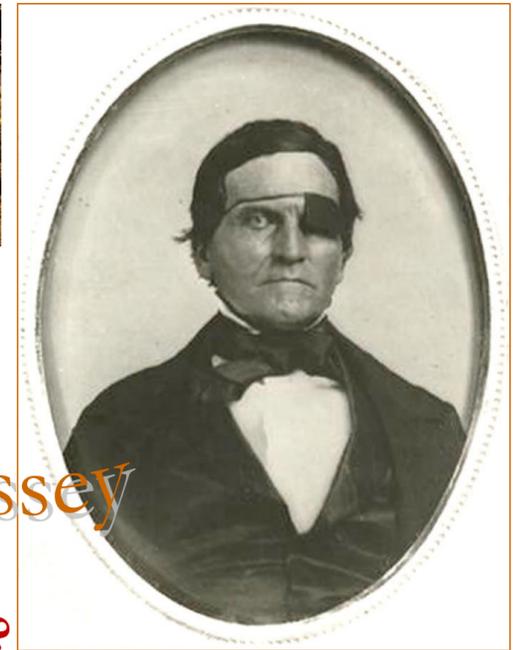


Obed Hussey and His Reaper

Quick! Who built the first successful reaper and where was it tested? Cyrus McCormick in Virginia? Wrong! [Obed Hussey](#) in Ohio! Although most people give “McCormick” and “Virginia” as answers to the questions, Hussey ran the first successful reaper in a barley field in Springfield Township, Hamilton County, Ohio, in June 1835—a decade before McCormick built a reliable though inferior competitor. With parts from John Lane’s nearby blacksmith shop and woodwork from Henry Rogers’ nearby sawmill, Hussey oversaw construction of the machine, designed to mow wheat and similar crops and to collect bundles of stalks in preparation for threshing the grain. Lane, Rogers, and others observed the test. Hussey, a Quaker from Maine, had built a reaper model in Baltimore and had tested prototypes in Glendale and Carthage, Ohio, before his inventive, scientific mind engineered the right combination of mechanical forces to mow grain effectively.



Obed Hussey

WHY OHIO?

Since the late 1700s and early 1800s, [geographies and gazetteers](#) had been proclaiming Ohio one of the best coal-producing regions having abundant deposits of iron ore, too. Beyond the western slopes of the Appalachian Mountains lay flat, fertile land promising to make future farmers rich. With a growing number of farmers, with good iron to make machines for farming, with bountiful coal to fire the factories to make the machines, and with productive soil, Ohio was in the right place at the right time.

The Springfield Township test and subsequent demonstrations before witnesses in the United States and England proved the value of Hussey’s invention. Farmers preferred Hussey’s reaper to McCormick’s; for that reason, McCormick sought Hussey’s patents, acquiring them in 1858 when Hussey’s business declined. Spending a lifetime asserting that he had patented the first successful reaper, McCormick ensured that his name would be passed down through history.

As Hussey’s biographer [Follett L. Greeno](#) attested, Hussey made bread cheap. Vast quantities of bread were the natural outcome of mechanized harvesting of wheat. Hussey changed the course of world history by launching an agricultural revolution.

