

## Simonds Canada Saw Company Limited



<http://www.simonds.cc/company/history1.php> from Simonds International

In January, 1906, The Simonds Mfg. Co. purchased The Canada Saw Co. of Montreal, Quebec for \$250,000. The business was renamed Simonds Canada Saw Co., headquartered in an all-new saw-making factory at the intersection of St. Remi and Acorn Streets. The company also operated factories in Ottawa and Toronto, Ontario as well as St. John, New Brunswick. Canada Saw itself started in 1904 when The James Robertson Saw Co. (founded in 1868) and the Ottawa Saw Co. (founded in 1893) merged. Canada Saw had 125 employees, all of whom were retained in the new company.



The business proved quite successful, growing steadily over the years. In fact, the Montreal plant underwent many expansions, including major expansions in 1907 and 1914. Another major expansion occurred in 1948, when the factory added hacksaw blades and bandsaw blades to circular saws, wide bands and cross-cut saws it had made up to this point.



Following on the success of the Intervale Road plant and a number of modern new branch house facilities, Simonds Canada started construction on a new 112,000 square foot one story, controlled conditions plant in late 1959 (unlike the famous Fitchburg plant, the new plant did have some windows). The new plant was constructed at a cost of \$1,500,000, and was located in suburban Granby, Quebec, about an hour east of Montreal.



Simonds Canada closed the outdated Montreal facility and moved to this new Granby facility in June of 1960, transferring 200 employees and their families to the Granby area. The total cost of this move was \$300,000. The old Montreal facility was sold off in November. The Granby plant produced the majority of Simonds products sold in Canada until it was closed in 1988 and production consolidated into the Fitchburg facility.

## January Is The Month Of New Manufacturing Beginnings!



Simonds' second Fitchburg factory - 1868 - 1906. Picture circa 1875.

**1905** - growing demand for saws and knives had strained the old North Street factory to the point where it just didn't meet the company's needs any more. So, in 1904, a new construction initiative was launched to build a new all-brick factory complex around the existing wooden structure, allowing production to continue uninterrupted. The first new building of this complex was dedicated on January 6th, 1905 with a gala celebration. This new factory building was one of the first all-electrically operated plants in the United States.



Simonds' third Fitchburg factory - 1905 - 1939.  
Postcard circa 1915, "The Largest Saw Manufacturer In The World".

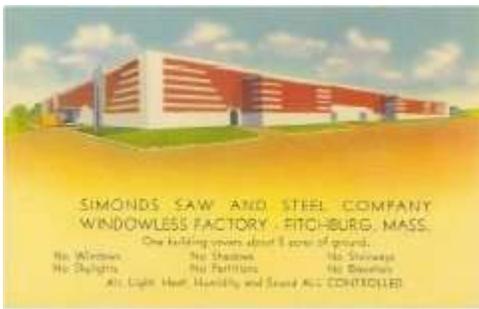


Simonds Steel Mill, Lockport, NY. Picture circa 1925.

**1911** - Simonds built its own steel mill in Chicago in 1900. The success of the steel mill, coupled with the company's success, was so great that demand quickly outgrew capacity. So, in 1910, Simonds started construction on an all-new steel mill in Lockport, New York. The new mill was placed equidistant from the Fitchburg, Montreal and Chicago factories and was able to take advantage of the new, cheap electricity being generated at

Niagara Falls. The first steel from this mill was rolled on January 2, 1911. The Lockport steel mill played an important role in Simonds history until it was sold in 1978.

**1931** - In the late 1920s, Simonds management wanted to consolidate manufacturing into one location. At the time, two plants were operated in Fitchburg (saws and knives, files and hacksaws) as well as the plant in Chicago. In 1930, the Austin Company of Cleveland was hired to design a revolutionary new plant - a windowless, controlled conditions plant all on one level. Soon, land was purchased and the cornerstone was laid on December 20th. Construction started in early January, 1931 and was completed that spring. When the company finally occupied the plant, after the Depression, a 5-acre, single-room facility replaced 3 older plants with an accumulated 17 acres of floor space! Amazing!



Simonds' fourth Fitchburg factory - 1939 - Present.  
Postcard circa 1959, "The World's First Windowless Factory".

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### A Partnership Dissolved

In the early 1800's, the name Farwell was synonymous with scythes. John and Joseph Farwell opened the first scythe shop in Fitchburg, Farwell's Scythe Manufactory, and quickly established Fitchburg scythes as the finest tools available. John Farwell's son John Thurston joined with Alpheus Kimball to open Kimball & Farwell Scythe Makers. Kimball and Farwell had an apprentice named Abel Simonds, who seemed quite ambitious!



