

Belltown's village blacksmith

Nelson Bell of the Belltown community of Lancaster District was a jack-of-all-trades who combined woodworking and blacksmithing skills to furnish his neighbors with wagons, coffins, and all sorts of farm implements and tools.

Bell kept a ledger that chronicled his neighbors' purchases. The ledger shows that his most frequent sales

were wagons and cradles for the cutting of grain. In 1830 the price of a grain cradle was \$2.50; a small wagon was \$50. Both items would have metal fittings, and this accounts for his blacksmithing — undoubtedly

an extra service for his basic woodworking business.

Samuel Campbell of York District was a master blacksmith who worked from a shop on John Springs' large Fort Mill plantation. Campbell's ledger, with entries from 1823 to 1826 covering 118 neatly written pages, is a fascinating glimpse into the plantation world of that time.

Campbell made new, or repaired, every iron or steel object to be found. Most often his entries show him shoeing horses and making plow points of every description. With each entry he showed the method he used. "Founded" meant that he made the object by pouring molten metal into a mold. "Laid" meant that he twisted metal strands together, and "upset" occurred when he improved a metal tool by making it shorter or thicker by hammering on the end.

Campbell mentioned three kinds of iron — "ware iron," "Rag iron," and "rold (rolled) iron." He also wrote "Casteel (cast steel)," and "Blistered steel" beside some of the objects worked on.



Nearby history

LOUISE PETTUS

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■ The ledger of a Lancaster tradesman gives a look at life in 1830.

Fortunately, Campbell wrote in a clear handwriting with each letter carefully formed. His spelling was atrocious, however, sometimes making it impossible, even with a dictionary, to understand what he meant. What was "kee for a forked dog"? "Ottering cranes for bells"? "Gudgers upset"? And, "Elettric iron bradd skeins band hurders"? The last item is mentioned only once, received by James Spratt on Aug. 18, 1824.

The variety of items that Campbell worked on is amazing. For William Goodrich, in one year's time, Campbell repaired the big wheel and the tub of his grist mill, shod his horses, and made him horseshoes, plow points, a spring for a lock, weeding hoes, dressing hoes, iron wedges, harrow teeth, and laid an ax with iron and steel. He mended pot hooks and two bread trays for Goodrich, who was a fairly typical customer.

In some cases Campbell traded services. Susan Sembler brought in her hand-woven cloth valued at \$1.50 in exchange for "2 new Clappers put in Bell-.25; Mending tongues (tongs) and fire Shovel — .25; 1 foot put on pot — .25; spout put on tea pot — .75." Sarah Auton also traded weaving for blacksmithing services. Dr. Joseph R. Darnell's medical bill was can-

celed by Campbell's frequent shoeing of the doctor's horses.

John McCoy was a butcher whose entries showed his trade: "To Fleshing nife made — .75; 3 tanner's nives upset — .75", etc.

"House hanging made frison welded" shows that Samuel Campbell could do fancy designs. Did Mary Guyer, or her son Isaac Guyer, happen to see some fancy wrought iron in Yorkville, or perhaps Charleston, that led to ornamental ironwork on their house?

Widow Nancy F. Potts paid Campbell for "Ironing Waggon complete with sand boxes — \$65.00." Campbell in turn paid a "Hammerman" (carpenter?) \$57.50 for doing the "woodwork of waggon banding hubs and boxes" and \$1.25 for making a "feed troft and side box."

Campbell worked for John Springs in an arrangement in which Springs furnished the shop and equipment. Campbell died in 1830. His estate papers show that in 1825 he purchased a lease on 223 acres of Catawba Indian Land from John Springs. Campbell's widow, Elizabeth R. Campbell, sold the lease after his death.

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Louise Pettus is a retired history professor from Winthrop University. Her column appears Saturdays.