

The New Haven plant of The Andrew B. Hendryx Co., ca. 1903

Andrew B. Hendryx Uncaged

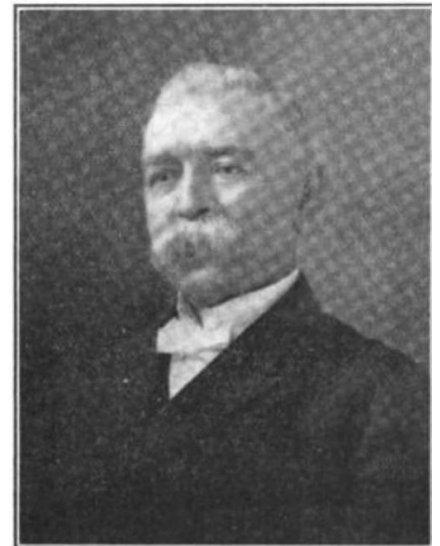
Steven K. Vernon

In 1874, Andrew B. Hendryx and a partner established the firm of Hendryx & Bartholomew in Ansonia, Connecticut, to make wire cloth and birdcages. The company, renamed Andrew B. Hendryx & Co., moved to New Haven five years later. By that time, Hendryx had already been granted a series of patents, including one for a birdcage fastened with the U-shaped rivets that would be used on untold numbers of his fishing reels, which he began to manufacture around 1886.

The Andrew B. Hendryx Company was incorporated in 1889, by which time it was making a huge variety of wire products, chains, fishing reels and lures, animal and bird cages, and other products. By the time the privately-held company was sold in 1962, it had made gun cleaners, machine gun barrels, kitchen equipment, and other products for the armed services through both World War II and the Korean War. But most notably, it had become the largest birdcage manufacturer in the country, shipping them to customers all over the world.

Aware of the ubiquity of Hendryx fishing reels, we collectors might tend to assume that Hendryx focused his business almost solely on cages and reels. But Hendryx also made heavy investments in a little-known sideline—the mining industry.

Dr. Wilbur A. Hendryx, Andrew's younger brother by 15 years, graduated from Rush Medical College, Chicago, Ill., at about the time that Hendryx & Bartholomew was founded. He practiced medicine in Grand Rapids, Mich., for a time and served as a lieutenant-colonel in the Michigan National Guard.¹ At some point, as a hunter and perhaps prodded by his brother, he traveled west and opened another door to opportunity.



*Andrew B. Hendryx, reelmaker
and mining executive*

THE ANDREW B. HENDRYX CO.,
MANUFACTURERS OF
METAL GOODS,
NEW HAVEN, CONN.

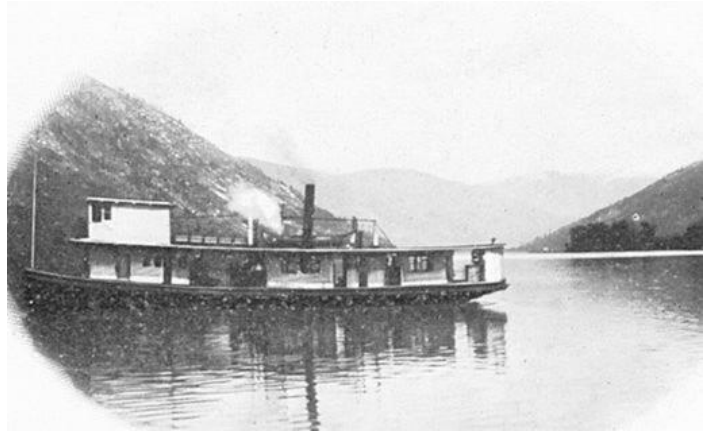
See Manufacturers of Bird Cages, Chains, Wire Picture Cords and Fishing Reels.

An 1893 New Haven directory ad listing some of the products made by The Andrew B. Hendryx Company

Kootenay Lake is a long widening of the Kootenai River in British Columbia, its southern end about 80 miles north of what is now Sandpoint, Idaho. According to T.A. Rickard,² some prospectors had built a small furnace, in 1867, to process lead ore mined on a peninsula on the eastern side of the lake. In 1878, R.E. Sproule laid claim to the available ground on the peninsula, and the principal claim was named the Blue Bell. Four years later, counter-claims were filed by Thomas Hammill, on behalf of John C. Ainsworth and his son George, who had a franchise for a railroad connecting Kootenay Lake and the Columbia River.

