

Wilson's Foundry Dwelling
401 Market Street
Denton, MD 21629

Contribution of Patricia C. Guida
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Two unimproved lots were conveyed to William H. Wilson on 14 July 1847. [X/438] In 1852, the property, which included *one dwelling, foundry and mill*, was assessed for tax purposes at \$1,100.

The home was built by William Henry Wilson (1817 - 1893). His obituary referred to him as a well-known, and expert, machinist, noting that he was “the inventor of the mowing machine and sheaf-dropper. He has a clock, every part of which he made with a penknife, and which keeps excellent time.” It went on to note that he “operated a foundry business on a large scale” in Denton.

On his large lot, behind his residence, was a foundry and a saw mill, the presence of which the residents were made particularly aware when, at noon, the whistle at the mill blew a 12 o'clock blast that was heard all over town. A memoir in the newspaper spoke of Wilson as “the Edison of [his] generation in Denton. What he couldn't make with iron and tools defied others in the attempt.”

He had an adjoining foundry, a two-man plant. It was fired once a week. Richard Potter, an African-American, second generation blacksmith, would walk from his home across 4th Street to “unstop the forge and help hold the ladle” pouring the liquid iron into molds to make plow shares.

An enterprising man, Wilson owned a retail store in Denton in 1841 and operated a steam mill on the Tuckahoe River in 1843. By 1852, the saw mill and foundry were up and running on his lot on 4th Street. Wilson left Denton in 1867, moving to Easton, Maryland, after he purchased another saw mill and foundry there. In July 1871, he bought four acres of land near Ridgely, taking title to the lot where his steam sawmill had been erected.

Wilson's foundry was not the only iron works in Caroline County. The history of this dwelling as well as other small-scale iron works in Caroline County, would show how, in the middle 19th century, agricultural communities met their own needs for iron plow shares, wheels, hinges, etc. and lumber for building.