

The Ohio Beauties, the 1854 J. D. Browne and the 1856 Nonpareil

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11/29/2014 Revised 9/7/2016



J. D. Browne & Nonpareil

The 1854 J. D. Browne (patented May 6, 1856) and the more petite J. L. Havens Nonpareil (Sept. 9, 1856) are special. For starters, they are quite early, the J. D. Browne was probably the first clamp-on fully automatic return parer produced. Prior to it, cast iron parers were mounted on boards. Both the Sargent and Foster and the J. D. Seagraves were popular examples of this latter style and many of these are found in collections. While both distinct models might display Nonpareil markings, in this article the large model will be referred to as the Browne and the smaller version as the Nonpareil.

### James L. Haven

The J. D. Browne certainly was not the first clamp-on parer. At least 2 examples exist of its predecessor where the paring mechanism had not yet been added. In this version, a hand-guided paring arm would have been used along with the cast iron parer, fig 1. Essentially, this version simply speeds up the rotation of the apple as a drive gear with peg teeth rotates the fork spur gear, fig 1. My own example was found many years ago in the mid-80's at a small shop near Cincinnati, Ohio where they were manufactured. The thin, delicate drive gear was broken long ago and a skilled blacksmith has fashioned a cast iron ring to surround the perimeter and hold it together. Originally, I disliked this and almost left it in the shop, thinking it was not worth the \$25 the seller was asking. But not wanting to go home empty-handed, I took it. (The seller told me of a nearby shop that she was certain had some good parers for sale. I went straight there, arriving just before they closed and purchased an unmarked Jersey for \$40, making it a good day.) It was only later that I appreciated this wounded implement and realized how much someone over 150 years ago must have loved it to go to the trouble of having it repaired. The two examples known to have survived differ in that my repaired one has prominent raised lettering of "JAMES L. HAVEN. CINCINNATI." While the one in Fig. 10-163 of Don Thornton's book *Apple Parers* is unmarked.



Figure 1

Haven

Haven Peg Teeth

### J. D. Browne

The J. D. Browne came in two distinct variations. The first had a small spiral drive on the rear of the frame that advanced the turntable's horizontal teeth. The spiral is driven by a spur gear that meshes with the internally cast teeth on the edge of the large drive ring gear, see Fig. 5-40 in *Apple Parers*. Slightly scarcer is the Browne with gearing identical to the 1856 Nonpareil. This model replaced the spiral gear with a bevel gear and thus requires a turntable with vertically oriented bevel teeth. The bevel gear rotating the turntable does not need to spin as fast as a spiral. Consequently, a small spur gear cast into the center of the drive gear supplies power from the center of the drive gear rather than its perimeter.

The later Browne no doubt was an improved version and probably had a short production run, being succeeded by the smaller 1856 Nonpareil. This improved

Browne does not appear in Don Thornton's book, fig 2. Both versions are heavily cast parers and are more solid in operation than the average machine. Even the wooden handle is twice the length of the more commonly used knobs on almost all other parers and was designed so that the user could grip it with his hand rather than just the thumb and one or two fingers. This combined with the narrow strip of peeling that it removes causes it to effortlessly overpower any apple.



Figure 2 J. D. Browne with Beveled Gear Turntable

The May 6, 1856 marked version was probably not produced until after that date because the gearing did not receive a patent until September 9, 1856. It is entirely likely

that some of these were produced between these dates. Why else would the patterns not carry the September 9 date? If the patent had already been issued, the pattern maker would no doubt have put the date on the patterns. Once the patent was issued, there would have been no need to produce all new patterns to include this later date since it was already covered by the May 6 patent. That seems to be a fair assumption.

