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RICHARDSON BROS. SAW COMPANY

By Bob Garay

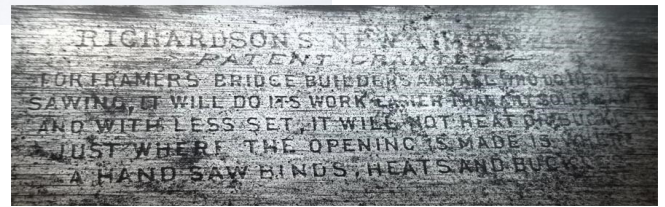
There are a few very early saw makers in New Jersey. The earliest recorded maker is Isaac Harrow who made mill saws and crosscut saws in Trenton, NJ around 1734. Erwin L. Schaffer in his book *Hand Saw Makers of North America*, lists some early makers in New Jersey. Benjamin Yard – Trenton, 1745. John Zane & Humphrey Whitehead – Trenton, 1769. H. Worrall & Co. - Elizabethport 1839. American Saw Co. – Trenton, 1849. Samuel Kennedy - Trenton 1857.



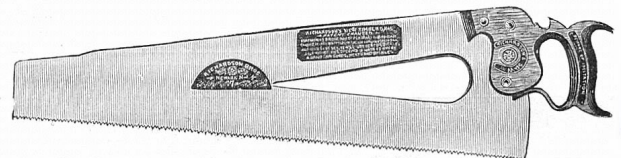
Above - Very unique Timber saw with cutout to reduce friction.

But the largest saw maker during New Jersey's early years were the Richardson Brothers of Newark, NJ. Christopher and William C. Richardson established their saw works at 15 Railroad Avenue, Newark, NJ in 1859. From the company's inception, Christopher Richardson was a prolific innovator in the area of saw manufacture. He was granted 9 patents. Among his innovations was a method to temper the steel used in the saw blade. This tempering process made a blade that cut better, stayed sharp longer and was more durable. The Richardson's saw works had few peers when quality and reputation were considered. Their firm went under the name C. & W.C. Richardson up to the year 1866 when it was changed to Passaic Saw Works – Richardson Brothers. In spite of the name, Christo-

pher seems to have taken over full management after 1869. During the late 1870', the "Passaic Saw Works" was dropped from the title and only Richardson Brothers was retained.



ESTABLISHED 1860.
RICHARDSON'S LATEST PATENT. TIMBER SAW.
 For Framers and Bridge Builders and all who do heavy sawing. It will do its work easier than any solid Saw and with less set. It will not heat or buckle. Just where the opening is made is where a Hand Saw binds, heats and buckles.
RICHARDSON'S CELEBRATED SAWS
 are unequalled for Fine Temper and Workmanship, and have justly obtained an enviable reputation wherever introduced.



If your Hardware dealer will not supply you with our Saws, we will send you, direct from the factory, one of our best Saws, express paid, on receipt of price. If not satisfactory will refund the money.
 26 in. Cut-Off or Rip Saw, \$2.00 | In ordering, give the number of teeth to the inch. In sending your order, it will cost less to send P. O. Money Order than to have goods sent C. O. D., which incurs an expense for return charges that can be dispensed with, and a saving to both you and ourselves by sending P. O. Order. We will prepay expressage. Every Saw warranted in all particulars.
 SAMPLE OF TESTIMONIAL: GREEN RIVER, WYOMING TERRITORY, Feb. 5, 1886.
 Timber Saws received O. K.; well liked; send four more at once. A. H. HIGGINS.
RICHARDSON BROS., 15 to 27 River St., NEWARK, N. J.

Above top - Etch on Timber saw - Curtsey of Mike Stemple. Above bottom - Ad featuring the new patented saw.

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Around that time the works were moved to 19-29 River Street. At this location the saw works covered an area of about four acres and in the late 1800's employed close to 200 workers. Christopher Richardson controlled the business until 1990 when he sold it to the National Saw Company. Even then the saws remained etched and medallions were cast Richardson Bros.

As the most productive of early New Jersey saw works, Richardson Brothers made enough saws so that it is not difficult to find examples in good condition today. Because of the various names under which these saws were manufactured, it is reasonably easy to date them.

In 1874 a publication on The Industrial Interests of Newark, NJ. William F. Ford states that Christopher Richardson is the sole proprietor of Richardson Bros. since the death of his brother William. Christopher was the driving force of the Company. He had the technical skills and desire for innovation. In 1867 he received two patents, an Apparatus for Tempering Steel



Above - Early 1860's Richardson saw with no medallion, and early etch. David Latouche photo.



Above - Early 1860's Richardson saw with "Warranted Superior" medallion. Jared Greene photo.



Above & right Early 1860's saw with Richardson's "beaver" medallion. David Latouche photos.



Plates (Pat. #65,946 and another for Improvement in Hand-Saw Frames (Pat. #65,947).

On April 30, 1878 Christopher Richardson registered his "BEST - R" trademark. This consisted of a Maltese cross with an "R" in the center and on each of the four arms letters making up the word "BEST". Thus, this trademark on any saw or saw attachment identifies it as having been manufactured after the date of registry.

