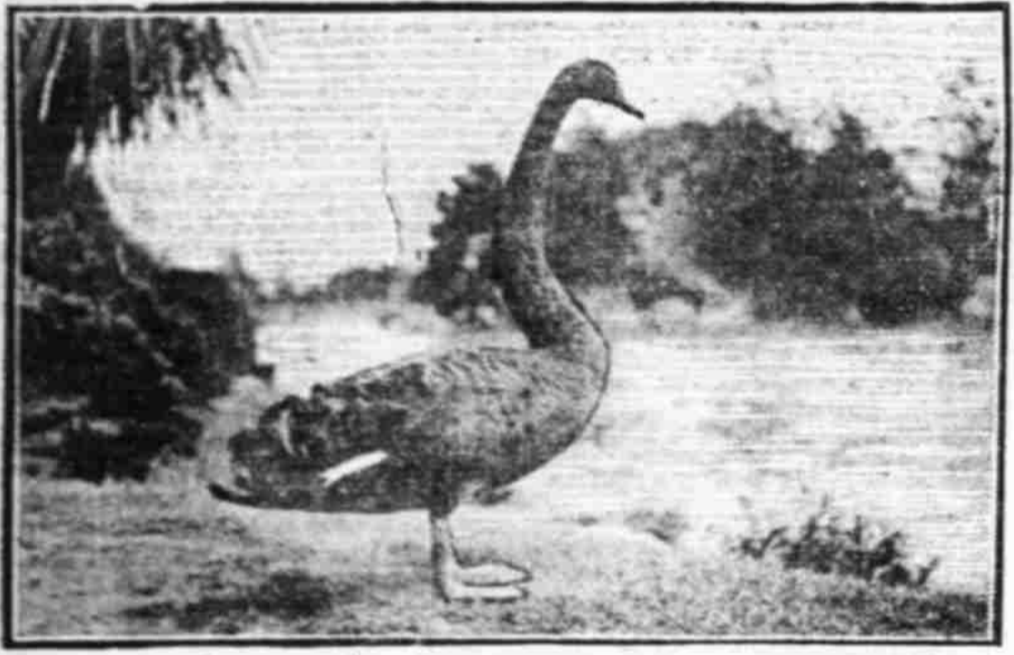
But these men have only one method of giving each other relief—a method that, however unpleasant it may seem to the average reader, is declared by the most eminent

surgeons to be the one practical, feasible plan, and one that shows how devoted these co-workers can be to each other.

And the method in question is this: Directly the stoker, say, gets some stinging particle into his eye the driver will firmly, yet delicately, open the eyelids wide and then lick out the unseen fragment—that is quite capable of producing tragic consequences—with his tongue. The public know little of this heroic remedy, but on every line in the world it is being applied daily.

Surgeons, with all their beautiful instruments, recognize that the way in question is, when the foreign substance is of metal and one that cannot be seen, the only plan.

SAN FRANCISCO'S PET BLACK SWAN.



Most extraordinary is the bird, with its phenomenally long neck, that is San Francisco's pet black swan, Uncle Tom. Its home is Stow Lake, an artificial sheet of water in the Golden Gate Park, the city's delightful recreation ground for world-weary folk.

Uncle Tom and the mandarin ducks and the lake itself comprise the sole benefaction which San Francisco ever received from the

late Collis P. Huntington. Nearly every child on the Pacific Coast is on terms of easy intimacy with Uncle Tom, and Uncle, everything considered, is the best tempered swan, white, black or parti-colored, now in captivity—if the freedom of a large sheet of water and the exclusive suzerainty of a small island may be termed captivity.

Black swans are found only in Australia, and are rare even there.

Turtles Ruin Vines.

