

**BUCK BROTHERS,  
MILLBURY, MASS.**



The most complete assortment in the United States of *SHANK, SOCKET FIRMER, and SOCKET FRAMING*  
**CHISELS,**

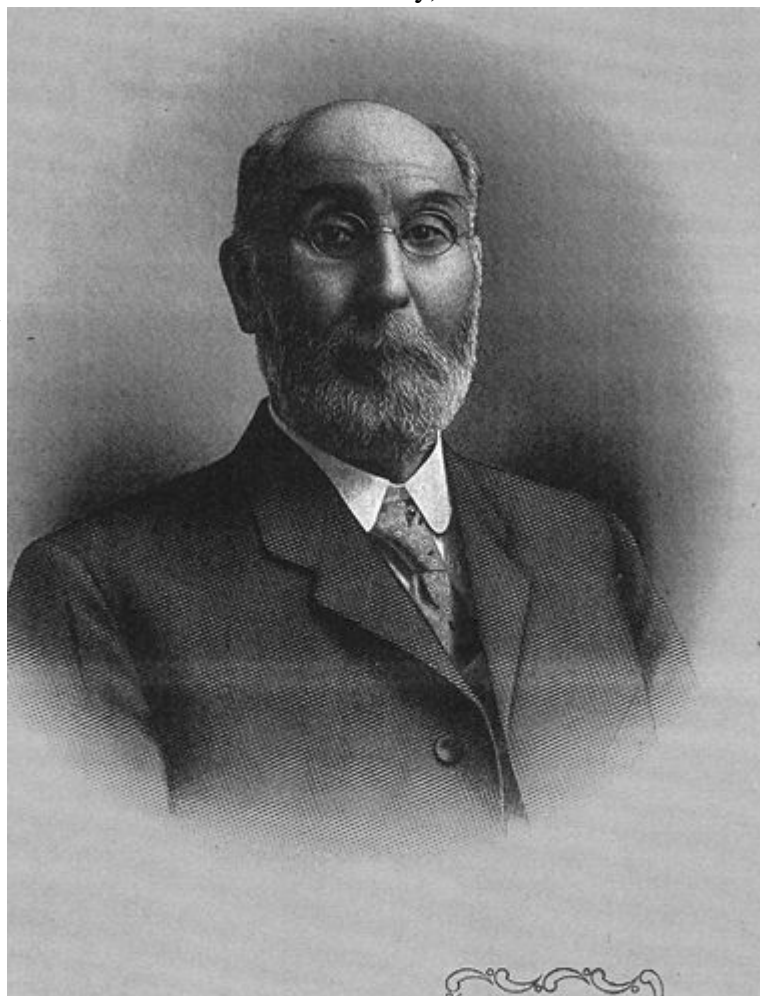
Also *GOUGES* of various lengths and circles, bevelled inside or outside; *NAIL-SET, SCRATCH, and BELT AWLS*; *CHISEL HANDLES* of all kinds; *PLANE IRONS OF THE BEST QUALITY*. Ask for them, and give them a trial.

## Buck Brothers

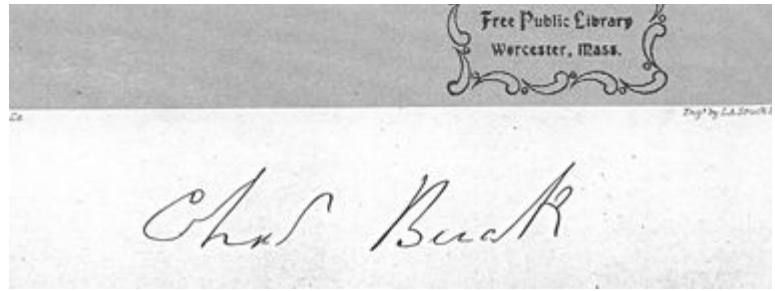
Unlike the mysterious personal life of fellow Millbury, MA edge tool maker T.H. Witherby, the history of the Buck Brothers is fairly well known thanks to John Kebabian's 1972 EAIA Chronicle article and Ken Roberts' 1976 "Commentary Concerning the Buck Brothers" which accompanied his reprint of the 1890 Buck Brothers catalog (now re-reprinted by Astragal Press). For this history of the Buck Brothers, I've gone back to many of their original sources, and, during the course of my own research, I have uncovered a few more that help to fill in some gaps. Especially noteworthy are an 1865 catalog and Richard Buck's diary (which is owned by the Massachusetts Historical Society).