The Disston & Sons saw company was making their own spring steel since the mid 1850's. All other saw making companies had to source their steel from the U.K., or buy from Disston as they were too small to manufacture it themselves. As Disston & Sons were very involved with politics they lobbied to keep high tariffs on this imported steel. Thus they would keep their advantage by making their own steel. This made it very difficult for any saw making company to compete with the largest saw making company - Disston & Sons. In 1890, the Rich-



Above - Mid 1860's saw with flying eagle banner medallion. David LaTouche photo.

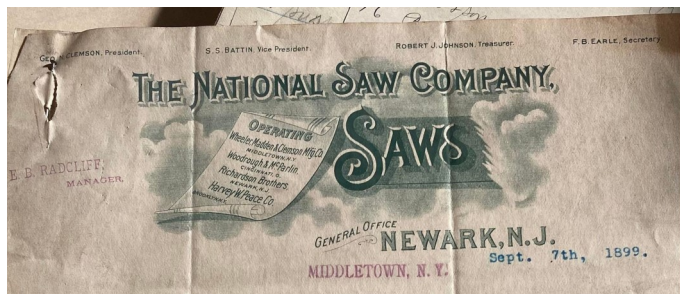


Above - Flying eagle Banner Challenge medallion. This includes the F.Washbourne 1867 patent for soldering the head to the shank of the medallion.



Above is one of the extensive etches Richardson used showing their "BEST" logo in a Maltese cross with an "R" in the center. Below is the medallion from this same era saw with the logo and the T.Munger 1869 medallion patent.





Letterhead of the National Saw Company from 1899 listing the saw companies it includes. Courtesy of Connor Ploski.

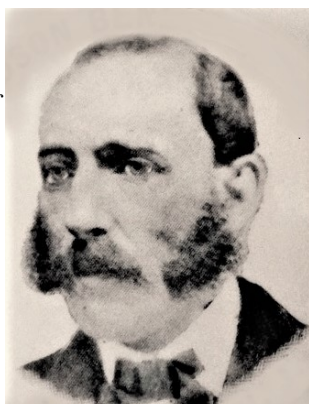
ardson Works were purchased by "The National Saw Co.", an organization set up by Hamilton Disston, who at first kept his involvement a secret. The intention was to buy out and take control of as much the American saw industry, as possible. In a period of three years Disston was able to gain control of the five leading competitors. Richardson was the first one that they went after. Harvey Peace, Woodrough & McParlin, Wheeler, Madden & Clemson, Woodrough & Clemson, were soon to follow.



Above - An ad for the National Saw Co. from the Iron Age magazine Sept 1896.

When Christopher Richardson sold his saw works to the National Saw Co., he was under the impression that it was a group of investors, who were attempting to consolidate the interests of a number of saw makers, in order to gain a competitive edge with the Disston's, and issued this statement:

"Owing to poor health, I have been compelled to dispose of the business carried on for the last 30 years under the name of Richardson Brothers. In, retiring, I wish to express my thanks to the many customers with whom I have had such pleasant dealings, and trust they will continue to patronize the Richardson Saw with the same feeling in the future as in the past. The business will be continued under the name Richardson Brothers, though by an entire new ownership. I trust you will forward orders for these Saws, and feel assured that you will still get the genuine best Richardson Saw."



William C. Richardson

Hamilton Disston continued to operate the five companies under the banner of "The National Saw Co." until his death in 1896. Hamilton had committed suicide due to his mishandling of Disston finances with his Florida land investments. This put the company in major financial troubles. William Disston, (Hamilton's brother), took over the Presidency of H. Disston & Sons, and quickly divested the interests of the National Saw Co., along with numerous other interests, and pulled the Disston Company back into solvency within five years. The companies under the "National Saw Co." were broken down, dismantled, and all the goods and equipment were sold off. This was the ending of the Richardson Saw works, the largest saw making company in New Jersey.

The saws of The Richardson Brothers

Among the variety of saws produced by the Richardson Company were: panel, ripping, circular, butcher, bow, back, compass, and pruning saws. They also made scroll saws and fellow webs, knives, cutters, molding irons and springs. Richardson cane knives were a sideline of which they were particularly proud. They sold well both in this country and abroad.

There were many patents Richardson Bros. used with their saws. Some were of his own invention. Below is a listing of these patents. Richardson also patented a Trowel handle and some dining accessories.

- #65946 -1867 - C.Richardson - Tempering steel plates
- #65947 -1867 - C.Richardson - Hand saw frame
- #72766 -1867 - Washbourne - Sawnuts
- #157296 -1874 - C.Richardson flattening & tempering saws
- #183805 -1876 - Holden keyhole saw patent sold by Richardson
- #248045 -1881- Lawson butcher saw patent used by Richardson
- #308703 - 1884 - C.Richardson Cast Iron handle pad Saw
- #315663 - 1885 - C.Richardson - New Timber Saw
- #320169 - 1885 - C.Richardson - Saw handle
- #292951 - 1886 - C.Richardson - Crosscut saw handle
- #343254 - 1886 - C.Richardson - Hacksaw saw buckle
- #364672 - 1887 - C.Richardson - Crosscut saw handle

Thanks to Bill Chambers for this patent information.



