

# THE HAMMER

Many, many years ago—how many we can't say, because the records were lost when the Henderson County Courthouse burned — the Big Hammer was made in Baltimore, Maryland. It was shipped to Charleston, South Carolina by water, and from there it was brought to Western North Carolina in a wagon. At that time the Sittons had a foundry on Mills River where they processed the ore from the Boylston mines. The hammer was to be used in beating out the iron.

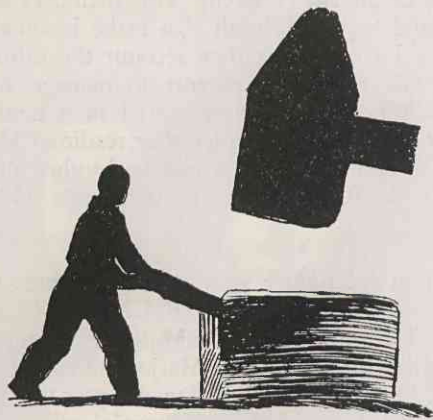
In either 1864 or 1865 the Confederacy purchased the hammer from the Sitton family and moved it to a site on Davidson River, at the old dam site—just opposite to the present entrance markers to Pisgah National Forest. Here steel for gun barrels was made from manganese mined on Little Mountain — about three miles from Ecusta.

The ore was smeltered by the heat from a charcoal fire, the metal was drawn under the hammer, and twisted, like molasses, as the hammer came down. These twisted strips of pure manganese were sent to Asheville where they were machined and bored for the rifles used by the Confederate soldiers. The men who worked at the Davidson River foundry stated many times that it was the purest manganese that they had ever worked, and at that time it was the richest grade being mined in the United States. While other deposits were almost worthless, this manganese sold for \$30.00 a ton—F.O.B. Blantyre.

The hammer is approximately 30 inches high, 16 inches wide, 12 inches deep, and weighs about 350 pounds. When it was fitted on the end of a large beam it gave the appearance of a giant tack hammer. There was a hole in the handle, through which a metal axle was placed, so that the handle could act as a fulcrum. The axle was supported by a huge log on each side, and the end of the handle, opposite the peen, almost came in contact with a waterwheel. A flume was built from the river, and the stream of water in the flume turned the large waterwheel. Spikes were embedded in the wheel. These spikes struck the end of the hammer handle, pulling it down. The spike released the handle and the peen dropped

into a U shaped anvil, where the metal was worked. As soon as the contact had been made another spike caught the handle and it was raised again. The spikes were so placed that there was a continuous up and down motion of the hammer, and there was a constant pulling and twisting of the metal between the hammer and the anvil.

The hammer is owned by Mr. John W. Smith, Brevard businessman and President of the Brevard Chamber of Commerce.



*Shown at top right on the facing page is a picture of the Big Hammer. Below is a drawing of the hammer, showing how it was used to beat the strips of manganese. The spikes in the waterwheel caught the end of the handle, pushed it down and released it as the wheel continued to turn.*