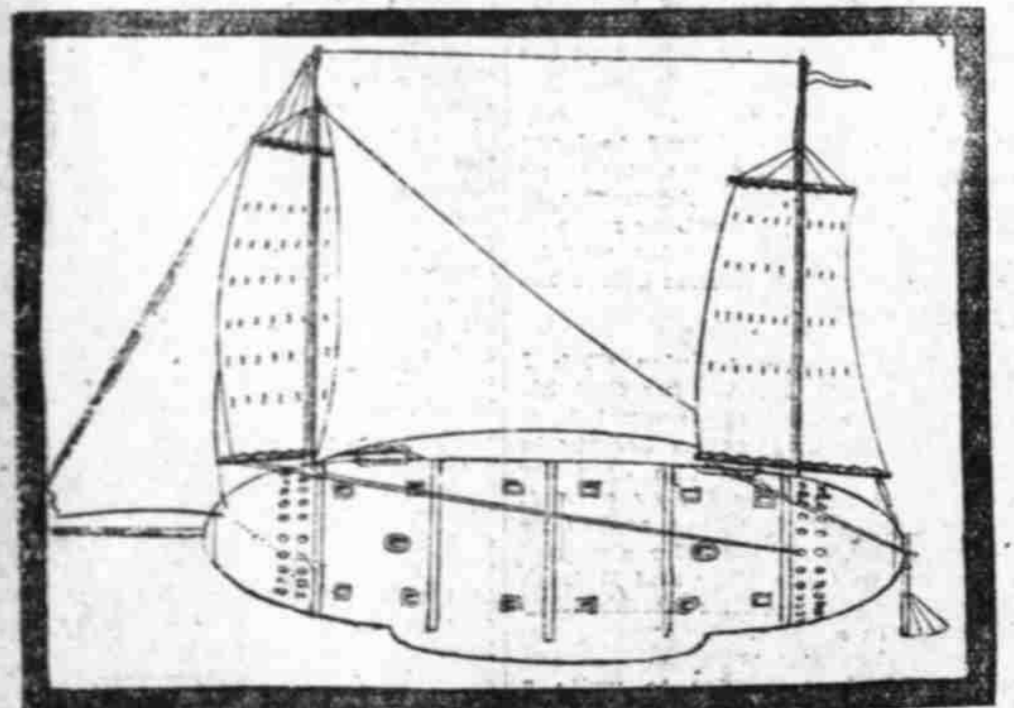
"One of our colonists," says an Algerian paper, "recently noticed that his vines had been gnawed around the roots, and, resolving to ascertain the cause, he went at night into the vineyard and soon heard a noise which was so strange that for a moment he thought it was of supernatural origin."

"Having lighted a lamp, however, he discovered that it was made by an arm of turtles, which was slowly making its way from the river to the vineyard. The mystery was now solved, for the turtles no sooner entered the vineyard than they began to ravage the vines. Summoning some laborers, the owner finally succeeded in getting rid of the turtles, but in order to guard against further assaults he was obliged to erect a wall around the vineyard."

Long Distance Pianist.

In the newspapers of Padua a musician named Banca recently announced that on the following Sunday, at 7 o'clock in the morning, he would begin to play the piano and would continue to play for 40 hours, or until 11 o'clock on Monday evening. During this period he said that he would play 200 pieces of music from memory, and that he would rest for only 20 minutes—10 minutes at the close of the fourteenth hour and another 10 minutes at the close of the twenty-ninth hour. He added that during his long performance he would take no nourishment, except a little water and some medicine of his own concoction, and that a committee of physicians would be present in order to see him accomplish his singular feat.

A NOVEL LIFEBOAT.

