

Interior View of Burnes Blacksmith Shop



Many of the old blacksmith shops, with spreading chestnut trees, have already disappeared, yet there are a number of them still left about the countryside or in some partly hidden city corner which will recall those early years of the horse and buggy.

On upper Canal St., Stamford, one may still enter an old blacksmith shop, which was started about 1878 by James Burnes and is now operated by his son who has the same name. During the early years of this shop's existence, horses were so plentiful that it was often difficult to get a horse shod at the promised time, that every driver had to await his turn before he was allowed to give his horse to the shop's entrance. What a picture, too, this must have made, when the old forge, in all its glory, sent sparks flying about like so many miniature fireworks on a Fourth of July night! And this same fire must have brought out of the dusky haze numerous im-

plements of curious shapes and fashion. Even the school children crowded around the wide open door to watch the shaping of a horseshoe to its proper fitting. It was undoubtedly just such a scene that inspired the poet Longfellow to pen his famous lines:

"Under the spreading chestnut tree,

The village smithy stands."

Canal St. had several different blacksmith shops standing in the days of horse-drawn vehicles and a fire, police or milk horse was usually given preference. It has been told to the writer that the fire department almost always kept an extra horse in readiness, while one was being shod. But this was not true of the Stamford Police Department, as the patrol wagon at that time had but one horse and it had to be shod in double quick time.

"Today, instead of the horse coming to us," said the present owner of the blacksmith shop on Canal St., "we now have to go out

where the horse is, and even the forge has changed quite a bit from the old one, that was here up to 25 years ago. In fact," he continued, "a great deal of the inside shop work of today consists in fixing up tools and making small forgings. The anvil, it is true, is used somewhat, but nothing like of old, when plenty of horses were around."

Even to this day, men still congregate at the old Burnes blacksmith shop, where they talk over the latest political news around the pot-bellied stove, but there are seldom any heated disputes between opposing parties. In fact, as one fellow remarked the other day, "I guess this blacksmith shop is about the only place in Stamford where a Democrat and a Republican can mix."

The above sketch gives a picture of the interior of the old blacksmith shop as it appears today from in front of the present forge.

—Whitman Bailey.