

**“The Union” Line:
Post-War Paring Machine Perfection**

John Lambert

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The Union

Whittmore Union Parers

I suppose it is inevitable that in the collecting world, rarity trumps most factors. That is the only reason I can give for the lack of appreciation for the cleverly designed and perfectly performing Whittmore Union parers. In this article I will describe all 6 models in this line and state my case for their inclusion in my fictitious Parer Hall of Fame.

The Union

Whittmore Brothers advertised their "Entirely New" apple parer (Fig 1) in the August 1865 issue of the *American Agriculturist* (Judd, August, 1865, p. 260). "The Union" was probably sold as early as 1864 and no doubt bore the patriotic name "The Union" to capitalize on the national fervor as the Civil War ended and the Union was preserved.

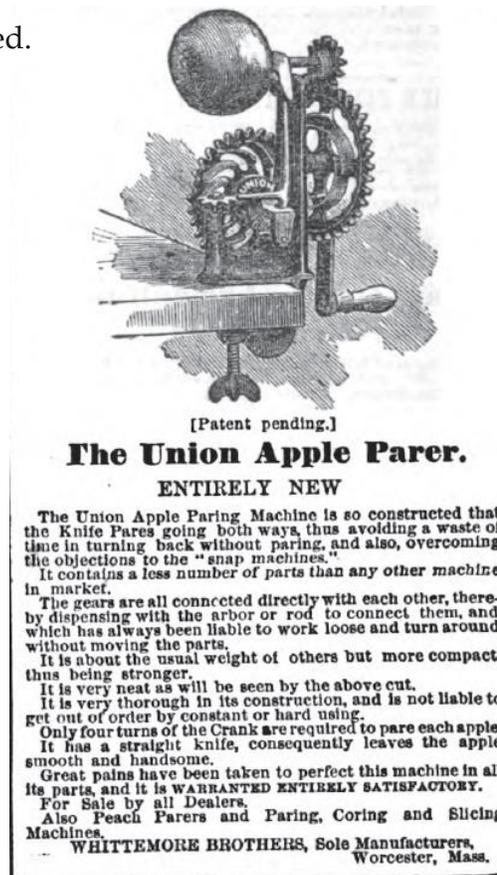


Figure 1

1865 Advertisement

Patent Pending

The first Union parer (Fig 2) is marked "THE UNION" but differs from the later and more common one in that it bears "PATENT PENDING" near the thumbscrew. It also features a noticeably narrower paring head, just 1 5/8" wide.



Figure 2

Patent Pending

The second model (Fig 3) represented in most collections is marked "PAT. NOV. 11, 1866" and D. H. WHITTIMORE WORCESTER, MASS." in addition to "THE UNION."



Figure 3

The Union Pat. Nov. 11, 1866

All Unions have the perfectly engineered helical gear that advances the blade in both directions. All but the final 2 models also have a 4-tooth helical gear on the rear of the crank gear to set the paring in motion. It requires 4 turns of the crank to pare an apple in each direction.

Union "Shelf"

The third model (Fig 4) adds a shelf to act as a blade guide to eliminate the horizontal leg on the lower end of the paring arm. This guide moves the paring

arm far aside after the forward cycle to allow the pared apple to be removed and replaced with a new apple. This model does not have "THE UNION" markings.



Figure 4

Union with Shelf

Union with Push-Off

The fourth model (Fig 5) simply adds a nifty compact push off. It is short, strong, and quite effective. These are quite desirable and a fair number of these are found in collections. I particularly like them.



Figure 5

Union with Push-Off

Large Wheel Union

The fifth model (Fig 6) is a product of improved engineering. It retains the push off but the size of the crank gear has been increased to 5" from 3 ¾" and the 4-tooth helical gear behind has been replaced by an 8-tooth bevel gear. This is a spectacular improvement in that it now takes only 2 turns of the crank to fully pare an apple and push it off. While other manufacturers could pare an apple in 1 turn, the early Herseys and the Wiggins, only one other model, the elusive Reading 2-Knife, ever achieved the 2-turn push-off model.



