

A CHECKLIST OF TINNERS' TOOL MANUFACTURERS

Compiled by Frank G. White

Represented on the following list are most of the tanners' toolmakers who were active in New England in the 19th century. Since the industry was primarily concentrated in the towns of Southington and Berlin, Connecticut, the respective histories of these two towns provide valuable data on several of the companies. Atwater's *History of Southington*, written in 1924, devotes an entire chapter to the development of this industry which culminated in 1870 in the consolidation of three rival companies as the Peck, Stow and Wilcox Co. This consolidation was prompted by the fact that at least two of the companies had financially overextended themselves in competing for a changing, and probably declining market. During the Civil War, Peck, Smith & Co. enjoyed a lucrative government contract for bayonets, but with the cessation of hostilities they soon found their tanners' tool business severely curtailed. Similarly, S. Stow Mfg. Co. became financially embarrassed in the 1860's due to heavy expenditures first on Orson Stow's experiments to improve machines, and then on a promotional campaign to introduce these machines to an initially unreceptive market. Although the machines eventually proved highly successful, the company was brought to the verge of bankruptcy. As a consequence the merger of these two firms with the Roys & Wilcox Co. of East Berlin was effected in 1870 in order to pool their resources as manufacturers and to eliminate further mutually crippling competition.

An unpublished monograph, written in 1916 by Truman Smith and entitled "The Rise and Progress of the Peck, Stow & Wilcox Company" also gives brief sketches of many of the tanners' tool manufacturers in the Berlin-Southington area. He was associated with the company for many years and recorded the recollections of some of the older employees. As he did not always document his sources, it is often difficult to evaluate his information.

Interestingly, of the more than 25 firms on this list, only two can be identified with certainty as having made tanners' machines before 1840. From 1840 Seth Peck seems to have nearly monopolized the trade. According to Truman Smith, Plant, Neal & Co. began making machines about 1834, but I have so far been unable to confirm this contention. Tanners' machines marked "P.N. & Co." are found which have boxes, i.e., cast iron frames, identical to those on Seth Peck & Co. machines which date between 1833 and 1843. This suggests that "P.N. & Co.", presumably Plant, Neal & Co., were using Peck's patterns to make their machines.

Admittedly the Norths and the Bulkleys were both in business during those years, but neither company was engaged in the manufacture of tanners' machines. They restricted their production to hand tools and stakes. It is conceivable that Franklin Roys established his business slightly before 1840. Again Smith writes that he started in Berlin in 1840, but there is no proof that he was making machines then. The only "F. Roys" pieces that I have seen are a stake and a hand seamer. Moreover, Josiah Wilcox, his former partner in North Greenwich, Connecticut, seems to have made tools, but no machines. The earliest confirmed reference to Franklin Roys' business appears on an 1846 broadside, and then only as an approved agent for the distribution of Peck's machines.

Solomon Stow, too, may have manufactured machines before 1847 as Atwater and Devoe give conflicting dates for the commencement of his business. He is listed in the 1831 American Advertising Directory as a manufacturer of "Eli Terry's Patent Clocks". He then, according to Atwater, began making tanners' machines for Seth Peck & Co. in 1837. Whether he sold them under his own mark has not been determined.

Although working dates of many toolmakers have been confirmed from directory listings and occasional contemporary references, firm bracket dates have not yet been established for some companies. Of particular difficulty are firms like the S. Stow Mfg. Co. which underwent repeated reorganizations with just a few years. This company was begun by Solomon Stow and possibly Hial Grannis; it next became S. Stow & Co., and then S. Stow Mfg. Co. until the merger in 1870. Although some of the changes apparently occurred within just a few years, they are of particular interest to the accurate dating of tools if the changes of management are reflected by the marks on their products.

This list is, of course, by no means complete or comprehensive. I have omitted reference to 18th century tanners' toolmakers primarily because I know of none other than Elias Beckley of Berlin, Connecticut. I should be interested in hearing from readers who have information on toolmakers on this list or know of additional 18th or 19th century manufacturers. If there is sufficient response, perhaps an updated compilation of American tanners' toolmakers can be published in a future number of the *Chronicle*.

