

To begin the history of the blast furnaces in Sharpsville is to begin the history of the town itself because it is through these blast furnaces, its main industry, that the town grew. Sharpsville is a small northeastern borough of slightly over 5,000 population situated in the Shenango Valley of Mercer County, Pennsylvania. The main industry in the town today is still the blast furnace—in partnership with a foundry company—but today these blast furnaces comprise only one company—The Shenango Furnace Company. In the past, however, this was a very different story because there were nine original furnaces located in Sharpsville, which number increased and decreased at various times in its history as old furnaces were remodeled and new ones were brought in, replacing others. Of all these furnaces, today only two remain—the result of competition and never-ending progress. The story of these furnaces, their beginning, growth, and eventual success or failure comprise one part of a large chapter in our country's history and growth—its iron industry.

The land now occupied by the borough of Sharpsville was originally settled in 1812 by Jonathan Dunham, a hunter and farmer. Dunham later sold his land to Hugh Means, who in turn sold it to his son-in-law, James Sharp, a miller for whom the town was named. Soon after this transaction, or in 1836, surveys were begun for the building of an Erie Extension of the Pennsylvania Canal. Because of this proposed canal, Sharp laid out lots for a new town, to be called Sharpsburg.¹

The canal was put through, but Sharp's town did not grow as he had hoped; only two lots out of forty-four being sold. Because of debt, Sharp was finally forced to sell out in 1846—the same year that the first blast furnace was built. It was because of this first and subsequent furnaces that the town finally did grow and was eventually incorporated as a borough on May 21, 1874.

In selecting a site for an early blast furnace, the builders looked for three requisites: (1) a bed of ore near the furnace site; (2) timberland to manufacture charcoal, which was used at that time as the chief fuel in smelting the ore; and (3) water power to furnish a blast of air.² Sharpsville then was a logical spot for a blast furnace, being ideally located on the banks of the Shenango River, where water power was furnished by a fall of some sixteen

¹ This was later changed to Sharpsville because another town already existed by the former name.

² J.G. White, *A Twentieth Century History of Mercer County, Pennsylvania*, Chicago, Illinois: Lewis Publishing Company, 1909, p. 349

feet;³ having sufficient timberland nearby; and being conveniently near to the carbonate iron ore deposits of Western Pennsylvania. This native iron ore, found chiefly in the mountain areas of the western part of the state, was of various thicknesses and from 10% to 33% rich in iron,⁴ not too ideal a percentage, it was later found. In addition to these requirements, the area around Sharpsville had an abundance of rich block or splint coal, called Mercer Block Coal. This mixture of coal and slate was considered “the most valuable coal in the United States”⁵ and was the, “foundations of the iron and steel industry in Mercer County.”⁶ The Erie Extension Canal and the two railroads, the Erie and the Oakland, built in 1864 and the Sharpsville and Oakland built in approximately 1862,⁷ contributed transportation for the growth of the iron industry.

The early furnaces were very unlike our modern furnaces of today, so that perhaps a short description is necessary. The furnaces were built on the side of a hill at least as high as the top of the furnace. Against this hill, a stack was built with the top leveled off in order to hold the ore and coal. A wagon road was then built at the top of the hill to haul the material and a wooden bridge was made from the hill to the top of the furnace so that the limestone, ore, and charcoal could be dumped in. The crude method of operation included hand filling of the furnace by wheelbarrow, horse-drawn ladle cars and hand-cast sand pigs.⁸ The furnace itself was usually made of substantial stone, 20 to 50 feet square at the bottom and smaller at the top, usually about 10 to 12 feet square. The stack was hollow with an approximate eight-foot diameter and the inside of the furnace was lined with firebrick, which was often renewed. The machinery for blowing consisted of two cylinder boilers set at the top of the stack so that the flame from the furnace was beneath it. The roaring noise and sparks blown from the mouth of the furnace gave proof that the furnace was in operation, as it was, both day and night.

