

EARLY HISTORY OF THE LITTLESTOWN HARDWARE & FOUNDRY CO., INC.

By Luther D. Snyder 11/13/1979 - age 87

Sometime in 1914, Emory H. Snyder wrote a letter to his brother, Luther D. Snyder, asking him to visit them at Glen Rock, as he wanted to talk over a business proposition.

Emory Snyder was married and would soon become a father for the first time. He was 24 years old. He worked at the Read Machinery Company, in Glen Rock, Pa. as a machinist. His wife was Chloe Fife from East Prospect, Pa.

Luther Snyder was 22 years old and was working at The Farmers Fire Insurance Company, York, Pa. He was engaged to Mary Belle Wambaugh and took her along down to Glen Rock.

The business proposition E.H. Snyder proposed to his brother was that they should go into business together in Wrightsville by starting an auto garage there as there was none in that locality.

They planned as follows: E.H. Snyder was to purchase a book on auto repairing and make a study of it. He did this and eventually figured he knew enough to handle the repairs of any make car.

He was then to quit his job and move to Wrightsville.

He did this and moved into an apartment at Chloe's relation's home on Second Street. His name was Harry Wagner.

Their daughter Rebecca was born there in 1915.

L. D. Snyder was to continue working at The Farmers Fire Insurance Company, York, Pa. for a few months. He was to quit then and stay at his mother's home, where part of a room was used as an office for the new business.

The finances of the new business were as follows: Both partners put in \$500 each and they borrowed some money from their mother and sister, about \$300 from each. (Paid off later with Littlestown cash)

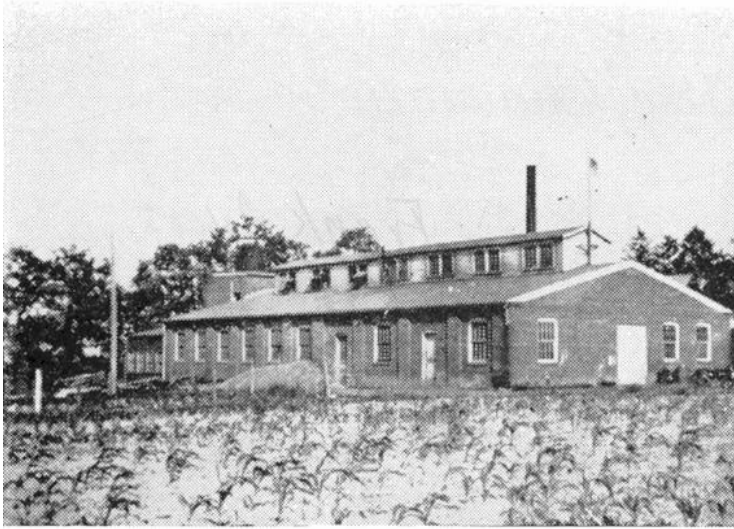
A small store building next to the Snyder home was used for the garage and an addition built to it, about twenty feet wide by thirty feet long.

It was planned to sell autos, so they bought a new Maxwell from the Snyder Sales Company in York. This Maxwell compared favorably with the Chevy and Ford and sold for \$750.00.

This was the same type that Jack Benny had on radio and Television.

There was effort made at selling this car to a doctor in East Prospect and some other prospects with "no sale". L. D. sent out letters and circulars to men that he thought would be good prospects, but still "no sale".

The car was used to take people to Gettysburg for a trip over the battlefield. The charge was \$10.00 which helped some. L.D. learned to be a guide for these people over the battlefield. When taking a young man and his intended on a trip to Gettysburg, the young man asked if the car couldn't go faster than the 25 MPH it was then doing...L.D. told him it could go a lot faster and put it up to 35 MPH. The young man yelled: "That's enough. Don't go any faster!"



1916



1938

1938 Summer Picnic Outing



Luther Snyder getting out of the Maxwell in 1915 at Gettysburg Battlefield

Sheldon K. Abel came into the picture by suggesting to the partners that they buy patterns and equipment that was for sale at the Columbia Grey Iron Company in Columbia, Pa.

