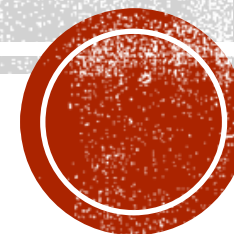


# FORGING A NEW COMMUNITY—

History of Blacksmiths in Saratoga





## **HISTORY OF BLACKSMITHS**

- Been around since 1500 BC when people used iron instead of bronze for weapons and tools
- Right up to the Industrial Revolution, blacksmiths made most objects using iron and steel by hand







## HOW DID THE BLACKSMITH GET HIS NAME?

- Two theories of where the blacksmith got his name:
- 1. From the German word “smithaz” which means skilled worker
- 2. “smith” comes from the old English word “smythe” which means “to strike”
- The “black” in blacksmith refers to iron oxide as iron is heated and exposed to air it turns black
- The term blacksmith has been used since the 15<sup>th</sup> century and means “a smith who works with iron.”







## INTERESTING FACT ABOUT THE BLACKSMITH....

- During Colonial times if you needed a tooth pulled, the local barber or blacksmith would do the job.....because they had the tools!!





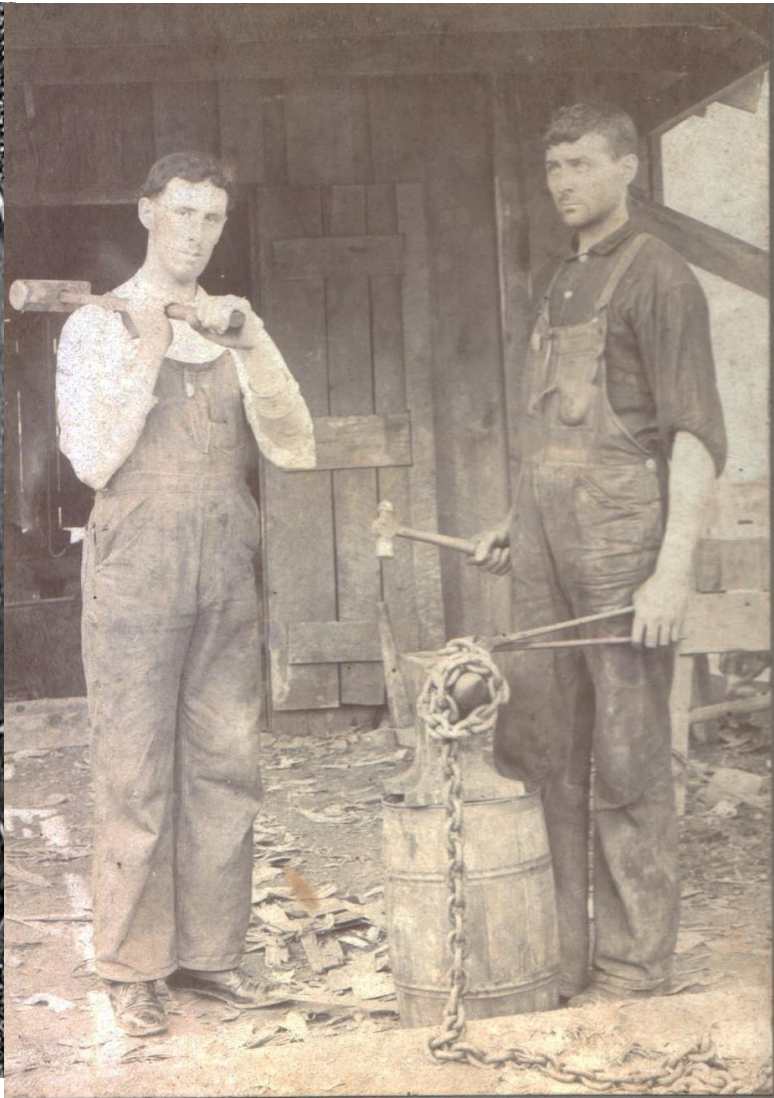
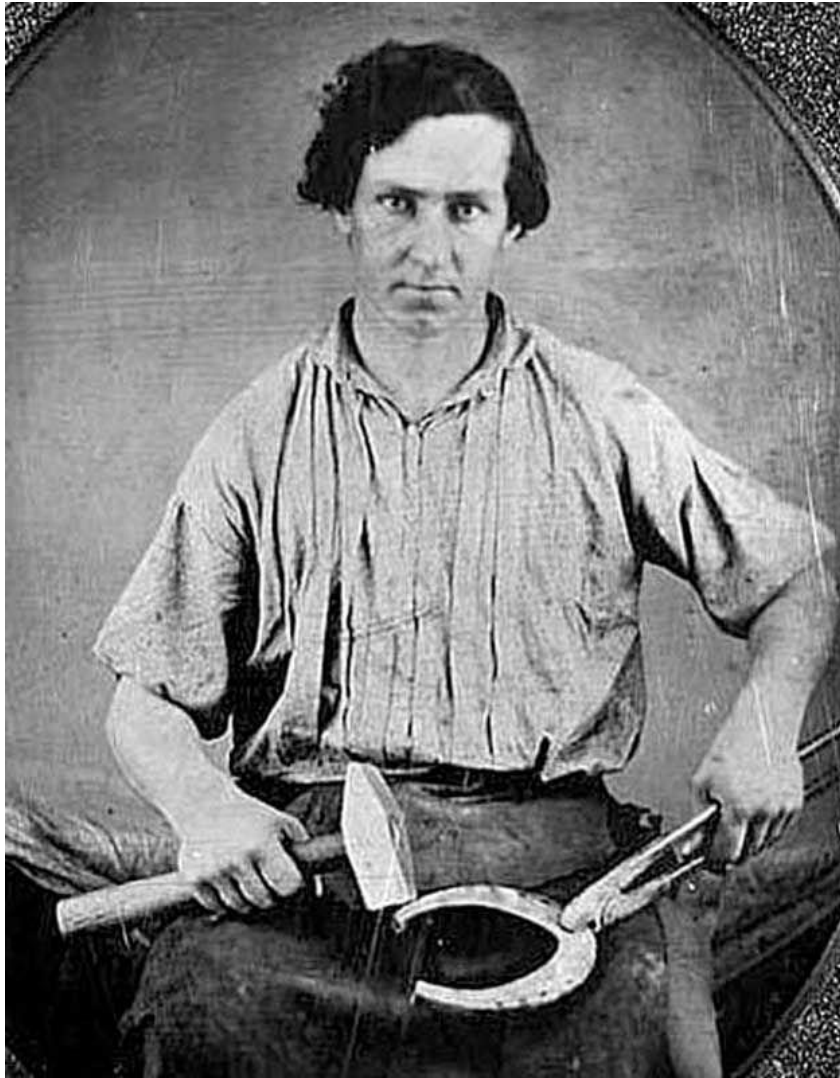


