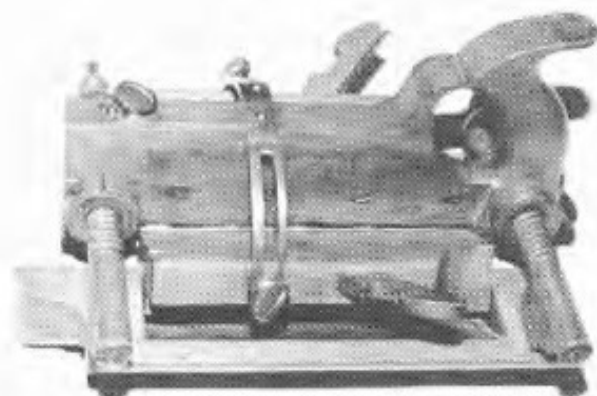


MARCUS B. TIDEY - Planemaker, Inventor, Manufacturer

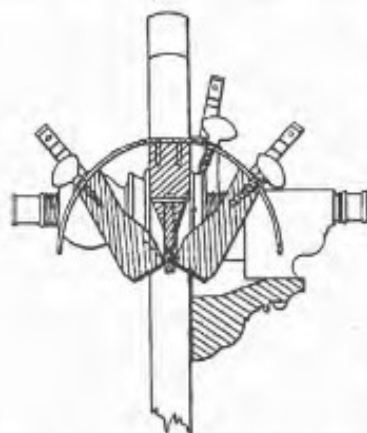
by Bob Garay

I remember seeing a Tidey beveling plane in the CRAFTS auction a few years back and was amazed at the complexity of the tool. I also remember seeing a Tidey Patent wood bench plane. Not wanting to take it apart, I was curious about the patent it had for the iron adjustment. I have come to realize you have to look in the throat to see the metal plate that incorporates the iron adjustment mechanism. I had also heard of the Tidey name mentioned as a New Jersey toolmaker and wondered what he had made and where he had worked. This all came to a head when a fellow CRAFT member said he had gotten a box of paperwork from the Tidey



Tidey beveling plane

estate at a flea market. I was curious as to what mysteries these papers could unfold. Included in this article was the obituary of April 7, 1901 from the Newark Sunday Call newspaper. Reading this only intrigued me to find out more about Marcus B. Tidey. The article states that his parents moved into the Canada wilderness where Marcus learned mechanics from his father who was a civil engineer. Here he must have also learned about wood and woodworking as his father owned and



Front view of Tidey beveling plane

operated a lumber mill. At the age of nineteen Marcus set off on his own and moved to Dundee, NY. There he learned and worked for a planemaker business. Five years later at the age of twenty four he obtained his first invention



Marcus B. Tidey

patent for a beveling plane that cuts a bevel on both corners of a work piece at once. Shortly after this his belongings were destroyed by fire and he moved to Ithaca, NY. Here is where he patented his plane design for securing and adjusting plane irons. Probably discouraged with the profits from his plane making inventions he quickly turned his inventive mind to the table saw. Working with his father at the saw mill probably gave him some insight into how important the table saw was to become in the manufacturing process.

In 1857 Marcus B. Tidey moved to Newark, NJ to open his new table saw manufacturing business. His business was located at 80 Warren St. Over the years he produced improvements in the table saw and was granted over thirty patents. It is this business that the box of letters I acquired from my friend included. Marcus B. Tidey seems to be the inventor



Tidey nameplate with logo

of the modern day table saw. If not the inventor he was a major inventor of its various forms used by early industries. In 1890 Tidey employed eighteen workers. His two sons worked for him and apparently understood the business. They shared the responsibility of operating the manufacturing departments with a man only named as Keil.



