

The Rendell Family of Blacksmiths, Heart's Content, Trinity Bay.



ich@heritagenl.ca -- Heritage NL -- PO Box 5171, St. John's, NL, Canada, A1C 5V5

By Dale Gilbert Jarvis with notes from Ted Rowe.

The Rendell Forge is a small, one-room, one storey wooden blacksmith shop located in Heart's Content, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador. The Rendell family has a long history of blacksmithing in the community.

The first of the Rendell family to arrive in Newfoundland came from Yeovil, a town and civil parish in the district of South Somerset, England, close to Somerset's southern border with Dorset. Charles Rendell came at the invitation of Robert Slade in 1780 and stayed until 1793 (Rowe 1988 102). He had a son, birthplace uncertain, also named Charles Rendell who married Lydia Way, of Trinity.



The original Yeovil spelling of the name may have been “Rendle” - and the Slade and Kelson receipt book notes a Charles Rendle as a customer in 1810 (Rowe 1988 103). The historical records of Yeovil for the 19th century note both Rendells and Rendles,

and the Churchwardens' Accounts include, for 1831, a blacksmith/ironmonger by the name of Rendall (see Osborn).

Charles moved to Heart's Content circa 1793 and built a house and forge (Rowe 1988 102). Son Charles and wife Lydia Rendell moved to Heart's Content from Trinity in the early 1800s to craft ironwork for vessels (Simmons). According to the heritage plaque outside the forge, he "settled at the northern end of Rowe's Bank, where he provided the ironwork for the vessels coming off the stocks at Rowe shipyard" which had been established circa 1783 by James Rowe, also of Yeovil.

Charles (hereafter Charles Sr.) and Lydia fathered five sons: Charles Jr. (b. 1832), Giles (b. 1837), James, John Thomas, and the youngest, George, who went on to set up his own blacksmith business in Hant's Harbour (Rowe 1988 103-4). Charles Sr. was also Heart's Content's first constable, appointed in the 1830s, and was prominent in the Loyal Orange Association (Rowe 2020).

Charles Jr. was listed as "Deputy Sheriff" for Heart's Content in the Year Book and Almanac of Newfoundland, 1898, and as the Inspector of Weights and Measures in the same directory for 1903. Charles Jr. died in 1904, and the Evening Telegram carried the following notice:

DEATH OF MR RENDELL - Mr. Charles Rendell, a well known resident of Heart's Content, died there in his 72nd year on Thursday last. He carried on the business of a blacksmith for several years, and was always in independent circumstances. He leaves two sons, W. J. Rendell, who is an engineer in Dawson City, Gordon, who is at Heart's Content, and three daughters to mourn their loss, to whom the Telegram extends its sympathy (Local 3).

The third generation of Rendells produced several blacksmiths. Brothers Giles, James, and John T. worked alongside their father, with their brother, the aforementioned George setting up in Hant's Harbour. In the 1864-65 Hutchinson's Directory, four Rendells were listed as blacksmiths in Heart's Content: Charles Sr; G. (presumably Giles); James; and John.

Giles, son of Charles Sr, by his wife Leah Rowe (b. 23 May 1842 in Heart's Content), had six sons who lived into adulthood: Charles (b. 1860); Giles (b. 1862); Henry (b. 1865); Tolson "Tot" (b.1867); James "Jim" (b.1869); and Bela (b.1881).

By 1904, McAlpine's Directory for the Trinity Bay District lists five blacksmiths working in Heart's Content: Charles Sr; Giles; Tolson (son of Giles); John (possibly an error for James?); and John T.

Giles, son of Charles Sr., passed away circa 1907, and his wife Leah died 29 September 1920, survived by six sons and three daughters. She died suddenly after a two day illness, while visiting son Bela in Grand Falls, known for her "goodliness and kindness." Her remains were transported by train to Brigus Junction, and thence to Heart's Content for burial ("Obituary Mrs."). A photograph of five of her sons was taken around the time of her funeral.