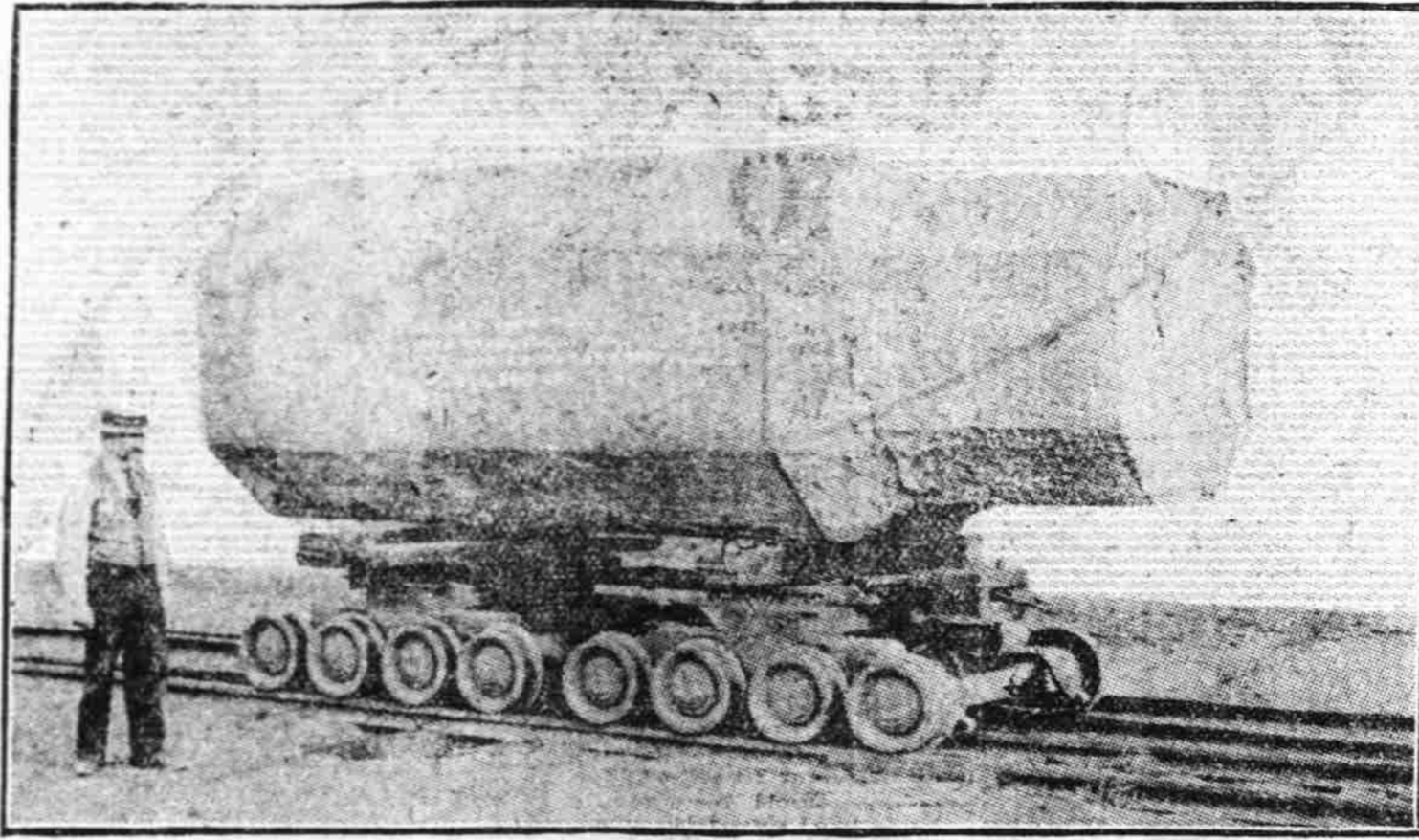


There more an ingenious lifeboat has been invented. It consists of an outer rotatable shell, an inner hanging carriage and a centerboard, which is longitudinally attached to the shell in such a manner that it can be opened or closed, and it is said by those who have examined it to possess some notable advantages over them.

ment between them, and, furthermore, there is a mechanism, by means of which the carriage can be locked to the shell in any desired position with relation to the centerboard when the latter is open.

In a few other respects this boat differs from those now in use, and it is said by those who have examined it to possess some notable advantages over them.

LARGEST INGOT FOR GREAT GUN.



Greatest of its kind is the gigantic steel ingot, weighing 210 tons, from which was made the breech end of the great 10-inch gun which has just been bored and rifled at the Watervliet Arsenal. The ingot was cast for the government at Bethlehem Iron Works, and is the largest piece of solid steel ever cast in the world.

