

The following was presented by Board Member Linda Muster at the Hall of Distinction Induction Ceremony of the Dover Historical Society, on Sunday, April 23, 2017.

## Jabez Reeves

The third child of Albert George and Martha Reeves, the second son, Jabez Albinas Reeves, was born August 3, 1840 at Motcombe, Dorset, England.

Jabez, a master puddler, who learned his trade in the steel mills of England and Wales, was the first family member to immigrate to the United States, arriving on May 25, 1865 via New York City. He soon discovered he was short of funds and had to sell his steamer trunk to raise money to complete his journey to Niles, Ohio where a job awaited him.

After working at several locations in Ohio and Pennsylvania, Jabez rejoined his brothers, Jeremiah, George and Jonathan at Niles where they operated the Reeves Brothers Boiler Works.

Jabez' job was superintendent of the erecting crew, overseeing the erection of numerous structures, including casting houses and furnace stacks in Ohio and Pennsylvania. While supervising the building of a rolling mill in New Philadelphia, Ohio, he learned that the floundering Dover Rolling Mills of Canal Dover was for sale. After investigating the situation, he felt it would be a good place for the Reeves brothers to establish a business. Returning to Niles, Jabez convinced brother Jeremiah to go to Canal Dover to check out the rolling mill operation, wherein Jeremiah agreed it would be feasible to purchase the property. The banks in Canal Dover wouldn't talk to them, saying it was a disaster, but the banks of Niles didn't hesitate to loan the brothers the money needed. Even after steel men of northeastern Ohio tried to discourage the Reeves' from buying the business, the brothers soon moved to Canal Dover with their families in tow. They made their purchase in June, 1883. During 1883 and 1884, Jabez oversaw the remodeling of the Dover Mill, located at West Broadway and South Factory Street, now General Electric. The mill was renamed the Reeves Iron Company and soon created a "boatload" of jobs, all because Jabez saw a good future with the mill and the town of Canal Dover.

Jabez, known as the "blue collar" brother, and his employees maintained a perfect safety record at the mill, while working under very dangerous conditions. He was well respected by the employees and would meet employees to "tip a few" after hard days work. The workers were extremely loyal. In their admiration of him, they would recite "Jaberz, Jaberz, boss of all the Laberz, with a little bunch of whiskers on his chin."

Jabez and his wife, Mary Ann Jenkins Reeves, an immigrant from Wales had 7 children – Martha, Elizabeth, Winsor, Lloyd, Latimer, Albert and Milton, better known as Mitt. They are survived by 1 grandson, Jay Reeves, and many, many other descendants, 13 of whom are in attendance today.

Jay Reeves' father, Mitt, traveled to Canton, Ohio with his mother, Mary Ann, to visit her good friend, Ida Saxton McKinley. Mitt, being an animated 2-year-old, was very active all day. Finally, after enough of Mitt's energy, Mr. McKinley scooped up the youngster, holding him until the boy slowed down and eventually fell asleep in the lap of the soon-to-be President of the United States.

Jabez Reeves acted as general superintendent of the Reeves Iron Company for 12 years, until failing health precipitated his retirement from active business. He and Mary Ann retired to their new, lovely home on East Front Street in Canal Dover. They previously resided at the corner of North Factory and West 6<sup>th</sup> Streets, with brother, Jeremiah, and nephew, Samuel, living behind them on Sixth. Jabez' home is now part of the parking lot at St. Joseph's Catholic Church. Their home on Front Street is now owned by Linda and Myron Shetler, who have put much hard work and love into the property. The Reeves' would be very pleased.

Jabez was a stockholder in Dover Manufacturing Company, Dover Forge and Iron Company, Dover Land and Development Company, Dover Lumbar Company, Acme Boiler and Construction Company and the New Philadelphia Co-Operative Store. He was also stockholder and director of the Reeves Iron Company of Dover and New Philadelphia Iron and Steel Company of New Philadelphia at the time of his death in 1912.

The Reeves Brothers are my heroes. They came to the United States, the land of opportunity, with nothing but the clothes on their backs but, with determination, a strong work ethic and a lot of guts, theirs became a true American success story.