THE CHECKLIST

FIRM NAME	LOCATION	WORKING DATES	PRODUCT	SOURCE
DR Barton	Rochester NY	1832-1875	Stake	Tool mark
C Brombacher J Brombacher	Tarrytown NY New York NY	c. 1840-1900+	Tinners shears & stakes	J Demer 1846 dir.
J&W Bulkley (Justus & William)	Berlin CT	1823-1844	Stakes & hand tools	North 1831 AAD
Wm Bulkley	Berlin CT	1844-1878	Stakes & hand tools	North
Bulkley & Norton	Worthington CT (Berlin)	-1849-	Circular shears	1849 NEMUD
OW Burritt	Weedsport NY		Roofer's crimper	Tool mark
S Deer			Roofer's crimper	Tool mark
Isaac J Hough	Middletown CT	1856-1857	Stake shears & hand tools	1857 GC J&E North
Kenney Mfg Co	Hartford CT	-1875-	Double seaming machine	1875 NEBD
Lufkin Rule Co	Saginaw MI	-present	Tinsmith's ruler	Tool imprint
J Nixon & Sons	New York NY	-1846-	Stake shears	1846 dir
Jedediah North	Berlin CT	1810-1824	Stakes & hand tools	J Demer
J & E North (Edmund)	Berlin CT	1824-1854	Stakes & hand tools	J Demer
E North	East Berlin CT	1855-1856	Bench shear	Tool imprint
Eli Parsons & Calvin Whiting	Dedham MA	c. 1803-1816+	Tinners machines	Devoe
Seth Peck	Southington CT	c. 1816-1832	Tinners machines	Atwater 1831 AAD Timlow
Seth Peck & Co (Romeo Lowrey, Orrin & Noble Peck, Wyllys Smith)	Southington CT	1833-1843 (?)	Tinners machines	Atwater Perry Record Barber 1838 T Smith Hayward 1839
Peck Smith & Co (O Peck, Wyllys Smith) Benjamin Seward	Southington CT	1843-1870	Tinners machines	Atwater 1846 Peck Broadside 1849 NEMUD 1851 CBD 1857 GC T Smith
Peck Stow & Wilcox	Southington CT E Berlin CT Plantsville CT	1870-present	Tinners machines stakes, tools	Atwater Pexto catalog

Plant, Neal, & Co	Southington CT	c. 1834(?) - 1845	Tinners machines	T Smith
F Roys & Co (Franklin) -	Berlin CT	1840(?) - 1846+	Timers machines & hand tools	Atwater 1846 Peck Broadside T Smith
Roys & Wilcox (Edward & Samuel Wilcox, Elisha Norton)	Berlin CT	c. 1843-1870	Tinners machines & hand tools	Atwater 1849 NEMUD 1851 CBD ASM 1855 1857 GC DSC 1860
Oliver Snow & Co	Meriden CT	-1849-	Stamps & dies for tinners	1849 NEMUD
Solomon Stow	Southington CT	-1831-	Brass gear wheels & machine parts	1831 AAD Atwater
S Stow & Sons (Orson & Enos)	(?) Southington CT	1847-11851(?)	Machines	T Smith Atwater
S Stow & Co	(?) Southington CT	c. 1848 c. 1851-1853	Machines	J & E North 1851 CBD
S Stow Mfg Co	Plantsville CT	c. 1853-1870	Machines	Atwater 1857 Gaz. Of CT DSC 1869
N & G Taylor (Dealers – mark on a stake of J Wilcox Port Chester)	Phila PA	1839-1849		Tool mark
Terryville Mfg. Co	Terryville CT	-1875-	Hand tools	1875 NEBD
Aaron W Whitney	Woodstock VT	c. 1845-1869	Timers tools & machines	Dana ASM 1855
Josiah Wilcox	N Greenwich CT Port Chester NY Greenwich CT	c. 1838-1849	Tinners tools	1849 NEMUD Mead
Lyman Wilcox	Berlin CT Port Chester NY	1844-1855	Tinners tools	North 1849 NEMUD
Wilcox & Roys	Sawpit NY (name of Port Chester before 1839)	-1839		J Demer J Demer
William Williams	New York NY	-1831-	Tinners tools	1831 AAD

(A few supplemental names on this list contributed by J Demer & J Kebabian)

KEY TO SOURCES

Atwater	Atwater, <i>History of Southington CT</i> 1924
Timlow	Timlow, <i>Ecclesiastical Sketches of Southington CT</i> 1975
North	North, <i>History of Berlin CT</i> , 1916

Dana	Henry Swan Dana, <i>History of Woodstock VT</i> , 1889
Demer	John Demer, <i>Jedediah North's Tinnerns' Tool Business</i> , 1973
Devoe	Shirley Spaulding Devoe, <i>The Tinsmiths of Connecticut</i> , 1968
Barber, 1838	John Warner Barber, <i>Connecticut Historical Collections</i> , 1838
Hayward, 1839	<i>Hayward's New England Gazetteer</i> , 1839
ASM, 1855	<i>The American System of Manufacturers: Report of the Committee on the Machinery of the US</i> 1855, reprinted 1969
1831 AAD	1831 <i>American Advertising Directory</i>
Perry Records	Misc papers of the George Perry Tin Shop in Saxtons River VT, 1833
1846 Dir	1846 <i>Directory for the East</i>
1846 Peck	
Broadside	1846 Advertising broadside of O & N Peck reprinted in Devoe
1849 NEMUD	1849 <i>New England Mercantile Union Directory</i>
1851 CBD	1851 <i>Connecticut Business Directory</i>
1857 GC	1857 <i>Gazetteer & Business Book of Connecticut</i>
1869 DSC	1869 <i>Dover Stamping Company Catalog</i> , reprinted 1971
1875 NEBD	1875 <i>New England Business Directory</i>
T Smith	"The Rise & Progress of the Peck, Stow & Wilcox Co," an unpublished monograph written by Truman Smith, 1916
Mead	SP Mead, <i>History of the Town of Greenwich CT</i> , New York, 1911
North	<i>Account Book of J & E North, Berlin CT</i> , Ledger No. 2, 1845-57
	<i>The Chronicle of the Early American Industries Association</i> September 1979, Vol. 32, No. 3

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