

Harrington or Benton Foundry?

By Carol Woolridge

There's no need to argue the point. Actually, over 160 years ago, when the Foundry was first built, it was the Harrington Foundry. Now it's the Benton Foundry, so both are right.

First, the history of the Harrington Family, actually my family's history. The first immigrant in the Harrington family was Robert Harrington II. He settled in Watertown, Middlesex, Massachusetts, which is where he met his future bride, Susanna George, who was born on 18 Aug 1632 and died 6 Jul 1694 at the age of 61 in Watertown. Robert was born in Southwold, Suffolk, England in 1616, and he also died in Watertown, on 17 May 1707 at the age of 91. It was Robert's son, Charles who was the first-born Harrington in North America.

The next generation of the Harrington family, which consisted of Jesse and Abigail (Richardson) Harrington, were married on 30 Dec 1781. Their journey south went from Massachusetts to Stonington, Connecticut, then on to Rensselaer, New York where their son Jacob was born in 1799. Jesse and Jacob traveled to the Wyoming Valley, where they operated a ferry which carried people across the Susquehanna River and back.

During the brutal Wyoming Valley Massacre, the Harringtons carried women and children down the river on a longboat, helping them to escape their obvious fate at the hands of the Indians. Jesse and Jacob fought in the Wyoming Valley Massacre, where Jesse was mortally wounded in the battle against the Pennamites and Indians.



The Wyoming Valley, from Prospect Rock

This battle was in Tilbury Creek near Plymouth during the Revolutionary War. The Plymouth area is where Jacob met and married Elizabeth Baker. After his father Jesse's death, Jacob traveled to Pine Creek in Huntington Township. In his final move, Jacob traveled on to upper Cole's Creek in northern Columbia County.

Cole's Creek/Sugarloaf is where Jacob bought 500 acres of land in 1836. They were actually a part of the 45,000 square miles that were presented to William Penn in 1681, by Charles II to pay a debt Charles owed Penn's father.

Jacob built his first business on the east side of the road, opposite side of where the Foundry stands today. While he was building and extending this business, his son, Newton was fighting in the Civil War. Jacob started out in the timbering business, manufacturing shingles and selling them until 1841. He sold the property to J. B. Davis in 1866 when he retired, later dying in 1878.

After Newton returned from the war, he worked for a year in the Harveyville Foundry. After his year in Harveyville, he returned to Sugarloaf, in northern Columbia County and built a small iron Foundry on the same side as his father Jacob's sawmill. During this time, Newton met and married Melissa Dildine. Newton's building was actually very small, only 20 by 50 feet. This is where he manufactured sled shoes and the Harrington plow. The picture below is similar to the Harrington plow.



In 1882, a sawmill was built, linking it to the Foundry. The power for this now-combined business, which built sled shoes and Harrington plows, was supplied by a large dam located on J. B. Davis's property.

Herbert T. Harrington, Newton's son, was born on 9 Aug 1858 and died on 27 Dec 1929. He built a larger Foundry on the west side of the road, where the present building stands, altering it several times since the late 1800's. He married Elizabeth Hower, who was born on 16 Dec 1861 and died on 16 Jun 1939.

The Foundry manufactured many items like stone sleds that farmers dragged out to their fields, gathered all the stones from the ground, then dragged them out and dumped them onto stone rows between the fields. The Foundry also made all the manhole covers in Bloomsburg.

Another popular item in those days was buckwheat cakes. The griddles they were cooked on were made locally by, you guessed it, the Harrington Foundry.

Another duty which many men were in charge of in their households was repairing and resoling their family's shoes. A shoe repair machine consisted of an iron stand with various size lasts/lathes to fit different styles and sizes of shoes. First, the man would slip the shoe onto the last/lathe, then nail on the sole.

The Harrington Griddle and the Shoe Repair Lathe and Shoe Stand were both items the Foundry manufactured, and that many families had in their homes.

Herbert T. Harrington lived from 9 Aug 1858 and died 27 Dec 1929. He was a very successful businessman from the late 1800's, extending well into the 1900's. He was a hard worker, but he also took time out of his busy schedule to relax. He enjoyed hunting deer and bear, and also trout fishing. He built a large room in his home to welcome friends and family to square dance, the music for which was usually accompanied by Herbert on his fiddle.

Herbert's sons, Roy, Alfred and Stanley, began working with their father at a very early age. After Herbert died, his sons took over the business. Later, the Foundry made gears for New Holland boilers. The Harrington Foundry was the sole supplier for years, making about 42 a day, with each one weighing about 180 pounds. They also manufactured King Koal stokers, which they sold and installed from Harrisburg to Scranton.

During the peak years of operation, the Foundry employed from 70 to 120 employees. They also added a new concrete building to add brass, aluminum and bronze castings.

The Harringtons owned, operated and maintained the Foundry and its varied divisions for about 100 years. During that time the family invested at least \$250,000 into the business to keep up with the demand for all its products and services. The Harringtons made a very good grade of gray iron which their customers valued. This branch of the Harrington family all lived in an area called Harrington Hollow.

Some of the earlier Harringtons were buried in the Fallowbrook Cemetery, also known as the Davis/Harrington Cemetery. The Harringtons interred there include Jacob and Elizabeth, and Newton and Melissa Harrington. This cemetery is across the road from the present Benton Foundry, it's less than a mile in from Rt. 487, and at the left side of the far end of an open field next to the tree line. There are about 17 fieldstone markers which are blank or unreadable. The private cemetery is still being used for burials and is very well maintained.

Later the Harringtons readied their business to be sold to the Hall family, Alfred J. Hall and Elmer Kime. Alfred and Elmer bought first the bankrupt Hallstead Foundry and through their hard work and devotion, turned it into a very profitable business. They both understood they had to expand the business to take proper care of their customers. They needed another foundry relatively close by which could help their rapidly growing business.

It came to their attention that the Harrington Foundry was not as profitable as it had been but would probably fit their needs. After several meetings, Stanley, Roy and Alfred came to an agreement with the Hall family on 11 Jun 1958, and closed the deal to sell them the Harrington Foundry for \$25,000.

The Harrington brothers continued to work at the foundry, now renamed the Benton Foundry. This made a very smooth transition for the new owners, allowing most work to be transferred to the Benton Foundry over the next few years.

Leadership changes over the years:

Harrington/Benton Foundry Lineage

Newton Harrington	1860
Herbert Harrington	1880
Roy, Alfred, and Stanley Harrington	1910
Alfred J. Hall and Elmer Kime	1958
Fritz and Butch Hall	1975
Fritz, Jeff, and Kimberly Hall	1985- ?