

3. Men of Iron

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Long before the clearances in Scotland there was a tremendous interest in the Americas. The young men in Lochwinnoch had particularly itchy feet; the urge to emigrate may have been nurtured by the nearness of the Clyde and the sight of the sailing ships at Greenock which was just over the hill. At any rate, Lochwinnoch families were well represented in America before the Declaration of Independence, many of them holding important positions in the New Country.

In 1737 three young men from Lochwinnoch - John Adam from Bowfield, Hugh Orr from the Strands and William Barclay probably from the Barclay family in the Kirkcubright - arrived in Boston, almost certainly from the same boat. John Adam kept account books from which I quote:

"I remained in Scotland until May 6, 1737, then sailed from Greenock for New England and arrived in Boston June 25th following."

When he was 80 he recorded some business reminiscences

"My account book No.1 was first used to keep accounts as blacksmith two years when Messers. (sic) Orr and Barclay and myself set up a blacksmith shop in 1737 and part of 1738 and part of 1739 until full two years were completed. Then Mr. Hugh Orr moved to Bridgewater and Mr. Barclay continued to work in the said shop by Dicon Thomas Randell."

(The shop was in Easton). The forge was owned by Deacon Thomas Randell whose house was next door. John Adam rented a room in that house. Barclay stayed on, but Hugh had a very successful career in iron in Bridgewater as we shall see. Fortune had smiled on the three young men so far, but there must have been a Scots colony in Boston to guide them. How else would they get to the right place (Easton near Taunton) twenty-two miles from Boston? Another factor greatly benefited Adam. In the mid 1650's a family called Leonard had established an iron industry in the young American colonies in spite of attacks by tribal Indians. These ceased about 1676. The Taunton area was rich in iron deposits and had ample water power. By the 1720's the name Leonard was synonymous with Iron Works. Captain Eliphalet Leonard, great-grandson of pioneer iron founder James Leonard, had a daughter Sarah who must have caught John Adam's eye right away. In 1738 Adam repaired in his workshop the following items for Leonard's forge at Easton:

	English Money		
	£	s.	p.
To fixing 2 bellows pipes	0	2	0
To mending 1 saw mill saw	1	5	0
To mending 1 pouring iron	0	0	8
To mending 1 iron for the bellows	0	0	10
To mending 2 pair of forge tongs	0	2	6

To pay the above Leonard delivered to Adam in the same year an anvil and large quantities of old and new bar iron.

To finance the Adam and Orr's blacksmith shop, they borrowed 25 pounds old tenor on November 13, 1739, from Joshua Hayward of Easton, promising to repay in one year in "merchandable barr iron"

William Barclay seemed to continue as a working blacksmith, Hugh Orr went on to bigger things, but John Adam continued as blacksmith in Easton until 1749 when he moved to Taunton. He bought 400 1¼ inch planks, 500 ½ inch pine boards, oake boards, 1,000 bricks, great nails, shingell nails, limestone etc.. Why? The Leonard connection had paid off, and he needed to build himself a house. He married Sarah Leonard in November 1749. He sold that house in 1756 then erected a shop and warehouse. He became a successful merchant. He shipped large quantities of flax seed for making linseed oil to his uncle, William Adam in Lochwinnoch. Flax seeds were also used as a medium of exchange. Adam bought and sold boards, planks, shingles, nails, bar iron, Bibles, chafing dishes, teapots, sheepskins, hollowware, salt, alum, indigo, chocolate, coffee, hogs fat, bayberry tallow, linen and broadcloth. His customers included about two dozen members of the Leonard family, plus other merchants who asked him to sell their goods. He did not give up his interest in iron. He joined the daring entrepreneurs in Massachusetts who started experimental rolling and slitting mills for the production of nail rod. The Revolutionary War created a need for thin iron rods to make swords, sabres, bayonets, knives, daggers and nails. A slitting mill was set up and operating in July 1777. One of the "directors" was John Adam Junior now 22 years of age. Production rose from 28 tons in 1777 to 95 tons in 1779, then fell to 73 and 75 tons in the next two years owing to slitting mill problems. Cast rolls weighing hundreds of pounds each and costing 15 shillings per hundredweight were very important. In November 1776 Adam bought his first pair of rolls from a Captain Washburn which were unsatisfactory. He then bought a pair of rolls from Hugh Orr, his old friend. By this time Hugh was operating a large blast furnace at Bridgewater, Massachusetts. He sold about 1600 pounds of broken slitting mill rollers to Orr. In spite of his friendship with Orr, he tried another roll maker. Adam progressed, but it is not surprising that much of his raw material was bought from various Leonards. The nail industry flourished, but the roller business needed not cast iron but forged iron. One Forbes could supply. Young John Adam managed to marry his daughter, Abigail.

So much for John Adam. Hugh Orr's story is better known. He was a gunsmith and door-lock filer before he went to America in 1737. After his partnership with Adam and Barclay he went to Bridgewater. He set up the first tilt-hammer in that area, and was the only edge-tool maker for a long time, then the manufacture of tools spread. He made 500 muskets in 1748. The Revolutionary War caused a great demand for his products. He also exported flax seed. For a time he was in financial difficulty since the infant country did not pay some of his work, so he was forced to write a begging letter to his brother, Robert Orr of Strands Inn, Lochwinnoch. He knew Robert intended to leave him money when he died, so he wrote a heart-rending appeal to have it sooner. When Robert died he sent money for a "stain" which is in the Old Kirkyaird of Lochwinnoch. Hugh died in 1798 in his 82nd year. He was for

many years a senator for the County of Plymouth in the United States of America.

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