Portland Picket Pointer and Earlier Fence Patents

By Neil Searle

Peter Piper Picked a Portland Picket Pointer…….. Have you ever wondered how they used to shape the pointed tops of pickets for picket fences?

In the early 1900s, Adde & Co. made the "Portland Picket Pointer", a machine dedicated to pointing picket fence stakes. They also made the "Portland Meter", (Fig.8.) a device that, when installed on a planer, kept track of the lineal feet of stock. The picket pointer seems to have been a relatively short-lived product and the company specialized in metering devices for various industries. Adde & Co. survived until at least the 1970s.

Fig. 1. 1904 Advertisement from the Louis Lumbermen Co. They also claimed *"a boy can point 5000 or more a day"*

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The PPP appears to be based on an earlier patent by William Johnson shown in Fig. 5. Where *"it consists in attaching an ordinary carpenters' plane iron to an iron frame, on which is pivoted an arm for holding the picket in such a manner that by turning the said arm on its pivot with the picket, the plane iron shall cut one side near the end in an arch of a circle….."*

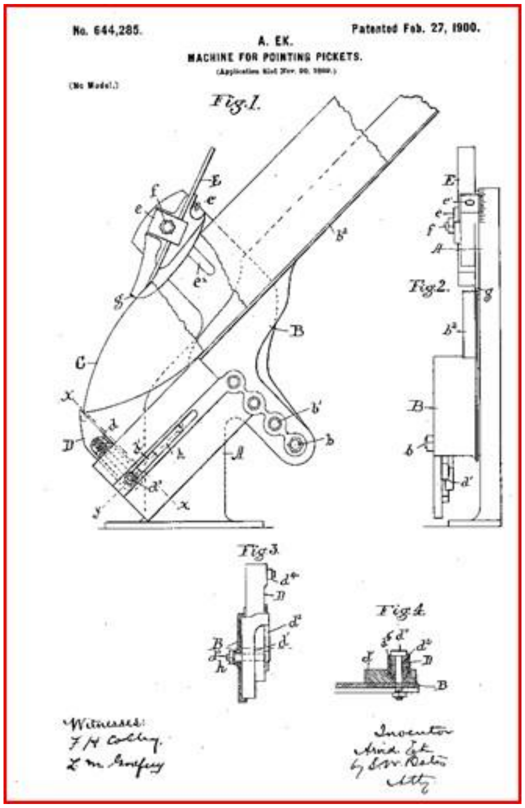

Fig. 2. Feb. 27, 1900. Patent No. 644,285. Arvid Ek of Portland, Maine, USA.

Based on patent records it appears that the company founder was S. Adolf Adde. The machine designers were Arvid Ek and Emil Ek. (Probably Swedish immigrants.)

Several earlier picket pointers were patented and manufactured, some earlier and some later than Arvid Ek's patent.

Fig. 3. The chip breaker serves as the initial stop for the picket stock, then as the cut progresses the chip breaker moves out of the way.

Some timber mills back in the days allowed retired mill workers to cut pickets, extra pocket money to help them out.

This design point is called a 'Stockade Point' also more commonly known as a Gothic arch.

