

Some Massey, Harris, and Ferguson History

The Massey Show
Celebrating the Massey Family and History
By Myno Van Dyke

On June 16, 2001, something extraordinary and unique happened in Newcastle, Ontario. The Newcastle and District Historical Society sponsored The Massey Show. An exposition of the products produced by the revolutionary Massey family beginning with tools and implements and later combines, tractors and larger farm machinery. Their contributions would revolutionize agriculture. As well, they made numerous generous contributions to the village of Newcastle. A picture of the Massey Foundry appears below left.



Sanford Haskill, a Port Hope resident and a member of the Newcastle Historical Society is the driving force behind the "The Massey Show". Sandford's family have deep roots in this area. His ancestors first immigrated to Port Hope in 1793 and Haskills have lived on the same Lakeshore Road farm since 1796. When asked what prompted him to come up with the idea of a Massey Show, he explains, " It is the only local machinery company that is still operational. There has never been any type of show to prolong the Massey history and we should never forget our heritage."

The Massey family immigrated to the United States from England in 1630. By 1795, some of the family moved to Watertown, New York on the east side of Lake Ontario. Around 1802, Daniel Massey, along with his wife Rebecca Kelley and their infant son Daniel, traveled across the lake to Haldimand Township, near the village of Grafton. Here, he obtained 200 acres of land and began the process of clearing the forest and constructing a home. Today, this same farm is the home of St. Annes Spring Water. When young Daniel was 6 years of age, he was sent back to Watertown to live with his grandparents. Here he received some education and several years later he returned back to help work the farm with his father.

By the time young Daniel was twenty one years of age, he had established himself as quite the entrepreneur. He had purchased his own 200 acres of land just west of his parent's farm and married his childhood sweetheart, Lucinda Bradley. During the next twelve years, he accumulated more land and hired as many as 100 men to clear it. He continued lumbering and

land clearing until around 1830, when he decided to focus on farming again. He had made numerous trips back and forth to the United States to visit family and friends and often he would bring back machinery and tools that were not known to Canadians. One of his first acquisitions was the "Bull Thresher", which was set up in the barn where the grain was brought to it. Soon, neighbouring farmers would also bring their grain into the Massey barn and have it threshed.

Since the blacksmiths in Cobourg and Grafton were some distance away, Daniel Massey built a small machine shop where he could repair not only his own machinery but his neighbour's as well. Massey recognized that there was a great demand for labour saving implements, so, often he would bring back these tools and implements from his trips to visit family in the United States. Eventually, Massey decided to turn the farm over to his son Hart and concentrate on making and repairing farm machinery.

Richard.F. Vaughan owned a small foundry and machine shop in the village of Bond Head on Lake Ontario in Durham County between Cobourg and Oshawa. Vaughan was an acquaintance of Daniel Massey, likely through Stephen Vaughan who was married to Lucinda Massey's sister Cyrene . Stephen and Cyrene lived just south of Richard Vaughan's foundry. Richard Vaughan had to close the shop in 1847 and shortly after formed a partnership with Daniel Massey to use the building for manufacturing implements. Vaughan provided the building and equipment and Massey provided the money. Within six months, Massey bought out Vaughan's interest in the business and became the sole owner. By 1848, his reputation and business had grown and he had to find a larger facility. Today, a fine looking newer bungalow is situated on the property where the foundry once stood at the north-east corner of Mill and Metcalf Streets. Stephen and Cyrene's house, built around 1843, is still there at 579 Mill Street South.

Massey found a large two story brick structure, which was already being used as a foundry a mile north in the growing village of Newcastle. He purchased it as well as fifty acres of land from the Hon. George Strange Boulton. Massey immediately had the land divided into building lots (five per acre) anticipating the future growth of the village. He also built a new home for his family located at 285 Mill Street South and this house still stands today. The cobblestone exterior has been replaced with brick and the verandahs and cupola are no longer there. The mansard style roof found on it now, was added later. Hart Massey obtained the house when his father died in 1856 and then sold the home in 1872 to the Anglican minister, Rev. Henry Brent and his wife Sophia. In 1896 it was sold to the Anglican church and used as a rectory for many years. The vacant land to the east and south of the house is still owned by the Anglican church.

In 1849, Massey moved his implement building operation into Newcastle on the south side of The Kingston Road (now King Street) east of Beaver Street and called it "The Newcastle Foundry and Machine Manufactory, C.W."(The "C.W." means "Canada West"). Additional men were hired and new equipment was obtained for the firm to begin manufacturing plows, stump pullers, harrows and other farm implements.

By 1851, the business had become too much for Daniel to look after on his own so he sent for his 28 year old son, Hart, to work there as factory superintendent. Later, Hart and his family moved into a large white frame house beside the Newcastle factory. This home was demolished a few years ago to make way for the new IGA store.

Hart, who was mechanically inclined, immediately immersed himself in the business. He was also very active locally, being a Justice of the Peace for 20 years, he served as the local Coroner and Chief Magistrate. As well he was a school trustee and taught a bible class at the Newcastle Methodist Church (now Newcastle United Church).

