

From Peak Around the Corner –

Brick Factory

The Charles Staples Brick Factory sat on a piece of property between the railway line and the slope at the back side of the village. Directly across the Keswick River at a bend in the river is the David and Heather Olmstead property. Situated on the hill away from the Keswick River and the brick factory are the Church of Christ and I.O.F. Hall properties.

Workers removed clay from the banks of the Keswick River and baked it in a kiln. The moulds for the clay had an indentation of XXX so that when dried, the reddish brown rectangles revealed the company mark. Considered good quality, these bricks remain in a few places throughout the community. During demolition of the Ralph Colter house at the corner of route 104 and the Jones Forks Road in 2006 or 2007, the chimney bricks had the Charles Staples Brick Factory XXX etched on them.

When Heather and David Olmstead purchased the Ray Jones property, Garth Pugh, told them about the brick factory that had been on the other side of the river. His understanding was that the Charles Staples brick factory closure had been the result of a bad batch of bricks for a customer and it set the business back financially. They struggled to recover but eventually shut down. The year of closure is unknown.

The Blacksmiths

When he was in his mid 20's, Newton Bird and his wife Sarah built a two-storey house and blacksmith shop. He was born in 1865 so it's fair to say that he would have built and begun operation sometime between 1885 and 1895. The original house, now owned by Freeman and Helen Jones, sat behind the shop. Sarah wanted to be closer to her new husband and his work so they moved their belongings from the house at the rear of the property to the renovated second storey of the blacksmith shop. Newt, as many called him, put new shoes on horses, made outer rims for wagon wheels, runners for sleds and other items from iron. Norris Bubar remembers a story told to him years ago by Dell Pugh of Pugh's Crossing. Newt was painting a new hand sled he had just finished making when Dr. Oscar Morehouse arrived to get his horses shod. The doctor noting what Newt was doing said, "I suppose paint covers a lot of sins [mistakes]." Without a sideways glance the witty Newt responded, "Not near so many as a death certificate."

Newton and Sarah had a daughter Dora who married Bernard Hine. He joined her father's business. Dora and Bernard's daughter Jean (Hine) Branscombe said that her grandfather tended the books every night as did Bernard later. They ordered supplies from Stewart & Stewart in Woodstock and James S. Neills in Fredericton. Horseshoes came in 100 lb. kegs, enough to shoe between 10 and 14 horses. When paying bills, the Hines' went to Kate Hagerman's post office and mailed out their payments.

Newt Bird enjoyed a successful career in his chosen trade until he died at the age of 61.

Blacksmiths did lots of iron work, including the hand crafting of pulp hooks for those who worked in the woods. The smithy also repaired hay wagons, rebuilt and made wheels. Jean remembers Bernard heating the iron to bend it for a wagon wheel. Using huge tongs, he placed it over the wooden wheel. While it was hot he'd bend it around the wheel tightly then pour cold water over to cool it into proper form. Blacksmiths also made shoes for oxen, bands, bobsleds, steel shoes, starts and raves. Using cable, the smithy also made top-chains and corner-binds for log hauling; hooks for chains, pevy dogs, picks, barn door hinges, horse shoes, nails, and drift bolts for spiking large logs. The blacksmith also used his grindstone to sharpen tools and axes.

The anvil and forge sat to the left along the side of the blacksmith's shop. The right side was for shoeing horses. Mr. Hine used the block-and-tackle that hung from the ceiling to hold a horse's foot up in the air while he put on new shoes. Daughter Jean and granddaughter Tracy Hine both remember how strict Bernard was about the shop. Children couldn't visit while he shod horses. Some were kickers and if a horse spooked, either the children or the blacksmith could be severely injured. They remember sitting on the stairs leading from the second-storey living

area to the shop and peeking through the stair risers to watch the horses receive their new summer or winter footwear.

Bernard was very particular about his shop, cleaned it thoroughly each time a horse made a mess on the floor, and oiled the shoeing platform regularly. Lloyd Anderson brought his horses from Kingsley but they rested in a small barn and had some hay before they went into the blacksmith shop. This ensured they were well rested and less apt to put up a fuss as they were shod.

Tracy Hine said "Papa (grandfather) used to let us run the bellows - you'd pull down the big wooden handle and WHOOSH - the air would rush through and stoke the fire and glow just huge. He would render horseshoes and other things for us just to show us how. He kept it immaculate in there, a place for everything and everything in its place. He kept a can of Werther's Originals on a ledge and it was pretty special if he gave us one. I loved the smell of the blacksmith's shop. We had real coal for snowman eyes and buttons."

To the rear of the shop was a gas engine with a belt planer for the rough lumber stored in a shed that still stands on the property.

"We all learned to ride our bicycles by starting out on the blacksmith platform. My sister Hope wrote a song called 'When We Were Kids' and there's a verse that fondly recalls how we used to have singing contests in the blacksmith shop. We would stand on the chopping block, turn the big grind stone and pretend we were filming as we sang into a skipping-rope-handle mic."

2002 sharpening 2 pieces	50	75
repairing weavel. clip on center iron	2.50	5.50
3 shoeing horses (6) 8 new shoes	2.75	5.15
10 10 new shoes 4 calked set of grips	2.40	2.10
14 4 new shoes no. 4 (1 spec 4) 4 removes	60	1.85
7 sharpening 8 shoes (19) 7 removes 1 new shoe	50	4.35
28 16 removes spreader chain 2 bolts	2.40	1.50
1915 9 1 new shoe bolt in hand (6) 1 saw wedge	1.20	1.50