

Blacksmith Shop



HOME

RAILWAY

COMMUNITY

BUSINESS

FARMING

THE SEA

GALLERY

SITE MAP

BLACKSMITH



For the early settlers, the blacksmith was perhaps the most essential tradesman. Not only did he make

the iron parts for the first farming implements, he also could repair all iron objects by hammering them by hand on an anvil. After heating the iron until white-hot, the blacksmith would then shape and wield a multitude of objects from it, including carriage bolts and wheels, iron work for fishing craft, cooking utensils, and most importantly, horseshoes.

Blacksmiths who made horseshoes were called farriers, derived from the Latin word for iron. At a time when horses were the only means of transport, the blacksmith was important to not only individual farmers and travelers, but also to merchants whose businesses depended on transporting their goods to other places. Also, because they spent much of their time shoeing horses, blacksmiths gained a considerable amount of knowledge about equine diseases. The blacksmith doubled as a veterinarian, treating and preventing the hoof-related ailments that could hobble a valuable animal.

In Kensington and area, blacksmiths were particularly busy during the winter months. One common winter task was mussel mud digging, where the horses would haul organic material up from river bottoms through the ice. Horses had to be well shod to get the necessary foothold on the ice. In Clinton, the local blacksmith was able to shoe over twenty

also becoming farrier.

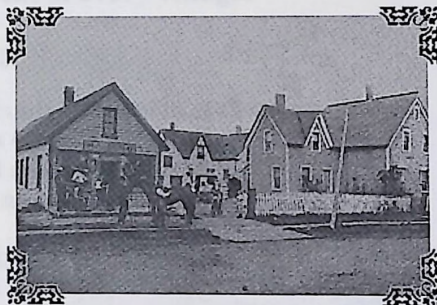
horses a day. Even so, he would not want to hurry too much, because a slip of a nail might result in an upset horse and a backwards kick with his name on it!

\$20

In the early 1900's, the average price for fitting a horse with new shoes was 80 cents, parts and labour included. If the blacksmith was asked to take off the old shoes, caulk the hooves, and then place the old shoes back-- somewhat like a past equivalent of rotating tires-- the blacksmith would charge approximately 40 cents. While it might not have been posted, there was an unspoken understanding about the going rate for almost every blacksmithing task, from making anchors to oyster rakes. Alex Nicholson, a blacksmith from Clinton in the early 1900's, charged 20 cents to sharpen a coulter (or turf-cutter) on farm machinery. Having your pot repaired would set you back 20 cents, and getting your buggy running smoothly again usually ran in the vicinity of 65 cents.

\$10-

Herbert Moase (1865-1942) began his career as a blacksmith in Kensington, and sold his operation to Tyndall and Fred Semple in 1918. Tyndall



Semple had started out as a blacksmith in Traveller's Rest, P.E. I., which is approximately 5 miles west of Kensington. The Semple family is a classic example of how the blacksmith's work translated into expertise in dealing with horses. Tyndall Semple became one of the most respected horsemen in the Maritime harness-racing circuit, involved in the training, breeding, and driving some of its great champions. He continued to race actively until he was eighty-six.

Preis.
when
younger

Many apprentices came to Kensington to serve under its blacksmiths, learning the art of shaping metal from veterans of the trade. The 1890 Island Directory lists Archibald Delaney as a blacksmith located in French River, P. E. I., approximately 10 miles northeast of Kensington. His son, Emmerson, went on to train at the Semple smithy in Kensington, and then returned to French River and established his own business. Working full-time until the age of eighty, he only retired from his forge and anvil in the 1960's, when there were few horses left to be shod.

Although the blacksmith was at one point considered an indispensable part of the community, the need for his services declined when the horse was replaced by the automobile, and machine forging made human hands obsolete. Composed by local poet Bessie Wheeler, this poem evokes the bygone era of the blacksmith, when the clang of the hammer on the anvil was the heartbeat of every village.

The Blacksmith Shop

The blacksmith shop stands by the side of the road,
Where it's stood most a century before,
But its doors are closed and its roof is sagged.
And the anvil will ring no more.

The horses that came for bright new shoes
Left their footprints on
the floor;
But they are gone and
will never return,
So the anvil need ring
no more.

