Presented to

THE SOUTH CUSTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mackay, Idaho

By Gil Junkunc

July 1995

INTRODUCTION

It has been said that "John Junkunc invented the first combination padlock". Although that is not exactly correct, he was issued patent number 948,280 on February 1, 1910 for certain new and useful improvements in locks. It is generally accepted that his patented specification was indeed the forerunner of the modern combination padlock as we know it. The first regular production of John Junkunc's patented lock is believed to have taken place in Mackay, Idaho.

JOHN JUNKUNC

John Junkunc was born on February 2, 1879 in Hungary. The youngest of three sons, John reportedly came to the United States of America at the age of fifteen as a stowaway. Little is known of his activities prior to employment with the railroad as a machinist working in Idaho. Apparently under homestead law, he eventually established land ownership there.

It has been stated that John Junkunc loved to invent and to improve things mechanically in his spare time. He is said to have designed and built a number of gadgets and small tools. One of these was a keyless (combination) padlock invented out of necessity, as one story goes, because of constantly misplacing keys for the regular keyed padlocks used on the job. Another suggested need prompting the invention of the lock was to develop a better means of securing his tools and personal possessions.

Reference has been made to Boise in words written about John Junkunc, however, residence in Pocatello was claimed when he filed application for his patent May 25, 1909 at age thirty. Obviously, he had been granted citizenship by this time or would not have been able to file a patent application. It is likely that only prototype locks were made while John Junkunc was in Pocatello. There is ample evidence that production locks were made in Mackay for a period of time.

MACKAY, IDAHO

The first known record connecting John Junkunc with Mackay is a front-page article appearing in the July 15, 1909 issue of <u>THE MACKAY MINER</u>. He was described simply as "a Pocatello machinist" who, with machinist Casper Weiffenbach of Mackay, had perfected locks and planned to manufacture them in the city.

Casper Weiffenbach had long been associated with the Oregon Short Line in Pocatello and likely became acquainted with John Junkunc through their mutual employment there. He was also a listed witness on the patent application filed just seven weeks prior to the publication of the referenced article. The question arises as to why the two men selected Mackay as the site to pursue their planned endeavor.

Since the period was coincident with the building of the Mackay Dam, numerous business opportunities were available. Casper Weiffenbach's presence in Mackay was likely directed to such opportunities for a machine shop. For this reason, he probably convinced John Junkunc (or demanded) that manufacture of the locks be in Mackay rather than Pocatello. JUNKUNC SAFE & LOCK COMPANY, LIMITED

A front-page article appeared in the August 5, 1909 issue of <u>THE MACKAY</u> <u>MINER</u> announcing the formal organization of a company to manufacture the lock developed by John Junkunc. According to current records of the State of Idaho, Secretary of State, the official date of filing of incorporation of the Junkunc Safe & Lock Company, Limited was August 25, 1909. A copy of the Articles of Incorporation recently obtained from the Secretary of State's office was signed and notarized on August 3, 1909 with the principal place of business and principal office established in Mackay, Custer County, State of Idaho.

Officers of the corporation as listed in THE MACKAY MINER were:

J. C. Junkunc, President Casper Weifenbach, Vice President Dr. F. H. Poole, Secretary A. L. Fowler, Treasurer

It is interesting to note that John Junkunc was not known to have a middle name or initial and "Weiffenbach" is the correct spelling of the other major participant. This would suggest that neither man was well known to the community at the time.

As correctly reported in the newspaper, the amount of capital stock authorized was \$100,000.00 divided into 100,000 shares with a par value of \$1.00 each as confirmed by the Articles of Incorporation. A total of 71,775 shares were actually subscribed initially. The Articles authorized five directors and listed them as the four officers and Frank Sweeney, all being residents of Mackay, Idaho.

John Junkunc seemed a logical choice for President as he was the inventor and driving force in organizing the manufacture of the lock. He acquired 52,500 shares in the company, which represented 52.5% of those authorized and guaranteed majority control. There is reason to believe that he was not in a position to actually contribute the dollar amount represented by his holdings.

