

AUGUSTUS FRANKLIN TRIPP (1822-1908)
EMMA JOHNSON [WATROUS] (1791-1828)

: NEW HAVEN VT FARM :

Augustus Franklin Tripp, the father of Carolyn Jewett Tripp, was born in New Haven, Vermont, on 30 September 1822. He grew up on the farm, and left in 1844 to join his half-brother, Charles Horatio Watrous (1814-1892) in Ohio, where he was involved in building steam engines for Great Lakes shipping. Augustus lived in Painesville, Ohio, where he met and married Mary Mehitabel Steele (1826-1866). They moved to Buffalo, NY and after several false starts, Augustus began working for Sydney Shepard, who had a steam engine works, and a metal stamping works. Augustus eventually became one of three partners in Sydney Shepard & Co.'s Buffalo Stamping Works, in charge of production.

His grandfather, Capt. Augustus Tripp (1763-1844) lived in Lanesboro, MA before he fought in the Revolution. He bought land in New Haven, VT in 1787. Capt. Tripp's father may have been Peter Tripp, who was killed in an Indian skirmish with prospective settlers in Wyoming, Pa.

Capt. Tripp planted an elm tree at the farm at its founding, and it grew into a giant elm tree, dominating the photos taken at a family reunion before 1908. Capt Tripp's son, Deacon Ansel Tripp (1792-1869), was born on the farm. When Capt. Tripp was crippled from a crushed leg while clearing a boulder, Ansel had to take over the management of the farm, at nine years old.

Ansel married Emma Johnson (1791-1828) in November of 1821. Emma was a daughter of Capt Christopher Johnson (1755-1823), who was a member of an ancient family of Middletown, CT. and Mary Austin (1756-1801), from an old New Haven, CT family.

Emma had been married to Eleazer Watrous (1782-1816), a school headmaster in Burlington, VT. They had Charles Horatio Watrous (1814-1892)⁴. Eleazer abandoned his family shortly after Charles was born, and moved to St. Louis, where he died in 1816.

Charles Horatio and Augustus Franklin were very close, and when Charles went west to the Great Lakes to seek his fortune, Augustus kept up with him in a series of letters, and eventually followed him to Ohio.



Photo CJC/SMCIII Scrapbook

“Homestead, Mill & Elm Tree planted by Augustus Tripp in 1787.” In New Haven, Vermont. Labeled by SMC2. Photo before 1908.

Augustus was very attached to his mother. After her death, Ansel was remarried to a cousin of Emmas', Marilla Deming (1792-1873), in 1830. Augustus describes her as a mean-spirited woman who made their lives miserable. Ansel, meanwhile, was bitter about being thrust into the role of provider so early, and while he was running the farm he was difficult to be with. (As soon as he retired from farming, his disposition improved dramatically.) The combination led Augustus to leave home in 1844, at 22 years old. His brother Isaac McNeil Tripp (1828-1904) continued to live in New Haven. He died in Buffalo, NY.

: PAINESVILLE :

Augustus traveled from New Haven to Charlotte, VT, and by small canals to the Erie

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Canal. He wrote about his trip late in life. He disembarked in Buffalo, and spent some time sizing up the town before moving on to Painesville, Ohio to meet Charles. Augustus' first job was to clean out steam boilers for the Cuyahoga Steam Furnace Co., a sign of the growth of industrial revolution in this country.

: THE ERIE CANAL :

He arrived in Painesville, Ohio and met Mary Mehitabel Steele (1826-1866) on 12 May, "the day after my arrival in Painesville, and she was the first young lady I met in Ohio." She worked as a milliner, while brothers Horace & George Steele were merchants.