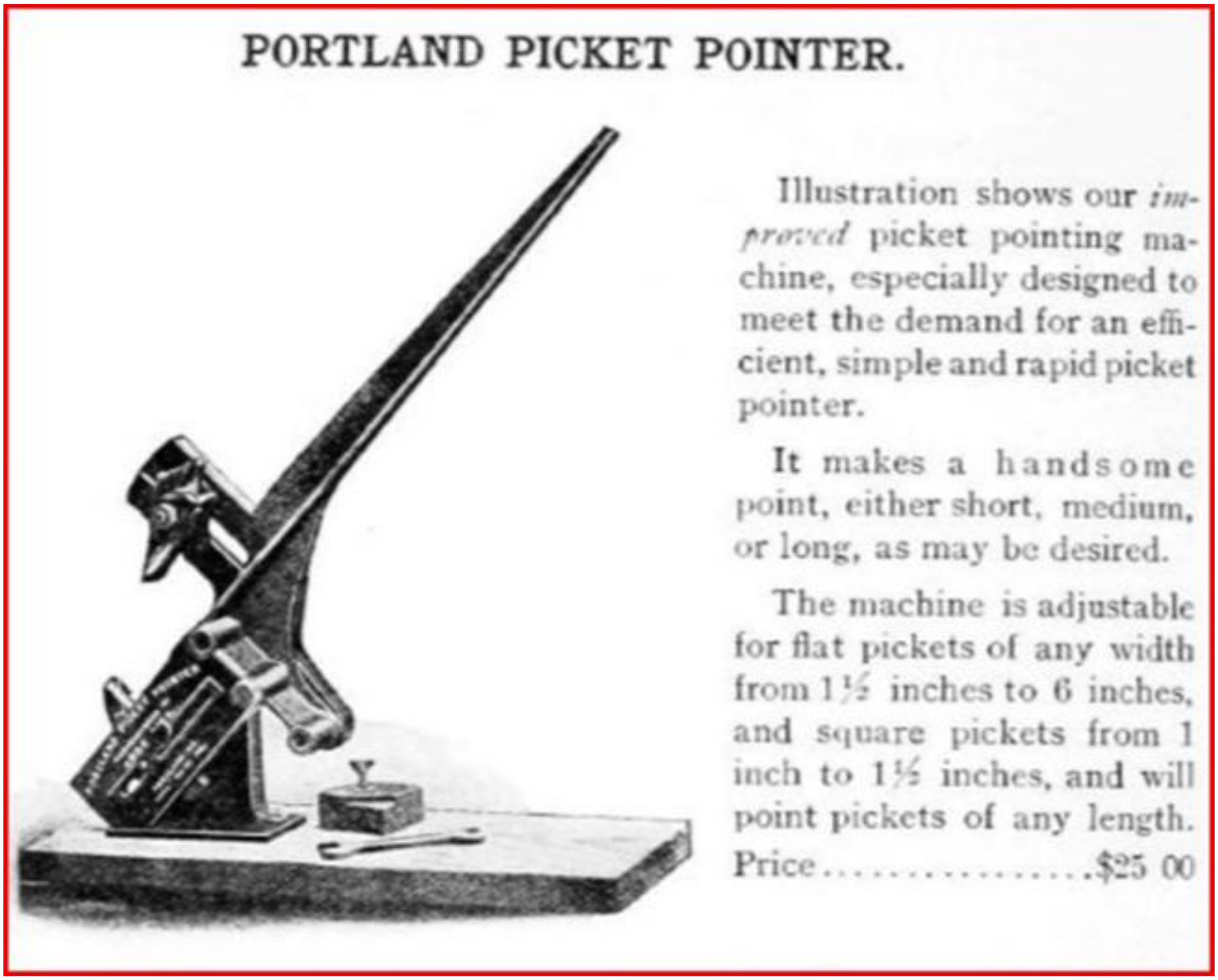

Fig. 4. From the Walter A.Zelnicker Supply Co., St. Louis. 1904

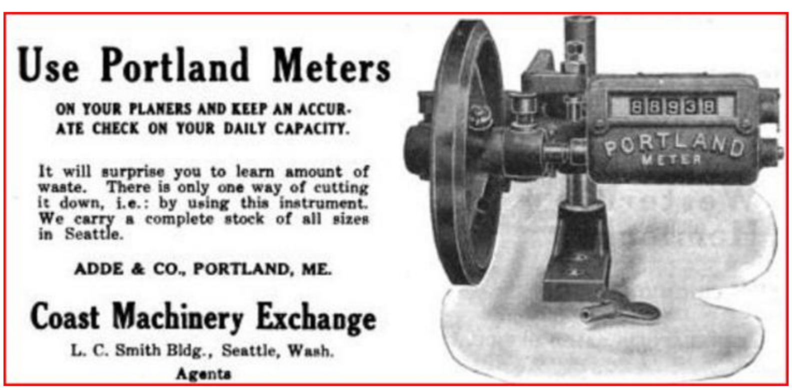

Fig. 5. 1919 advert from "The Timberman" Also patented by Emil Ek. Patent No. 766942, 1904. Adde & Co. were also known for the Portland Lumber Meter. "This little meter will indicate the quantity produced, tell at a glance at what speed your machine is feeding, and show the machine tender at any time the exact number of feet that have run through." Several models were produced with counting capacity up to 10,000,000 feet.

MAKING A POINT

Here's an item for you antique-tool collectors who are looking for something a bit unusual. Called the Portland "picket pointer," this patented early 20th-century device produced perfect picket points by slicing them with a knife, saving the fencemaker a lot of handsaw work.