Figure 6 Union with Large Wheel and Push-Off

This large wheel version is quite desirable and by far the most difficult to acquire. It is much scarcer than a Thompson or long Bergner and as rare as a J. D. Browne, Nonpareil, or Ault though all of these would probably command a higher price. Its absence from Don Thornton's *Apple Parers* is further evidence of its scarcity.

The Standard or "Ultimate Union"

The final evolution of the Union line (Fig 7) is what was referred to for many years by collectors as the Ultimate Union. I still use this term in conversation because collectors immediately recognize it. We now know that most, if not all, of these were produced by Landers, Frary, and Clark sometime after April 1880 and sold as "The Standard" (Fig 8). D. H. Whittemore Company was acquired by the Goodell Company in 1879, shortly before the patent on this highly-prized model was granted to D. H. Whittemore (Thornton, 1997, p. 22).



Figure 7

The Standard or "Ultimate Union"



Figure 8 Parer Box Label for The Standard

The frame on The Standard model is a full 1" taller to accommodate the lower end of the slicing/coring arm. Curiously, despite the taller frame, the paring arms are $\frac{1}{4}$ " shorter than all previous Unions so the two varieties are not interchangeable. A wide flange has been added to the frame just below the forks to prevent parings from becoming entangled in the gears. The bevel gear on the rear of the crank gear has been reduced to 6 teeth. The bevel gear it drives has been completely retooled to have 36 teeth instead of the 32 in all previous Unions. This allows 1:6 ratio so that a complete paring, coring, slicing, fragmenting cycle can be accomplished in 6 easy turns. The shelf guide has been

redone in a more aesthetic and practical cutaway style. Juices no longer set there and a crack will not render the guide useless. In addition to the NOV. 11, 1866 date, it adds "PAT. APR. 6th, '80" on the opposite side of the lower frame.

Conclusion

With the Standard, the Union family was complete. These uniquely designed, perfect paring machines would soon be shoved aside by the tsunami of the Big 4, the Reading 78s, Hudson's Rocking Table, Goodell's Turntable '98, and the ubiquitous Sinclair Scott. Their aesthetic charm and mechanical perfection would soon be forgotten as the Big 4 dominated the market. But, 150 years later, it is almost impossible to sell one of the latter while even the most advanced collector will probably purchase a Union as a spare because he never knows if he will see one of these beauties again. Their charm is undeniable.

The earliest Unions are 150 years old. I cannot imagine a time in the future when these marvelous devices are any less appreciated than they are today. Paring an apple with any of these models is done with surgical ease and even the most common of these should be prized.