There were a lot of patterns for hammers, hatchets, hinges, many types of toys and banks.

There was a 20" drill press and nickel plating equipment. This consisted of a plating tank and generator. The whole thing could be bought for \$350.00.

The old company had a salesman in New York City by the name of S. J. Eisenman and he promised to sell for us. He did a good job.

One of the items was a magnetic tack hammer, which was sold in good quantities to Butler Brothers, a wholesale house in New York City. There was a special method in making this hammer: The castings were dumped into a tub of water while they were still red hot. They were then magnetized by holding them against the generator which was used for the plating job.

Another item was a puzzle key. Two keys held together and were tough to take apart. You had to study them very much. These were sold to N. Shure Company in Chicago. They sold them to the concern that made the Cracker Jacks. They used large quantities.

Another item sold to N. Shure for Cracker Jacks was the bunch of "penny toys". They consisted of small tools about three inches long and were hammers, hatchets, hoes, rakes, etc. They were sold in large quantities. The penny toys and keys were copper plated by dipping them in a solution of copper sulfate and muriatic acid.

Some of the other items were: pruning shears, special pincers, match box holder, bag truck, broom holder, stove lid lifter, ceiling hook hinges, sash pulleys, toy stoves, banks, jacks, jitney auto, toy oxen.

Castings for all of these items were bought from the Riverside Foundry (now Donsco) in Wrightsville. The manager, Harry K. Smith, was thankfully very lenient with credit to the Wrightsville Supply Company.

Mr. Aigeltinger, manager of the Wrightsville Hardware Company, suggested to L. D. that he should not start a foundry in Wrightsville, as there were already three in town. His idea was that it was hard to get enough molders.

Handles for the hammers and hatchets were bought from a concern in Reading, Pa. They were shipped by trolley freight to Columbia, where they were put on the ferry boat to cross the river to Wrightsville.

The garage business was now dropped and the new company had five employees, including the owners: Bessie Snyder (sister), Noah Snyder (brother), Paul Filbey, E. H. & L. D. Snyder.

There was thought now of making their own castings, but that would require a lot of money, which they did not have and were having a tough time financing their present operations. Much money was tied up in accounts receivable and inventory.

The Chamber of Commerce of Red Lion was looking for more industries for their town. They were contacted and a meeting was held in the bank. They were shown some hammers, toys, etc. that were being made and were told of the good orders on hand and the number of good customers. While they were studying it over, this big event happened to change things entirely for the new company:

John Moudy, from Littlestown, Pa., had invented a special barn lock and he came down to the Columbia Malleable Castings Co. to have some samples made in malleable iron. This concern was in

the factory that was the Columbia Grey Iron Company. When Mr. Moudy got his sample castings, he asked where he could have them plated and was sent to the Wrightsville Supply Co. They polished the castings, nickel plated and finally buffed them to a nice bright finish.

Mr. Moudy mentioned that he wished they had some factories in Littlestown as he found in Wrightsville and Columbia. He said they had only a silk mill and a couple cigar factories. He was told that the new company was looking for a proposition like this and would be glad to come to Littlestown and talk it over with anyone he would get to a meeting. Mr. Moudy said he would see what could be done and a few weeks later he phoned the Snyders, asking them to come to Littlestown. They went up taking Mr. Abel along to explain the foundry business.

It was a big surprise when they came to Littlestown. They found a number of people in the upper room of the fire engine house. They had to make speeches telling their story. It was a big job.

They suggested to the group that they appoint a committee to talk things over and make plans. This meeting was held the same evening and the committee consisted of men from the two banks (Mr. Wehler and Mr. Jones) and a couple store keepers. It was planned to sell bonds instead of stock, similar to the method used for getting the silk mill to town. \$9000 was to be raised this way. 5% coupon bonds due in ten years. \$50.00 each. Of course this amount was too small to do all the things that needed to be done and still have money for working capital.

