



**Jesse Reed
(1778 – 1867)**

Jesse Reed was born in 1778, the son of Ezekiel Reed, a clockmaker of North Bridgewater, and Mary (Rogers) his wife. The following is from Jacob W. Reed, the historian of the *Reed Family in America*, which was published in 1865.

At the age of nine, his wanderings, of which there were many in his long life, began. At that age, he went to live with a Mr. Dean at Easton. He stayed there three years and during that time showed his remarkable mechanical ability by constructing a trip hammer, using a wheel and camshaft, run by water-power. When he was twelve years old, he returned to his father, watching whom, the son constructed the main part of a wooden clock. At fifteen, he was apprenticed to a joiner in Randolph with whom he served a regular apprenticeship, “coming out

of his time” in 1799. The following year he married Hannah Hayward. During his apprenticeship he was much interested in the popular search for “perpetual motion” but after as successful a result as could be hoped to secure, became convinced that the thing was impossible, and abandoned the search, devoting his time to more practical matters. The year of his marriage he developed a successful rotary pump, then he turned his attention to the manufacture of nails by machine.

John Washburn of Kingston had made a successful machine for cutting nails by power rather than by hand. Mr. Washburn died in 1801 at the age of thirty-seven. By his method, the blanks were cut by one operation, picked up by children or other cheap help and inserted in the slot of the same or another machine in which the heads were formed. From 1802 or a little earlier until 1811, Reed was working on the development of a machine, which should cut the entire nail by one operation. He worked from various angles: sometimes the heads were shaped first, after which the points were flattened; sometimes he shaped the blanks first as Mr. Washburn had done, then attempted to form the head. Successful results were patented, the first time in 1802. By that time, nail-rods were used just as they had been when nails were hammered out by hand, and as they had been used in previous experiments, but the operation was an expensive one and so the machine was cast aside. Later Reed experimented nail iron rolled to proper thickness, then split into pieces. None of the results satisfied the inventor. He used up his scant resources, his partners refused to advance further financial aid, and he laid aside his dreams for a time, following the joiner’s trade until he should once more be able to work out his ideas.

While in Boston, he worked on the canal in Medway, helping to construct the first lock, which was built at that point. Later he was in Providence, RI, then in West Bridgewater, in both of which places he brought out nail machines. Later he was in Malden, where he invented a machine for pulverizing dyewood for Barrett and Shattuck, Silk Dyers. Patents for this machine were obtained in 1807. Removing to Kingston, where he purchased a major interest in the Fuller gristmill on Jones River, he took up his nail machine once more, this time successfully. In 1809, 1810 and 1811, letters patent were obtained covering inventions of nail machine and improvements, which produced a machine commercially acceptable and capable of making a nail complete in one operation. He also ran a dyewood manufactory at a lower privilege on Jones River, which he sold, to the Jones River Cotton and Woolen Manufacturing Company when they built their factory at the lower privilege in 1813. In September 1812 he had purchased Robert Salmond's farm in Hanover and must have moved there immediately for in January 1813 he was styled in a deed as "of Hanover".

By 1839, Reed resided in Marshfield, having built there the first house in American built with machine made nails. Although Reed and his descendants moved from Kingston, in 1926 Edgar Reed donated the funds for the Community House building in Reed's memory.