SPBC/Harmony Spongberg
Augustus Franklin Tripp (1822-1908) &
Mary Mehitabel Steele (1826-1866),
possibly a wedding picture c.1847.
AFT @ 25, MMST @ 21

In 1847 he married Mary Steele. Mary was a daughter of Horace Steele⁵ (1791-1864), a newspaper publisher, and Hannah Clark (1793-1832), both originally from Vermont. Horace Steele founded the Working Men's Press, in Buffalo in 1832. After the death of his first wife there, he moved to Ohio, where he was editor of the Painesville Republican.

Augustus & Mary moved to Buffalo to join Charles Watrous, who had been made a partner with John D. Shepard (relation to Sidney surmised, but not known for certain) in the Shepard Boiler Works. AFT was bookkeeper.

In 1849 The Shepard Boiler Works failed and the family returned to Painesville, where Augustus bought a "house & lot."



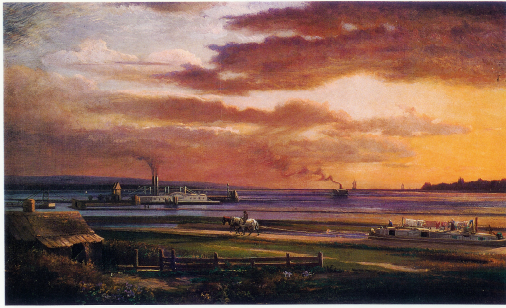
SPBC/Harmony Spongberg
Mary Mehitabel Steele with George Augustus Tripp (1849-1922) and Emma Hannah (1851-1932), c.1852

AFT became an agent in Buffalo for his brothers-in-law, Horace & George Steele. In 1851 H & G Steele suffered losses due to the sinking of a Great Lakes steamer, with their goods on board. Back to Painesville. H & G Steele failed in 1852, and Augustus had to find more work.

*Capt Augustus Tripp¹, Ansel Tripp², Augustus Franklin Tripp³, Carolyn Jewett Tripp Clement⁴,
Norman, Edith, Merrell, Harold, Marion, Stuart⁵*

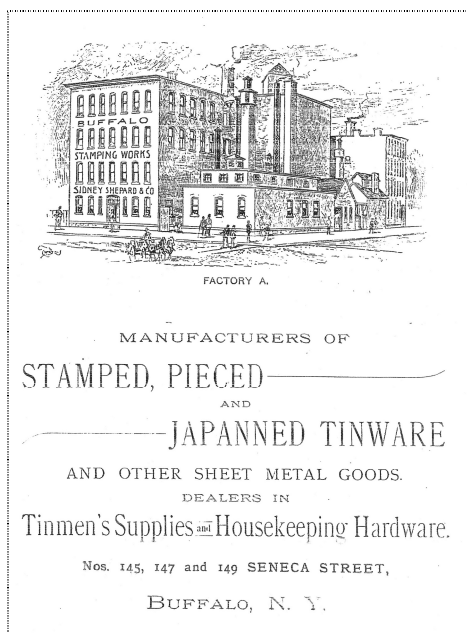
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: BUFFALO :



AFT returned to Buffalo in 1852 to take a position as bookkeeper with Sidney Shepard & Co. Thus began the stabilization of his career, and the beginning of a climb to security and “position.”

Sidney Shepard owned the Buffalo Stamping works, that made sheet metal goods, from horse troughs and buckets to “housekeeping hardware,” such as cache-pots, letter boxes, coal hods (scuttles), etc. Some were of sturdy galvanized steel, and some were of finer tin, delicately decorated with stenciled designs and gold leaf. “The firm eventually became one of the largest importers of tin plate, manufacturers of stamped metal ware, and dealers in hardware and tinner’s supplies in the Union.”