One of the most interesting things that I have uncovered is where the Buck Brothers got their start. On the cover of the 1890 catalog, they point out that they are "Formerly of Sheffield, England," which means a whole lot in the world of tools. But on the 1865 catalog cover (which looks remarkably similar to the 1890 catalog), they state "*Formerly in the employ of Messrs. Spear and Jacksons, Wm. Ash and Co., and other First-Class Manufacturers, of Sheffield, England.*" We know that their grandfather was the manager of the Newbold factory, and that they served their apprenticeships under their father (who probably apprenticed under his father at Newbold) so I guess they learned from some of the best.

Also interesting to note is that many of the original etchings from 1865 are still in use in the 1890 catalog! Kinda makes it hard to figure out the age of your tools if the same catalog drawings are being used 25 years after they were drawn.



Here is a brief timeline of the Buck Brothers:



1746 -- Joseph Buck (1), grandfather of the Buck Brothers, is born. For thirty years he was the manager of the Newbold factory in Sheffield.

1801 -- Joseph Buck (2), father of the Buck Brothers, is born in Sheffield, England. He spends his life working in various Sheffield edge tool and cutlery manufacturers.

1824 -- Joseph Buck (1) dies.

1825 -- Joseph Buck (2) marries Elizabeth Taylor of Doncaster, England.

1826 -- John Buck born on February 20.

1829 -- Charles Buck born on March 22.

1831 -- R. T. (Richard Taylor) Buck born on October 1.

As noted above, the Brothers Buck all served their apprenticeship with their father. They worked for, among other places, William Ash and Spear and Jackson. We also know that R. T. graduated from People's College in Sheffield.

1849 -- John emigrates to the US. He works in Williamsburg, NY for less than a dollar a day. He soon finds employment with DR Barton in Rochester, NY.

1850 -- Charles (and his wife Isabella) joins John in Rochester and also works as a grinder for DR Barton. DR Barton was possibly the premier edge tool maker at this time. DR Barton won the Gold medal for edge tools at the 1851 Fair of the American Institute of the City of New York. TH Witherby won the silver medal in 1850 (no gold medal was awarded that year), but the following year apparently Barton made a huge impression on them and awarded him the gold medal. [Click here for a DR Barton ad from the 1851 Rochester Directory.](#)

John and Charles are listed in the Rochester Directory from 1851 to 1853, although it is known that John moved to Newark, NJ for a short period during these three years.

1853 -- John and Charles move to Worcester, MA. Shortly thereafter, R. T. joins them in Worcester. They are officially the Buck Brothers and they work out of the Junction Shop on Southbridge Street. The catalogs all say "Established 1853."

R. T. marries Elizabeth Edge on November 10, 1853. They had four children: Willie (died at age 6), Mary Anne (died at 19), Anne, and Sarah.

1855 -- Charles' wife Isabella dies. They had three children: Elizabeth and Isabella and one who died in infancy. Charles then marries Mary Small, and she bore him four children: Mary Earnest, Joseph, and Martha. In 1864 his second wife died. Charles then married Maria Kendall. She bore him four children:

Charles (died at age 3), Josephine, Julia, and Edith.

1857 -- For the first time in print, as far as I can tell, the Buck Brothers are listed as a business in the Worcester City Directory.

Buck Alexander, laborer, h 27 Laurel  
Buck Charles, (Buck, Brothers,) h 19 Lamartine  
Buck John, Buck, Brothers, (Charles & Richard,) chisel manuf'rs  
at Junction shop, h 96 Southbridge  
Buck Richard, (Buck, Brothers,) h 96 Southbridge  
Buck Spaulding, machinist, h Chatham place  
Buckley Cornelius, laborer, h Temple

1864 -- Charles and R. T. buy from Andrus March his privilege on Dorothy Stream (also called Dorothy Pond Brook). This was the former site of T. H. Witherby.

In the 1865 catalog, there is a prefatory letter letting people know about the move:



*Richard T. Buck*

#### TO THE HARDWARE TRADE

*During eleven years, our business was located in the city of Worcester. Last year we had a favorable chance to build a shop in Millbury-six miles south-on the P. & W. R. [Providence & Worcester Railroad], where we have better facilities for doing our work, and as good advantages for shipping goods.*

*All telegrams should be sent to Millbury-and we hope our friends will address their letters there. But they may be sent as heretofore, as we shall continue our box at the Worcester Post Office.*

*We wish to call the special attention of the trade to our Socket Firmer Chisels, of which there are three kinds-they are especially suitable for the Retail Trade, and we consider them the best goods in market.*

