

As of 14 Aug 2007

GEORGE HARDMAN (b. 1818)
Paternal Great Great Grandfather

Born: Abt 1818 Kürhessen (Germany)¹
Died: 19 May 1875 Newburg, Preston, WV “Softness of the Brain”

Arrival in US: Abt 1841
Naturalization: 1846

Spouse: Nancy BLAKE Ohio (parents foreign born)
Marriage: Abt 1845 Ohio or Virginia

Children:

Name	DOB	POB
Hans Roland	1846	Wheeling
Blanche Virginia	1848	Wheeling
Franklin	1855	Monongalia died in infancy
Margaret	1861	Preston ? Wheeling ?

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY:

By all reports, George Hardman² (GH) was a highly energetic, affable, friendly sort with good business management skills. However, his repeated business failures because of a lack of capital seems to have been the result of poor strategic business sense combined with bad luck. He was involved in several business failures, investing, for example in an iron rail mill before there was sufficient demand and, conversely, purchasing and operating iron furnaces with a process already outdated and under-capitalized. He had bad luck in timing, being overtaken by both the Panics of 1857 and 1873, although he was far from alone. He is noted in newspapers of the time as being “well-known” in Wheeling. However, it must also be noted that the population of Wheeling (city only) in 1850 was only 11,435 and 14,083 in 1860. The city had only been incorporated in 1806 (as a town in 1769). In 1840, although the true frontier had moved to the West, Wheeling still retained a somewhat (transitional) frontier character, and was rapidly changing.

GH arrived in Wheeling from Germany in the about 1841, having brought with him his Grandmother, Christena Hardman (based on his and her ages).³ (Hardman is an Anglicization,

¹ Only source for Kurhessen is Clinton Furnace pamphlet where it is called Courhessen and “Hesse” in 1870 US Census.

² There is no evidence of any middle name or initial except its use on the death certificate of his son, Hans Roland (therefore dubious at best). In those documents available bearing his signature, he seems to have signed “Geo. Hardman”.

³ 1850 US Census

probably of the German name Hartmann.) At some point, he met and then married about 1844 or 1845, Nancy Blake⁴, born in Ohio, of immigrant parents⁵ (NFI). Their first child, Hans Roland Hardman, was born in 1846 in Wheeling. A second child, Virginia Blanche, followed two years later. There then appears an unexplained gap until the birth of Franklin (who died within two years) about 1855 at Clinton Furnace, Monongalia County. This was followed by yet another unexplained gap until the birth of their last child, Margaret, in 1861. Both Virginia Blanche and an unnamed child, age 10 (probably Margaret) are listed as residing with their parents in Preston County in 1870.⁶ While Hans Roland remained in Preston County until after 1880, Virginia Blanche moved back to Wheeling immediately after (or as a part of) her marriage to John Pace in 1871 or 1872, and remained there until her death in 1934. At some point Margaret married a man named Warethen and also seems to have lived in Wheeling.⁷

The same year as the birth of his first child (1846) GH was naturalized.⁸ If this is accurate, GH would have had to arrive in Wheeling in 1841 at the latest.⁹ He apparently was trained as a stone mason in Hesse, a highly skilled trade at the time. As late as 1850, he still listed his occupation as that of a stone mason,¹⁰ although, as noted below, he was heavily involved in other activities.

George Hardman seems to have arrived with substantial resources, perhaps from liquidating assets in Hesse (and thus bringing what would have been a 78 year old woman with him). By 1850, he had sufficient means to own a home on Chapline Street in Wheeling¹¹ and be able to afford an 18 year old live-in caretaker for Christena.¹² Further, he appears to have maintained this residence in Wheeling until his death, even though his business endeavors were located primarily in Preston County. George Hardman remained a prominent enough citizen of Wheeling for his untimely death (about age 57) in Newburg to be reported on page 1 in the *Wheeling Intelligencer* newspaper.¹³

⁴ Maiden name based on Death Certificate of son Hans Roland, on file

⁵ 1870 US Census, Parentage Unknown other than noted as foreign born.

⁶ 1870 US Census

⁷ “Maggie” seems to disappear. The only reference so far found to her is she is the informant on her sister’s death certificate, whence the name Warethe

⁸ Margaret Little, *George Hardman and the Clinton Iron Furnace* (Morgantown, WV: Monongalia Historical Society, May 1993) hereinafter Clinton Furnace.

