

established a nail factory at his Monticello plantation as a way to supplement his income. His nail factory made both hand-forged and cut nails. It would not be until the middle-1800's that cut nails began dominating the marketplace. Cut nails are not actually "cut" they are sheared from steel plate that is the thickness of the nail shank. Although routinely referred to as "square nails", they are not truly square, the cutting machine tapers the nail shank as it is sheared from the steel plate. A second machine forms the head of a cut nail. With the hand-forged nail, all four sides are tapered. With the cut nail, two sides are parallel because they are the thickness of the plate they were sheared from.

Cut nails could be manufactured much faster than individually formed hand-forged nails. As the process was mechanized, the cost per nail decreased. However, cut nail factories employed operators and attendants for each machine so the process was still labor-intensive. Cut nails had their heyday from about 1820 (development of the Type B nail) to 1910, the advent of the wire nail. Wire nails are round. Steel wire is fed into a machine that grips the wire, cuts it, makes the head, and chisels the point, all in one operation. This process is totally mechanized, requiring someone to merely provide maintenance for multiple machines and turn the machines on and off. Each wire nail machine can make thousands of nails per minute.

Wire nails have all but replaced the cut nail. Cut nails are still used but mainly for restoration and masonry work. Though wire nails are cheaper to produce, the cut nail has a holding power of approximately four times that of the modern round nail. Compared on that basis, cut nails are still the better nail. Now you know more than you ever wanted to know about nails, as well as learning about an unusually named oilwick lamp.

Skip Cars

by Dave Thorpe

They are a little odd looking, but when you understand how they are used, skip cars suddenly become collectable too! You can see the rear wheel has an extra smaller rim that extends out from the main wheel. The smaller rim catches another track part-way up the incline which tips the car and dumps the load. These cars were used for both ore and water haulage.