The Rendell brothers at the time of their mother's funeral in 1913.
From left to right Bela, Tolson, James, Giles, Charles

By the 1920s, the forge had passed on to Bela, and he is listed in the 1921 census as a blacksmith.

Bela, son of Giles, operated this forge with his son Jim in the 1920s. When business fell off during the depression years Jim moved his family to Hants Harbour. In 1941 at the age of 60 Bela went to Scotland as a blacksmith with the Newfoundland Overseas Forestry Unit. He returned to Heart's Content at the end of the war and continued with the forge in the 1950s, turning out grapnels, horseshoes and custom ironwork (Rowe 2020).

Ted Rowe remembers being a boy in the 1950s, and watching Bela Rendell at work in the forge:

Well, it was always a place in the summertime where the kids would go over occasionally and watch what the blacksmith was doing in the forge. What I remember most about is it is making

horseshoes. I was always amazed that he would take a straight piece of iron and, through moulding it on the anvil, have it turn out the right size, curved around. Then he would heat the ends of the u-shape and turn those up, which is what gave the horseshoes the grip that you needed when it was installed on the hoof. He'd punch the nail holes in it, and when that was all done, this would be done with red-hot iron heated in the firebox, and he'd plunge it into a pail of water and the hiss and the steam would come up. He'd then take it out of the water and it was all ready to be put on the horse.

There would be two or three or four horses outside that would be tethered onto a rail that he had next to the forge. The owners would bring their horses there and he would come out, and if they were already shoes on the horse, he would take off the old shoes and put the new shoes on each of the horses there. We always found that fascinating to watch. I can't remember him working on other ironworks in the forge, and I'm sure that he did. He most likely made anchors for the fishermen and did some custom ironwork for people as well.

Bela Rendell married Susannah Hopkins. Ted recalls,



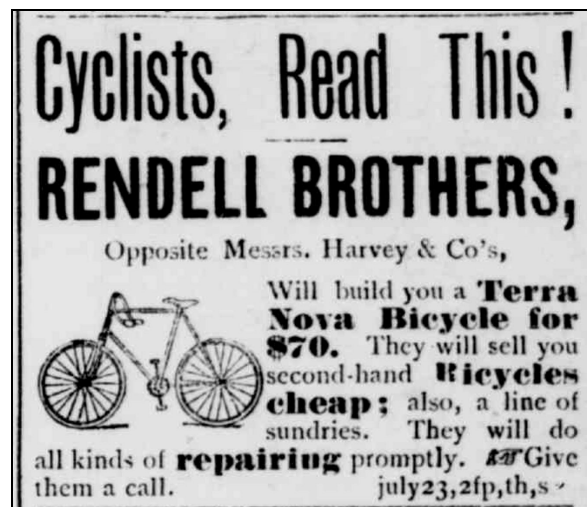
His wife was Aunt Suze. Her name was Susannah; she was a very popular lady because she was making beer all the time and selling it to whoever wanted it. I think she was the one source of beer in Heart's Content at that time! People would come from up the harbour to see Aunt Suze.

A number of Bela's brothers continued on in the blacksmithing tradition.

Tolson "Tot" Rendell remained in Heart's Content and ran his own blacksmith business, as well as butcher shop and carriage service (Rowe 1988 105).

James Rendell moved to East Boston, Massachusetts, where he worked as a blacksmith, machinist, and businessman, and where he married Rebecca Rendell (née Pugh) of King's Road, St. John's on December 10, 1892 (Lance 7). James also ran a bicycle shop at 16 King's Road in St. John's (Rowe 1988 105), which seems to have been in operation from 1896 (Terra Nova 1) to the early 1920s. The shop did bicycle repairs, as well as building bicycles from scratch, as this article from 1897 shows:

Local Make.—In Macgregor's window, on Water Street, may be seen Mr. H. M. Ross's new racer. It has been built by Messrs. Rendell Bros., of this city, and is one of the best machines ever built by them. It has all the latest improvements — the speed indicator being the most novel. It tells how quickly the ground can be covered. The machine has new racing-leather tires, weighing only 13 lbs. Mr. Ross expects to win every race this season.