## THE GOLDEN AGE OF THE BLACKSMITH

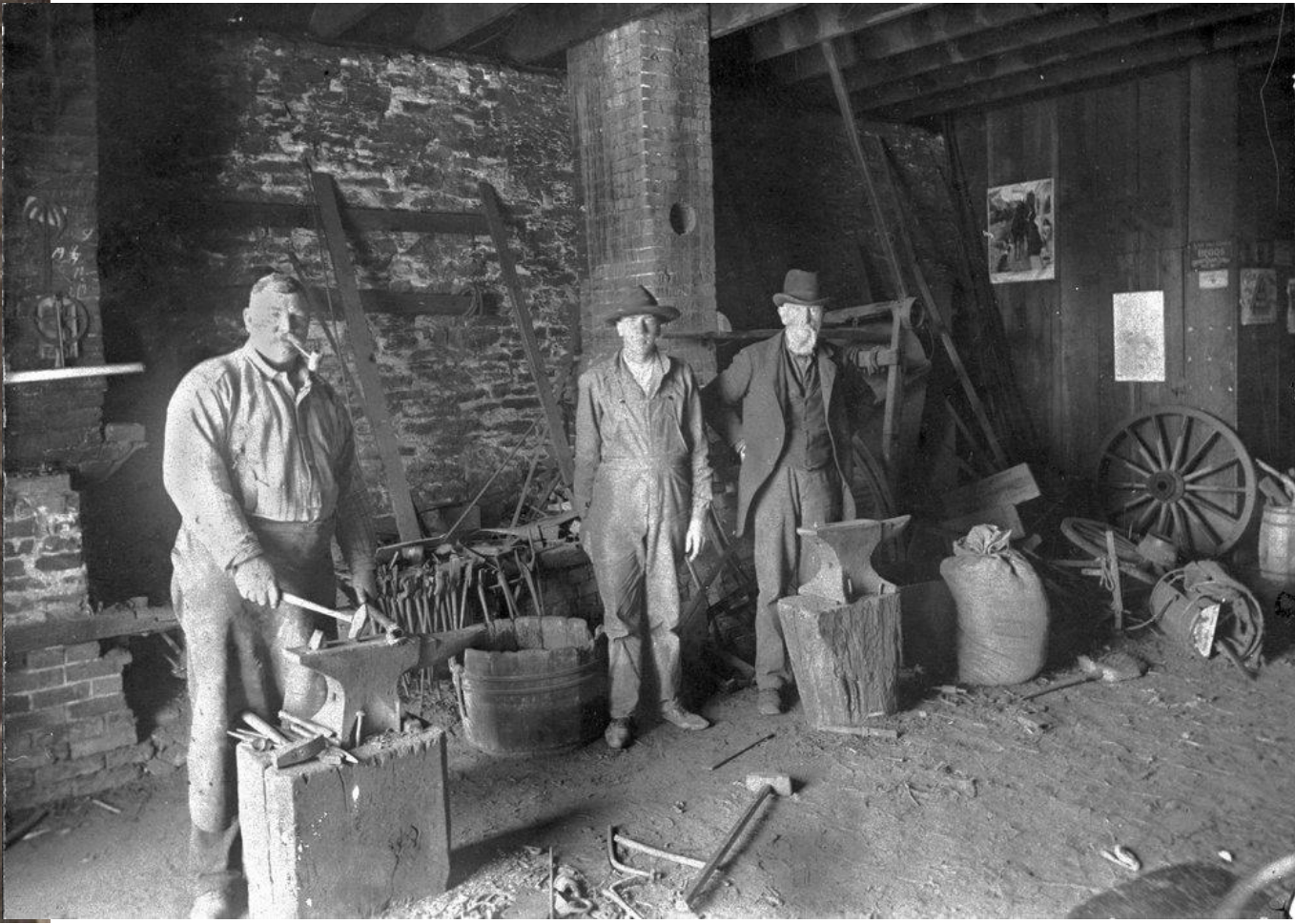
- In 1850 when Henry Jarboe came to McCartysville people were delighted
- At the time Saratoga had both lumber and agricultural industries
- People relied on blacksmiths in their communities for many things and services
- During the 1800s people were moving from farms to cities and needed reliable transportation















## COMMUNITY RESPECT

- Both tradesman and business man
- Maintained detailed records of work
- Kept a ledger or day book of work
- Many held positions of respect in the community
- Children especially enjoyed watching the blacksmith work
- The blacksmith shop was often the center of information about the town







## **PAYMENT**

- Basic repair of farm implements such as plows, rakes and other equipment ranged between \$1.00 to \$1.50 per day
- New products could earn \$5.50 per day
- Or the blacksmith could negotiate exchanging services for milk, butter, meat or other items







## IMPORTANCE OF THE BLACKSMITH

King Arthur of Camelot in evaluating trade people

- Asked tailor, carpenter, stone mason, goldsmith who was the most talented
- When asked who made their tools they responded, the blacksmith
- The blacksmith also said he made his own tools because that was his craft!







# LEARNING TO BECOME A BLACKSMITH

- Blacksmiths depended on apprenticeships to learn the trade
- Apprentices received room and board for assisting
- Children as young as 10 could become an apprentice; after 10 years became a journeyman
- At this time women were not blacksmiths unless they worked with a husband or father
- No known female blacksmiths in Saratoga!