Mr. M. N. Wehler, President of the Littlestown Savings Institution, was appointed trustee for the mortgage bonds. A Committee was appointed to sell the bonds. The sale was rather slow. Mr. Keagy, who owned the farm east of town bordering on the railroad, offered to guarantee the sale of the bonds, also to give the company a field along the railroad and the siding going into it if the factory would be built on that land. This was a very tempting offer, but by accepting it, we would be turning down Mr. Moudy, who wanted the factory at the west of town on some land he owned out there. They both had the same idea of selling lots to people who would build homes near the new factory.

So, we didn't accept either offer, much as we would have liked to, but bought a lot from Mr. Moudy in town where the factory now stands. It cost \$800 and about \$1000 for the railroad siding we put in. This money could have been saved if we had accepted Keagy's offer.

The lot was along the railroad and a siding could be run in if some land was bought from Harry Mehring, who owned the land east of this lot. It was bought from him and he requested a contract by which he could use the siding when necessary if he didn't interfere with the company's need.

Other interesting things happened in the sale of the bonds: As they were selling very slowly, Mr. Wehler suggested that the Snyders take about \$1,500 worth of the bonds to show the people we had faith in the enterprise. He was told that they had no money to put into the bonds, but needed every cent in the business.

\$500 worth of stock was sold to Max Weaver, who said he saw a big opportunity for profit on this stock. It turned out over the years that he was right. With this \$500 and a loan of \$1000 on the bonds, \$1,500 worth were bought. The loan of \$1,000 on the \$1500 worth of bonds was made at the bank in Hellam, Pa. L. D. Snyder knew the president of this bank through contact with the Boy Scouts. This loan was later transferred to the Codorus National Bank, Codorus, Pa. Max Weaver offered to sell his stock back to the Company for \$300, but he was paid \$500, same as he paid for it. Israel Crouse, John Moudy and Jim Kelly bought the last remaining \$1,300 worth of bonds. With the sale of bonds now complete, the business was ready to start its organization.

Gettysburg attorney, William Hersh, was the attorney for the new company. Squire Howard Blocher allowed the company to use his office until the new building could be built.

The new organization consisted of three stockholders and three directors as follows:

Emory H. Snyder – President
Sheldon K. Abel – Vice -President
Luther D. Snyder – Secretary-Treasurer

They each owned \$1,000 of the stock, which listed at a value of \$5,000 – 50 shares at \$100 each.

Emory Snyder was to head the machining and finishing room, packing and shipping. He was a machinist by trade. Sheldon Able was to head the molding room. He had been molding room foreman at the Columbia Grey Iron Company. Luther Snyder was to take care of the office, including all billing, collecting and bookkeeping. He had been a bookkeeper at the C. H. A. Dissinger and Brother Company in Wrightsville. Clayton Bair helped him set up the books for the new corporation.

Now they were ready to see about putting up the needed building. B. F. Starr, who had an office on the 2nd floor of Abia Smucker's building on East King Street, was the architect. He helped to plan the new building and made the prints to be used by the contractors.

I. H. Crouse & Sons and Eline Brothers quoted on the job. I. H. Crouse had been a big help in getting the bonds sold, but Eline Brothers quoted a couple hundred dollars lower and the contract was given to them. The price was \$3,200. The building was 100 feet long by 50 feet wide, with a small addition at the east end for the cupola. There was a partition cutting the building into two 50 ft. rooms. One room was for the molding room and the other was for the machine shop and finishing room, also a small office. A small core room was added to the east end near the cupola room.

The railroad siding was ready by the time the building was completed. It was a big help as all of the pig iron, coke and sand had to come by rail freight. There were no trucks those days. All of the equipment and inventory came from Wrightsville by rail car and unloaded from the new siding.

Toilet facilities were of the old time outdoor type.