Cyclists, Read This!
RENDELL BROTHERS,
Opposite Messrs. Harvey & Co's,
Will build you a **Terra Nova Bicycle for \$70.** They will sell you second-hand **Bicycles cheap;** also, a line of sundries. They will do all kinds of **repairing** promptly. **Give them a call.** *July 23, 2fp, th, s >*

Rendell Brothers Ad
Evening Telegram, 1896-07-23

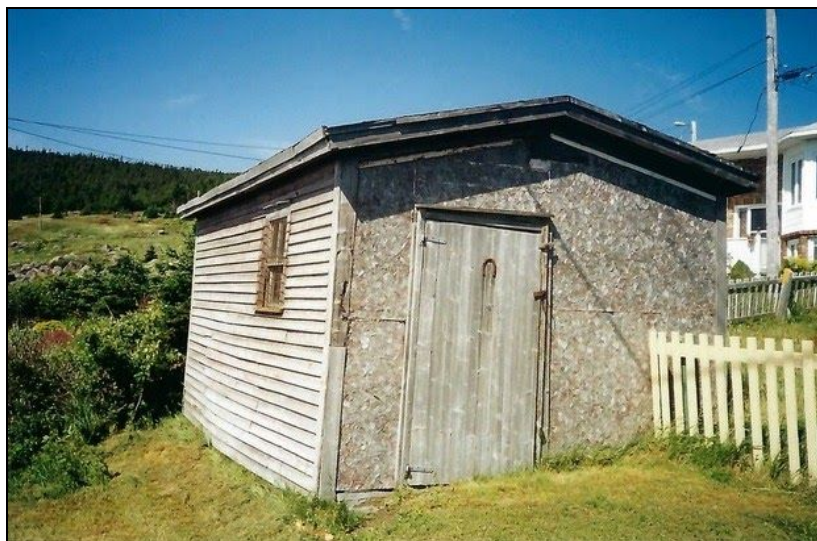
Henry A. Rendell was also a blacksmith, and he too ultimately settled in Boston:

Henry A. Rendell was born at Heart's Content in 1865, and received his education there. He learned the trade of blacksmith and left Newfoundland in 1891. Since leaving Newfoundland he has been most successful. He worked first as foreman blacksmith with the firm of W. H. Swett, Lynn, Mass. In 1897 he returned to St. John's and opened business on King's Road. Business being dull in his line (electro-plating) at that particular time he left Newfoundland a year later. Since 1898 he has been employed as foreman in the works of the New England Bolt & Nut Co., Boston (Cabot 12).

He died in Boston, age 73, on 15 March 1939 (NL GenWeb).

