

Antique fire engine finds new home in Jamestown

By Jeff McDonough

The Jamestown Fire Museum has been given a hand-operated fire-fighting apparatus that is estimated to be about 150 years old.

Ken Caswell of the fire museum said the machine was used to pump water to a hose so that the water could be used to extinguish a fire. The pumper, called a "hand tub," was built by Hunneman & Co. in Roxbury, Mass. The date of manufacture was 1840 to 1860, he said.

The antique was donated to Jamestown by the South County Museum because it is in need of restoration. The hand tub is missing its wheels, the red and gold paint is just about worn away and most of the fittings are rusted.

The lettering on the side of the hand tub is not clear, but Caswell believes that it says, "Natik," quite possibly where the pumper last saw active service.

Caswell plans to restore the pumper to a nearly new condition, as he and volunteers did with the 1859 Jeffers hand pumper now housed at the fire museum. Restoration will take several years, he said.

The Hunneman pumper is pulled by 20 people, who then pump the device by hand. The pumping crew is stationed fore and aft.

The restored Jeffers pumper takes 40 people to pull and pump, Caswell said.



The Jamestown Fire Department Memorial Museum recently acquired a pre-civil war "hand tub" from the South County Museum. Built by Hunneman & Co. in Roxbury, Mass., the antique fire engine is slated for restoration to working condition.

Photo by Jim Smith

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