Arguments and legal proceedings regarding ownership of the Blue Bell went on for years. In 1884, Wilbur Hendryx inspected the mine and came to an agreement by which he, brother Andrew, and other mining investors became co-owners of the Blue Bell with Sproule. Their early activities included building a part of the old Walla Walla Trail into a 32-mile toll road, running from Sandpoint (then called Pend Oreille until 1901) to the Kootenai River. They also provided a small steamboat, the *Surprise*, to reach the mining area. In 1885, Sproule was convicted and hanged for the murder of Hammill, and the Hendryxes obtained full ownership of the mine when the Ainsworths ran into their own legal problems.

The Hendryx investments in the Kootenay area grew rapidly. From 1886 to 1889, Wilbur bought several other mines near the Kootenai River, at some point organizing W.A. Hendryx & Company to make such investments. Meanwhile, the peninsula was named the Hendryx Peninsula, and Hendryx, B.C., became the name of the growing miners' community. In 1887, the steamboat *Galena* was built to replace the *Surprise*. Digging seems to have begun sometime in the late 1880s, and Wilbur was still expecting to "strike the ore body" in mid-1890.³ Accompanied by Andrew, who arrived from Oregon, Wilbur and his wife moved to Pilot Bay, a few miles south of the



The Galena, built by the Hendryx brothers to navigate Kootenay Lake

Blue Bell, in late 1891. This was the site chosen for a new ore-processing plant.

Precise dates vary among the sources, but the brothers registered their new Kootenay Mining & Smelting Company in British Columbia in early 1891. Andrew served as treasurer, and Wilbur, general manager at Pilot Bay.⁴ On May 26, 1892, the brothers registered their new Kootenay Lake Reduction Company in New Haven.⁵

The two Kootenay firms were consolidated in 1894 into the Kootenay Mining and Smelting Company, which was registered in British Columbia on August 6 as a "foreign company" with headquarters in Jersey City, N.J.⁶ The consolidation was a massive undertaking aimed at "gaining absolute control of the lead market of Canada and the Orient...besides cutting a considerable figure in the production of copper."⁷ Andrew B. Hendryx, the treasurer and one of the two major stockholders, had returned from New Haven and announced that he would take up permanent residence at Pilot Bay. It



The Kootenay Mining & Smelting Company site on Pilot Bay, 1896

was believed that the consolidation “secures for British Columbia the most important manufacturing interests in Canada.”⁷

The smelting plant processed 50,000 tons of ore up to early 1896,⁸ and the owners projected that “it will be the industrial depot of Kootenay Lake. Good stores, hotels, mails and local communications are all to be had.”⁹ The Hendryxes continued to stake additional claims in the area; Andrew was granted two in March, 1895, and the company was granted another in August.¹⁰

The best-laid plans of the Hendryx brothers and their consortium of investors went awry. First, the toll road was a financial flop and was sold to the county for half of its original cost. In a devastating blow, the Blue Bell turned out to be one of the least profitable mines in the area. Andrew shut down the smelter operations in September, 1896,¹¹ and returned to New Haven. By 1899, the Bank of Montreal had taken control of the Blue Bell, and ownership passed to the Canadian Metal Company in 1905. The settlement of Hendryx was renamed Riondel, after the company’s president.

The venture was not a total loss for the Hendryx brothers. At Pilot Bay, Wilbur had been experimenting extensively with methods and machinery for extracting metals from various ores. While retaining some interests in Canadian mines, he moved to Los Angeles in 1903, opening some kind of mining consulting office there. From 1904 on, he applied for and was granted at least 17 patents derived from his ore reduction work, the most important of which described means of treating ore with potassium cyanide, using specialized apparatus Hendryx designed. The process became an immediate sensation with ore processors all over the world, and Wilbur soon became a very wealthy man. In 1899, he donated a building to the University of California College of Medicine, which would house the Hendryx Pathological and Bacteriological Laboratory.

Wilbur moved to Denver in 1905, and at about the same time, he incorporated the Hendryx Electric Cyanide Company in Maine. The firm would be renamed Hendryx Cyanide Machinery Company in 1908. From Denver he traveled to several states and to England, South Africa, and New Zealand, installing his machinery as he went. In 1910, he moved to New York City, where he not only brought his Cyanide Machinery offices, but opened the Hendryx Company, Inc., which sold “novelties.” I only hope the novelties did not include cyanide

Hendryx Cyanide Machinery Co.
1738 BROADWAY, DENVER, COLO.
Manufacturers of Cyanide Machinery.
Testing of Ores and Designing of Plants a Specialty.
SEND FOR CATALOGUE.