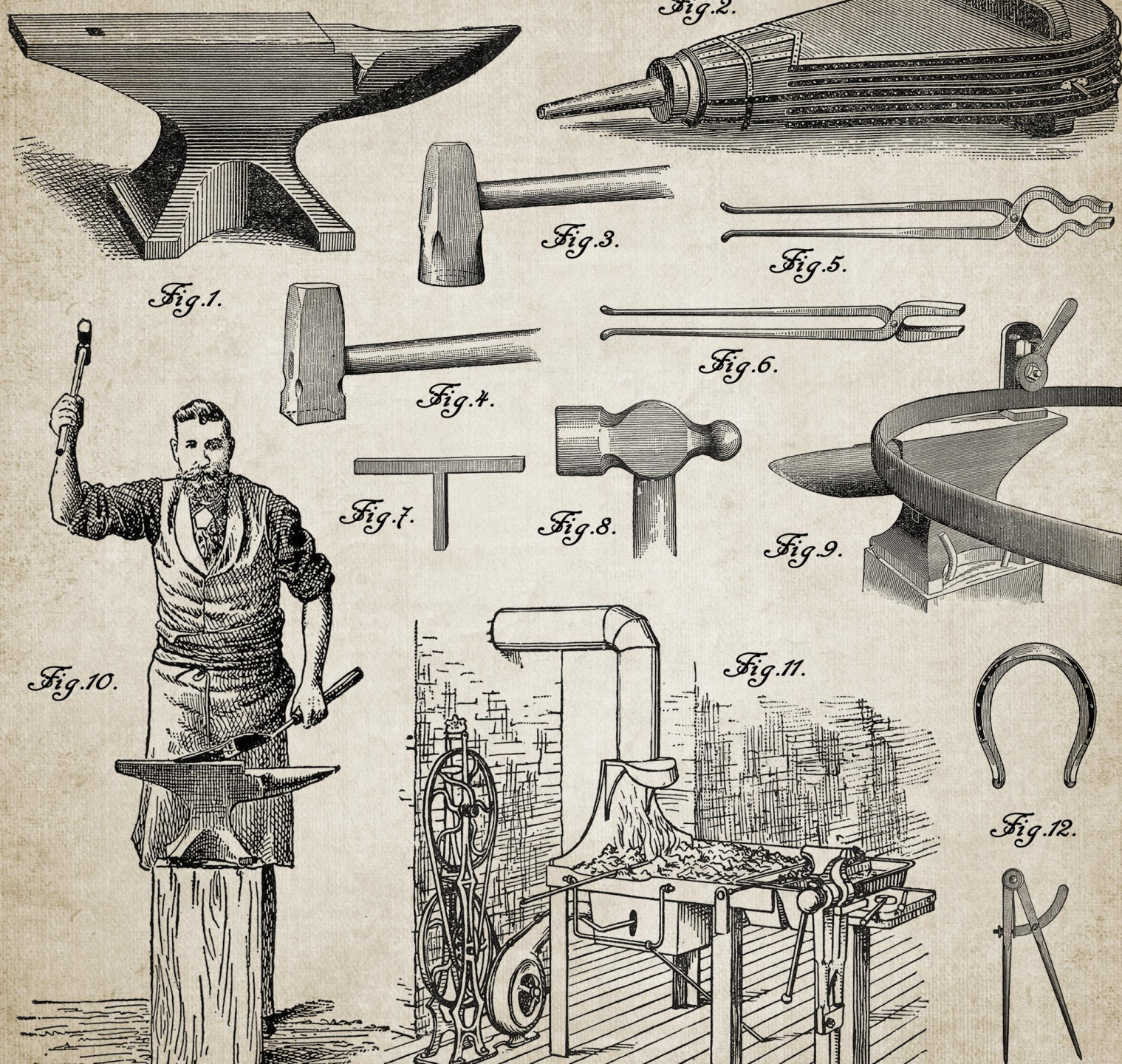


## EARLY DAY RECYCLING

- Before the mid 19th century many blacksmiths were working with wrought iron
- It was cheaper and easier to shape
- As demand for equipment changed, steel became more readily available
- Steel became the metal of choice for large farm tools
- Wrought iron was used for small projects and repairs
- Blacksmiths collected scrap metal for projects to save on money







## ESSENTIAL TOOLS

- Essential tools needed by a blacksmith included a forge, bellows and an anvil.
- These tools were crucial to properly heat and shape the products







## OTHER TOOLS

- The anvil provided the base for hammering
- Holes on the anvil allowed smiths to punch holes in their project
- The horn or front is curved so the smith can shape the metal
- Other tools included hammers, tongs, wedges and chisels. Hammers and chisels helped shape metal and tongs allowed smiths to move pieces around in the fire







## **NO ACE HARDWARE NEAR BY— CREATIVITY!**

If the blacksmith did not possess the tools required for a specific job, he would make his own

Over the span of a blacksmith's career, he could accumulate hundreds of different tools for one project!







## CLOTHING OF A BLACKSMITH

- A leather apron protected the smith from sparks.
- Typically, the apron was made from cowhide. The apron covered the waist to below the knees.
- Sometimes the apron was split in the middle to allow better mobility for shoeing horses.
- The blacksmith did not wear gloves because he preferred the direct contact with the metal. Some felt the gloves were cumbersome. Most blacksmith's hands were scarred.







## ORGANIZATION OF A BLACKSMITH SHOP

- The forge was the major tool with the anvil close by
- Smaller tools were seen nearby.
- A small waiting area would be close for when customers came by to chat
- Walls and corners housed scrap metal, coal, etc.







