

Walter A. Wood Mowing and Reaping Machine Company

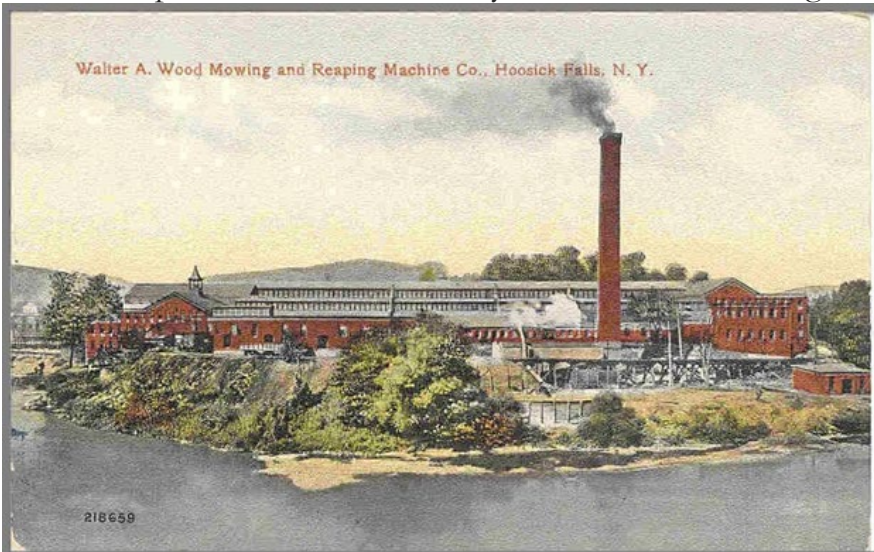
In the fall of 1852, business partners Walter Abbott Wood and his brother-in-law James Russell Parsons traveled to Geneva, NY, where there was an agricultural society-sponsored trial of farm machines. Wood and Parsons purchased a shop license to build the best machine presented there for sale in New York State.

Back in Hoosick Falls, there was an apparent disagreement on how to proceed. Parsons joined with another brother-in-law in forming Ball & Parsons to manufacture Manny Patent mower-reapers. Ball & Parsons would cease production in 1858. That year J. Russell Parsons would join Wood, and the next year Wood would lease the former Ball & Parsons works. Walter A. Wood had grown up at his father's forge and foundry. He examined the Manny machine for improvements, to make models for standardized parts, and improve the design for production. In 1854 he purchased a license for the Haines Header – a machine better suited for dry grain growing areas like California.

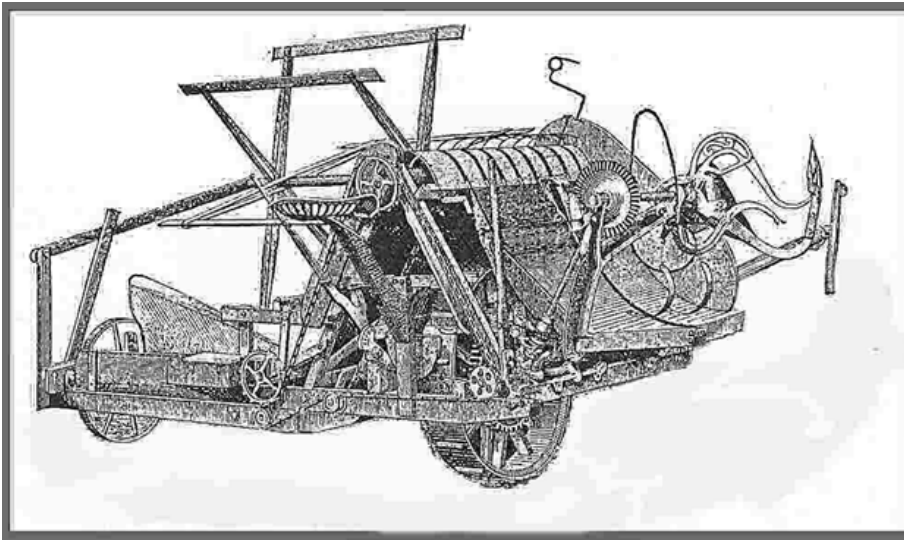
By 1860, Wood had an improved mower and a new combined mower – reaper. He soon decided the combination machine wasn't as good a mower as his separate mower. The mower version of the combined machine was sold as a separate mowing attachment to the reaper. This increased its cost to near that of the separate mower while providing a "combined" machine for those who insisted on buying one. The reaper was improved and became the chain-rake reaper – an early machine that no longer needed a second operator to rake the grain from the platform. Wood had all the patents for this early one-man machine and was able to sell a license for the reaper and the improved mower to Hart Massey for sale in Canada.