The Farwell Scythe Shop in West Chelmsford, which later became a sword manufacturer and finally a file factory

Abel Simonds followed J. T. Farwell to his new shop in West Chelmsford, Massachusetts for two years, only to return to Fitchburg. In 1827, Abel married Elizabeth Farwell, J. T. Farwell's sister, and they had a son, Joseph Farwell Simonds. Elizabeth died in 1829.

John Thurston Farwell saw a spark in his brother-in-law that intrigued him. A few years after Abel's return to Fitchburg, Farwell joined with him to start a new scythe manufactory along the banks of the Nashua River in West Fitchburg - J. T. Farwell & Company. The business used the Farwell name to help it get established, but it was Abel Simonds' vision and drive that led the shop forward.



Our original site on the Nashua River in West Fitchburg

As the small business grew, Farwell's attentions turned elsewhere. While in Chelmsford, he had become involved in town politics, a passion he would pursue upon his return to Fitchburg, as well. He served as Fitchburg town clerk for several years, and he served as deacon of the Congregational church. He became very involved in the struggle to prevent the spread of slavery into the Kansas and Nebraska territories, to the point where he led a party of 157 members of the New England Emigrant Aid Society to Lawrence, Kansas in 1855, to settle.

With Farwell becoming less involved in the business, Abel Simonds bought out his partner in 1851 and continued the business on his own, under the name A. Simonds & Company. Abel brought his son Joseph into the 18-employee business, and would continue to run the company until his retirement in 1864, when the company was passed over to two other sons - George and Alvan.



John Thurston Farwell



Abel Simonds

Abel Simonds passed away in 1874, pleased with the knowledge that all 8 of his sons at one time or another had worked in the business he established, and pleased with the fact that the company was still going strong, 42 years after its founding.

### DIED.

In this city, April 22, Abel Simonds, 70 years, 4 mos, 12 days.

The funeral of Mr. Abel Simonds will take place at the Calvinistic Congregational church, Sunday afternoon, the 25th inst., at 2 o'clock. Relatives and personal friends of the deceased are requested to meet at the Rollstone street Chapel, at 1.30 P. M., without further notice.

Excerpt from *The Fitchburg Daily Sentinel* April 23, 1875

Abel Simonds Passes Away

Abel Simonds passed away on April 22, 1875, at the age of 70. He died pleased in the knowledge that the business he started had grown from humble beginnings into a strong enterprise with a renowned reputation. He also took pleasure knowing that all eight of his sons at one time or another had worked in the family business. Forty-two years after it started, Simonds was going strong and growing rapidly.



Abel Simonds in his  
younger years

Abel Simonds was born in Fitchburg in 1804 on an old homestead in the south part of Fitchburg. He endured a youth of hardship. From the ages of ten to thirteen he worked for an uncle in New Hampshire. Returning to Fitchburg, he apprenticed in a scythe-making shop for seven years without pay. His schooling was brief - six weeks each winter. But the lessons he learned from hard work he took to heart and carried with him for the rest of his life. When he finished his apprenticeship, he was awarded fifty dollars, which he would use to strike out on his own, heading first to Chelmsford for a few years before opening up his own shop in West Fitchburg.



Abel Simonds in his  
later life

In the book *The City And The River*, Doris Kirkpatrick writes "strong work habits became a part of Abel Simonds' nature and work his philosophy of life. Yet devotion to labor did not dull his cheerful and kindly temperament. As his scythe business with John Thurston Farwell prospered, he won friends as well as money, served the Calvinistic Congregational Church, held important town offices, and was a trustee of the Fitchburg Savings Bank." He was a true New England renaissance man!

Abel married John Thurston Farwell's sister Elizabeth. Two years after they were married, Elizabeth died, leaving Abel with an infant son Joseph. Soon after, Abel married Jane Todd of Rindge, New Hampshire, and he and Jane had ten more children, eight sons and two daughters (his son Charles died shortly after his first birthday). His sons George and Daniel were guiding lights for the business from the mid-1870's until Daniel died in 1913.



The work crew, circa 1850 - including 3 of Abel's sons and 2 nephews

Upon Abel Simonds' death, the Fitchburg Daily Sentinel newspaper reported "Mr. Simonds was a man of quiet, sober, industrious habit." "He was a man of cheerful kindness." "He was a good citizen, a good neighbor, a good friend." And Abel would have been proud to know that people saw him in this way.



