

TAP MANUFACTURERS FROM 1867 to 1940

NOTES FROM MR. JOHN E. WINTER

1 - ALVORD-POLK COMPANY, MILLERSBURG, PENNA.

A combination of Alvord Tool Co. and A.J. Polk & Sons Co., the latter being one of the comparatively old tap makers, although not so well known.

The Alvord-Polk Tool Co. is now a subsidiary of Dallas E. Winslow, Inc., Detroit, Mich.

2 - AMERICAN TAP & DIE CO., Greenfield, Mass.

Organized and operated for some years by Nichols Brothers, manufacturers of cutlery. After F.O. Wells left the Greenfield Tap & Die Corpn. he organized the Wells Corporation which took over the American Tap & Die Co., but soon was reorganized as The Threadwell Corpn., which still operates.

3 - BENJAMIN BEE, West Harwich, Mass.

First in this country to manufacture taps and dies as a regular business in 1867. ~~He was a naval engineer and obtained a patent on tap thread milling machinery.~~ He organized the New York Tap & Die Co. of West Harwich, Mass. Later when the factory burned down the business was moved to Bridgeport, Conn., where Mr. Manning of Manning, Maxwell & Moore became financially interested. The business was not successful and Manning sold the special machinery to Morse Twist Drill & Machine Co.

4 - BATH, JOHN & CO., Worcester, Mass.

High speed steel ground thread taps only. Started about 1919 after trying unsuccessfully to interest the tap manufacturers in thread grinding machinery which he had developed.

5 - BAY STATE TAP & DIE CO., Mansfield, Mass.

Started in Taunton, Mass., about 1901 by Louis Lincoln a piano salesman. About the same time Chas. Hall and Chas. Williams, who had been foremen in the die department of the S.W. Card Mfg. Co., Mansfield, Mass. started the manufacture of small round dies. Lincoln lacked mechanical experience, and Williams and Hall, good mechanics, needed a business manager. The two small firms combined in 1903.

6 - BRUBAKER & CO., Millersburg, Penna.

One of the oldest tap manufacturers. Their business has revolved largely around the highly competitive railroad buying.

7 - BILLINGS & SPENCER CO., Hartford, Conn.

Have not been in the tap business for many years, but during the 1880's they regularly advertised Billing's Patent Screw Plates in the American Machinist.

- 8 - BESLY, CHAS. H. & CO., Chicago, Ill. and Beloit, Wisc.

Started about 1900 to specialize in the manufacture of tapper taps. They catalogued other items but purchased most of them until within recent years.

- 9 - BUTTERFIELD & CO., Derby Line, Vermont and Rock Island, Canada

Established by General and Colonel Butterfield in 1880. At first very small, but had a steady growth until sold in 1913 to Union Twist Drill Co.

- 10 - CARD, S. W. & CO., Mansfield, Mass.

Established in 1874 by Simon W. Card who had been superintendent of Birkenhead's Spindle Works. He started with practically no capital and made a few taps for A.J. Wilkinson, at that time Boston's leading hardware dealer. He did all the manufacturing operations, hardened the taps in a forge fire and Mrs. Card drew the temper to color on top of her kitchen range. After a short time David Harding, a local capitalist put \$5,000.00 into the business and that was all the cash ever put in. All later developments were paid for from earnings.

In 1878 Fred J. Smith, who had just learned the machinist's trade at Mason Machine Works, Taunton, was hired and almost immediately became very active in the business, first as foreman, then superintendent when the business became larger, then general manager, and acting in that capacity he sold out in 1913 to the Union Twist Drill Co.

- 11 - CARPENTER, J. M. TAP & DIE CO., Pawtucket, R.I.

Established in 1870 by J. M. Carpenter, financed by a Mr. Littlefield who put in money for himself and Carpenter under some arrangement that kept them on a 50-50 ownership basis that lasted until Mr. Carpenter died in 1927, when the Littlefield Estate still owned half the business. It was 19 years after they started before they were financially squared up, but after that they did remarkably well. Mr. Carpenter was without doubt the best mechanic among the early tap makers. For many years his product, particularly the smaller taps, was the best yet cost the least to manufacture so net profits were generally about 40% of sales. Some other firms grew faster because of their aggressive selling policies, while Carpenter did little for publicity and was independent in his dealings.

The business of the J.M. Carpenter Tap & Die Co., without the real estate, was purchased by The Latrobe Tool Co. They operated it in Pawtucket for several years. It was then moved to Detroit and operated by Whitman & Barnes for a comparatively short time before it was sold to Greenfield Tap & Die Corp'n to be operated as their Detroit branch.