The first furnace in Sharpsville built in 1846 and called at that time the Blanche Furnace, was built by the firm of Vincent, Howard, & Company, leaders in the iron industry of northwestern Pennsylvania, in collaboration with Joseph and John McClure. The furnace, a

³ History of Mercer County, Pennsylvania, Philadelphia: L.H. Everts and Company 1877; p. 9

⁴ J.G. White, op. cit., p. 351

⁵ History of Mercer County, Pennsylvania, p. 10--1877

⁶ J.G. White, op. cit., p. 342

⁷ History of Sharpsville, Pennsylvania, Diamond Jubilee pamphlet, 1949 p. 24-25

⁸ The History of Shenango, 8 page paper put out by The Shenango Furnace Company, p. 3

stone stack 48 feet high with a bosh of 10 feet, was located on twenty acres of land in the western part of the town.⁹ With Joseph McClure as its manager,¹⁰ the Blanche began to put out an average of 1,000 tons of iron a year, through the work of its fifteen employees.¹¹ After a short while however, the furnace proved to be unprofitable and caused the suspension of operation until 1853, when it was sold to David and John P. Agnew.

The principal causes of this failure and many of the ten others in the rest of the Shenango Valley was due to (1) the fact that the use of mineral coal was just being introduced to replace the use of charcoal, (2) the lack of skilled labor, (3) the inadequacy of the machinery, both in the power of the blast and in the capacity of the hot blast ovens, (4) the lack of sufficient capital, (5) the small yield of iron and (6) the fact that the use of native northwestern Pennsylvania ore exclusively, produced an inferior quality of iron that was difficult to sell.¹²

In 1853, after the Agnews had taken over the furnace, an experiment was tried in using the rich iron ore from the Lake Superior Region in place of the native ore, which had a lower percentage of iron and too much phosphorous to be successful. There seems to be much controversy over the question of which furnace first used this Lake Superior ore successfully. It appears that the credit of first using the ore must be given to the Blanch, now called the Sharpsville Furnace, because in 1853, thirty tons of this ore was used in the furnace. The Clay Furnace of Clarksville, Pennsylvania, also in the Shenango Valley, claims this distinction for itself, however, because later in the year it began experiments with Lake Superior ore and eventually made its use successful in 1856. The Clay claims that the Sharpsville's use of the ore was not successful, although the Agnews insist that some of the ore was made into bars, nails, etc, in evidence of success.¹³ The question thus seems to be that of which was successful, although the credit of first using it in the furnace clearly belongs to the Sharpsville. Regardless of this controversy, the Shenango Valley is thus able to gain distinction of being the first to use Lake Superior ore in a blast furnace. It can also claim the

⁹ *Manufactories & Manufacturers of Pennsylvania of the Nineteenth Century*, Philadelphia: Galaxy Publishing Company, 1875, p. 203

¹⁰ *History of Mercer County, Pennsylvania*, Chicago: Brown, Runk & Company, 1888 p. 193

¹¹ *Manufactories & Manufacturers, etc.* p. 203

¹² *History of Mercer County, Pennsylvania*, p. 129--1877

¹³ *History of Mercer County, Pennsylvania*, 1. 109-199--1888

first use of block coal in a Pennsylvania Blast Furnace, because this was started in 1845 by this same Clay Furnace of Clarksville, in place of the charcoal formerly used.¹⁴

The Sharpsville Furnace, under the management of the Agnews, continued in operation for approximately two years,¹⁵ during which the furnace ran into two blasts.¹⁶ “The average capacity at this time was estimated to be twelve tons per day”.¹⁷ After this two-year period, the furnace then fell into the hands of General James. B. Pierce of Sharpsville, who received it in payment of a coal debt.¹⁸ It is through the efforts of the wealthy Pierce that the furnace was refitted with the introduction of new machinery—the hot blast, blowing apparatus, etc., and experimentation. This experimentation, beginning in 1859 with the re-opening of the furnace was done with Jackson ore of Lake Superior.¹⁹ It is through the work of General Pierce and the Agnew brothers that the industry of the town, along with the contemporary establishments in other parts of the Shenango and Mahoning Valleys, was revived. It is at this time too that the real growth of Sharpsville begins. Pierce thus “did more to build up the town than any other man”.²⁰ It is also through Pierce and his descendants that many of the other blast furnaces grew up, for his family was involved in seven out of nine original blast furnaces.

