

Jesse Remington High School Draws Crowds at Deerfield Fair

The Jesse Remington High School Timber Frame Class drew large crowds at this year's Deerfield Fair when they started up their new Band Saw donated by another demonstrator at the Fair. Over the past few years, a mutual admiration and friendship developed between Headmaster, Jeff Philbrick, and owner of Turner Mills, Bill Turner. Last year, Turner promised to donate a portable band saw to the school for Timber Framing. This year, he put his money where his mouth was, and delivered a beautiful brand new trailer model that will cut large trees into 8'X'8 posts, or any other size rough lumber that the Timber Framers would use for their buildings.

On Thursday evening, crowds of 50-120 watched as Mr. Turner taught Mr. Philbrick and student Mark Moran, how to create a 6' X 6' beam from a 12' pine log. Two logs later, the student was creating another beam so that the class would have more work for the demonstration at the Fair. For the following 3 days, the 9 students in the class, measured twice, and cut once. They studied their blue prints, and then drew their marks on the posts and beams. They measured again, checked with the boss, and then began drilling, chiseling, and cutting away tenons and mortises according to their blueprints. They labeled each post and beam and its corresponding piece on the blueprints. When they cleaned up their tent during class time on Monday afternoon, they hauled away 8 posts and beams, 5 useable 7/8" rough boards, and a pile of bark-laden boards that they will likely use for sets for their Victorian Faire later in the month.

This year was the sixth consecutive year that JRHS students have showcased their woodworking talent at the annual Deerfield Fair. This year's building is the Shaker Garden Shed. The students, ages 15-18 and from many surrounding towns, had to learn to educate the crowd, while staying on task, because one mistake would cause the loss of a very expensive piece of lumber. The more experienced students were obviously more comfortable dealing with the public's questions, than were the newer students. But the beauty of that is that this experience will produce experienced students for next year's Fair demonstration.

The Timber Frame project is very unique to JRHS, and is one of the many options available to students under their philosophy of "Project Based Learning." Students commit at least one semester to the project, and some commit several years. Philbrick and his teams have built all kinds of buildings all over the state, as far away as Errol, Alton and Sunapee, and as near as Candia, Deerfield and Chester. Buildings have been as small as the Shaker Shed, and as large as multi story hay barns. Other designs include carriage sheds, garages and horse barns.

Students are involved in the entire building process, including work with the customer, designing the building on CAD, marking and cutting all the timbers, and ultimately raising the frame by team strength or a crane. Students tend to enjoy the thrill of the crane, but the old "barn-raising" push is a life experience not easily forgotten. This year's team of students includes Seniors Mark Moran and Tim Foote, Juniors Larry Davis, Ben Morgan, Julia Gustafson, Joel Whitlock, Sophomore Amanda Lacy, and Freshmen Joe Blais and Michael Davis.

The Deerfield Fair is a special place for these students, in that they get to annually return to one of the jobs that the students before them created – the Sugar House in the museum complex, completed in 2004. This was a landmark accomplishment for that team of students then, and today is enjoyed by thousands of visitors each year as it promotes and educates about the maple industry in NH.

The JRHS Timber Framing demonstration at the Deerfield Faire has also become an annual tradition for many visitors who come by and ask, "What are you building THIS year?" One family is just waiting until their four children, ages 10 months to 7 years old, are able to come to the High School. Retirees are fascinated by the concept of young men and women learning a trade, "like in the good old days". Other builders and Timber Framers stop by to ask questions on how to deal with specific issues they have encountered in their own buildings.