- 12 - CINCINNATI SCREW & TAP CO.

Was established in 1884, operating under that name for about five years, then discontinuing the small tool line and specializing in the manufacture of milling machines, the name being changed to Cincinnati Milling Machine Co.

13 - CONANT & DONELSON, Conway, Mass.

Established by men trained in Greenfield tap plants to manufacture two piece die screw plate sets to compete with the "Little Giant" sets developed by Wells Brothers Co. They continued in business for quite a long time but never became firmly established.

14 - CLEVELAND TWIST DRILL COMPANY

Manufactured taps as a side line for some years but discontinued the manufacture of taps in 1915 when they sold most of their special tap machinery to Winter Brothers Company.

15 - DETROIT TAP & TOOL COMPANY

Financially connected with Michigan Tool Co. Specializes in the manufacture of high speed ground thread taps.

16 - ELTERICH, CHAS. & CO., New York City

In business for many years but unknown outside of New York and vicinity, catering to local demands only.

17 - EVERARD MFG. CO., INC., New York City

Like Eltervich, established many years ago but with no widespread distribution.

18 - GODDARD, E. A., Essex, Conn.

Apparently continued the business established by Benjamin Bee as he sold taps in New York under the name of New York Tap & Die Co., after the original company of that name ceased to exist. Wiley & Russell of Greenfield purchased Goddard's machinery in 1874.

19 - GARDNER TAP & DIE CO., Marion, Ohio

Established first in Cleveland by Mr. Gardner, son of the Gardner who had developed the disc grinder for Chas. H. Besly & Co. and later established his own Gardner Grinder business. Moved to Marion where they operated on a precarious financial basis for some years. Gardner died and four years later, in 1932, the business was discontinued.

20 - GREENFIELD TAP & DIE CORP'N, Greenfield, Mass.

A combination effective in 1912 of Wiley & Russell Mfg. Co., Wells Bros. Co., A.J. Smart Co., and Reece Bros. Co., and several other firms not tap makers. Wiley & Russell Mfg. Co. and Wells Bros. Co. were among the largest and most successful of the tap manufacturers. Both companies specialized in the manufacture of screw plate sets, Wiley & Russell with the Lightning die, the first good adjustable die on the market, and Wells Bros. Co. with the Little Giant die, which became the leading hand operated die. Reece Brothers developed the round die, split on one side for a screw adjustment, a style still very popular.

- 21 - HANSON, HENRY M., Worcester, Mass.

For many years this firm has made very low priced taps for the chain stores, selling standard sizes and pitches in comparatively large quantities but in no competition with most of the other tap manufacture whose product has been used chiefly by manufacturers of mechanical goods while Hanson's taps have been purchased by amateurs for small repair jobs.

- 22 - HANSON-WHITNEY MACHINE CO., Hartford, Conn.

Manufacturers of various machinery and tool items, engaged in the manufacture of ground thread taps about 1920. They have continued to specialize on that grade and are a very recognized high quality leader.

- 23 - HARDINGE BROS. CO., Chicago, Ill.

For many years they manufactured small taps and dies, but their other lines, Bench Lathes, watchman's clocks, etc., were evidently more profitable as the tap line was discontinued and the firm moved to New York State.

- 24 - HOLROYD & CO., Waterford, N. Y.

One of the older tap manufacturers. Some of their people have claimed they were the first to manufacture screw plates. It seems possible that one of the Holroyds made a few screw plates during the 1860's, but it seems the firm was established about 1875. It was well known and quite prosperous up to 1900, but decrease in demand for blacksmith's screw plates, on which they specialized, led to closing up the business about 1910.

- 25 - JONES & LAMSON MACHINE CO., Springfield, Vermont

Started to make ground thread taps about 1920 and pushed their sale with considerable energy for a few years, then gradually dropped out of the tap business and went into production of very high grade thread grinding machines.

- 26 - KING, J. M. & CO., Waterford, N. Y.

At one time prominent in the manufacture of screw plates and taps, chiefly for blacksmith's use. Contemporaries of Holroyd & Co. on the same class of tools, and discontinuing business about the same time, probably about 1910.

- 27 - KING TAP & TOOL CO., North Attleboro, Mass.

Established about 1937 by former employees of Winter Bros. Co.

- 28 - MORSE TWIST DRILL & MACHINE CO., New Bedford, Mass.