Hendryx Cyanide Machinery Co.
107-109 William St., New York City
Manufacturers of the
**Hendryx Agitator, also
Hendryx Combination-Agitator and
Filter and Hendryx Dewaterer**
The best and most economical Cyanide apparatus on the market. Investigate the same. Send for Catalogues and Prices.
Also have a Complete Ore Testing Plant.

Hendryx ads from Mining & Scientific Press, 1908, and Metallurgical & Chemical Engineering, 1911

processing kits for boys. Wilbur died in an Allentown, Pa., hospital on Sept. 21, 1918.

The Andrew B. Hendryx Co., meanwhile, had bought a local foundry in 1897 to expand its ability to supply castings of brass, bronze, aluminum, white metal, and other alloys.¹² Andrew, still looking for metallic raw materials, became an owner of copper mines in Connecticut and Vermont and was said to use “every pound of copper produced by these and other mines controlled by him.”^{13,14,15} He died intestate in 1907.

The grandiose plans that the Hendryx brothers had for their Kootenay Lake holdings did not pan out. Nevertheless, it seems remarkable that Andrew Hendryx, trained as a machinist, was both able and willing to embark on such a venture only a decade after his first company was founded.

Notes

1. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 10/12/1918, pg. 1240
2. Many accounts of the history of the Blue Bell mine have been published over the last century. Details of its association with the Hendryx brothers vary and sometimes conflict with newspaper stories and interviews. I have tried to piece together the chronology of their activities using several accounts. These include:

- General Review of Mining in British Columbia/Bulletin No. 19.* Victoria, B.C.: Bureau of Provincial Information, 1904, pp. 142-144
- Annual Report of the Minister of Mines for the Year Ending 31st December, 1907.* Victoria, B.C.: Legislative Assembly, B.C., 1908, pg. J95
- Rickard, T.A., "The Blue Bell Mine, Riondel, B.C.," *Mining and Scientific Press*, 11/25/1916, pg. 765. Although Rickard's article is a detailed history of the mine, it is based on third-hand information from employees of the post-Hendryx owners.
- Turnbull, Elsie, "Old Mines in the West Kootenay," *The British Columbia Historical Quarterly*, July-October, 1956, pp. 147-163. This includes what may be the most scholarly history of the Blue Bell.
- Wilson, D.M., "East Shore of Kootenay Lake, B.C.: History," *The Virtual Crowsnest Highway*, http://www.crowsnest-highway.ca/cgi-bin/citypage.pl?city=east_shore#1, accessed 1/15/2016
3. *Engineering and Mining Journal*, 7/5/1890, pg. 16
 4. *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 5/20/1891, pg. 2
 5. *Special Acts and Resolutions Passed by the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut at the January Session 1893.* Hartford, Conn.: 1893, pg. 1188. "Reduction" refers to the extraction, sometimes electrolytically, of metals from ores.
 6. *The British Columbia Gazette*, 8/9/1894, pg. 735
 7. *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 7/5/1894, pg. 2
 8. *ibid.*, 2/18/1896, pg.2
 9. *British Columbia Mining Record*, December, 1895, pg. 9
 10. *Annual Report of the Minister of Mines for the Year Ending 31st December, 1896.* Victoria, B.C.: Legislative Assembly, B.C., 1897, pp. 557-8
 11. *Victoria Daily Colonist*, 9/24/1896, pg. 2
 12. *The Iron Worker*, 4/1/1897, pg. 4
 13. Weed, Walter H., "Copper Deposits of the Appalachian States," *United States Geological Survey/ Bulletin 455.* Washington, D.C.: Gov't. Printing Office, 1911, pg. 37
 14. *St. Johnsbury Caledonian*, 4/8/1903, pg. 7
 15. Harry T. Hendryx had been born in Oregon and was an officer of the Geiser-Hendryx Investment Co., Sumpter, Ore., which was founded in 1902 to operate gold mines in the Pacific northwest. I have found no evidence that he was related to the New Haven Hendryx family or that his firm had any affiliation with Kootenay Lake mines.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to John Elder and Suzanne Vernon for much-needed editorial help.