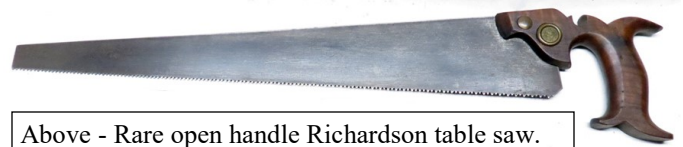
Above - The large and small of it. Here is a 48" long advertising saw with 7 brass fasteners. In front of it is a special order 12" saw. Photo courtesy of Mike Stemple.



Above top - Richardson's special extra quality back saw. It is one of the most spectacular designs I have ever seen in a saw handle.
Above bottom - A open handle back saw with the same all out handle design.



Above - Here is the top of the line Richardson hand saw - their No. 15 with a rosewood handle. It has the flying eagle with the "Challenge" medallion. Perhaps late 1860's - early 1870's. Photo courtesy of Daryl Weir.



Above - Rare open handle Richardson table saw.

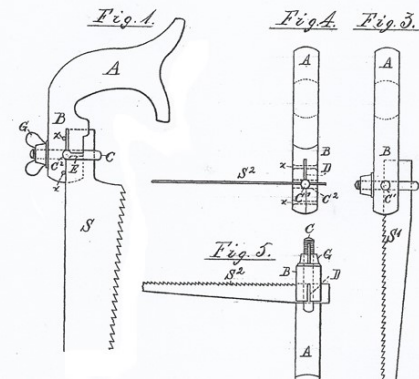


Above - Rare model of the Richardson brass back No.79 no set backsaw to cut kiln dried cabinet grade hardwoods. Photo courtesy of Will Adams.



Above - Special model of top of the line Richardson saws had vine carvings on both sides of the handle. This is a No. 12 saw made for a MA hardware store.

(No Model.)
O. RICHARDSON.
SAW HANDLE.
No. 320,169. Patented June 16, 1885.



Above - Patent drawing of unique key hole saw handle.
Above lower is Richardson saw using this patented feature. Photo courtesy of Bill Chambers.

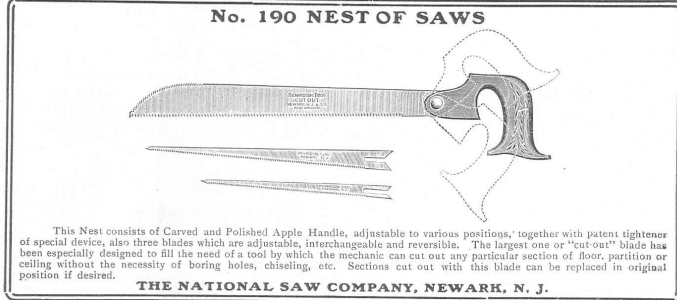
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Above - Rare jointers saw made by Richardson.



Above - Two computer generated images of Richardson saw etches composed by Tom Lamond during his saw studies.



Above - 1909 ad for Richardson No. 190 "Nest of Saws".

Etches used by Richardson Bros.

There was a wide variety of etches used by Richardson over the years. Often very elaborate to catch the attention of would be buyers. They also specialized in adding secondary etches for customers such as hardware stores to capture sales. Below are some of Richardson's etches.



Advertising & Letterheads of Richardson Bros.

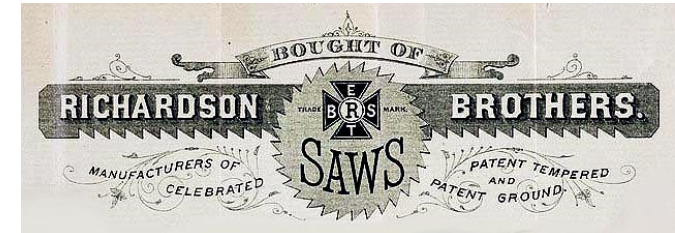
THE RICHARDSON SAWS
 ARE THE BEST IN THE WORLD.
 So say the Thousands of Carpenters who Use them.
 * ONCE USED, ALWAYS USED. *
 Guaranteed to give Perfect Satisfaction where all others Fail.

TRADE MARK. MARK.

All their Saws are Ground TAPER, THIN at the Back, and Warranted SMOOTH CUTTERS. The Richardson Brothers are Thoroughly Practical Saw-Makers. Send for Illustrated Price-List to
RICHARDSON BROS., 15 to 31 River Street, Newark, N. J.
 Established 1860. Incorporated 1890.



Above - Three Richardson logos are from Richardson business envelopes courtesy of Will Adams.



Above - Graphic from a receipt - courtesy of Jack Collins.

There were many people who helped me with this article. But overall it was the research and writings of Alex Farnham in his books on NJ toolmakers who I quoted mostly. Thanks Alex.