He traveled to the United States and attended many field trials of farm implements. Here, he obtained the Canadian patent rights for the Ketchum Mower, the first of all grass-cutting machines. The following year they began manufacturing these mowers in Newcastle. Later that year, they also began manufacturing the Burrell Reaper. By 1855, a more modern reaper called the Manny Combined Hand-Rake Reaper was being manufactured there. This reaper could cut from eight to ten acres a day and was extremely popular with farmers in Canada.

In 1856, the Grand Trunk Railway passed through Newcastle and this enabled Hart Massey to expand his operation again. Now his machinery could be loaded onto the rail cars and sent all across Canada. Hart also loaded his products onto the train and took them to a Provincial Exhibition in Kingston. Here, he not only won prizes but exposed his products to many new potential customers outside the Newcastle area. Massey could now manufacture not only farm implements, but steam engines, boilers, brass and iron castings, various stoves, lathes, iron and wood planes and "other kinds of machinery required in an Engine Shop, Carriage Manufactory, or other establishment of a similar kind".

In 1856, Daniel Massey died at the age of 58. He had no will and although he had eleven children, the property was divided between his son Hart and his two youngest daughters Arletta, who was thirteen, and Alida, age nine. After Lucina died in the late 1860's, the two girls sold their inheritance to Hart. One of the Massey's eleven children was Frances Massey who married William Boate. Boate was the Principal of the Bowmanville Grammar School, the Bowmanville Academy and later the Superintendent of Education for Darlington and Durham County. From 1864 until 1869 they lived at 261 Mill Street, just north of Daniel and Lucinda's original home.

In 1862, the first Massey catalogue was printed at the shop of E.A. McNaughton in Newcastle. Now the Massey business was renamed The Newcastle Agricultural Works. By 1863, the Newcastle Agricultural Works could not handle all the orders for their product so they added building space and more equipment.

Catastrophe struck on March 29, 1864, when the warehouse caught fire and was destroyed. A new building was constructed by the fall but the harvest was already over for that year so there were no new orders received. The following year they sold over 400 machines and soon sales agencies were set up across Ontario.

In 1866, Newcastle Works demonstrated their products at the Toronto Industrial Exhibition and the following year were chosen to represent Canadian Manufacturing at an International Exposition in Paris, France. There, with twenty-five million visitors, the Massey's finally received world wide recognition for their products. In a field trial, the Massey self binder cut the required section of oats, "without a stop, or missing a sheaf, or a hindrance of any kind." in a remarkable 55 minutes. The runner-up took two and a half hours and needed a change of horses. Soon, orders began to flow in from Europe.

In 1867, there were over 100 employees at the Newcastle plant and there they had six large buildings. In 1870, the Massey Manufacturing company was formed, with Hart Massey as President and his oldest son, Charles as Vice President and Superintendent. In 1871, Hart Massey retired and moved to Cleveland Ohio, leaving Charles to run the business.

In 1878, Massey introduced The Massey Harvester, which was a new, improved, completely Canadian design. It was extremely popular and although Massey planned to build 200 of them, they soon had orders for over 500 units. Even though they worked both day and night shifts in the factory in Newcastle, they were unable to keep up with demand and it soon became apparent that they would have to move to larger quarters. Much to the chagrin of Newcastle residents, they moved the operation to Toronto in 1879. Approximately 100 to 150 of the village's 1200 residents worked for Massey at this time. Essentially, the village was just too small to provide the services for a growing firm like Massey. They needed a good supply of labour, a public water supply and gas light to ensure that they could produce enough product so satisfy demand. By 1901, the population of Newcastle had dwindled down to 645 people.

In 1891, Massey Manufacturing joined with A. Harris, Son and Company and formed Massey Harris Company Limited. In 1953, they merged with Harry Ferguson Limited and formed Massey-Harris-Ferguson Limited which was shortened to Massey-Ferguson Limited in 1957.

In 1892, Hart Massey had a memorial built to honour the death of his son Charles. This was an extraordinary auditorium designed to be a "gift to aid in the development of the arts." It is called Massey Hall in Toronto. The Massey's contributions to Newcastle were extensive. In 1860, Hart Massey built a parsonage on Church Street at the south end of new Methodist Church and then sold it to the church. In 1909, Charles Massey made a large contribution to the same church and the building was completely renovated.. As well, they included in their gift a new brick parsonage at Mill and Caroline Streets. In 1923, Chester Massey built and donated the beautiful Community Hall still located at the north-west corner of King and Mill Streets.

Although Chester Massey's sons Raymond and Vincent became very well known throughout the world, it was not in the manufacturing business. Vincent lectured modern history and became Dean of Residence at Victoria College. He later became the first Canadian born Governor General of Canada. Raymond was a famous Hollywood actor and appeared in many movies. He played Abraham Lincoln in the film "Abe Lincoln in Illinois".

But it was here, in Newcastle, that the foundation was laid for the company's growth across Canada and all over the world. Members of the Newcastle and District Historical Society celebrated the Massey's contributions and accomplishments in and near Newcastle at both indoor and outdoor venues. The indoor show, which included historical memorabilia and toys, was held at the Newcastle Community Hall (a building originally donated by the Massey's) and the outdoor implement show was held at the Lovekin farm located at Hwy 115 and Hwy 401. Members of the Massey family attended as well as Massey enthusiasts from all over North America.