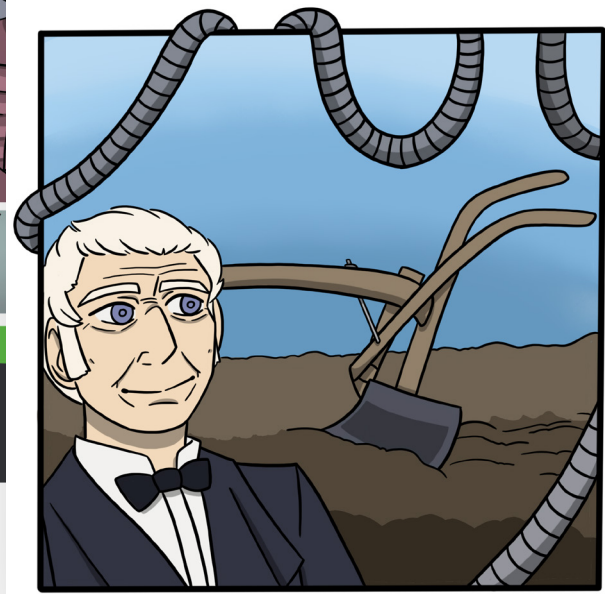


Scientists and Inventors

John Deere, Inventor

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John Deere kicked at the dirt.

It was sticky, very different from the soil back in Vermont, where he had been born in 1804. His neighbor, Lewis, was sweating as he cleaned the dirt off the blades of his cast-iron plow.

"It's just..." Lewis moaned. "It's just tougher here! It makes me wish I was still back east."

John nodded. Both men recently moved to Illinois, working to establish their respective industries, Lewis as a farmer and John as a blacksmith.

John bent over and picked up a handful of dirt. Lewis was right; it was tough soil. Unlike the soft, silky earth in Vermont, the ground in Grand Detour was sticky. Lewis needed to clean off his plow every few feet, a relentless, nearly unproductive chore!

John headed back to his blacksmith shop, put on his thick apron and lit a fire.

"Bang!"

John hammered the hot iron into the shape of a plow.

"Bang!"

As he worked, he thought about Lewis and the sticky Illinois soil. There has to be a better way.

He took his gloves off and rummaged around in his workshop, looking at random tools and bits of scrap. A shiny broken steel saw blade caught his eye, and he considered it. It was lighter than cast iron but still sharp and sturdy.

He took the steel over to the fire and began to work it, banging it with precision into the shape of a plow. John paid careful attention to the curvature of the tool, picturing how it might cut through the soil.

The next day, John woke up early, loaded the plow into his cart and led his mule to Lewis's farm. As he walked along the dirt road, his neighbors took notice.

"What's that, John?" they asked.

"It's a new plow design," John answered. "Made of polished steel."

His neighbors were interested. Like Lewis, most spent their days sweating in the hot sun, continuously cleaning soil from their cast iron plows.

By the time John reached Lewis' farm, he had quite a following. When the entourage arrived, Lewis approached John's shiny, silver creation.

"What's all this?" he asked.

"Your new plow," John answered.

"It's too light," Lewis replied. "It won't stand up to work like the cast iron."

"It's light, but sharp," John said. "Just try it."

Lewis harnessed his mules to John's new plow and urged them forward. The steel plow cut immediately into the thick, midwestern dirt. It churned the soil without Lewis needing to pause and clean its blades.

"I'll buy it from you," Lewis told John. "Today."

John smiled.

John's steel plow designed in 1838, blossomed into the business Deere & Company, with its green and yellow deer logo.

By 1849, the company was producing and selling thousands of steel plows a year. Agriculture in Illinois, and eventually the entire country, would never be the same.

NEWSPAPER CONNECTIONS

What long-standing businesses or companies can you find in your newspaper? What do they do or make?