This furnace of 1859, with John J. Spearman as manager became “one of the best and most modern in the valley”.²¹ With the use of the block coal of Mercer County, along with the ore from Lake Superior, there began the “first successful manufacture, it is claimed, of red short iron”.²²

In 1862 the management of the plant was changed and Jonas J. Pierce took over as manager. The proprietors of the Sharpsville now became the firm of James Pierce & Sons. It is in approximately this same year that the Sharpsville and Oakland Railroad was built and with this, The Erie and Pittsburgh of 1864, and the new railroads being built all over the State, the use of the native ores in manufacturing came to an end since it was found to be cheaper

¹⁴ J.G. White, op. cit., p. 352

¹⁵ *Manufactories & Manufacturers, etc.*, p. 203

¹⁶ *History of Mercer County, 1888*, p. 193

¹⁷ *History of Sharpsville*, p. 20

¹⁸ *History of Mercer County, 1888*, p. 193

¹⁹ J.G. White, op. cit., p. 361

²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 135

²¹ *History of Sharpsville*, p. 20

²² J.G. White, op. cit., p. 354

to ship in the Lake Superior ore than to deal with the native ore. This Pennsylvania ore, in addition to being less rich in iron than the Superior and thus more expensive to manufacture, was also found to be unusable for the Bessemer process because of its high percentage of phosphorous.²³ It is for these reasons therefore that the Superior ores completely replaced the native Pennsylvania iron ore.

In 1870, the Sharpsville furnace was rebuilt, except for its stone stack, and the size of the bosh was increased to eleven feet.²⁴ By 1875, its capacity average was 7,500 tons a year (although 8,000 tons had been reached). The number of employees needed for this job was now thirty, for whom the company maintained five single and seven double frame houses as living quarters. The annual consumption of the furnace was currently 16,000 tons of coal, 11,000 tons of ore, and 26,000 tons of limestone.²⁵ In 1882, the Company was re-organized and the Sharpsville Furnace Company came into existence, this being composed of Walter, Frank and J.B. Pierce, with J.B. as manager. In this year too, the old stone stack was torn down and replaced by one 65 feet high with a thirteen-foot bosh, being blown in on October 15, 1882.²⁶ At the same time the furnace was modernly replaced, the new furnace becoming capable of an average capacity of 20,000 tons of pig iron annually. The employees needed for this new plant, had by now increased to about fifty, with the pig iron now being shipped to Pittsburgh and Ohio chiefly.²⁷ "The extent and character of this establishment (at the time) entitled it to rank as one of the best in the State."²⁸

In the mean time, at about the time the Sharpsville furnace was being rebuilt, the other furnaces began to appear. This development started with the Allan Furnace, built in 1868 and put in blast in October of that year²⁹ by the firm of Henderson, Allan and Company. This single furnace with a stack of 50 feet and a 12 foot bosh,³⁰ was built on twenty acres of land situated on the lines of the Pittsburgh and Erie and the Sharpsville and Oakland Railroads. Its average annual production by 1875 had reached 10,000 tons.³¹ This pig iron

²³ J.G. White, op. cit., p. 352

²⁴ Manufactories & Manufacturers, etc., p. 203

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ History of Sharpsville, p. 20-21

²⁷ Manufacturing & Mercantile Resources of Mercer County, D.D. Williams & Company: Erie, Pennsylvania: Herald Publishing Company, Ltd., 1882, p. 152

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ History of Mercer County -- 188, 1. 194

³⁰ Manufactories, & Manufacturers, p. 306

³¹ Ibid, p. 306

manufactured through the efforts of twenty-five employees,³² was shipped to markets in Cleveland and Pittsburgh. By 1882 the furnace had become “very extensive and valuable.”³³ Nevertheless, in this year, it was completely remodeled when the furnace changed hands. The increased production due to remodeling was introduced by Henderson Forker and Company and caused the Allan, whose name was now also changed to Henderson, to have a capacity of 15,000 tons.³⁴ The new firm organized in April of 1882 was composed of B.H. Henderson, Joseph Forker, and John J. Spearman, and it then gave employment to over thirty men.³⁵ The furnace later changed names again, becoming the Florence when the ownership changed to the Henderson Iron Company. Its production by 1888 had grown to a total of 18,000 tons annually.³⁶