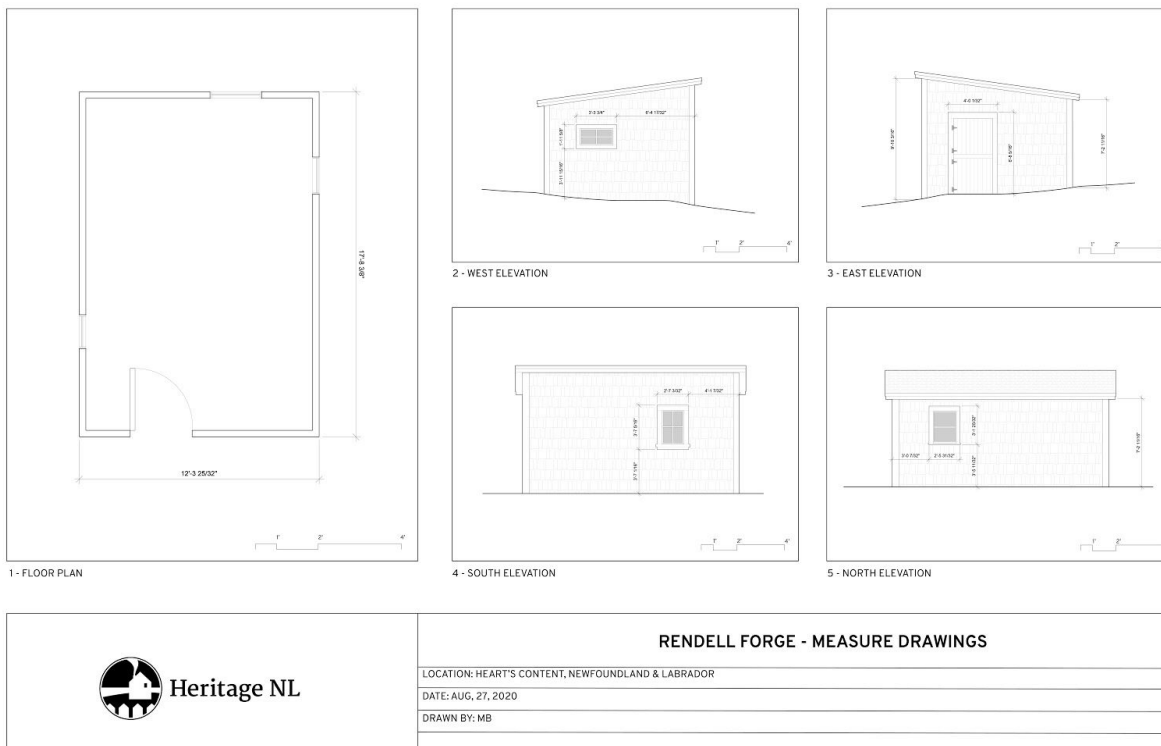
Following Bela's death, his son Ray (born 1924) worked the operation on a part-time basis. Son Edwin (born 1921) moved to Halifax and worked as an engineer. A daughter, Ida (born 1914), was a well-known shopkeeper in Heart's Content, and lived in the original family home till her death. Another son, James, worked as blacksmith, and went to Gander to work on the building of the airport and town in the 1940s ("Obituary for" para 2). Leslie James, his son, started working with his father in Gander at age 16, and went on to become an aircraft technician, and worked with Allied Aviation until 1982.

The last of the Rendells to work in the forge, Ray, used the building until circa 1990.



Rendell Forge, 2003, prior to restoration.

In the 2000s, the Mizzen Heritage Society took over the building. The roof was rebuilt, and the exterior of the building was reshingled.



###

Addendum

While tangential to the history of the forge, Charles Jr's son, W.J. "Will" Rendell, has an interesting story of his own. In 1902, the Harbor Grace Standard reported,

Another Newfoundlander who is doing well in the Far West is Mr. W. J. Rendell, son of Mr. Charles Rendell, of Heart's Content. Mr. Rendell went out some five years ago with the men who were here purchasing dogs for use on the trails to

the famed Klondike gold fields. Since going there, the lad from the cable city has been engaged prospecting, and has done well. Recently the Town Council of Dawson City appointed him city surveyor or engineer, at a salary of \$365 per month. Previous to his leaving Newfoundland, Mr. Rendell was employed in the Surveyor General's department, and the knowledge gained there has served him well -- securing the position now held by him in Dawson City. His friends are pleased to know of his well-doing, and congratulate him on securing the important position that has now come to him (Newfoundlanders 4).

W. J. Rendell married a Miss Kate Alcock, daughter of Captain Thomas Alcock (Some 2). There is an immigration record for both Mr. and Mrs. W.J. Rendell registering at White Pass, Alaska, in December 1912, arriving from Whitehorse via the White Pass and Yukon Railway (Immigration); though there is also a record of a W. J. Rendell working as manager of the Yukon Consolidated Gold Corporation (Coates 196), which was not formed until 1923.