During this early period, Wood also established offices in London and Berlin. In Hoosick, he purchased several other buildings near his foundry and leased the former Ball & Parsons shops. In 1860 his company made and sold 6,000 machines. In November 1860, the entire manufacturing area north of the Hoosick River burned. Wood purchased more land and built a new foundry and factory. In 1865 the Walter A. Wood Mowing and Reaping Machine Company was incorporated.

In 1868, it purchased an old factory south of the river to gain more water power at the falls. In March,



1870, there was another disastrous fire which leveled the buildings on the north side of the river. The old factory on the south side was put into manufacturing use while a temporary foundry was built on the north side. A new factory was completed in 1871 with fire sprinklers fed directly from a new reservoir on the nearby hill. The new building was constructed of wood frame inside brick. In 1873, a new foundry was built along Mechanic Street.



Wood had heard that Sylvanus Locke of Wisconsin was working on a binder-harvester. Locke had contacted a major western manufacturer who concluded the idea was impractical. Wood invited Locke to come to Hoosick Falls, and Locke designed a patented wire binder to go on a Wood harvester. Now one machine could cut and bind grain into sheaves. The Wood – Locke machine was the first commercially successful

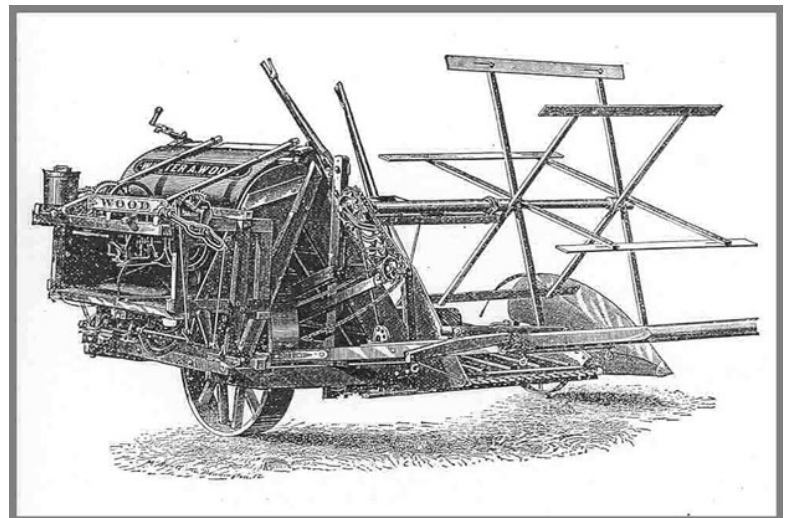
binder harvester in the world. The harvester is shown above.

By 1875, production again reached 23,000 machines, and, with the exception of one year, would remain at that level throughout Wood's lifetime.

In the late 1880s the Wood Company purchased the Minneapolis Harvester Company of St. Paul, Minnesota. In 1889 Walter A. Wood returned in triumph from his third Paris Exposition where his machines were victors in field trials. The Wood company was known worldwide for its quality products and after-sale support. The company's Twine Binding Harvester is shown below.

Walter Abbott Wood died in 1892 as one of the pioneer manufacturers of farm machines to reduce farm labor. In 1895 a national financial panic left the Wood Company unable to pay bondholders. Two receivers were appointed that year. By late 1897, there was a plan to emerge from receivership and form a new Walter A. Wood Mowing and Reaping Machine Company.

By 1910, International Harvester, formed in 1902, had combined the resources of the McCormick and Deering Companies plus several other mower – reaper – harvester manufacturers and dominated the market. International used the income to expand its line with a goal of providing a competitive model of every machine used by farmers in the United States. This was a blow to sales of Wood products.



World War I created the conditions that ended the Wood Company. The war destroyed the European market and war debts led countries to drastically cut U.S. imports. There were strikes at home, and too much competition for a now shrinking farm market. By 1923, another receiver was appointed, and the Wood company assets were sold off in 1924.