At about the same time the Allan furnace was being built, the Mount Hickory furnaces were also springing up. These two furnaces, constructed of stone on cast iron columns were built in 1868-1869 by John J. Pierce of Sharpsville, and W.L. Scott of Erie. The furnaces, situated on twenty acres of land in northeast Sharpsville were fifty feet high and of either a twelve foot³⁷ or a fourteen foot³⁸ bosh. By 1873, the furnaces were using yearly 21,800 tons of ore; 5,000 tons of limestone; and 33,000 tons of coal so that their combined capacity was an average of 18,000 tons yearly.³⁹ The power for the Mount Hickory furnace was furnished by two engines, one four-foot stroke and thirty-inch cylinder and the other a four-foot stroke and thirty-six inch cylinder.⁴⁰ By 1882 production had increased still more so that 35,000 tons of Superior Bessemer and Mill Pig Iron was being produced by the approximately fifty employees.⁴¹ This product was used mostly by the Company’s mills in Erie with the rest being sold to other manufacturers.⁴² The manager at this time was, of course, James B. Pierce who was continuing to play a major part in the Sharpsville furnaces. In 1885, the

³² Ibid

³³ Resources, p. 149

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Resources, p. 149

³⁶ History of Mercer County, 1888, p. 194

³⁷ Manufactories & Manufacturers, p. 203-204

³⁸ Resources, p. 151

³⁹ Manufactories & Manufacturers, p. 203-204

⁴⁰ Resources, p. 151

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ibid

Mount Hickory furnaces changed hands as they were sold to the Clair Furnace Company.⁴³ This company then proceeded in 1886 to tear down the furnaces and rebuild them into one 75 foot stack with a fifteen and one-half foot bosh. The capacity of the new furnace, now called the Clair, was further increased by this to an average of 40,000 tons yearly under the management of the superintendent, Josiah Robbins.⁴⁴

The next furnaces to appear in Sharpsville were the “ancestors” of the present-day furnaces. These furnaces came about through the purchase of fifty acres of land in 1869 by Jonas J. Pierce. On this land in the then southwest suburb of Sharpsville and on the line of the Erie and Pittsburgh Railroad, the first Douglas furnace was built in 1870 by the newly organized firm of Pierce and Kelly. This furnace, a fifty-foot stack and eleven-foot bosh, was first put in blast in February or March 1871. In 1872 another furnace joined the first with the addition of General Pierce and his son Wallace to the firm, which had now changed to Pierce, Kelly and Company. With the addition of Furnace No. 2, a fifty-foot stack with a fifteen-foot bosh,⁴⁵ the capacity of the furnaces reached 20,000 tons per year and required fifty men to operate them.⁴⁶ The power for the two furnaces was furnished by McIntosh and Hemphill Vertical engines, with 33,000 tons of ore, 40,000 tons of coal, and 8,300 tons of limestone being used annually in production.⁴⁷ By 1875, “the works were in every respect among the finest and most complete furnaces in the valley.”⁴⁸ In 1879 the No. 1 furnace was rebuilt and enlarged to sixty-foot stack and a fifteen-foot bosh⁴⁹ and in 1881, the No. 2 furnace was also enlarged. G.D. Kelley served as General Manager for the furnaces whose products were then composed of Bessemer, Foundry, and Forge pig metal.⁵⁰

Sharpsville’s next furnaces, also “ancestors” of the modern Shenango, appeared in 1872 with the organization of the Spearman Iron Company. This Company, composed of J.J. Spearman, Joseph Forker, B.H. Henderson, John Phillips, and Walter Pierce built its two furnaces on thirteen acres of land, occupied also by other necessary buildings and five double tenement houses.

⁴³ J.G. White, p. 256

⁴⁴ History of Mercer County, 1888, p. 194

⁴⁵ History of Sharpsville, p. 23

⁴⁶ Manufactories & Manufacturers, p. 204

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ History of Mercer County 1888, p. 195

⁵⁰ Ibid

These houses were built for and occupied by the workers.⁵¹ The power for these two furnaces was also furnished by two McIntosh and Hemphill Vertical engines,⁵² had stacks 63 feet high with 14 foot boshes.⁵³ They were blown in on January 15, 1873 and September 15 or 20, 1857, respectively. The 52 tons of Superior Lake ore along with fifteen tons of limestone and ninety tons of coal were needed daily for the furnaces to make an average production of 1,000 tons of foundry pig iron monthly.⁵⁴ Under the management of J.J. Spearman, these furnaces were also remodeled; No. 1 in 1882 and No. 2 in 1885.⁵⁵ By 1882 the plants were employing eighty men in the furnaces and were capable of producing 36,000 tons of metal a year. This product shipped all over the United States, especially to Pittsburgh, was “fully equal to the best manufactured”.⁵⁶