The faithful smith and
the faithful horse,
Have passed with an
era before,
And have paved the way for a different day



When the anvil will ring no more.

**Memories are all that are left,
With those who watch at its door;
These, too, shall toil then pass away
And the anvil will ring no more.**

**Shoemaker | Tailor and Dressmaker | Livery Stable | Herbert
R. Moase, Tradesman**



Local Business



The large side of the Old
Blacksmith Shop as it stands
today.

black of Commerce Street. By 1953, only one shop
is listed, that of Willard Richardson, located on
Pocahontas, near Commerce Street.

RICHARDSON'S BLACKSMITH SHOP

The current blacksmith shop was built in 1897 by
Lewis C. Reidel. Reidel was born in 1864. He
came to Colusa at the age of 5, where he worked as
a blacksmith and wagon maker until his death in
1906. Reidel built the current blacksmith shop on a

WILLARD RICHARDSON'S OLD BLACKSMITH SHOP

From Galena's earliest days, blacksmithing was an essential industry. Galena city and business directories from the late 1840s through the late 1860s list from 20 to 40 individuals claiming their occupation as "blacksmith". In the 1858-59 directory, for instance, at the time when Galena had a population of around 14,000, there are approximately 35 blacksmiths listed. Many of Galena's blacksmith shops were located on Franklin and Commerce Streets, also the location of a number of lumber yards.

With the approach of the 20th century and the advent of the



The forge side of the Old Blacksmith Shop as it stands today.

automobile, the number of blacksmith operations gradually decreased. In 1914, the Galena business directory lists 9 blacksmith shops employing about 15 people. Three of these shops were

located in the same

block of Commerce Street. By 1953, only one shop is listed, that of Willard Richardson, located on Franklin, near Commerce Street.

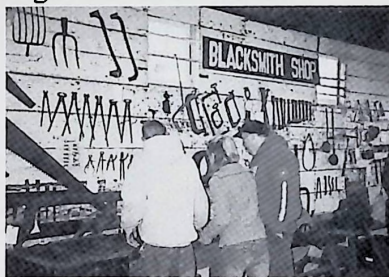
RICHARDSON'S BLACKSMITH SHOP

The current blacksmith shop was built in 1897 by Louis C. Readel. Readel was born in 1864. He came to Galena at the age of 6, where he worked as a blacksmith and wagon maker until his death in 1920. Readel built the current blacksmith shop on a

lot located at Franklin and Commerce Streets, across the street from the shop's current location. Readel purchased the lot from members of the Spare family which had operated a lumber yard at that location in the mid-1800s. The 1914 city directory lists Readel, Strickland and Wandel, Blacksmiths at 245 N. Commerce Street. After his death, Louis Readel's widow sold the property to Harry Parker, another Galena blacksmith. The Parker family had been involved in blacksmithing in Galena since the late 1850s. The 1900 city directory lists both father and son as blacksmiths. Henry, the father, died in 1904. His son, Harry, continued to work as a blacksmith at the Main Street shop until 1921 when he purchased the Readel blacksmith shop. Harry Parker worked at the current blacksmith shop until 1929 when he sold it to Willard Richardson. At some point Harry Parker moved to Chicago. He died in 1952.

Willard Richardson was born nearby in New Diggins, Wisconsin in 1895. He started learning the blacksmithing trade in 1912.

During World War I, Richardson worked as a smith in the U.S. Army's Camp Grant near Rockford, Illinois and then as a farrier with the U.S. Army in France. Richardson came to Galena in 1921 where he worked with Harry Parker as a blacksmith. He bought Parker's blacksmith shop in 1929 and continued to work as a blacksmith until his death in 1979, a span of almost 50 years.



Tools hanging in the Old Blacksmith Shop today.

The City of Galena purchased the shop in 2002

when it became necessary to realign the street. The shop was moved only 100 feet to its current location. The Galena/Jo Daviess County Historical Society was then awarded a Public Museum Capital Grant through the Illinois State Museum for the restoration of the structure.

The forges had to be rebuilt, but the entire shop area was kept exactly as it was after 80 years of use. Willard Richardson was a blacksmith, farrier and wheelwright. All of his original tools are still on display in the shop. Today the Old Blacksmith Shop Museum honors his legacy and that of all blacksmiths who were the lifeblood of each and every community in America.