⁹ The Immigration Act of 1795 was in force and required a residency of five years. Citizenship could then be granted by a local common law court by application.

¹⁰ 1850 US Census

¹¹ Clinton Furnace

¹² 1850 US Census

¹³ *Wheeling Intelligencer*, Thursday, May 20, 1875, Volume XXIII, page 1

His first apparent investment was about 1842 in the Washington Rail Mill where he was a partner. The Mill had failed by 1845 because there was a lack of demand for its product at that time.¹⁴ The timing was unfortunate. It was a few years too soon for a mill of this type in Wheeling. The B&O Railroad, for example, did not reach Wheeling until 1853.

What happened between 1845 and his next known investment in 1853 remains a mystery for now. According to the 1850 Census, however, he still owned personal property valued at \$45,000. That would equate to a value of well over \$525,000 in 2006 dollars, a not insubstantial sum. How this income was generated is not known. However, he was an election commissioner for the 8th District of Ohio County in 1852.¹⁵ In 1856 he was listed in the Wheeling Directory as an iron merchant. This lends further credence to his maintaining two households, because in 1853 he had moved to Monongalia County where he operated the Clinton Furnace until 1859 and then moved to Preston County to establish and operate the Franklin (Hardman's) Furnace.

His next apparent investment was with John Gill and Edward W. Stevens in the Crescent Rail Mill in Wheeling. Various founding dates are given, most commonly 1854, but it may have been as early as 1852. Part of this may be confusion caused by similar names. Apparently, and it is difficult to tell at this point, the three partners bought and/or built the Crescent Iron Mill in Wheeling sometime prior to 1854. In 1854, they expanded their vision and created Wheeling's first publically owned manufacturing plant. They chartered (incorporated) the Crescent Manufacturing Company under the laws of Virginia with an authorized capital of one million dollars. It is difficult to tell from the information available whether this huge mill (eventually built) actually existed at this point or was simply a planned, massive expansion of the extant Crescent Iron Mill. According to its advertisements it had, or was to have, fifteen double puddling furnaces, fourteen heating furnaces, three trains of muck rolls, two Burden squeezers and one train of sheet rolls as well as the innovative complete set of fully equipped rail rolls. Additionally, the company owned land in Wheeling as well as other locations, notably for our purposes in Monongalia County. Attached to this were a number of land deals concerning land owned by Gill (some 9,000 acres). They then traveled east to interest investors (one of whom, Joseph Whitaker of Philadelphia was a founder of Principio Iron, which would eventually acquire the operation). The entire deal appears to have had very widespread support. Gill was elected president and a C.D. Hubbard was elected Secretary. Members of the board were the largest stockholders, including GH.¹⁶ The mill was shut down in 1857 as a result of the Panic. This whole operation appears somewhat dicey and was possibly pure speculation at this point. The Crescent Iron Manufacturing Company apparently continued in receivership until it was sold in 1862.¹⁷ It then became a part of the Whitaker Iron Company. George, however, indirectly as a part of the deal, had moved, at least part time, to Monongalia County and the Clinton Iron Furnace.

¹⁴ "The Crescent Mill", <http://wheeling.weirton.lib.wv.us/history/bus/whitaker.htm>, downloaded 30 Apr 2007, an article from the *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, 14 Sep 1886.

¹⁵ Ohio County Order Books, Volume 32, p. 270

¹⁶ Earl Chapin May, *Principio to Wheeling, 1715-1945* (Harper Brothers, 1945), pp. 120-122

¹⁷ "The Crescent Mill", <http://wheeling.weirton.lib.wv.us/history/bus/whitaker.htm>, downloaded 30 Apr 2007, an article from the *Wheeling Daily Intelligencer*, 14 Sep 1886.

In 1853 (officially 7 May 1854) GH purchased the Clinton Furnace in Monongalia County, about 10 miles south of Morgantown, from R. B. Carr of Wheeling¹⁸ and George D. Evans, although they had never succeeded in putting the furnace into production.¹⁹ (An iron furnace of this time was essentially an iron smelter fired by charcoal that ultimately produced pig iron. They generally worked veins of iron ore near the surface. The process required a vein of limestone nearby as well. It also required a water source and large stands of timber that could be converted to charcoal. Although they varied in size, they generally employed from 100 to 500 people organized in a company town provided by the furnace operator.) GH was apparently assisted financially by Alexander Campbell, also of Wheeling.²⁰ GH operated the furnace from 1853 to 1857 (or 1859) before selling out.²¹ The furnace was located along Three Forks Creek in Monongalia County. Clinton Furnace had been originally built in 1846 by a William Salyards. GH also purchased an adjoining 395 acres from Francis Weston. At least one and possibly two children were born and died in infancy in Monongalia County while he was operating the Clinton Furnace and are allegedly buried in the church yard of Summers (Methodist Episcopal, built 1858) Church near Clinton Furnace off Halleck Road. At the time, this church was used as a union church.²² A combination of George's wanderings between Wheeling and Clinton and the repeated infant deaths may account for some of the differences in dates of birth between his and Nancy's children.