*We shall at all times make it our object to sell our goods as low as we can afford; but would suggest that we must not be expected to sell as low as other makers who do not use as good stock, nor pay as much for labor, and who do not give that personal attention to the workmen that we do.*

*We feel grateful to our numerous patrons for the encouragement they have given us in the past. We hope to deserve a continuance; and determine that our goods shall keep the front rank-which we find is*

*conceded to them, not only by our dealers, but also by the manufacturers in the same business.*

*It may be well for those friends who call on us, to first enquire for R. T. Buck's residence, as samples and store-rooms are near there; --the works being nearly a mile distant.*

*Yours very truly,*

**BUCK BROTHERS**

*Millbury, Mass., June 15, 1865.*

John is no longer a partner in the business. He continued on in Worcester, making files with John Reeves under the name Buck & Reeves. In later years he worked for his brothers, but never was a full partner.

1865 -- Their father, Joseph Buck, dies.

Employees of Buck Brothers listed in the 1871 Millbury Directory:

*Forgers:*

Lewis Spring, Jr.

Thomas Surr

*Grinders:*

Edward Drammo

Joseph Headh

Richard Pickering

*Polisher:*

Peter White, Jr.

*Misc:*

Ethan Allen

Prime Durocher

John Holmes



1872 -- On March 1, Charles sells his share of the business to R. T. and opens the Charles Buck Edge Tool Company on Grafton Street in Millbury on property he had bought in 1865.

John Buck dies on September 24, 1872 at age 46.

1875 -- R. T. copyrights the Buck's Head logo and starts marking tools with this logo. Thus, if your chisel has a Buck's Head on it, it was made on or after 1875, although not all the chisels made after 1875 has the logo.

By 1875, Charles Buck's business is well underway. He placed the following notice in the November, 1875 "Manufacturer and Builder": "Mr. Chas. Buck, of Millbury, Mass., late of the firm of Buck Bros., the well-known tool makers, is now engaged in the manufacture of every variety of firmer and socket-chisels and gouges, cast steel turning chisels and gouges, cast steel nail sets and scratch awls, machine gouges, and a large variety of special tools for mechanics, all of which he keeps constantly on hand, and all orders sent to him will have prompt attention."

1878 -- R. T. builds a new factory-the Riverlin Works-which can be seen in the 1890 catalog. Unfortunately, this building no longer stands. R. T. also builds twenty houses, known as Buck's Village, for his employees to rent. (My wife's aunt actually lived in one of these houses in the 1970s.)

1880 -- R. T. sues Charles over the use of the Buck Brothers name. Charles is forced to stop using the name. It is not clear to me if there are tools out there marked Buck Brothers which were made by Charles, or if he merely implied some sort of relationship in his ads or on letterhead or labels, etc.

1893 -- R. T. dies on January 12 at age 62. He is one of the wealthiest men in Millbury. R. T.'s sons-in-law, William Proctor (Sarah's husband) and E. M. Wood (Annie's husband), take over the business.

1905 -- William Proctor buys out E. M. Wood's share of Buck Brothers and becomes the sole owner.

Charles Buck dies on August 24, 1905. His death was reported in the New York Times: "Charles Buck, leading manufacturer of edge tools, doing business in Millbury, died suddenly at the Methodist camp meeting in Sterling Junction, Mass., yesterday. His age was seventy-six years." The company continued until 1915 when William Proctor buys the company and reunites it with Buck Brothers.

1948 -- After almost 100 years as a family business, Buck Brothers is sold to the New England Metallurgical Corp. of Boston.

1951 -- Buck Brothers is sold to the Great Neck Saw Company of Mineola, NY.

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I am working on a timeline of Buck Brothers logos. Here is a sample of some of the logos on Buck tools from my collection:



## References:

R. T. (Richard Taylor) Buck Diary and Commonplace Book, 1853-1882. Owned by the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Buck Brothers. 1865 *Price List of Chisels, Light Edge Tools, Screw Drivers, etc.* (original owned by the Special Collections Department of the University of Delaware Library)

Buck Brothers. 1890 *Price List of Chisels, Plane Irons, Gouges, Carving Tools, Nail Stes, Screw Drivers, Handles, &c.*

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John S. Keabian. "Early American Factories: Buck Brothers, Millbury, Mass." *The Chronicle of the Early American Industries Association* Vol. 25(1), March, 1972.

*Manufacturer and Builder*, November, 1875.

Ken Roberts. "Commentary Concerning the Buck Brothers" which accompanied his reprint of the 1890 Buck Brothers catalog (printed in 1976--now re-reprinted by Astragal Press).

City Directories of Rochester, NY; Worcester, MA; and Millbury, MA.

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