The length of the ingot was 16 feet 7 inches, diameter 6 feet 2 inches. While still in a molten condition in the mold the steel used in manufacturing the breech end of guns is subjected to hydraulic pressure until the ingot has cooled, thus insuring the solidity of the metal. The upper head of the powerful compressor weighs 125 tons, and the lower

one, including the cylinder through which the hydraulic pressure is applied, 135 tons. The finished gun is to weigh 128 tons, and will be 49 feet long. It will fire a projectile weighing 2,350 pounds, at a velocity of 2,000 feet per second. The powder charge will be 1,000 pounds.

SHIP MADE OVERLAND VOYAGE.

During a very heavy storm the United States new lightship Columbia River, No. 39, was driven ashore and cast high up on the sands. The proper place for the vessel to display her warning light to all approaching vessels was a point about eight miles off the mouth of the great Columbia River, on the Oregon and Washington coast.

The lightship was very securely anchored, being held in position by a massive chain fastened to a ponderous "mushroom" anchor. But so fierce was the gale that the chain

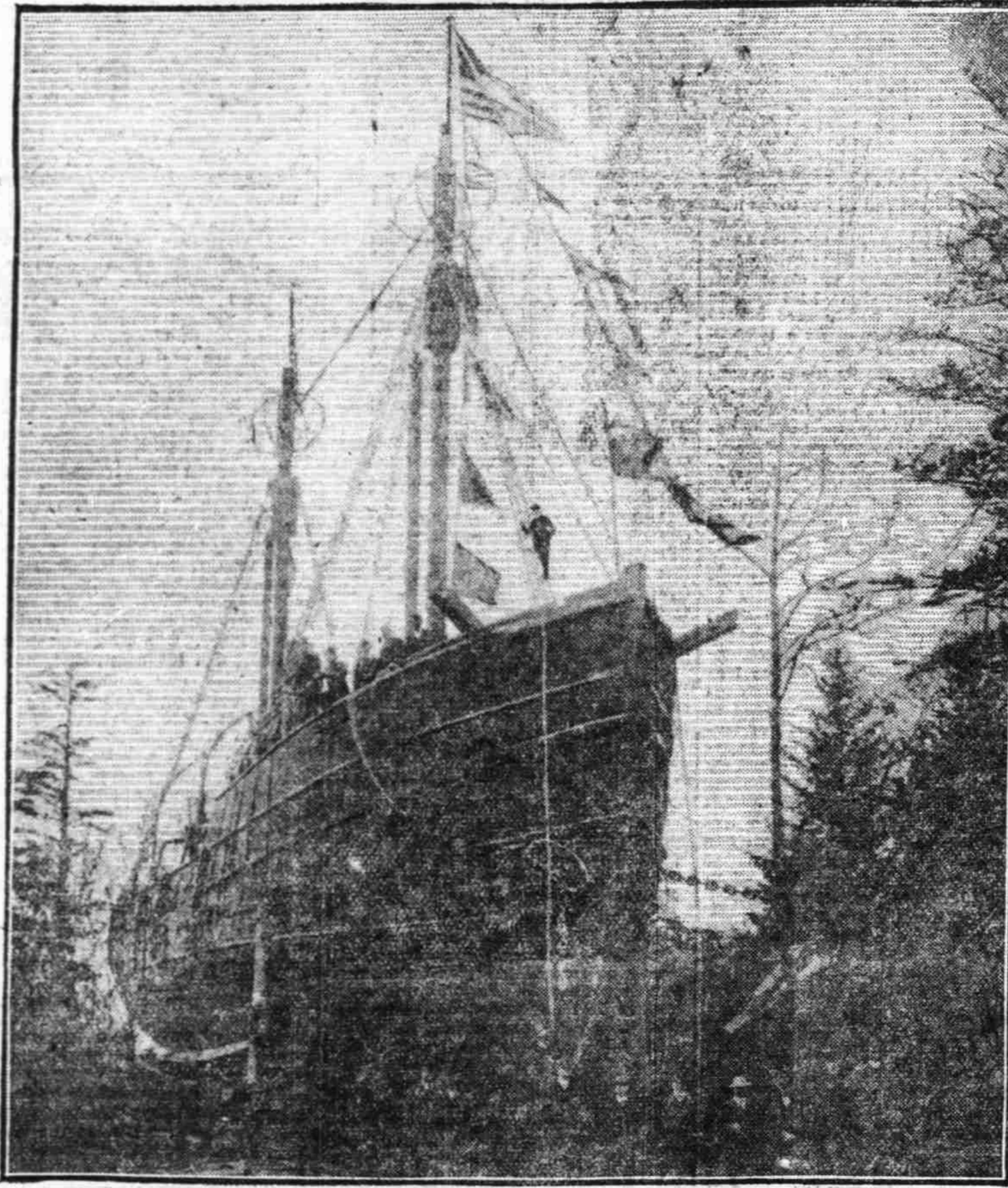
was snapped asunder. The vessel went aground near the mouth of the river, going far up on the treacherous sands at extreme high tide.