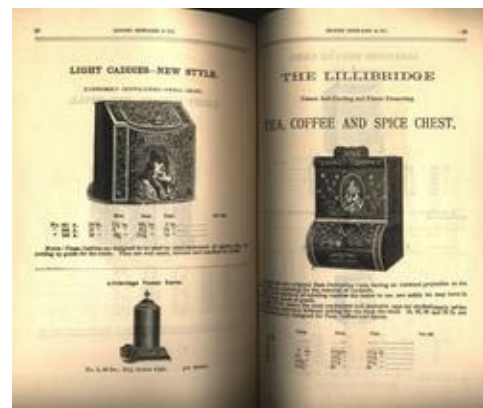


Sidney Shepard saw the value of the telegraph early, and not only employed it in his firm, but became a large investor in Western Union, serving on its board for many years. The firm’s catalogs, including literally thousands of items, included a telegraph ordering code to facilitate shipments of goods. It has been said that the firm was among the first to employ a catalog, at all.

When Sidney Shepard retired, to his family’s farm in New Haven, NY, and to Paris, Augustus F. Tripp and James C. Forsyth ran the business: Augustus the manufacturing plants, and Forsyth the offices.

To give an idea of the scope of the company’s production, the following items were listed in an advertisement in the Buffalo City Directory of 1870, page 187:

“Sidney Shepard & Co.
No. 68 Main Street Buffalo New York
Manufacturers of Tinned and wrought Iron
French Hollow Ware, Stamped & Japanned
Tin Ware



The Sidney Shepard Catalog

Sauce Pans, Preserving Kettles, Dish Pans, Milk Pans, Cake Pans, Cullenders [sic], Wash Bowls, Bake Pans, Frying Pans, Water Dippers.

Drinking Cups, Ladles, Skimmers, Grocer’s Scoops, Sauce Pan Handles, Kettle Ears, Coal Vases, Pail Covers, Steamer Bottoms.

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T.K. Breasts & Covers, Ointment & Pill Boxes, Grater Blanks, Closet Doors, Boiler Covers, Chamber Pail Fixtures, Pie Plates, Lettered Plates, Pattie Pans, T.P. Breasts & Covers.

Coffee Pot Tops, W.B. Bottles, C.M. Pans, Blow Horns, Deed Boxes, Cash Boxes, P.O. Boxes, B.H. Cases, Cake Boxes, Bread Boxes.

Sugar Boxes, Marking Cups, Dust Pans, Tumbler Drainers, Knife Trays, Spittoons, Chamber Pails, Spice Boxes, Pepper Boxes, Box Graters.

Cake Cutters, Tumblers, Canisters, Match Safes, Candlesticks, Molasses Cups, Nurse Lamps, Toilet Ware, Tin Toys, Grocers Caddies.

Cans for Spice Dealers, Fruit Can, T. & B, Coal Hoods, Coal & Fire Shovels, Oyster Chafing Dishes, Copper Tea Kettles, Thimble Rings, Candle Molds, Cake Turners, Blacking Boxes.

Perforated Black & Galvanized Sheet Iron for Malt Kilns, Perforated Sheet Zinc for Paper Mills, Tinmen's Solder, Jone's Celebrated Anti Friction Metal, &c., &c.

IMPORTERS & DEALERS IN

Hardware & Metals, Tinmen's Furnishing Goods, Tools & Machines, House Furnishing Goods, Agricultural Implements, Etc.

(pointing hand symbol) Our stock comprises a larger assortment than any other House in the Trade. We publish Illustrated catalogues of our own manufactures, Tinmen's Tools and Machines & General Hardware, which will be supplied on application.

Sidney Shepard
Augustus F. Tripp
James C. Forsyth"

One can only imagine the difficulty in managing their inventory.

: THE SHEPARD CO. TELEGRAPH :

From an Oswego, NY Historical Society journal of 1966, regarding Sidney Shepard, of New Haven, NY & Buffalo.

"Sidney Shepard & Co developed from a retail hardware metal & roofing business into a larger wholesale jobbing concern covering all of the state[s] east of the Mississippi with large extensions to their factory. An incident that happened in the factory about that time might have changed the history of the telephone had the story circulated more widely.