When GH arrived at Clinton Furnace he put the quarter-stack furnace into production and operated it until he ran out of capital in 1857 and sold out by 1859. In addition to the costs of the furnace, he may also have suffered losses through his simultaneous involvement in the Crescent Iron Manufacturing Company. Too much should not be made of this failure because it, like tens of thousands of other businesses, was caught up in the national Panic of 1857. GH became the first postmaster of the then growing community of Clinton Furnace on July 9, 1857 relinquishing that post a year later.²³

¹⁸ Throughout his business dealings in Monongalia and Preston Counties, GH maintained a residence (Chapline St) and was apparently active in Wheeling.

¹⁹ Clipping, Unknown date and newspaper article, "The Monongalia Story", by Dr. Earl Core of WVU.

²⁰ Clipping, Unknown date and newspaper article, "The Monongalia Story", by Dr. Earl Core of WVU.

²¹ "The Antebellum Iron Industry in Western Virginia; the Cheat Basin ironworks", *Appalachian Blacksmiths Association*, <http://www.appaltnet.net/aba/education/historical/ironworks/ironworks4.htm> , downloaded 25 Mar 07.

²² Clipping, Unknown date and newspaper article, "The Monongalia Story", by Dr. Earl Core of WVU.

²³ Clipping, Unknown date and newspaper article, "The Monongalia Story", by Dr. Earl Core of WVU.

In 1857, the US was hit by the “Panic of 1857”, essentially a short recession, which had adverse consequences for the furnace as well as Crescent Iron Manufacturing of Wheeling. In 1857-1858, the furnace went under and was purchased at auction by Crangle and Company of Wheeling, the trust deed holder. It is also alleged that GH made an assignment of the furnace to Benjamin Ryan in 1858²⁴, although evidence for this is somewhat shaky.

GH then moved across the county line to Preston County, still along Three Forks Creek near where it joins with Laurel Run, and started what was initially named the Franklin (at Irondale, aka Victoria²⁵) Furnace, also called Hardman Furnace,²⁶ near Independence in 1859²⁷. It was named Franklin in memory of one of the infants that died in Clinton. The settlement nearby was called Hardman and is extant as of 2007. GH appears to have regularly employed German immigrants.²⁸ The “Acts of the Legislature of West Virginia, 1863”, Chapter 13, page 12, passed January 13, 1863, authorizes Charles H Kimball, as Trustee, Franklin Furnace, to acquire certain land parcels, construct, and maintain, a tram or railroad to connect the furnace to the B&O RR. A hotel, called the Victoria Hotel, was built (by slave labor) across from the iron works and its foundations allegedly still exist. Neither the slaves nor the hotel belonged to GH.²⁹

The furnace failed in 1865, but GH was apparently retained to run it. He re-purchased it with a Deed of Trust in Sep 1868. In 1870, he also became one of the stockholders in the Iron Valley Railroad.³⁰ (There is some confusion here. Antebellum Iron Industry states Hardman’s Furnace at Victoria was also in the hands of Colonel Nemegyi as a broker.³¹) According to the reconstructed Deed Book³² Hardman Furnace and the Iron Valley Railroad were in trusteeship in June 1868 and 907 acres and the railroad were transferred to D. Randolph Martin. The same

²⁴ Clipping, Unknown date and newspaper article, “The Monongalia Story”, by Dr. Earl Core of WVU.

²⁵ Morton, p. 200, extract on file

²⁶ Wiley, p. 358, extract on file; Wikipedia article on Hardman Furnace, 6 Apr 07, on file

²⁷ “The Antebellum Iron Industry in Western Virginia; the Cheat Basin ironworks”, *Appalachian Blacksmiths Association*, <http://www.appaltnet.net/aba/education/historical/ironworks/ironworks4.htm> , downloaded 25 Mar 07.