Persistent efforts were made to pull the large vessel back into the water. However, all such attempts proved unsuccessful. Finally, it was determined to "navigate" the lightship across the neck of the peninsula—a distance of nearly two miles—and get her into deep water.

This overland voyage was finally accom-

plished, though at much time and expense to the government. By the combined use of steam, horses and powerful tackle the vessel was successfully "navigated" across the land and relaunching in deep water. Necessary repairs were made and the lightship taken back to her proper position and anchored more securely than before.

The land passage of the lightship was regarded as a remarkable achievement. Notwithstanding her very rough experience of the storm and the "voyage," the damages to the vessel were comparatively small.



KEEPING COOL IN NAPLES.

It was unusually warm in Naples a few weeks ago, and in order to keep cool hundreds flocked down to the beautiful bay every morning and not only enjoyed a bath, but also took their meals, mainly composed

of fruit and light wine, as they floated or stood in the water.

The scene is familiar to all Neapolitans. Indeed, on any warm day parties of friends

may still be seen enjoying themselves in this novel and sensible fashion.

One per cent. of the population of India profess the Christian religion.



AMERICAN FORT ON BRITISH SOIL.

Curious, indeed, is an American fort which was built on British soil. How many can guess what fort it is and where located? The name is Fort Montgomery, and the location is on an island near the foot of Lake Champlain, about half a mile northeast of Rouse's Point, N. Y.

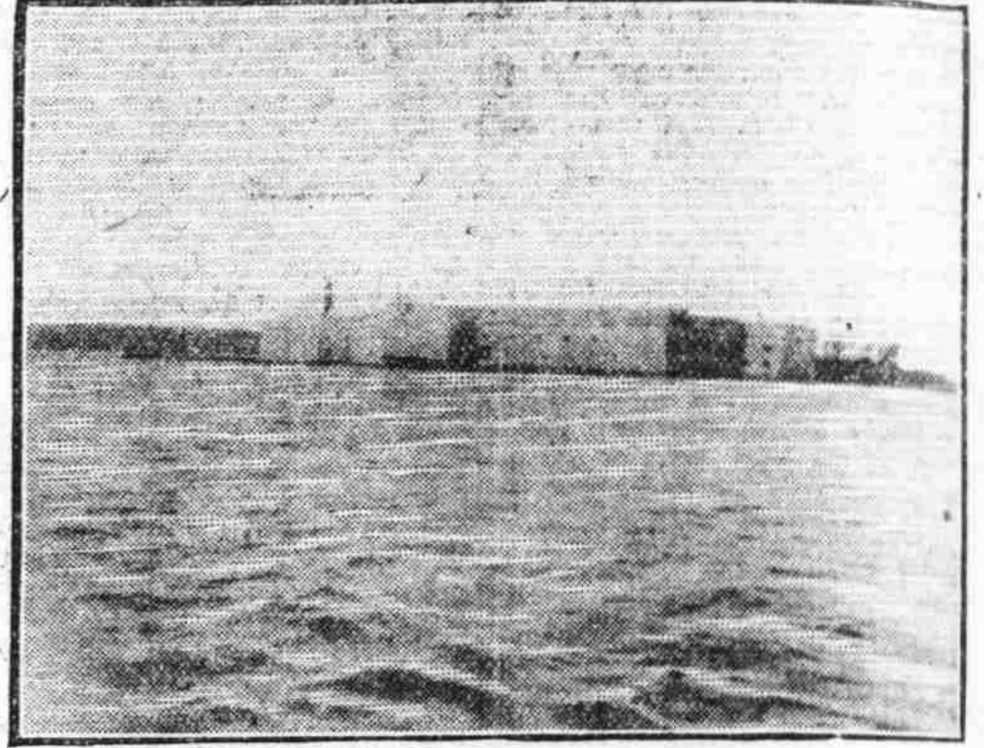
A short time ago, when traveling in that part of the country, I saw this fort and asked the name of it. "Why, that is Fort Blunder," said my informant. "Did you ever hear of it?" I confessed ignorantly, and he explained matters.