As always,
Happy hunting

John Lambert
zlambert@yahoo.com

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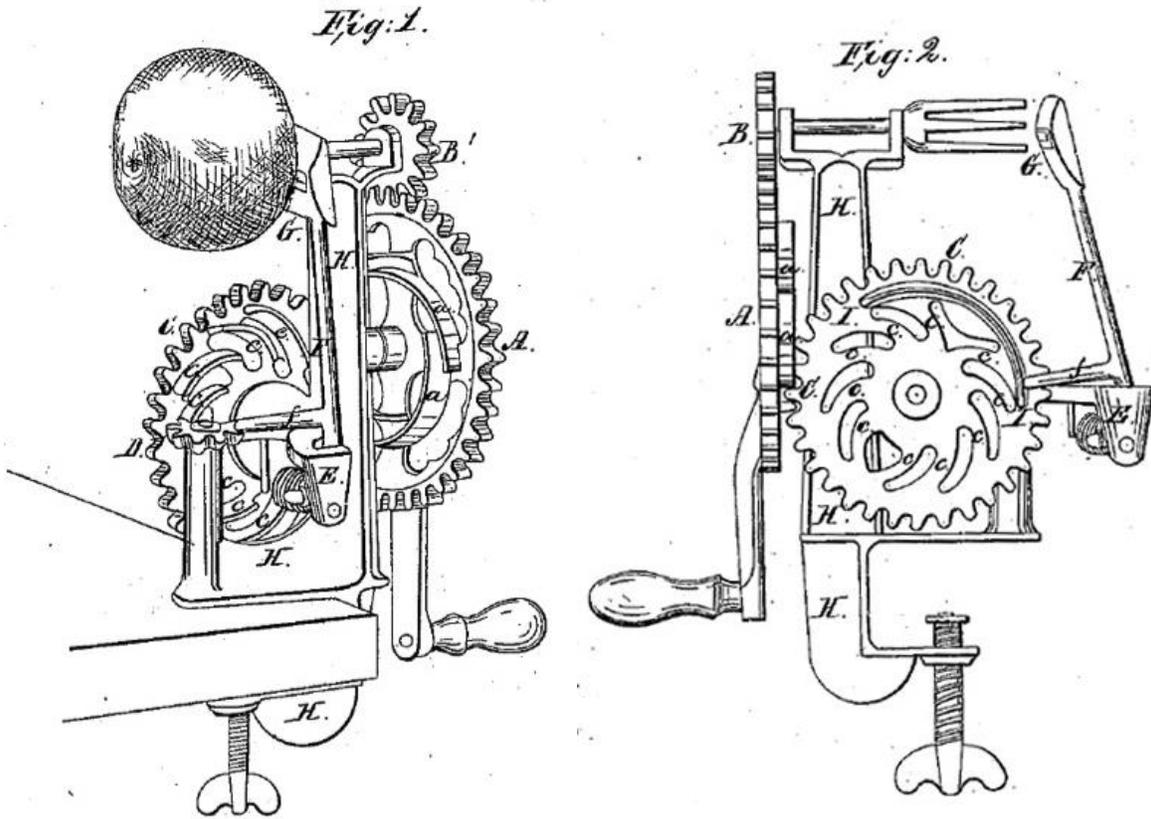
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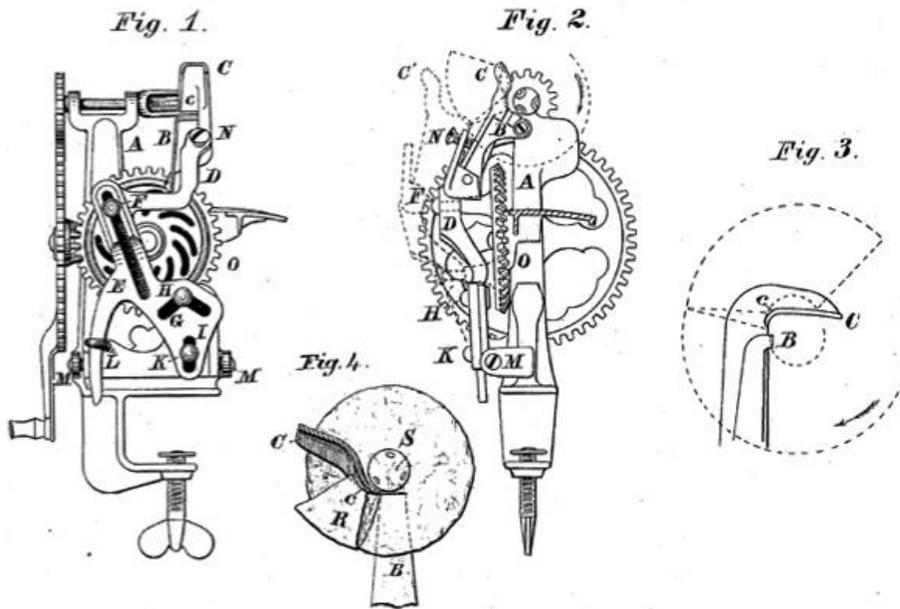
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D. H. Whittemore 1866 Improved Apple Parer Patent Drawings Fig 1 & 2.



D. H. Whittemore 1880 Apple Parer and Slicer Patent Drawings Fig 1, 2, 3, & 4.