

# HISTORY DETECTIVES



HISTORY NEWSLETTER for YOUNG PEOPLE

SUMMER 20 11

## Portraits & Voices: Shoemaking Skills of Generations

How has shoe making changed in L-A?

Who were the people who made the  
millions of shoes produced in  
Lewiston and Auburn?

**Come and find out at  
our newest exhibit!**



“The Hand  
Sewer” a  
painting by  
Lewiston  
artist  
Ray A.  
Michaud was  
created for the  
exhibit.

### MARK THE DATES FOR SUMMER!

## **Museum L-A Science & History Camp**

**July 18-22**

**10AM-12:00PM**

**“H<sub>2</sub>O to Go”**

**“Bobbin Girl”**

**“A Mile in our Shoes”** (Shoe Exhibit)

**3** days experimenting with water wheels,  
magnets and electricity

**2** days learning about life in the  
textile and shoe industries

**\$6** per day or **\$25** for all 5 days

**Ages 9-13**

**Maximum of 10 participants**

**Contact [jbeal@museumla.org](mailto:jbeal@museumla.org) or call (207) 333-3881**

## PREPARE FOR THE CIVIL WAR SESQUICENTENNIAL

DO YOU KNOW.....

**WHAT new invention allowed the manufacture of thousands more shoes for the Union army?**

**HOW shoes are related to the Battle of Gettysburg?**

**WHAT was the most common style of shoe worn by the wealthier women who lived in Northern cities during the Civil War?**

**(see bottom of page 6 for answers)**

## Shoe Industry Math

(answers on page 3)

After the invention of the McKay stitching machine, the labor cost of making a shoe fell from \$.75 per pair to \$.03 per pair. If the Cushman shoe factory manufactured 1,000 pairs of shoes per day, how much money did they save each day if they began using the McKay stitcher?

- Before the Mc Kay stitcher, the labor cost was \_\_\_\_\_ to produce 1,000 pairs of shoes.
- With the Mc Kay stitcher, the labor cost was \_\_\_\_\_ to produce 1,000 pairs of shoes.
- The difference in labor cost was \_\_\_\_\_
- Can you see why so many new shoe factories grew up in New England after the invention of the McKay stitcher?

### Parts of an Oxford Shoe

Draw lines from the word to the correct part of the shoe : ( find the answers at Museum L-A)

**Tongue Quarter Outsole**

**Heel Welt**



**Insole Eyelet**

**Throat line Toe Cap Vamp**

### Have you been wondering about the winning bedspread designs from last year's contest?

From left, front row - Megan St. Cyr, Mickayla Friel, Hayden Bavis, and Sydney Hill; back row - Museum L-A Educators Diane Williams and Joan Beal. First place winner was Hill of Martel School, who chose Sts. Peter and Paul Basilica as her inspiration. A tie for second place went to Bavis of Montello School, who chose Thorncrag Sanctuary as his theme, and to Friel, of Montello School, who was inspired by the Bates Mill. Third place went to St. Cyr, of Martel School who chose St. Mary's Hospital as her inspiration. You can see the note cards that were made with their creations in the Museum shop.



## **Why were shoe worker unions in the 1880's called "Knights of St. Crispin?"**

St. Crispin and his twin brother St. Crispinian were early Roman saints who were shoe makers.

They are the patron saints of leather workers, tanners and shoe makers.

After the Civil War, the Knights of St. Crispin became one of the largest organized labor groups in the country.

**Visit Museum L-A and find these shoes in our shoe exhibit.  
All these were made in the Lewiston-Auburn shoe shops.**



### **Answers to shoe industry math:**

Before the McKay stitcher, it cost \$750 to produce 1000 pairs of shoes.

With the McKay stitcher it cost \$30 to produce 1000 pairs of shoes.

The difference in labor costs was \$720.

That meant that the manufacturer could make \$720 more in profit.  
Sounds like a good business in the 1880's!

### Shoe Word Search

P	H	T	O	N	G	U	E	T	I	N	S
F	I	M	F	Y	K	Q	J	K	L	T	B
Q	U	A	R	T	E	R	T	K	L	T	B
H	C	F	R	T	I	G	O	D	C	H	W
Z	X	O	F	N	Z	E	E	B	R	O	F
E	O	L	S	T	U	O	C	O	I	L	I
O	Y	O	W	F	W	W	A	P	K	E	M
F	L	N	H	X	V	T	P	C	O	E	O
E	D	Z	O	A	L	D	M	K	U	H	N
M	E	F	M	I	T	T	E	L	E	Y	E
O	V	P	N	J	H	O	E	D	K	F	N
K	K	E	V	K	B	J	Y	X	L	B	A

- |         |             |         |
|---------|-------------|---------|
| EYELET  | THROAT LINE | HEEL    |
| TOE CAP | INSOLE      | TONGUE  |
| OUTSOLE | VAMP        | QUARTER |
| WELT    |             |         |

Words go vertically, horizontally and diagonally, forward and

Can you make up a good slogan that would be in an advertisement for Falcon firefighting boots? Send it or email your idea to [jbeal@museumla.org](mailto:jbeal@museumla.org) and we'll print some in our next History Detectives.