It seems that after the War of 1812 the government of the United States became convinced that the entrance to Lake Champlain should be guarded by a fort strong enough to engage any British fleet which might attempt to force an entrance to the lake. And so Fort Montgomery was constructed at a cost of nearly \$500,000. It was an immense fortification for those days, and was arranged for three tiers of guns.

Just about the time it was completed, joint surveyors fixing the line between the United States and Canada came along, and, after doing a good bit of mapping, announced that Fort Montgomery was on Canadian soil. The northern boundary of New York state was the forty-fifth parallel, and this fort was several hundred yards over the line. Work on the fort came to an immediate standstill, and the matter was made the subject of a special treaty.

It was decided that in view of the fact that the United States had no intention of encroaching on Canadian soil, the fort should be left as it was, but to include the fort. That is why the fort is called "Fort Blunder."

It was never armed and has never been occupied by more than one or two men. At present a sergeant of militia is stationed there, and his sole duty is to raise and lower the flag at sunrise and sunset.



Seal Is Reversible.

Mystic and elusive is the seal, right in line with the mysterious character of the organization that bears the monogram of the Society of American Magicians, of New York. It is usually printed in red and white, and is remarkable for the initials "S. A. M." worked together in such a way that they are readable upside down or downside up.

Another curious feature of the seal is a pair of serpents in a circle, with their tails in each other's mouths—the Egyptian sign

His Decoration.

Vanity of the French race occasionally meets with an amusing check. It is related by a Paris journal that a public man had been awarded, for some laudable services, the African order, Labaki-Tapo, by the King of a certain country in the Soudan, which the French had come much in contact with.

The Frenchman was greatly delighted, and immediately went to a member of the Ministry to obtain the necessary permission for him to wear the decoration of this foreign order.

"Do you know what the decoration consists of?" asked the Minister.

"Certainly," the gentleman answered, "it is a beautiful ring of gold, from which is suspended a calumet enameled in red. I demand the authorization to wear it."

"Certainly you can wear it, but it must be worn, in order to be lawful, exactly as the members of the order in Africa wear it."

"And how is that?"

"In the nose."

The newly appointed cavalier of the Labaki-Tapo ran out at the door, and is declared by the journal which tells the story to be "running yet."



of eternity. The watchwords of the organization, which is made up of all the magicians in the country, and holds its meetings on the first Saturday evening of each month at No. 493 Sixth avenue, are "Magic—Unity—Might."

The first letters of the three words are an acoustic spelling "Mum," which is the spirit of the association, the purpose of the club being to prevent the exposure of their secret methods and the betraying of the mechanical means of the magician to arrive at his surprising ends.

Puerto Rico Butter.

This is the way butter is sold on the streets of San Juan, Puerto Rico. It costs a cent a pat, and the boy carries a plate of it on his



Thread In Surgery.