Most of the equipment for the new molding room was used. The cupola and blower, the high speed steam engine to run the blower—later replaced with a shaft from the main slow speed horizontal engine also used for the grinders, tumbling barrels, drills and plating generator—all were used equipment.

The wages paid when starting were low, but in line with what other concerns were paying in the area. For instance, the finishing room paid 10 cents per hour and worked a ten hour day. The molders made about twelve dollars per week, piece work. There was no payment of time and a half for overtime work. There were no fringe benefits except for a picnic in the summer and a Christmas party in the winter.

It was hard to finance the new business. M. N. Wehler and the Littlestown Savings Institution allowed us to have loans on our invoices up to three quarters of the amount. When the bill was paid, the note was paid. As business increased, this was a big help.

In 1918, our casting salesman, Lough Brothers of New York, brought the Velox Vise Company to us to manufacture a patented machinist vise that had a slip-easy method of changing the opening of the jaws. It worked on the pinch bar principal. Emory and Luther went to look at this in Lowville, New York; by train to

New York City, boat to Albany and finally by train to Lowville. It was during this trip that their sister, Bessie, died from the flu.

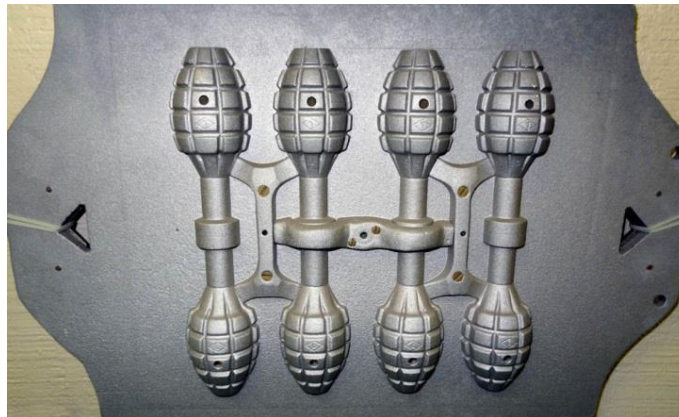
The vise manufacturing needed more equipment than could be afforded to keep up with the orders that were rapidly coming in. Emory made a broaching machine for the slide hole. The business was finally taken away and given to a concern in Ohio, with us being paid for the patterns, broaching machine and some other equipment.

We would later get back into vise manufacturing in the 1920's that proved to be one of our best sellers. We made them for Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward. This was a regular bench vise with the steel sliding bar. The sales were made by a relative of Lough Brothers, F. G. Acomb, who became our hardware sales manager and Vice-President from 1929 until 1959, working only on commission. He was responsible for New York, N.Y. instead of Littlestown Pa. being on the hardware items before World War II. He thought the items would be easier to sell and have more prestige.

An addition to the molding room was built by I. H. Crouse in 1919, who gave us more than a year to pay for it. That addition was a big help as the casting business was improving. We could now increase our number of molders from six to twelve.

During the first world war, we made mostly castings for bearings and shaft holders.

During the second world war, we made over a million hand grenades and rifle grenades. Also, several million bomb plugs. These plugs were used to shut the bomb's fuse holes. They were taken out when the bomb was used and the fuse was put in its place.



Hand Grenade Pattern

Our hand grenades were being used in practice and one man dropped his grenade short. All of the men dropped to the ground. One man who had worked in our core room making cores for the hand grenades had a piece of the grenade hit him on the helmet, making a large dent. Without the helmet, he may have been killed by one of our grenades that he may have helped to make!

Some other items made over the years besides commercial jobbing castings: Hammers - over a million a year, sold to McCrory, Woolworth and other concerns; lamps, pitcher pumps, vises, scoops, flanges, cement tools, tampers, mail boxes, pots, ladles, frying pans, bookends, door stops, awning hardware, etc. We also made special items for customers who would get the complete item from us and sell it as their own: Small sand blaster for cleaning spark plugs, ham boilers, chewing gum ball machines, floor polishers, car polishers, horse drawn fire engines, banks, plates and mugs.