Started in the tap manufacturing business in the early 1870's when they purchased through Manning, Maxwell & Moore of New York the patented thread milling machinery made and used by Benjamin Bee, operator of the New York Tap & Die Co. of Bridgeport, Conn. The Morse tap and die line has been of fine quality comparable with their specialty, twist drill.

29 - MOREHOUSE & CO., Mansfield, Mass.

Established about 1880. Made rather an inexpensive grade of taps and there was no particular sales effort so they operated for only a few years.

30 - NEW YORK TAP & DIE CO., West Harwich, Mass. and Bridgeport, Conn.

Established by Benjamin Bee in 1867. Probably the first commercial tap makers in America. See previous report on Benjamin Bee.

31 - POLK, A. J. & SONS CO.

Now a part of Alvord Polk Tool Co., Millersburg, Penna.

One of the older firms, established in 1896 but not well known outside of a limited territory.

32 - PRENTISS, H. & CO., New York City.

Advertised in American Machinist during the 1870's as manufacturers of patent relieved, machinist, blacksmith's, gas fitter taps, dies, reamers and screw plates. As Prentiss was a dealer it is probable that his claim to be a manufacturer was not strictly correct though he may have been financially interested as was Manning, Maxwell & Moore in some one of the pioneer Conn. tap makers such as Goddard and Redfern.

33 - PRATT & WHITNEY CO., Hartford, Conn.

Started to manufacture taps and dies 1873-1875. They first made pipe taps and some special long shank taps for tapping track bolt nuts for the Consolidated, now the N.Y., N.H. & H.R.R. During the next twenty years the tap and die business and the manufacture of other small tools increased to such an extent that in 1893 their small tool business was segregated from their machinery line. The P & W Co., was the leader in the early struggle to persuade users of threaded parts to discontinue the use of unstandardized V threads and 1/64 and 1/32 oversize, and adopt the U.S.S. thread system, now called the National.

34 - REECE BROTHERS, Greenfield, Mass.

E.F. and V.J. Reece left the Wiley & Russell Mfg. Co. in 1874 and started making round adjustable dies of the style still popular. They added the manufacture of taps within a short time, but while their mechanical work seemed to be fully up to the average of that time they did not develop anything like as fast as others starting business about the same time. In 1901 they were still small and there was some negotiation toward combining with Winter Brothers Company. Later they reorganized as The E.F. Reece Co., and in 1910 they combined with F.E. Wells & Son Co., which later became part of Greenfield Tap & Die Corporation.

35 - REDFERN - Somewhere in Connecticut

Probably an offshoot of New York Tap & Die Co. or E.A. Goddard as they were in business in Connecticut at an early date. They made no noticeable mark in the industry. Taps bearing their name were occasionally seen up to 1900.

36 - REIFF & NESTOR, Lykens, Penna.

Have been in business for many years but have not become particularly well known throughout the trade.

37 - RUSSELL MFG. CO., Greenfield, Mass.

Founded in 1913 by Chas. and Whitman Russell, sons of Chas.P. Russell pioneer tap manufacturer of taps and dies, executive head of Wiley & Russell, one of the leading firms in the industry until 1912 when it combined with others to form G.T.D. Corp'n. The Russell Mfg. Co. specialized in the manufacture of screw plates similar to the "Little Giant" invented by Wells Brothers and now made by G.T.D. Corp'n. The business was carried on in a comparatively small way for many years before it was discontinued.

38 - STANDARD TOOL CO., Cleveland, Ohio

Started to manufacture taps about 1900. Shortly after that time when Winter Bros. Co. was quite new in the business it was proposed to sell to Standard, as that firm needed experienced tap makers. The history of the industry might have been entirely different if that combination had been made.

39 - SMART, A. J. & CO., Greenfield, Mass.

Organized in 1906 by A.J. Smart and his three sons when they left the Wiley & Russell Mfg. Co. They operated quite a successful business for a few years until joining the Greenfield Tap & Die Corporation in 1912.

40 - SUPERIOR TAP CO., Springfield, Vermont, and later at Charlestown, N.H.

Organized about 1900. Secured some volume of business, chiefly from the low price trade. Never became prosperous and discontinued after a few years. When they were in business Winter Bros. Co. furnished them with quite a number of items which they were not fitted to manufacture.

41 - THREADWELL CORP'N, Greenfield, Mass.