George F Simonds - 1858

### George Simonds' Patents

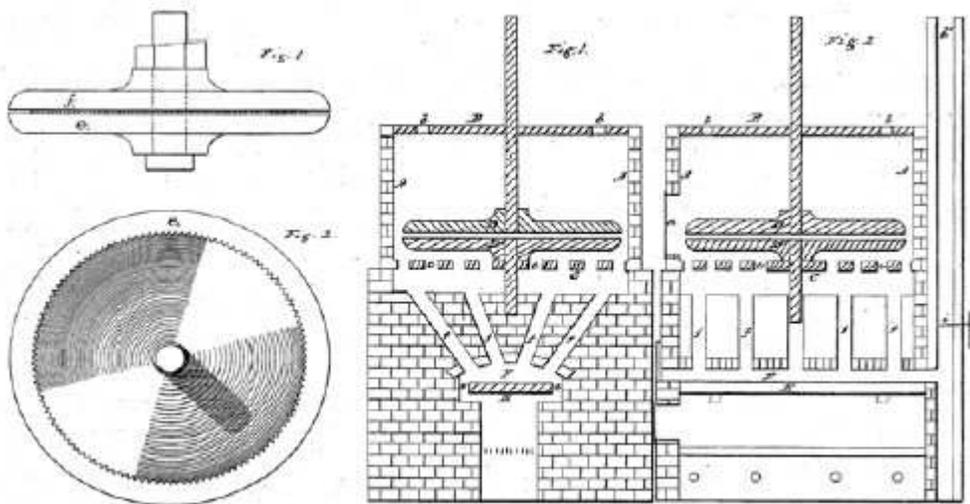
George Frederick Simonds was Abel Simonds' seventh son, born in 1843. He grew up spending a lot of time in and around his father's scythe shop in West Fitchburg. At the age of 18, George spent a year serving in the Union Army during the Civil War but was discharged when he became quite ill.



George F Simonds - 1888

Back home in Fitchburg, while recovering, George started to experiment with materials and processes in an effort to improve the products made in his father's shop. When Abel Simonds retired in 1864, George took over the business with his brother Alvan. George earned his first patent in 1868 for harvester irons. He would earn many more during his lifetime!

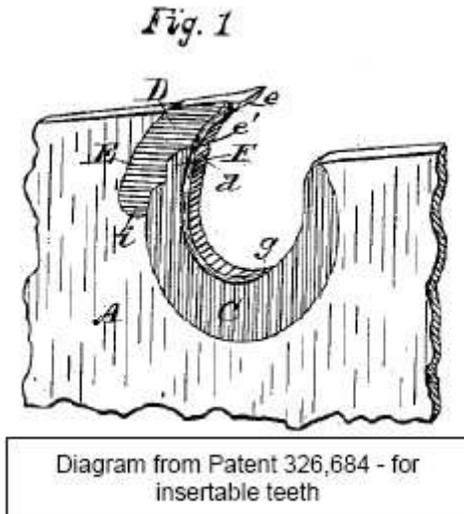
In May of 1874, George Simonds was awarded two patents that would be instrumental in the company's success - for a new method of tempering and straightening circular saw blades as well as a new design for a tempering oven. Other patents for the manufacture of circular saws followed over the next few years. In 1882 came the patents that truly established Simonds as a leader in sawing innovation - the process and equipment for crescent grinding cross-cut saws.



Patents 150625 and 151167 took the making of circular saw blades to new heights

But it was in 1885 that George Simonds left his indelible stamp on the company, when he developed and patented the "two-circle" insertable tooth for circular saws. This patent established the bit and shank business that is still very important to Simonds today, utilizing designs that are not much changed from those laid out in the patents of 1885.

During the early and mid-1880's, George experimented with ball bearings and metal-rolling. His leading edge work in this area led him to leave the family business in November, 1886, and establish his own concern - The Simonds Rolling Machine Company. Beginning in 1885 and until his death in 1896, George was awarded 74 patents for his work with ball bearings and rolling metals into forms and shapes.



Over his lifetime, George Simonds earned over 100 patents. If Daniel Simonds was the business visionary who helped guide a small New England Company into a global manufacturer, it was George's inquisitive nature from which were borne the innovations which allowed Simonds to grow and prosper.