It's hard to beat the efficiency of this guillotine-like tool. To cut one side of a picket point, you cradle the picket stock in the tool's arm and lever it downward. This raises the opposite end of the workpiece upward at an angle into a thick knife. One quick slice does it. Flip the picket over in the cradle, cut the other side, and you're done.

Sharp solution. *The Portland "picket pointer" saved early 20th-century fencemakers a lot of sweat.*

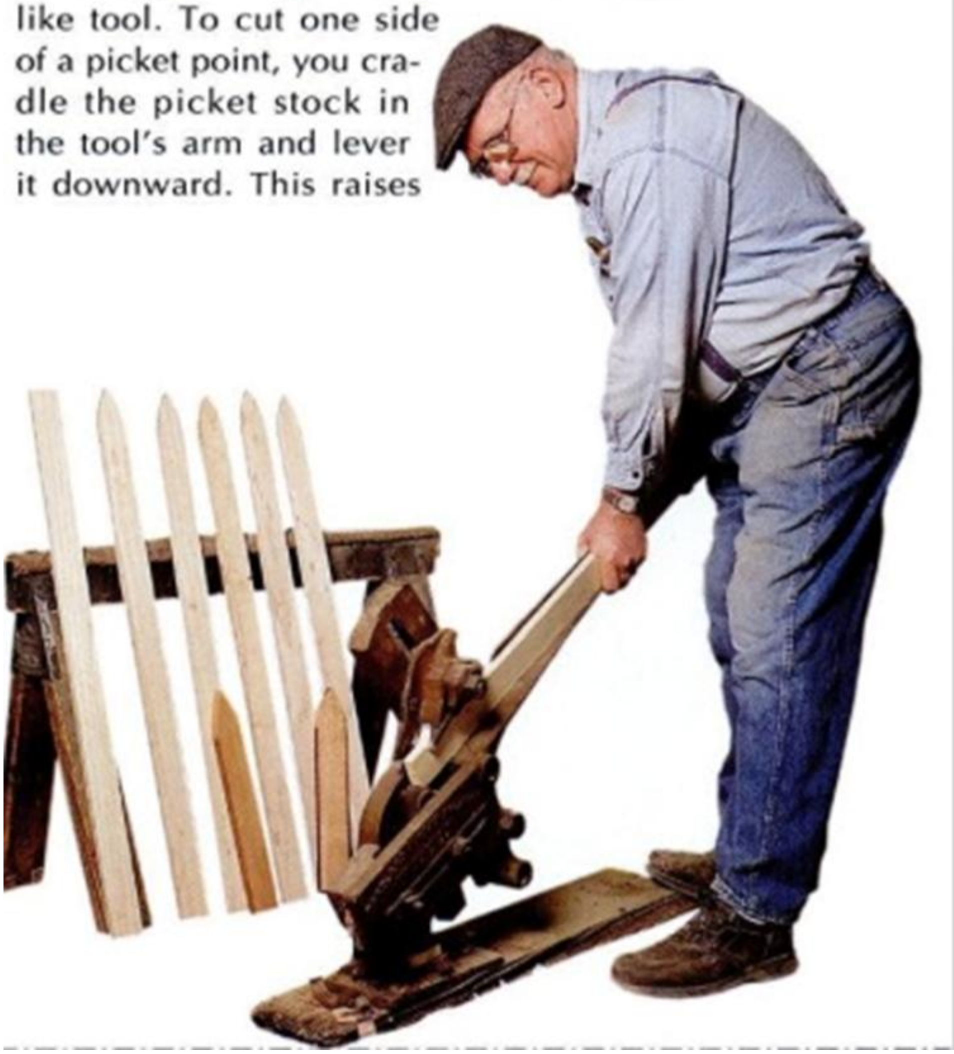

Fig. 6. October 1998 American Woodworker

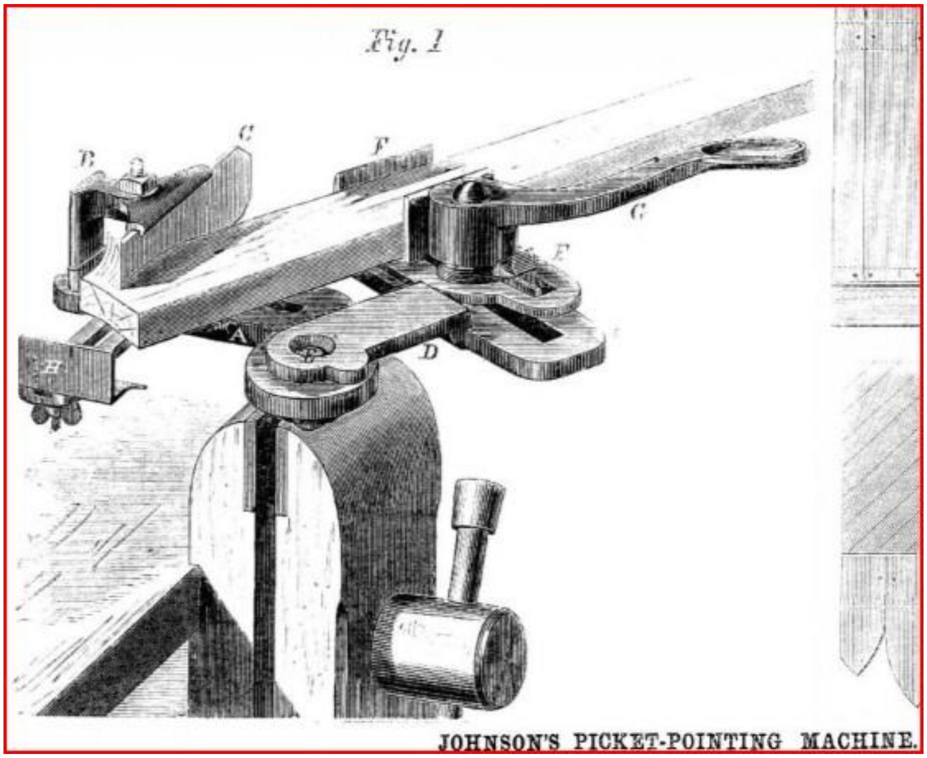

Fig. 7. Johnson's picket pointing machine (Scientific American Magazine, Vol. 21, Issue 12)

W.W. Johnson Patent May 30, 1868 Pat. Number 73339. As shown, this machine is held firmly by a lug either in a vice or wedged in a notch on a bench.