### Nonpareil

The Nonpareil has always been special to me, fig 3. It was produced in my home state of Ohio like the Browne and elusive J. J. Parker. All are early and quite unique. It is such a delicate and aesthetic model. I will never forget a hot, muggy day in 1985 when I took my young family plus a neighbor swimming. I drove 10 miles out of the way and left them briefly in the car with my young wife in sweltering heat as I visited a small antique shop in a town of 30 houses. I always had to knock on the shopkeeper's door so she could come out, walk next door to her shop and open it. On this day, before we went next door, I asked "Have you picked up any apple peelers?" She nodded and said she had a new one on her kitchen shelf. She was known to keep the best stuff for herself. I followed her through her small living room and as I write this I can recall the thrill of walking into her kitchen and spotting across the room that distinct coiled spring paring arm of the Nonpareil. I knew this was in her house for a reason and once I held it I knew why. It was a beautifully preserved example of a well-designed parer. I was careful not to appear as excited as I was and not to insult her by trying to purchase something she had no intention of selling. As I tried to come up with an inquiry, she said "do you see that early date on there?" Before I could even answer, she followed up with "I'd have to have \$40 for it."

I never had as much fun sitting beside a swimming pool in my life. People probably wondered why I had that faraway look about me and why I never got in the water. It was because I was so distracted by what I had on the floor of my car that I probably

would have drowned if I had jumped in the pool. Someday my collection will be sold and dispersed across the country to new homes. Not the Nonpareil. It goes to my daughter who was 10 at the time. All collectors have a few special things happen in their collecting life. No event was more memorable to this old collector than that scorching summer day when I was young, thought \$40 was a bit of money, and the Nonpareil dropped into my lap.



Figure 3

Nonpareil

The Nonpareil version is just about half the size of the Browne. The entire casting is crisp and distinct, fig 4. The spiral spokes have thin, raised fins that gracefully emphasize their shape.





Figure 4

Nonpareil Drive Gear

It retains the clever design to advance and release the paring arm/spring. The centers of the turntable and carriage are offset just enough so that the small tooth on the underside of the turntable gradually makes less and less contact with the carriage so that when both reach the end of the paring cycle, the tooth loses contact completely and the carriage snaps back to the starting position, ready for a new apple. One advantage to the quick return action parer is that there is no idle cranking, it is always paring. Until excessive wear occurs on either of the two teeth on opposite sides beneath the turntable, this early model would have given years of satisfaction. Both my Browne and Nonpareil pare flawlessly though I hold my breath each time that carriage snaps back. But I am of the opinion that parers are meant to be demonstrated just like I intend to continue to drive my 1935 Ford Convertible Sedan. It gives me no pain whatsoever that others do not share this feeling.

If you are the fortunate collector to ever own either of these models in any variation, you should feel special because you are in select company. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with you if you gaze at them at length as they sit atop the shelf and appreciate their beauty.

Happy collecting.