Wood-top modern table saw, circa 1880

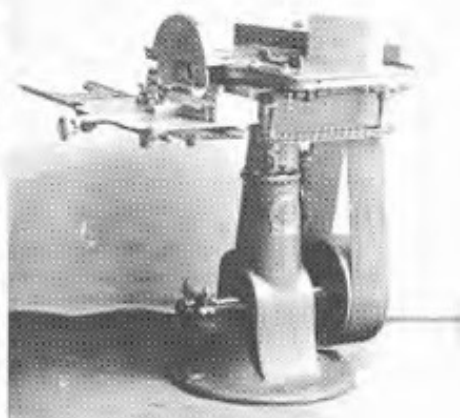
It was his son Marcus Jr. that took over the business upon his death in 1901. His Newark NJ business was expanded when he leased a New York business office. It was his machines that propelled the US and other countries along their way in the Industrial Age. His various designs of table saws were sold and used across this country and many others. In reading through over thirty letters of correspondence from his company's estate it becomes evident how widespread his machines were used. The Tidey company often included a warranty that an operator of one of his specialty machines would turn out two to three times the amount of work currently done on one of their best machines they presently employ or they do not have to pay for the machine. It has to be understood that in the past, items were packaged and shipped in wooden boxes or crates.

Thus most manufacturing companies needed some type of saw to assist in construction of these lock corner boxes. Companies like the Joseph Dixon Crucible Co. of Jersey City or Bloomingdales of New York, outfitted their packing departments with swing cut off and rip saws or circular combination saws to package their products. Tidey made saws for the cigar industries shipping them to Cuba, Florida, South America and even India. The cigar business was booming during this time and the Tidey saw was used to equip the cigar box factory. The automobile industry was just starting to form and his saws were integral machines in the coach and automobile factory. The French Motor Body Company, Inc. and the Carrosserie D' Automobile Company both of New York employed his saws in coach and automobile fabrication. The Firestone Tire & Rubber Company ordered a sander used in the buffing of rubber threads to replace the wire wheel it used which it said did not perform satisfactory.

The US military was a large purchaser of the Tidey saws as ships still had much of its construction of wood. The Army used his saws for the construction of its bases

here and abroad. Even the Diamond Toy Corporation wanted Tidey's saws as it wrote, "We are in desperate need of some novelty saws preferably ten inches in diameter." When showing the pictures to my brother, he said

he saw a Tidey saw like the one pictured in a lumberyard in north Jersey just a few years ago. This saw was pulled out



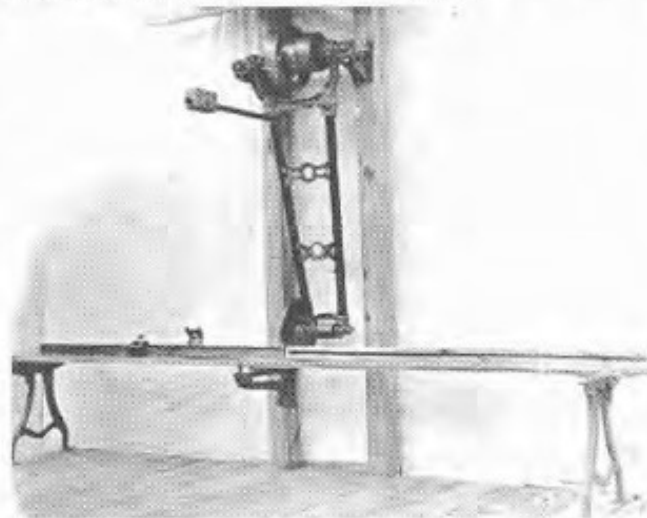
Pedestal saw

like a radial arm saw with a counter weight above for making crosscuts. Many of his earlier saws had wooden tops and cast bases. The John Hewitt Foundry Company of 18-30 Sherman Ave. Newark, NJ, did some of the forging of the bases. Special order saw blades were purchased from E.C. ATKINS & COMPANY. Orders for 14" - 16" rip, crosscut, and miter saw blades cost about \$6.00 to \$7.00 dollars each.

During the last ten years of his life Marcus Tidey was an invalid. During these years his mind stayed clear, and he was constantly sending to the pattern maker plans for new devices, up to within three days of his death. The World War had its toll on the Tidey Manufacturing Company, as did new technologies. Could it be that Marcus Tidey himself was not there to innovate the saw into the home workshop?



Five-blade gang saw, circa 1880



Overhead motor crosscut saw