A short illustrated article in the 1869-09-18 issue of Scientific American describes this machine. An ad in the 1869-12-18 issue of Scientific American features the same engraving as the article: "Johnson's Picket-Pointing Machine. Rights for Sale. Agents wanted. Address W. T. Glasgow & Co., Sole Proprietors, Nashville, Tenn."

The noun 'Picket Pointer' is believed to have originated with Johnson's Picket-Pointing machine according to the Oxford English Dictionary.

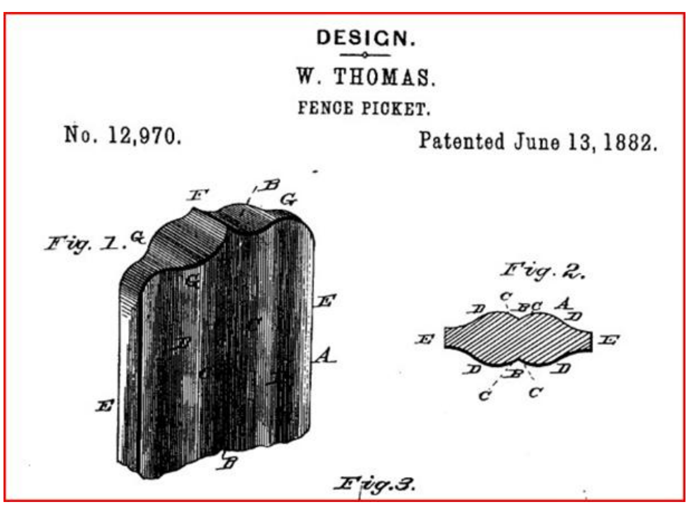

Fig. 8. An early picket patent. Wilber Thomas described this picket design as his improved ornamental picket. He states in his description, *"is designed-to be secured on the longitudinal wires of a fence, as shown in Fig. 3, or by any other suitable means, and form a fence of superior attractiveness and neatness."*