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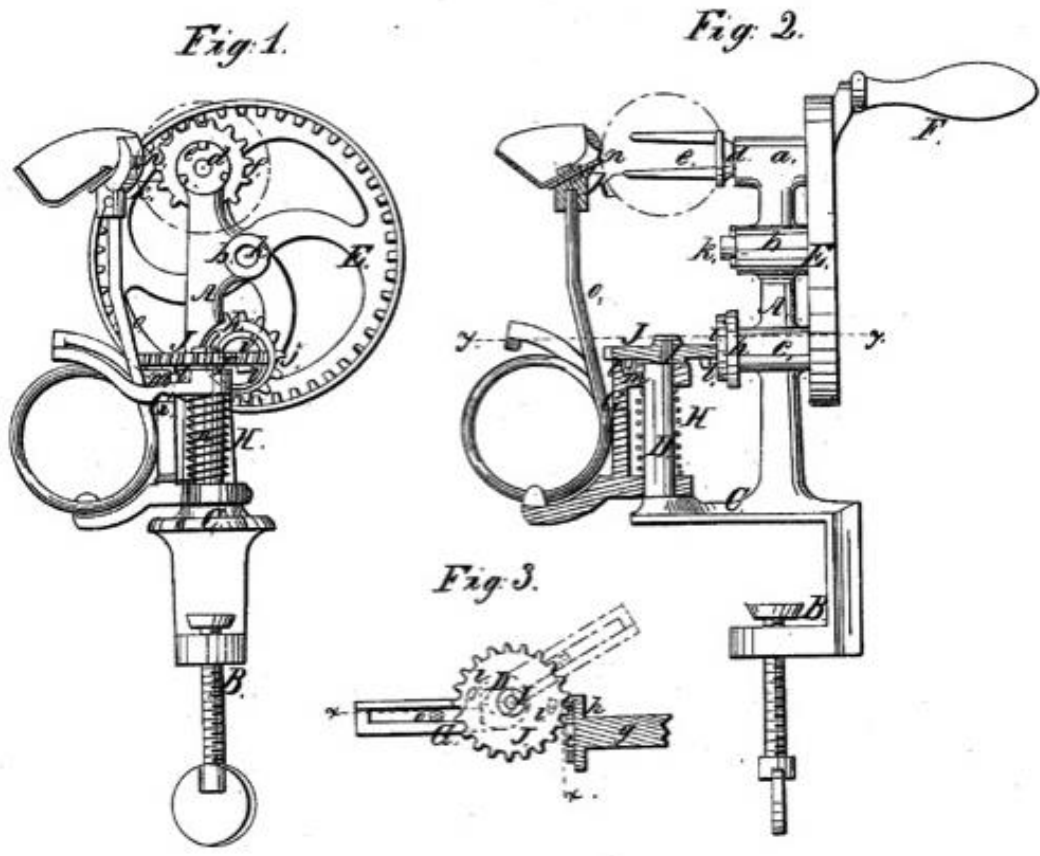
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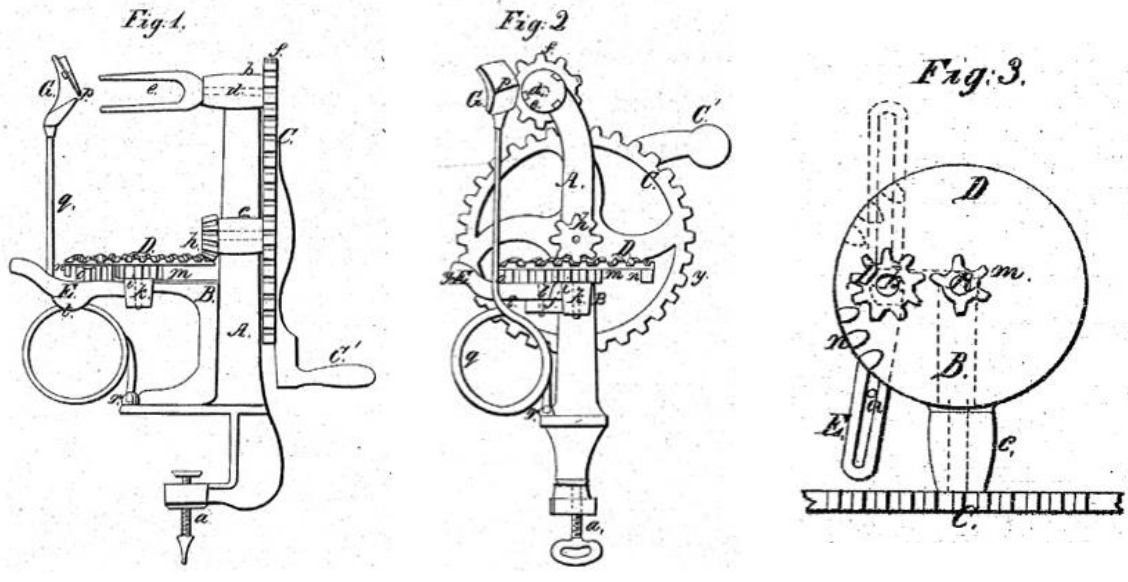
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J. D. Browne May 6, 1856 Patent Drawings Fig 1, 2, & 3.



J. D. Browne September 9, 1856 Patent Drawings Fig 1, 2, & 3.