



No city of New Zealand can equal Dunedin in the extent of its iron foundries, and the number of men employed in the manufacture of machinery and implements. For many years it has been the Glasgow of the colony; but within the last decade, and particularly the past 18 months, a new industry has caused an immense accession of business to these commercial men.

This is the gold-dredging industry, and, as has been more than once stated in these columns, no part of the world can show such improvements and developments in construction as these iron foundries of Dunedin.

Experience and the demands of a flourishing industry have occasioned this advancement and the engineers of the city deserve the utmost praise, inasmuch as they have won the attention of the gold dredging world.

In this regard the firm of Messrs Joseph Sparrow and-Sons have performed an excellent work, and have had a flourishing career. At the present time, they are very largely engaged in dredge construction, and no doubt a pen sketch dealing with their foundry will be of interest to the general reader.

The business of the firm was established by Mr Joseph Sparrow 25 years ago, [1875] when he employed six men to assist him in carrying on his modest business. To-day, [1900] so successful has he been, he employs upwards of 300 persons, and turns out an enormous quantity of work per year. Mr Sparrow is possessed of an experience which fitted him admirably for the exigencies of manufacture in New Zealand.

Joseph Sparrow was born in Dumbarton, Scotland, in 1842 and served his apprenticeship in Denny & Co's Leven Shipyards on the Clyde. He then spent 5 years with Mitchell, Armstrong and Mitchell at Newcastle-upon Tyne. He married Robina Mackay there in 1864 and on 1 June 1869 they sailed from Glasgow for Port Chalmers on the *William Davie*.

Joseph started work originally in St. Andrew street, and after a brief period joined Mr Wilson in the old Otago Foundry. Fifteen months later he seceded from that institution and went to the premises at present utilised as an iron yard situated in Rattray street. This land comprises one acre and a-half of freehold and a smaller area of leasehold; and has a frontage of 300 ft to Rattray street, 270ft to Willis street, and 264 ft to a thoroughfare unnamed fronting the harbour. The buildings occupy one-third of this area, while the remaining space is utilised as an iron yard, where a large stock of iron is kept.

The works are divided into the engineering department, iron and brass moulding department, boiler-making department, blacksmith's shop, and pattern-making shop. In each is a fine complement of machinery and tools. Thus the engineering department contains iron turning lathes, drilling machines, planing machines, screwing machines, key-seating machines, etc., driven by a 50 h.p. steam engine and boiler.

In the boiler-making department are two large punching and shearing machines and several smaller ones, plate bending rollers, plate furnaces, drilling machines, a Baker blower, and four blacksmiths' fires. In the blacksmiths' shop are six fires, and two large steam hammers, besides other machines. The pattern-making department contains a circular saw, band saw, wood turning lathes, etc. The whole premises are lit by electricity supplied by the firm's own dynamo, and worked by a special engine. This provides a night light as good as daylight and has enabled the foundry to work night and day for the past 12 months. The main portion of the work of Messrs Joseph Sparrow and Sons is confined at present to gold dredge construction.

The dimensions of their contracts will be understood by the mere statement that they are now engaged in making seventeen of these river monsters, ten of which are about completed. In undertaking these an immense amount of iron work must be manufactured; nor must the fact be overlooked that these dredges made in Dunedin are the best in the world, American and European engineers and foundries following the local plans.

The firm make a number of steam engines, particularly for marine use, Mr Sparrow's experience coming in very handy in this connection. Boilers made by him are in use in various parts of the colony, and during the past 20 years he has negotiated much of the repairs-for the Union Steam Ship Company, Shaw, Savill and Co., and other large shipping companies.

The firm manufacture iron and brass castings with distinct success. All the iron work for the recent extension of the Roslyn tram system was done in these workshops, including two 40 h.p. boilers, and 3000 yokes bent out of 60lb railway iron for the underground tunnel.

Besides the men employed in Dunedin there are numbers in the country negotiating contracts entered into by the firm. At the New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition of 1889-90, Mr, Sparrow took first prize for a small steam boiler.

Joseph and Robina had 17 children, 13 of whom lived into adulthood. Two of the sons went into the business and continued it until 1952 when it was taken over by Fletcher Steel.

Joseph and Robina were closely associated with the Methodist Church for 50 years and Joseph was a trustee at North-East Valley, Mornington and finally Trinity Church. He was a JP, and a borough councillor at North-East Valley and Mornington. He was for six years a member of the Mornington School Committee, and is a useful member of the Manufacturers' Association.

Joseph died on 1 July 1930, 13 years before Robina, and is buried in Dunedin's Northern Cemetery, along with Robina, and the grave is marked by an imposing granite obelisk.

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