



Name: Linus Yale Jr

Place: Salisbury, Herkimer County, New York

Years: April 4, 1821- December 25, 1868

Brief Biography

Linus Yale Jr was born on April 4, 1821 in Salisbury, Herkimer County, New York. Growing up as a young boy, Linus was always influenced by his father who was a locksmith. However, his main interest growing up was art.

Regardless of his interest in art, he was still focused on being a locksmith. Alongside his father, he was able to pick locks that were described as superior. This led to the development, by father and son, of a bank lock that was harder to pick.

The design of the lock made by father and son was very different from the normal locks of the time period. Their locks soon became known as infallible. With this reputation of an infallible lock, Linus moved to Philadelphia. This is where he stationed his main manufacturing center and created his first combination lock, eliminating the need for a key. He also maintained a sales office in New York City.

As a resident of Philadelphia, Linus created a partnership with a man named Halbert Greenleaf. After taking part in the war, Greenleaf decided not to return to the business. Greenleaf, along with one of Linus's ex-salesmen, created their own business in Rochester, New York. Due to a small market for bank locks, Linus began to focus on locks that could be used for everyday items. He

called such locks “cylinder locks” and patented his design. His location in New York was unable to make a large amount of these locks so he went to Philadelphia for some much needed help.

In Philadelphia, Linus met up with Henry Towne, a mechanical engineer and operations manager. Another added benefit to Towne’s skills was the fact that his father was quite wealthy. Towne’s father contributed some capital which helped create the Yale Lock Manufacturing Company.

The New York location was soon moved to Stamford, Connecticut because of Stamford’s location relative to New York City. The city had become a major market for locks. While traveling, Linus died a sudden death. Towne took over the business and renamed it Yale & Towne Manufacturing Company.

Major Achievements

Linus created what was considered an infallible bank lock. He also designed a combination lock which was probably used in the Civil War. His efforts also led to the cylinder lock. Linus created a successful lock business. To this day, the Yale Lock has remained unchanged from its original design.

For More Information

The Deerfield Historical Society Library, Deerfield, Massachusetts

The Stamford, Connecticut, Historical Society

"The Mechanization of a Complicated Craft," from *Mechanization Takes Command* (1948) by Siegfried Giedion

The Lock Museum of America in Terryville, Connecticut,
New York Tribune, 28 Dec. 1868. (obituary)

Resources

American National Biography Online

<http://poorwilliam.net/al-040411.html>

By Jenn Delisle