The last two of the Sharpsville furnaces were the two furnaces of the Ormsby Furnace Company which were constructed on ten acres of land in Sharpsville, along with four tenement houses.⁵⁷ The No. 1 Furnace was built in 1872 and cost \$105,000. This furnace boasted a fifty-foot stack and a twelve foot bosh diameter.⁵⁸ It was said that this furnace “produced more iron in twenty-four hours than any other, having turned out within a fraction of forty tons”.⁵⁹ This furnace, having a capacity of over 13,000 tons a year, which was shipped to Pittsburgh and employing 25 men, had an average daily consumption of 42 tons of Lake Superior ore; 60 tons of coal; and 10 tons of limestone.⁶⁰ In 1879 the furnace changed hands and was sold to the Perkins Company which was comprised of Samuel Perkins, Jr. of Sharon and James F. Rhodes, Marcus A. Hanna and Willis Master, all of Cleveland,⁶¹ for \$20,000.⁶² The name of the furnace was now changed also to the Mabel Furnace to be under the management of Samuel Perkins, Jr., who replaced J.J. Hofius. In 1880, under Perkins and Company, No. 2 Furnace was built being made fifty feet high with a fourteen-foot bosh.⁶³ The

⁵¹ *Manufactories & Manufacturers*, p. 197

⁵² *Ibid*

⁵³ *History of Mercer County*, 1888, p. 195

⁵⁴ *Manufactories & Manufacturers*, p. 197

⁵⁵ *History of Mercer County*, 188, p. 195

⁵⁶ *Resources*, p. 145

⁵⁷ *Manufactories & Manufacturers*, p. 269

⁵⁸ *Manufactories - Ibid*

⁵⁹ *History of Mercer County 1877*, p. 132

⁶⁰ *Manufactories & Manufacturers*, p. 269

⁶¹ *Resources*, p. 151

⁶² *The Sharon Herald*, Sharon, Pa., April 21, 1879

⁶³ *Resources*, p. 151

second furnace now increased the annual capacity to 18,000 tons of Bessemer and Forge Mill Pig Iron, and gave work to 45 employees. In 1883, progress continued its pattern and both furnaces were built to 65 foot stacks and 14 foot boshes, thus increasing the annual capacity to a total of 35,000 tons.

Now that the birth and development of the furnaces had increased the number of furnaces in Sharpsville to its fullest, the position of the furnaces around the turn of the century began to change. The original nine furnaces, prior to 1880, had included the Sharpsville, the Allan and Henderson, the two Mount Hickory, the two Douglas', two Spearman and one Ormsby or Perkins. These nine furnaces were capable of producing 1,800 tons a week or 220 tons each.⁶⁴ In 1880 the number of furnaces increased to ten with the addition of Ormsby No. 2, but in 1885, this total number was again decreased to nine with the combining of the two Mount Hickory furnaces into a single one. The furnaces themselves on entering the 20th Century began to change considerably. As the century moved on, competition became much greater with the building of bigger and more powerful corporations and these began to tell on the town and on the valley. With the further building up of the iron and steel industry, the center of the industry began to move slowly southward toward Pittsburgh and northward toward Erie.⁶⁵ The Sharpsville furnaces each tried to keep up with the growing competition, but for most, it was a losing fight after the first third of the century.

The history of the furnaces from 1900 on, eventually ended with the failure for the greatest part of them, as the later history will show.

During the first three decades of the century, there was no change in the Sharpsville furnace as it continued to operate uneventfully. The Claire, too, continued in operation although it was completely rebuilt with no part of the old furnace being used when the Reliance Coke and Iron Company took over the furnace.⁶⁶

At about the turn of the century in approximately 1907 or 1908, a new furnace made a short appearance in Sharpsville. This furnace, called the Northside Furnace, was located just below the present Shenango Furnace and was based on a new idea. The furnace under the management of the four Robinson brothers, Scott, Charley, Will, and Harry together with Blair Cantnor and Andy Nickle, was based on the idea of using flue dust, a by-product of the

⁶⁴ History of Mercer County, 1877, p. 132

⁶⁵ This is Shenango, The Shenango Furnace Company 1954, p. 3

⁶⁶ History of Sharpsville, p. 22

furnaces containing about 90% iron in an effort to produce iron. But, this effort was to no avail so that the plant was forced to close after about three to six months—a failure.⁶⁷