²⁸ *The History of West Virginia, Old and New*, Volume III (Chicago & New York: The American Historical Society, 1923), pp. 281-282, extract on file

²⁹ “Laurel Run History, 26 Jan 2006”, <http://laurelrunhistory.blogspot.com/2006/01/laurel-run-history.html>, downloaded 8 May 2007.

³⁰ Wiley, p. 497, extract on file

³¹ “The Antebellum Iron Industry in Western Virginia; Colonel Nemegyi and the Irondale Furnace”, *Appalachian Blacksmiths Association*, online, downloaded 25 Mar 07, extract on file.

³² Joy L. Gilchrist, *Abstracts of the Preston County Journal, 1866-1868* (Decorah, Iowa: Anundsen Printing, 1982), p. 54.

source then has an extensive entry on page 67 which transferred several tracts of land and the railroad to Charles Kimball as Trustee of the Franklin Iron and Coal Company, owned by George and Nancy Hardman, to be sold at public auction on July 21, 1868. This property having been purchased (deed recorded) by Charles Kimball as Trustee, George and Nancy Hardman, in November 1859. The entries give the detailed locations.

GH then founded the Gladesville Furnace, Preston County, in 1869³³ near Brain's Run (Morton, p. 200, gives the start date as 1872). Actually, he purchased the iron works from D. Randolph Martin of New York on 21 Sep 1868 which included a bond for \$1000. It is described in the deed book as that part of the Galatin Tract located along Three Fork Creek containing 213 acres. This was a tract that Martin had purchased only months before (May 1868) from John McCurdy (trustee). GH purchased several other plots along Raccoon Creek from others at the same time and in the same transaction. GH went into debt some \$204,355 by promissary note payable in installments from 1868 to 1873, in varying amounts.³⁴ He signed a deed of trust with Gibson Lamb and Charles W. Brochuner in Feb 1871. As of July 1869, George Hardman was signing business correspondence under a letterhead reading, in part, "Martin Iron Works" and "George Hardman, Proprietor".³⁵

The 1870 US Census, Roll 1697, page 100 shows George Hardman, Lyon Twp, Preston, WV, age 51, POB Hesse; notes parents of foreign birth; occupation iron manufacturer, real estate \$300,000 (\$5,925,000 in 2006 dollars), personal property \$30,000 (\$592,500 in 2006 dollars); wife Nancy, age 51, POB Ohio, both parents of foreign birth; female child Virginia, age 20; unnamed child, age 10 (it may be assumed that this was Margaret).

Gladesville Furnace reportedly failed as a result of the Panic of 1873, although according to Antebellum Iron Industry, it was not purchased by Colonel Nemegeyi (who renamed it Irondale) until 1877, two years after GH's death.³⁶ There is more name confusion here which may be caused by multiple, overlapping transactions.

According to a death notice in the *Wheeling Intelligencer*, George Hardman died on 19 May 1875 of "softness of the brain". The notice states the place of death as Newburg. Newburg simply may have been the closest large town. (NB: According to Volume 3, p. 1172, "History of Franklin County, Ohio, there is a second GH, also German, who had iron manufacturing business dealings in Wheeling in the 1870s. He died while on a train en route to Wheeling in 1874 and was buried in Wheeling. He should not be confused with "our" George Hardman.).

³³ "The Antebellum Iron Industry in Western Virginia; Colonel Nemegeyi and the Irondale Furnace", Appalachian Blacksmiths Association, online, downloaded 25 Mar 07, extract on file.

³⁴ Sale Recorded in Deed Book #38, page 27 to 33, copy in file. (This is a reconstruction after the 1869 fire made in 1873)

³⁵ Ltr, Martin Iron Works, Preston County, W. VA., dated July 7th, 1869 and signed "Geo. Hardman" and addressed to Mssrs. Brown and Carroll concerning the attachment of a house, passing some bills to a Smith Crane, and reference to a railroad order under jury consideration.

³⁶ "The Antebellum Iron Industry in Western Virginia; the Cheat Basin ironworks", Appalachian Blacksmiths Association, online, downloaded 25 Mar 07, extract on file.