Falcon Performance Footwear in Auburn is famous for making firefighters' boots.

### What was it like to work in the shoe industry in Lewiston and Auburn?

Some quotes from Museum L-A's Oral Histories

#### Roger Nadeau (Falcon Shoe)

"...So we were a young team and very innovative, would try everything and anything. They'd say you can't do this, you can't do that and we would make it work. And that's the way it was. So we were very profitable."



Roger Nadeau with the U.S. flag flown in honor of Lewiston-Auburn's shoeworkers.

#### Jerry Poulin (Acorn Shoe)

"...I could get everything I needed in this community. I could get patterns graded right up the street in walking distance. I could get leathers, findings, all the parts needed to make shoes were right here in this community. It was vertical, it had it all."

#### Jeannine Roy (Falcon Shoe and other earlier companies)

"...Oh, they were busy, oh my God, yes, you could quit your job every week and get into another shoe shop. But not me, I wasn't the type to move. When I had a job, I stick to it. Just like down at Falcon. I went down there in 1970 and I'm still there."

*If you want to hear more about life in the shoe industry, visit Museum L-A website and listen to the oral histories.*

*Go to [www.museumla.org](http://www.museumla.org) and click on the [Exhibits](#) link. You will find the Oral History pages, with many stories to explore*

Turns sidewalks into soft carpets (Melville Shoe Corporation, Lewiston)

## **Experience Museum L-A!**

School groups, Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, Girl Scouts and Brownies have all visited Museum L-A , tried out activities and contributed to the Museum's work.

### **“Weave and Spin” with students, Cub Scouts and Brownies**



### **Girl Scouts and partners at Clover Health Care in Auburn**



### **On April 16 Boy Scouts help make Museum L-A's Mortgage Burning Bonfire a success**



## Voices from L-A's Past

# MEET ARA CUSHMAN

In 1853, Ara Cushman started making shoes by hand in West Minot, ME. Soon he started driving through the state with horse-loads of shoes. He became successful enough that he employed more men to help him, but still did most of the work by hand.

In 1863, he moved to Auburn to take advantage of the new possibilities that the railroad and canals provided. In 1888, his business incorporated and became the Ara Cushman Co. He was one of the first shoe manufacturers to take advantage of all the new, efficient shoe machinery that was being invented, especially the McKay stitcher, which attached the “uppers” to the soles. By 1880, he was employing **1,000** workers who were famous for producing canvas shoes for men, women and children. These were like the first sneakers! All those changes in just 27 years!

In his shoe factories, Ara Cushman organized a profit sharing program for his employees. They got to keep a percentage of the profits each year. His company later became the Cushman-Hollis Co. and the factory was located where Denny's is today, on Court St.

Ara Cushman also gave back to the community. He helped raise the money to build the Universalist Church, and served on the committee that founded Maine General Hospital. He was a supporter of anti-slavery groups and pro-Temperance (against alcohol) groups.

## Answers to Civil War Questions

*The South had far fewer factories and manufactured products than did the North. They had a hard time replacing or obtaining uniforms, weapons, and, of course, shoes. There was a rumor that there was a supply of shoes in Gettysburg. The Confederate army hoped to get its hands on these shoes, as many of them were fighting barefoot. Seeking shoes at Gettysburg was not the main reason for the battle, but it did have some effect on General Heth, who requested permission to take his division and “get those shoes.”*

*The McKay Stitching Machine, which was patented in 1862, made it possible for the Northern factories to use machines to sew the uppers to the soles of shoes, making it possible to produce many more shoes.*

*The side lace up boot (shown here in an original and a reproduction), with a low heel was one of the most popular styles for Northern women who could afford them.*

The word **Sesquicentennial** means that it is the 150th anniversary of an event.



**Education Dept.**

Museum L-A  
35 Canal St.  
Lewiston ME  
04240

**Portraits & Voices:  
Shoemaking Skills  
of Generations**

**Come and find out  
at our newest exhibit!**



Who might have worked here?



Cross section of a shoe. How  
many parts can you identify?