George F Simonds - 1888

Daniel Simonds - Business Visionary

In an earlier issue, we looked at the inventive genius that was George Simonds - an inventive genius that spurred new and industry-leading products; an inventive genius that firmly established the company on an upward trajectory. But it would be younger brother

Daniel (8th son of Abel Simonds, born in 1847) who would establish the company as a world-wide leader in saw-making.

Daniel Simonds attended school in Fitchburg and went to Comer's Commercial College in Boston after high school. Upon graduation, he started working for the company, working first as a clerk before moving out onto the shop floor. He was Vice President and Superintendent of the works from 1876 until 1886, when he assumed the presidency of the company upon his brother George's departure.



Recognizing that growth would come more and more from the western part of the country as the western territories became more developed, Daniel saw fit to commission the construction of a factory in Chicago in 1892, to service the middle and western portions of the country. This plant was an immediate success and was expanded many times. In fact, by 1900, the Chicago factory was larger than the Fitchburg factory.

Wanting to eliminate Simonds' dependence on foreign steel, Daniel added a steel mill to the Chicago factory in 1900. The great success of this venture led to the building of an all-new, greatly expanded steel mill featuring the most modern technologies known in Lockport, New York in 1911. Simonds' steelmaking legacy was long and impressive!



Always on the lookout for ways to expand both the product line and the geographic coverage of the company, Daniel's master strokes came in within weeks of each other. In December of 1905, Simonds expanded its product range with the acquisition of The Fitchburg File Works. Then, five weeks later, in January of 1906, Simonds expanded fully into the Canadian marketplace with the acquisition of The Canada Saw Company,

consisting of a modern, new factory in Montreal and branches in St. John, Ottawa and Toronto. And both of these bold moves took place while the Fitchburg plant was being entirely rebuilt and greatly expanded!

Daniel Simonds passed away in 1913. His legacy included a cornerstone role in the development of technical and vocational education in the United States, in addition to the rich and strong legacy he left at Simonds. And his three sons would build upon this legacy, both in terms of social and commercial development.



### The Hunter Arms Company

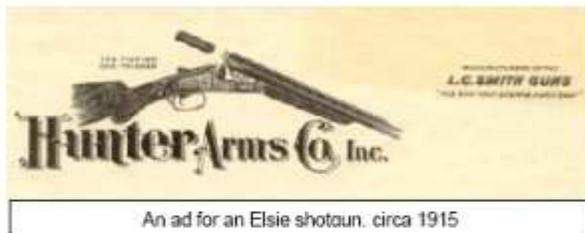
In one of the more unusual moves in the history of the company, Alvan T., Gifford K. and Harlan K. Simonds purchase the Hunter Arms Company of Fulton, New York, in May of 1920.

Hunter Arms was a manufacturer of guns, specifically the famous L. C. Smith double barrel hammer gun, or shotgun. The purchase price was reportedly between \$250,000 and \$300,000. The Simonds brothers installed Stephen Gilles, from Simonds's main Fitchburg plant, as the General Manager of the Hunter Arms business, which is run as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Simonds Saw & Steel.



The Hunter Arms Company started as Hunter & Comstock Arms in 1889, when John Hunter bought out the L. C. Smith Company. Lyman Cornelius Smith was a sawmill operator before entering the gun trade in 1879. Soon after starting his gun manufactory, the L. C. Smith hammer gun was introduced and was quickly recognized as a top-quality firearm. The "Elsie", as it was known, was one of the "Famous Five" shotguns available at the time. Along with Fox, Ithaca, Lefever and Parker, Elsie's dominated the American shotgun market in the late 1800's and early 1900's. After selling his gun business, Smith started making typewriters, eventually merging with Corona to form Smith-Corona.

In 1917, the company went bankrupt, and was purchased by a group of Fulton residents, who held it until it was purchased by Simonds. Eventually, Simonds sold the business to Stephen Gilles in the mid-1930's. By the late 1930's, Gilles' health turned bad and Hunter Arms struggled to survive, finally filing for bankruptcy as World War II was winding down.



The business was then sold to Marlin Firearms of North Haven, Connecticut in 1945, operated as the L. C. Smith Gun Company. In 1949, the factory floor collapsed and by 1950, the Fulton plant was closed and the company fully consolidated into Marlin's Connecticut factory.

There are other examples of the Simonds ♦ venturing out from the Saw & Steel business they had built, but the Hunter Arms venture is perhaps the most notable and intriguing venture.

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