This business has had an interesting existence, starting as the American Tap & Die Co. operated by Nichols Bros., cutlery manufacturers. Some years later the American Tap & Die Co. was taken over by the Wells Corp'n which was reorganized as the Threadwell Tool Co., which also was again reorganized as the Threadwell Corp'n.

42 - TOLEDO TAP COMPANY, Toledo, Ohio

Operated for a few years in the early nineteen hundreds, then dropped tap production and took up other lines of manufacture.

43 - WELLS BROS. CO., Greenfield, Mass.

In 1876 Frederick E. and Frank O. Wells with their father Elisha Wells who was the first tap salesman, left the Wiley & Russell Mfg. Co. and established a partnership, Wells Bros., later the corporation Wells Brothers Co. They developed the "Little Giant" two piece die which became the best known hand threading tool in the world. In 1879 Franklin E. Snow became a member of the firm and took charge of sales. In 1890 F.E. Wells retired from Wells Bros. Co. and with his son, Fred W. Wells, organized F.E. Wells and Son Co. to manufacture the "Economy" pipe die and other tools and machinery. Wells Bros. Co. was one of the fastest growing firms in the threading tool industry. In 1912 they combined with Wiley & Russell Mfg. Co. and others to form G.T.D. Corp'n.

44 - WELLS CORPORATION, Greenfield, Mass.

Organized by F.O. Wells formerly of Wells Bros. Co. and G.T.D. Corp'n. Mr. Wells had a number of ideas on tap design and tap manufacturing equipment which he thought should be valuable, so he undertook to form a new tap manufacturing combine starting with the American Tap & Die Co. but his efforts to interest Winter Bros. Co. and others were without success. The Threadwell Tool Co. took over the equipment and continued the manufacture of taps.

45 - WELLS, F. E. & SON CO.

Organized in 1890 by F.E. Wells when he left Wells Bros. Co. Manufactured the "Economy" pipe die and other threading tools, also considerable small machinery. They took over Reece Bros. Co. in 1910 and later combined with G.T.D. Corp'n.

46 - WELLS TAP & DIE CO., Greenfield, Mass.

F. E. Wells formerly of Wells Brothers, then F.E. Wells & Son Co., started again with his son in 1929 to manufacture screw plate sets but business never developed.

47 - WILEY, RUSSELL MFG. CO., Greenfield, Mass.

John J. Grant of Northampton, Mass. went to Greenfield in 1871 with a patented round two piece die, the halves being held in correct relationship in a collet and adjustable by two taper headed screws and started to manufacture these in a small way. It was far ahead of any threading tools then in use and attracted the attention of Solon L. Wiley and Chas. P. Russell, who went into business with Grant to manufacture these dies under his patent. The "Lightning" screw plate was for some years the leader in thread cutting tools until surpassed by the "Little Giant" brought out by the Wells Brothers. In 1874 when the business had increased to employ about 40 men Grant's interest was purchased and the firm became Wiley & Russell Mfg. Co., which for some years was the largest manufacturer of taps and dies. In 1912 they united with Wells Bros. Co. and others to form G.T.D. Corp'n.

48 - WINTER BROTHERS COMPANY, Wrentham, Mass.

Organized in 1899 by John, Murray and Allan Winter, all of whom had acquired considerable tap manufacturing experience with S.W. Card Mfg. Co. They started in a very small way with practically no working capital. During the early years there was an offer to purchase by Standard Tool Co. and there were also some negotiations with Reece Brothers. Allan Winter soon dropped out of the original partnership and a Rhode Island Corporation was organized, but re-organized under a Massachusetts charter in 1904. For several years the business was the smallest of about sixteen others then operating, but continually advanced to fourth place in production in 1929 when purchased by the National Twist Drill & Tool Co. Winter Bros. Co. was the first of the tap manufacturers to use for its regular product special tungsten and chromium alloy steel; the first to put high speed steel taps on the market; and the first to grind tap threads in 1914 as a regular product.

49 - WOOD & SPENCER CO., Cleveland, Ohio

A firm well established in the manufacture of screw machine products when they became interested in taps through contact with the Gardner Tap & Die Co. and Roy Smart, son of A.J. Smart, the Greenfield tap manufacturer. They have become well established during the last twenty years but the business does not seem to be widespread.

50 - VERMONT TAP & DIE CO., Lyndonville, Vermont.

Organized in Newport, Vermont, in 1920, by former employees of Butterfield & Co. After some years of struggle for existence, control was purchased by C. H. Davis, a lumber and pulp dealer, who moved the business to Lyndonville in 1929. Since that time there has been a steady development.