References

1864 - 65 Hutchinsons Directory - Heart's Content. ngb.chebucto.org. Retrieved July 27, 2020.

<http://ngb.chebucto.org/H1864/64-hearts-cont-tb.shtml>

"The Cabot Club Committee." *The Newfoundland Quarterly*, volume 004 (1904-1905): 11-12.

<http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/ref/collection/quarterly/id/22812>

Coates, Ken; Morrison, William. *Land of the Midnight Sun: A History of the Yukon*. McGill-Queen's Press - MQUP, Mar. 21, 2005.

"HEART'S CONTENT". ngb.chebucto.org. Retrieved July 27, 2020.

http://ngb.chebucto.org/M1904/04-hartcont_tb.shtml

"Immigration." <http://alaskaweb.org/immi.html>. Retrieved September 17, 2020.

Lance Corporal Arthur James Rendell (PDF). The Rooms

https://www.therooms.ca/sites/default/files/rendell_arthur_james_204_0.pdf

“Local Happenings.” Evening Telegram, 1904-06-02: 3.

“Local Make.” Evening Telegram, 1897-05-27: 4

<http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/ref/collection/telegram18/id/48818>

"Newfoundland Census, 1921," database with images, FamilySearch

<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:QV1W-R28N> : 16 March 2018

“Newfoundlanders in BC.” Harbor Grace Standard, 1902-05-30: 4.

<http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/ref/collection/hgstandard/id/11778>

NLGenWeb Newspaper Transcriptions - Daily News - YEAR END EVENTS 1939.

Retrieved 17 September 2020.

https://sites.rootsweb.com/~cannf/dailynews_1939.htm

"Obituary for Leslie James Rendell at Greens Funeral Home & Services".

www.greensfuneralservices.ca. Retrieved July 27, 2020.

<https://www.greensfuneralservices.ca/obituary/4053284>

“Obituary. Mrs. Leah Rendell.” Evening Telegram, 1913-09-30.

Osborn, Bob. “Yeovil Trades and Traders.” The A-to-Z of Yeovil's History. Retrieved 17

September 2020. <http://www.yeovilhistory.info/shopping%20index.htm>

[Rendell family tree](#). Prepared by Edwin Rendell, 17 January 1992.

Rowe, Melvin. “[Heart's Content Shipwrights - First in Design and at Building 1783-1900](#).” Unpublished manuscript, 1988.

Rowe, Ted (July 27, 2020). "The Rendell Forge, Heart's Content". The ICH Blog: Intangible Cultural Heritage, Folklore, and Oral History. Retrieved July 27, 2020.

<http://www.ichblog.ca/2020/07/the-rendell-forge-hearts-content-quest.html>

Rowe, Ted. Personal interview with Dale Jarvis. July 28, 2020.

Simmons, Lillian (August 7, 2012). "Town has enough history to warrant a heritage district". The Compass. Retrieved July 27, 2020.

<https://www.pressreader.com/canada/the-compass/20120807/281754151464244>

"Some Harbor Gracians at Dawson City." Harbor Grace Standard, 1911-02-03: 2.

<http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/ref/collection/hgstandard/id/14377>

"Terra Nova Bicycle." Evening Herald, 1896-06-10: 1.

<http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/ref/collection/eveherald/id/8950>

Year book and almanac of Newfoundland, 1898. St. John's: J.W. Withers, Queen's Printer, 1898. http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/ref/collection/cns_almanac/id/9145

Year book and almanac of Newfoundland, 1903. St. John's: J.W. Withers, King's Printer, 1903.

http://collections.mun.ca/cdm/ref/collection/cns_almanac/id/9465

The Heritage NL Fieldnotes Series was created to openly share information concerning the ongoing research projects of Heritage NL in the fields of built heritage and intangible cultural heritage. This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](#). Last update 27 October 2020.