As cited on page 20 of *The Clinton Furnace*, a death notice was published in the *Wheeling Intelligencer*, Thursday, May 20, 1875, Volume XXIII, page 1 (Notice that this was page 1 of the paper):

“Probable Death of George Hardman – Mr. Philip Schule received a dispatch yesterday from a friend in Newburg stating that George Hardman (whose illness we mentioned a day or two ago) was not expected to live until night. His disease, as stated, was softening of the brain, superinduced by excessive anxiety and strain of mind on account of recent business reverses. Only a few months ago he was in this city, looking to be, as far as outward appearances indicated, in his usual health. He still retained his healthful florid complexion, and his robust physique, and his hair was only slightly tinged with gray, notwithstanding he was upwards of sixty years old. At that time he was perhaps not without hope of ultimate relief from his pecuniary embarrassments, and no doubt was putting forth all possible efforts to save himself. But the calamity that had been culminating ever since the panic of 1873, overtook him after that visit, and he was finally compelled to let go his hold upon the large furnace property in Preston County which only two years ago bid so fair to realize his life long ambition to make a big strike in business. This property could have been sold in 1873 for a sum that would have paid all his debts and still left him an ample fortune. But Mr. Hardman’s ideas were large, and one or two hundred thousand dollars of a surplus, after a life such as his had been, did not fill the measure of his ideas. So he held on, hoping to consummate a sale in New York by which he would sell his property for a million dollars. At that time he was making pig iron at a large profit, and like thousands of others, was wholly unprepared for the thunder clap out of the clear sky, the September panic.

“Mr. Hardman was at one time a man known to almost everybody in Wheeling. He was well-remembered by all our older people as a man of great energy and boldness in business matters; as full of big ideas, always sanguine of success, ready to embark in large enterprises, and as one who contributed much to the business life of the city without reaping any ultimate benefit himself. He had many of the qualities of a successful operator in large schemes, but unfortunately was too visionary to work out results with that attention to details that is so necessary to success. He always rallied again, and at last seemed in a fair way to conquer the adverse fate (which) had beset his pathway for so many years. But his prospects as we have stated, were delusive, and like the apples of Sodom turned to ashes in his clutch, leaving him at last more hopelessly bankrupted than at any former period of his life. His failure is said to have left him with a debt of some three hundred and fifty thousand dollars, an amount so large at his age, and so discouraging after his many reverses, as to have taken away all his wonderful vitative power of mental recuperation. He therefore gave way under the pressure, and has fallen victim of his sanguine nature. P.S. Since writing the above we have seen a dispatch to Henry K. List, Esq., stating that Mr. Hardman died quietly at seven o’clock last evening.”

Even so, time is strange. There remains a settlement between Independence and Newburg WV, named Hardman, possibly without its residents knowing why. It is on the Hardman-Newburg Road, County Highway 33/12. There also existed until 1969 Hardman or Q Tower on the B&O RR (now CSX) at milepost BA269.8. This tower was closed in 1998 and torn down in 1999 and a new Hardman tower constructed closer to Independence at MP269. The former was located roughly where “Hardman Switch”, the siding for the Hardman (Franklin) Iron Furnace had joined the B&O RR until the furnace closed. Both the former and latter were “helper” locations where additional locomotives were/are attached to trains to help them over the steep Newburg grade.

COMMENTS:

According to the 1850 Federal Census, Henry Hardman (Hardmon), two years older than George, also a stone mason, and also from Hesse, was living just blocks away from George in District 44 as well. There is no concrete evidence of any relationship between that Henry Hardman and GH other than these coincidences. Henry does not seem to appear in any of the material pertaining to GH, nor do they seem to have crossed paths after this. On the other hand, they are of a similar age, profession, and birthplace. It makes for tantalizing speculation.

Henry had arrived from Germany after 1842 accompanied by a wife and two children, all born in Hesse (Germany). Grandma Christena may have come with George because he was single and Henry already had a family. Henry, as the eldest, may also have been liquidating remaining family assets in Germany. I have made some attempts to trace this individual, but only with limited results so far. This Henry seems to have moved about, and may have ended up as a stone mason in Cumberland, Maryland by 1870. If (a big if) this individual is related to George (brother?), it may explain the connection that enabled Hans Roland to meet and marry Caroline Frances Bumbaugh, who was from Franklin County, PA, when he was a miller in Preston County, WV. (Cumberland is between the two and was a major market center for the area.). What is possibly Henry's son, also Henry (based solely on name and age) was boarding with the Hutchinson family in District 1, Monongalia County, WV in 1860. At this point, this all remains speculation.