It is with the rest of the furnaces that the greatest changes took place. The Alan, Henderson, or Florence furnace, owned by the Henderson Iron Company in 1888, was later sold to the Pickens-Mather Company of Cleveland, Ohio, and then in 1902, was sold to Youngstown Sheet and Tube Company for \$300,000 in common share stock.⁶⁸ During this time, the furnace became known as the Alice. In 1910⁶⁹ the furnace again changed hands when the Youngstown Company sold it to the Thomas D. West Foundry Company at which time the furnace became part of the Valley Mould and Iron Corporation.

The six remaining furnaces now reached the period during which they were forced, for survival, to combine into one company—The Shenango Furnace Company. In June 1899 W.P. Snyder and Henry W. Oliver combined to form The Shenango Furnace Company with the purchase of the two Douglas furnaces.⁷⁰ These furnaces which became known as Shenango No. 1 and No. 2 had a capacity at the time of 150-200 tons per day.⁷¹ Then in 1904 the same year that Oliver died, Snyder bought the furnace from the Spearman Iron Company which between 1889 and 1894 had been remodeled and the remaining furnaces dismantled.⁷² Finally in 1904 he completed his furnace buyings with the addition of a furnace from the Perkins Furnace Company, the Mabel,⁷³ a furnace which resulted from the modernization and conversion of the two furnaces into a single one in 1888.⁷⁴ In 1906, after buying out Oliver's interest, Snyder organized The Shenango Furnace Company. As the years passed all four of these furnaces were town down and two completely new ones resulted; No. 1 Furnace being built in 1908 between the two Douglas Furnaces and No. 3 in 1915 on the site of the old Spearman.⁷⁵ In 1918 William P. Snyder, Jr. succeeded his father as President of The Shenango Furnace Company.

⁶⁷ Mr. Frank White, employee of Spearman and later Shenango Furnace—two years

⁶⁸ R.B. Collins, Director Industrial Information Institute, Inc. for Mahoning and Shenango Valley

⁶⁹ History of Sharpsville, p. 21

⁷⁰ This is Shenango, p. 11

⁷¹ History of Shenango, p. 8

⁷² Mr. Raymond Kane, Auditor

⁷³ This is Shenango, p. 3

⁷⁴ Harry Davis, Safety Supervisor

⁷⁵ This is Shenango, p. 3

The period that followed this early 20th Century progress or from the late 1920's on, completed the final disappearance of all but the Shenango furnaces. In about 1933, the Claire furnace operations came to a close.⁷⁶ Later the Pittsburgh Coke and Iron attempted to carry away the blowing engines and machinery for other use but the borough refused to allow it unless back taxes were paid. The Company refused to comply with this, the borough took over the furnace and sold it for scrap in an effort to get its money and also because they feared that the furnace would be in the way. (This could have been used during the war if the borough had not disposed of it.) The result was the disappearance of the furnace and very little money obtained for the town.⁷⁷

The Sharpsville Furnace, too, met a similar fate when in about 1944,⁷⁸ the Sharpsville Furnace was sold to the Pittsburgh Coke and Iron Company who in turn sold the furnace to a scrap dealer.

In the meantime the Valley Mould was undergoing a great change. In approximately 1925, the Alice furnace was torn down and scrapped after being out of operation for four to five years and by this time The Shenango Furnace Company had become the source of the iron needed for the foundry. Until about 1926 the Valley Mould had accepted the responsibility for paying the freight rate on the iron shipped from The Shenango Furnace over the Sharpsville Railroad (owned at this time by the B & O and the Pennsylvania Railroads.) At this time, however, the Valley Mould officials tried to persuade The Shenango Furnace to absorb these freight rates and when Shenango refused, the Valley Mould decided to move its business. A new plant was thus built at Hubbard, Ohio, so that the iron could be brought in directly from the Youngstown Sheet and Tube furnaces at Hubbard. From 1926 until 1931, the foundry at Valley Mould continued with cupola operation, but in 1931 it was completely closed down.⁷⁹ In March 1943, the plant itself was moved out of Sharpsville to Cleveland, Ohio, leaving only a few of the old buildings remaining as evidence that the plant had once existed.⁸⁰