Modern surgery employs dozens of different kinds of thread for sewing up cuts and wounds. Among them are kangaroo tendons, horsehair, silk and very fine silver wire. Many of these threads are intended to hold for a certain number of days, and then naturally break away.

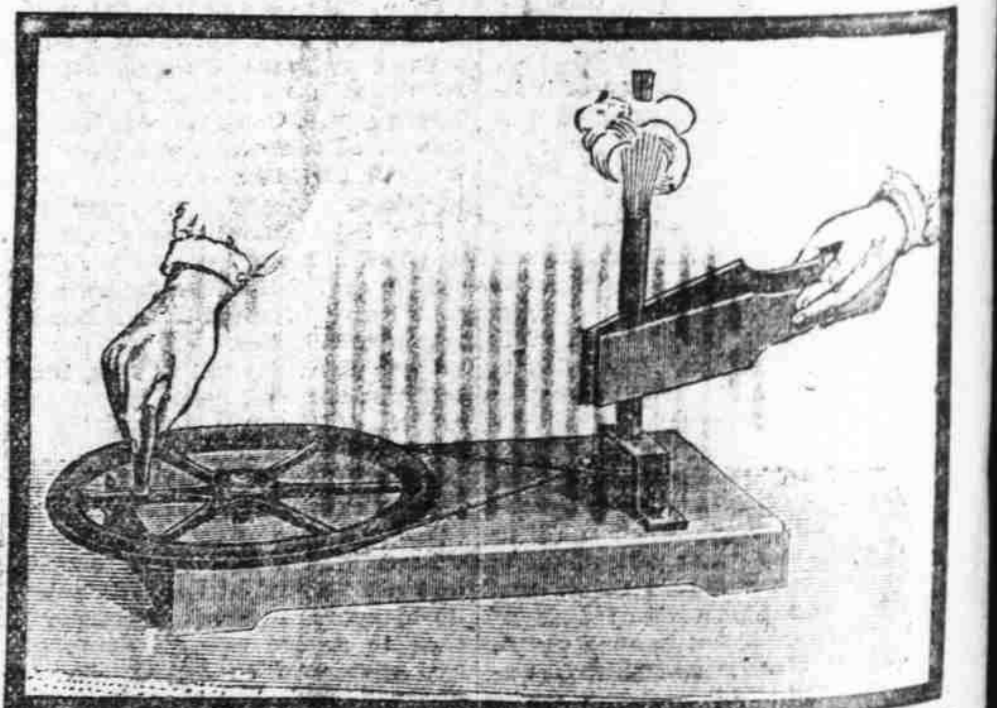
The short, tough tendons taken from the kangaroo, which are used for sewing severe wounds, will hold for about four weeks before they break away. Silk thread will hold for much longer, sometimes six months, while the fine silver wire is practically indestructible.

With the entire outfit a surgeon is able to select a thread that will last as long as the wound takes to heal, and will then disappear completely. To accommodate this assortment of threads special varieties of needles are required.

Besides the needle craned in different segments of a circle, surgeons use needles shaped like spears, javelins and bayonet points. Some are as long as bodkins, with a point like a miniature knife blade. Others have the sharpened end triangular.

head, crying, "Butter of the country!" It is not much like what we know as butter, however, being quite melted as a rule. Women make it by shaking milk about in an earthen jar.

TO COOK WITHOUT FIRE.



It is possible to cook without fire, as a simple experiment clearly proves. To an ordinary rotary mangle, which is operated by a hand wheel, is attached a metal cylinder which is filled with water and which is closed with a plug or cork at the top. Whenever the wheel is moved a smaller wheel, to which the cylinder is fastened and which is connected with the hand wheel by a leather strap, is also turned.

Now, if the rapid rotation of the mangle is checked by pinning a board across the sides of the clamp, and in such a manner that the cylinder when the latter is rotated, the cylinder will also grow warm and eventually boil. As soon as it arrives at this stage steam in the cylinder will force the plug and with great force.