## WHAT HAPPENED TO THE BLACKSMITH?

- Railroads linking the country and hardware manufactured and now readily available began affecting the blacksmith's job
- In the latter part of the 1800s, the significance of the blacksmith shifted as industrialization mechanized the processes of many trades
- Mass production threatened to replace the work.







## EXAMPLE

- Before 1850 blacksmiths forged nails at a rate of one per minute
- Nails proved so valuable, people would burn down buildings just to collect the nails
- End of the century, machines could make hundreds of nails per hour and at a cost that made them easily replaceable and inexpensive







## TODAY

- By World War I cars and trucks were available and ended the need for wagons, horse-drawn carriages.
- Blacksmiths made decorative ironworks until World War II.
- Some became mechanics for cars. Today “smithing” is more of a hobby to make attractive, decorative items







## AN HONEST MAN

*“His brow is wet with honest  
sweat*

*He earns whatever he can.*

*And looks the whole world  
in the face.*

*For he owes not any man.”*

*Henry Wadsworth  
Longfellow*

*The Village Blacksmith*







# BLACKSMITHS IN SARATOGA

McClain

Henry Jarboe 1850

James McWilliams 1864

Martin Kane 1895

AP DeRome

Peter Hansen 1891-1976

Robert Pfeffer

Jim Wilson 1916

Bert Bertelsen 1925

Jim Kern

Sherman Aber







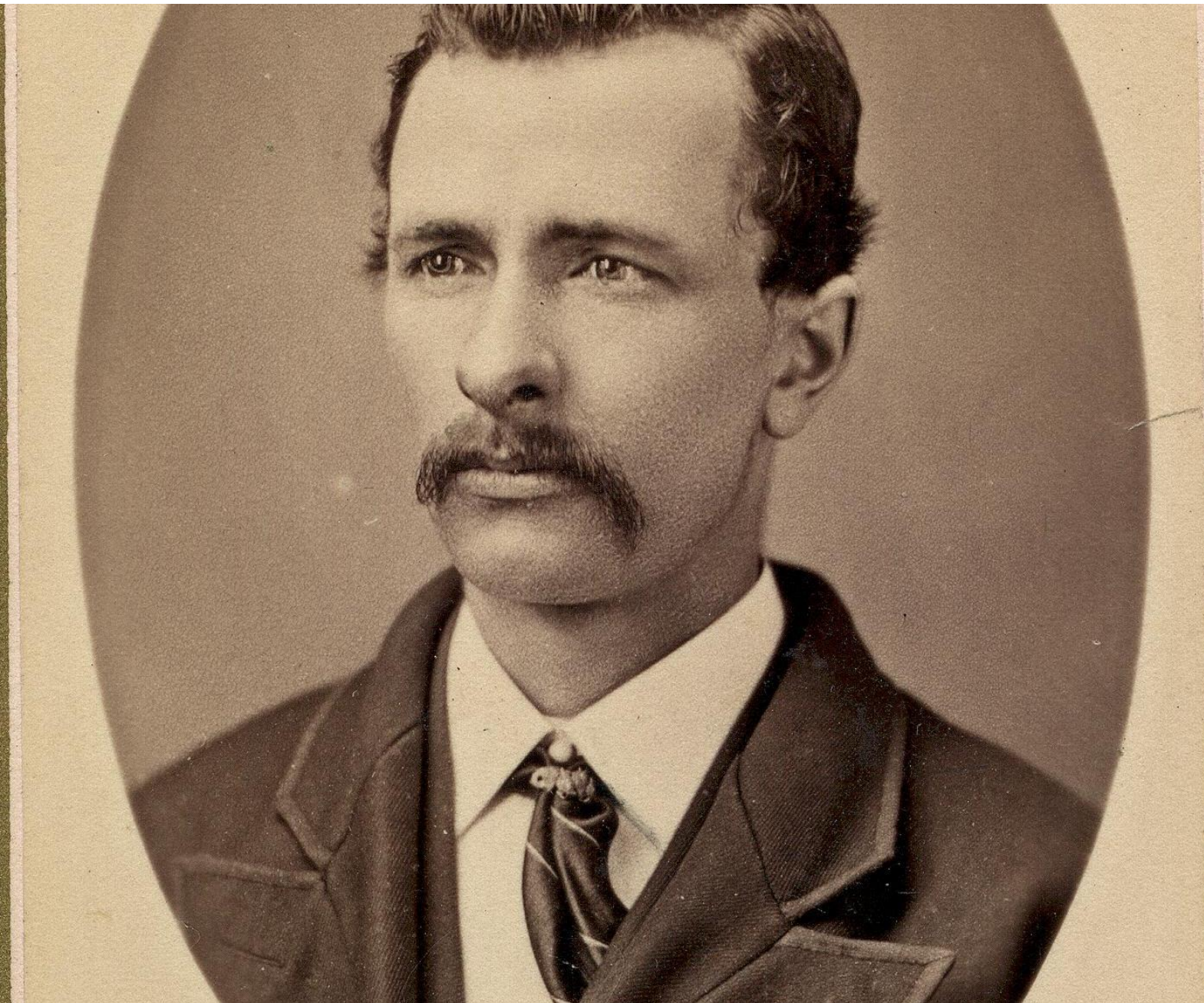
# HENRY JARBOE

## 1818-1904

- Born in Kentucky
- Moved to Texas where he became a Texas Ranger
- Married Mary Conn and came to McCartysville in 1850
- Established a blacksmith shop located off of Lumber Street
- Invested in a lime kiln and later was one of the organizers of the Saratoga-Pescadero Turnpike
- Active in the community







## **JAMES MCWILLIAMS (1836-1900)**

- Born in Scotland and moved to the US where he settled in Illinois
- Came to California in 1859 after completing service in the army.
- Married Martha Hollen and moved to McCartysville where he bought the blacksmith shop and house from Henry Jarboe for \$500 in 1864
- McWilliams was on the Madronia Cemetery Board as well as active in the community







# MARTIN KANE

## 1863-1941

- Born in Pennsylvania.
- Apprenticed to a blacksmith in NY for four years.
- Moved to Oregon where he married Mary Macoon.
- In 1892 they came to Saratoga where he established a blacksmith shop