The remaining two furnaces now were having a struggle to keep in operation because the larger steel companies were beginning to own and operate their own blast furnaces,

⁷⁶ History of Sharpsville, p. 22

⁷⁷ Frank White

⁷⁸ History of Sharpsville, p. 21

⁷⁹ Mr. W.J. Conlin, Assistant General Superintendent

⁸⁰ History of Sharpsville, p. 21

reducing the market for pig iron. The Shenango's loss of a market at the Valley Mould created an especially great problem. To solve this, the Company in 1926 purchased buildings formerly owned by the Valley Mould from the Morris-Sandow Company of Black Lick, Pennsylvania, and moved these buildings to Sharpsville.⁸¹ In the same year they also bought the Penn Mold and Manufacturing Company of Dover, Ohio, and moved the mold division to Sharpsville. This Sharpsville plant, known henceforth as the Shenango-Penn Mold Company now used the molten pig metal from the furnace and began manufacturing ingot molds and stools thereby causing no stoppage in production and thus saving the furnaces. The remaining plant at Dover, the property now of Shenango began to manufacture brass and centrifugal castings exclusively. The Company further increased later with the purchase of the foundry at Neville Island, Pennsylvania, in 1939 and now reached the point where it was large enough to compete with the large corporations. The Shenango-Penn Mold Company soon became "one of the largest single producers of ingot molds in the country".⁸² The Shenango furnaces today, under the management of the President, William P. Snyder, Jr., the executive Vice President, H.M. Wilson, and the General Superintendent, Benton W. Norton are at the present time producing an average of 1,300 tons a day, 1,140 of which goes into the foundry and the rest into commercial pig iron.⁸³ The Shenango companies thus on the whole have proven to be very successful employing more than 2,500 people in their operations.⁸⁴

So from the original nine furnaces, due mainly to General Pierce and the prosperity as a result of them, Sharpsville's furnaces have been slowly reduced to the two of today—The Shenango Furnace Company. This drastic change, as mentioned before shows the result of competition, combination, and never-ending progress in the country's continual struggle for prosperity, playing but one small though typical part in the history of the growth of the iron and steel industry of the United States of America.

⁸¹ Mr. W.J. Conlin, Assistant General Superintendent

⁸² Sylvester K. Stevens; Pennsylvania, Titan of Industry, Volume 3

⁸³ Raymond L. Kane, Plant Auditor

⁸⁴ This is Shenango, p. 24

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1) J. G. White, A Twentieth Century History of Mercer County, Pennsylvania, Chicago, Illinois: Lewis Publishing Company, 1909
- 2) History of Mercer County, Pennsylvania, Philadelphia: L.H. Everts and Company, 1877
- 3) History of Sharpsville, Pennsylvania, Diamond Jubilee Pamphlet, 1949
- 4) The History of Shenango, 8 page paper put out by The Shenango Furnace Company, 1954
- 5) Manufactories and Manufacturers of Pennsylvania of the Nineteenth Century, Philadelphia: Galaxy Publishing Company, 1875
- 6) History of Mercer County, Pennsylvania, Chicago, Illinois: Brown, Runk and Company, 1888
- 7) Manufacturing and Mercantile Resources of Mercer County, D. D. Williams and Company, Erie, Pennsylvania: Herald Publishing Company, Ltd., 1882
- 8) The Sharon Herald, Sharon, Pennsylvania, April 21, 1879
- 9) This is Shenango, The Shenango Furnace Company, 1954
- 10) Mr. Frank White, employee of Spearman and later The Shenango Furnace Company 50 years
- 11) Sylvester K. Stevens, Pennsylvania – Titan of Industry, Volume 3, New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, Inc., 1948
- 12) Mr. R.B. Collins, Director of the Industrial Information Institute for the Mahoning and Shenango Valleys
- 13) Mr. Raymond L. Kane, Auditor for The Shenango Furnace Company, Sharpsville
- 14) Mr. William J. Conlin, Assistant General Superintendent, The Shenango Furnace Company and Shenango-Penn Mold Company, Sharpsville
- 15) Mr. H.M. Wilson, Executive Vice President of The Shenango Furnace Company and Shenango-Penn Mold Company, Pittsburgh
- 16) Mr. Harry T. Davis, Safety Supervisor, The Shenango Furnace Company and Shenango-Penn Mold Company, Sharpsville, Pennsylvania