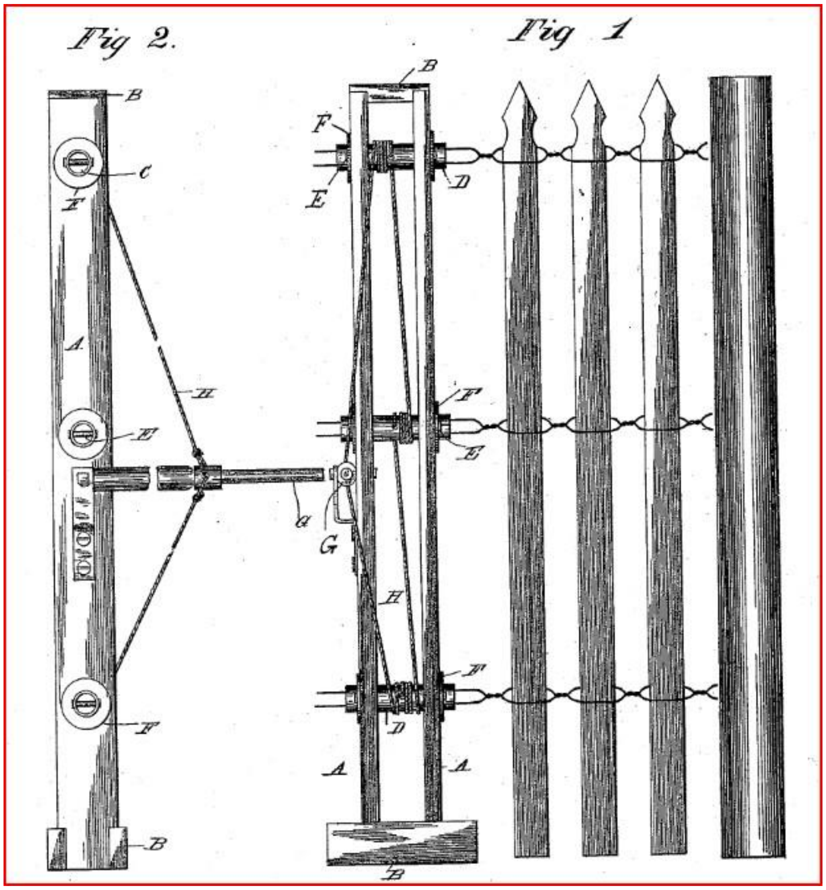

Fig. 8. A wire and picket fence machine as patented by G.R. Reniff and G.W. Tucker in 1893. This was an improvement on several other similar patents from the 1880s.

"have invented certain new and useful Improvements in Machines for Weaving Wire-and-Picket Fences"

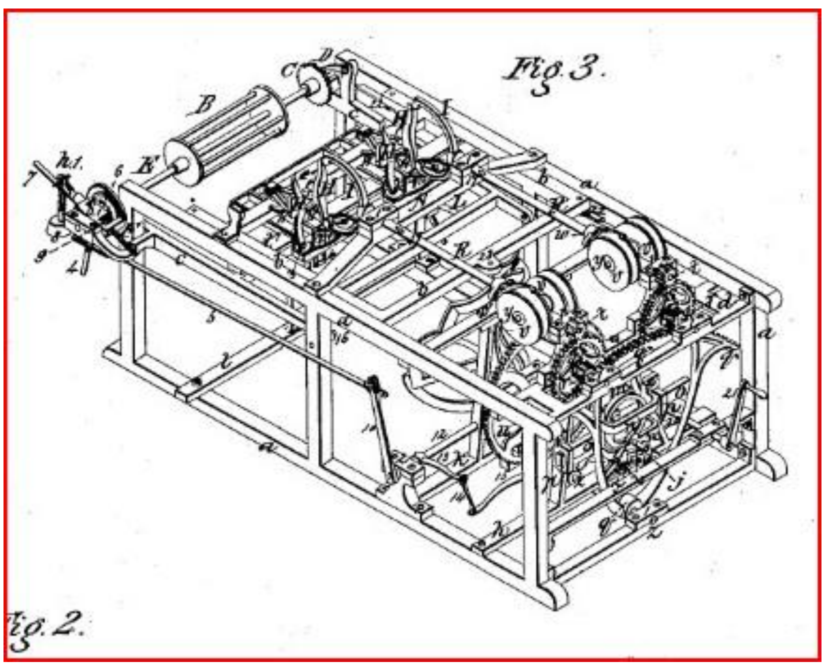

Fig. 9. Moore & Kelly, Making Fence Pickets. Patent No. 27923.

April. 17, 1860.

This was one of the earliest wire and picket making machines. It was one of the most complex and elaborate, there was even a steam-powered option for this machine.

Ref: Blue OX Mill Works. DATAMP. VintageMachinery.com. American Woodworker