- The two story building on Lumber Street was called Kane's Hall. The bottom floor was the blacksmith shop the top, a social center.
- 1902 he became the local justice of the peace.
- He was a member of the Fraternal Aid of Saratoga, the Foresters of America, on the Saratoga Board of Trade. And he was the first volunteer fire chief!







# BERT BERTELSEN

## 1883-1954

- Born in Denmark.
- Apprenticed as a blacksmith for 3 ½ years in Denmark
- Joined the Danish Army and after fulfilling his service resumed being a blacksmith.
- Came to California in 1913 where he was a blacksmith in Davis for 4 months
- Moved to Saratoga in 1916 and bought Jim Wilson's blacksmith shop which was located on Saratoga-Sunnyvale.
- In 1915 he bought the Kane building and moved his blacksmith shop to the new location.
- In 1946 he had a heart attack and closed his shop.
- Member of the American Order of the Foresters, IOOF, Saratoga Improvement Club and president of the San Jose Lodge of Danin.







## **NEW BLACKSMITH EXHIBIT- 2023**

Steve Benzing, architect

Behrouz Behrouzian of Bp-Pak

Ernie Kraule, Project Manager

- Built of redwood, this false front, new addition to the Historical Park will be enjoyed by all ages. It will be a welcome addition to our Pioneer Living classes.







## **OPENING SOON....**

You will see inside:

- Forge, anvil and bellows
- Tools a wheelwright would use for wagon, cart repair
- Sharpening tools for scissors, saws etc.
- Tools for repairing plows
- Tools a farrier would use to shoe horses
- Household items, i.e. pots, latches, keys patched or made







## **OTHER ATTRACTIONS**

- Grand opening planned for March or April
- Demonstrations by real blacksmiths on the patio
- Inside AV showing how work was done
- Quarterly demonstrations by blacksmiths on the patio







# THANK YOU

- Valley Foundation
- Sereno Group
- Cooper-Garrod Estate Winery
- Ann & Rick Waltonsmith
- Peck Family
- Locke & Amy June Jorgensen
- Jim and Jane Asher
- History San Jose
- Saratoga Federated Church
- City of Saratoga
- Many small and large donations!







## **THANK YOU!**

Come see us at 20450  
Saratoga-Los Gatos Road,  
Saratoga. Open 1-4 on Friday,  
10-4 on Saturday and 1-4 on  
Sunday. Free admission.

You can also see an exhibit in  
the lobby of the Saratoga  
library of the history of the  
blacksmith in Saratoga from  
December-end of January