Mr. V. C. Gilman, of St. Paul, Minn. was perhaps one of the first men in the world to have heard and seen a conversation carried on by means of an electric telephone. He related that in 1874 or 1875 he was in the employ of Sydney Shepard & Co., of Buffalo. It was an old & wealthy house, established in 1836. The firm at the time mentioned consisted of Mr. Sydney Shepard, Mr. Augustus F. Tripp, and Mr. James G. Forsyth. Mr. Shepard lived in New York and had no active part in the business which he had established. Mr. Tripp looked after the manufacturing part of the business which was about two miles from the main offices which were managed by Mr. Forsyth.

The stores and the factories were connected by telegraph. He further mentioned that in the office his desk was next to Mr. Forsyth's and that he was the official telegrapher.

One morning he said there was a sudden commotion and that "a tall man wearing a very high silk hat--like that shown in pictures of Mr. Lincoln--a long linen duster, came striding towards me with a very determined aid [sic]. he looked like a crazy man and without preliminaries asked, 'Where's the telegraph key?' When it was pointed out to him he said, 'Get away, I'm going to disconnect it.'"

Continuing to address Gilman he went on: 'You do all the telegraphing at this end don't

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you? Good deal of bother; constantly interrupting your other work, isn't it? Be a good deal easier if anybody could talk directly to the factory, wouldn't it?

'He was advised that we did not have speaking tubes that length yet, but his retort was that we could talk right over the wire--anybody--just like we were talking now. Mr. Forsyth motioned me to let him have his way, as we both though[t] he was crazy.'

It was then that Mr. Gray removed the key very deftly, took a parcel from a small bag, and laid it for a moment on the desk. It was a perfectly square box, about 3 inches in size, made of an old cigar box and put together with pins; had a hole about three-quarters of an inch on one side and a wire attached to the opposite side. After connecting it with part of the telegraph instrument, he looked at his watch, then left it and began pacing around in a nervous way.

Some of the clerks were inclined to laugh but with a frown from Mr. Forsyth they restrained themselves. Mr. Gray would stop often to look at his watch and when it showed eleven he grabbed up the box and placed the hole near his mouth and kept repeating 'Hello Hello, Hello.'

He continued this for about three very long minutes, then his whole expression changed and extreme joy spread over his face when he said, 'That you Mr. Tripp? Do you hear me all right?' 'Yes, Yes, I hear you perfectly.' 'Yes, yes, Thank God.' Then he turned around and asked, 'Who's Victor? Mr. Tripp wants to talk with you.'

Mr. Gilman (Victor) said that no one in the office knew that Mr. Gray had previously been at the factory and connected his little box to the key there. He expected, when he picked up the little box from his desk in the office only to appease the apparently demented man by pretending to hear the voice of Mr. Tripp on the wire. When he actually heard what he knew to be Mr. Tripp's voice, cold chills ran up & down his spine and

he nearly collapsed. He asked Mr. Tipp where he was, and when he said at the factory he could hardly believe it.

After that, most of the other men in the office took turns speaking into the mysterious box. Mr. Forsyth was persuaded to take a try, which he did with an air of preventing trouble with those lunatics. After he had said hello, the next instant he staggered and exclaimed, 'My God, is that you Tripp?'

Mr. Gray explained that he had been at work on this talking machine for a long time but had only tried it out on a short wire in his house as no one previously would let him try it on wires out of doors, but through a friend in Buffalo he had been able to get Mr. Tripp to agree to his experiment. Three or four years later an exchange was established in Buffalo at a private resident rate of \$1.25 a month. Mr. Gray later became president of Western Electric Company.

Although Mr. Bell is considered to be the first inventor of the telephone, this was the first recorded evidence of a telephone conversation being carried on between distant points. Whether Mr. Gray did [or did] not get his machine and ideas patented I do not know but, as the foregoing account appeared in the 'Iron Age,' and 'Telephony' magazines, it would seem that Mr. Gray must have had good evidence of his invention."



Nathaniel Tripp
A.F. Tripp