Casper Weiffenbach, the other major participant in the formulation of the company, was appropriately chosen for the position of Vice President. He acquired 17,500 shares in the company, which represented one-third that held by John Junkunc. Together, the two held 70% of the authorized number of shares and 97.5% of those subscribed. Like John Junkunc, there is reason to doubt that Casper Weiffenbach was able to contribute the dollar amount represented by his holdings. He did, in fact, open a machine shop in Mackay during January 1910, but it is interesting to note that there is no evidence that manufacture of locks ever took place there.

Dr. Francis H. Poole, acting as Secretary, brought considerable credibility to the organization. He was a prominent doctor in Mackay at the time, having established its first hospital. Although primarily engaged in medical care, it is known that he had some involvement in gold mining ventures after he came to Mackay in 1906 from the Fort Hall reservation where his Idaho residence began. Dr. Poole was also active in the government of Mackay and served on the City Council before moving his medical practice to Pocatello in November 1909. In December 1910, he was appointed Superintendent of the Idaho State Insane Asylum at Blackfoot.

JUNKUNC SAFE & LOCK COMPANY, LIMITED (continued)

Dr. Poole, in addition to assuming office, was an investor in the Junkunc Safe & Lock Company having acquired 100 shares at the initial offering. Because he moved from Mackay three months after the incorporation it is unlikely that his influence was significant, beyond the original need. According to a copy of the Annual Statement filed by the corporation with, and recently obtained from, the Secretary of State's office dated June 27, 1910, Casper Weiffenbach had assumed the position of Corporate Secretary.

Alonzo L. Fowler moved to Mackay in September 1908 having previously been involved in real estate in Blackfoot. When he later assumed the position of Cashier at the State Bank of Mackay, he quickly established a revered reputation. It was fitting then that, as one of the city's most successful bankers at the time, he was solicited to assume the position of Treasurer for the new corporation. It is interesting to note that a local attorney, C. I. Huddle, was listed as the Corporate Treasurer in the Annual Statement dated June 27, 1910. Why Mr. Fowler was no longer an officer at that time is not known. He did assume responsibility as the first Master of the Masonic Lodge established in Mackay in June 1910 and the following month announced his intention to run for the office of State Senator representing Custer County. It may simply have been that demands on his time were too great, or perhaps that it would be politically disadvantageous to be associated with the Junkunc Safe & Lock Company. Mr. Fowler did invest in the new company with his holding amounting to 100 shares. Possibly worthy of note is that the State Bank of Mackay failed in March 1912.

Frank Sweeney, another Director of the corporation, may have been the most significant participant despite not assuming a corporate office. Described as "master mechanic" of the Empire Copper Company in an article appearing on the front page of the April 29, 1909 issue of <u>THE MACKAY MINER</u>, he was reported to be building a machine shop near his home in the city. This was to become the Mackay Novelty Works. It was at that location on the corner of Spruce Street and Cedar Avenue that the initial manufacture of the Junkunc locks took place. Just about a year later, a front page article in <u>THE MACKAY MINER</u> dated April 7, 1910 announced that the Mackay Novelty Works operated by Mr. Sweeney had twenty-four employees, had completed a major contract involving the Mackay Dam project, and had also obtained substantial contracts for additional work that was yet to be completed. In that same article it was stated that the "Mackay Novelty Works are making the famous Junkunc Lock under contract".

It would appear that the production of Junkunc locks in Mackay was confined to Frank Sweeney's operation. Mr. Sweeney, personally, was also an investor having subscribed to 100 shares. The original list of the investors in the Articles of Incorporation was altered to delete the Mackay Novelty Works and insert Frank Sweeney's name instead. An interesting observation in that it may further support the impression that Frank Sweeney was a more astute businessman than Casper Weiffenbach. Later events substantiate that conclusion, as Mr. Sweeney subsequently acquired at least a portion of the assets of Mr. Weiffenbach's operation. JUNKUNC SAFE & LOCK COMPANY, LIMITED (continued)

Some of the other investors in the company are notable and a brief comment regarding them seems appropriate:

Chase A. Clark - 200 shares

Mr. Clark was a prominent attorney in the state of Idaho, acting as counsel for the Empire Copper Company, the Oregon Short Line, and the Big Lost River Irrigation Company, as well as being involved in real estate transactions. He served two terms in the State Legislature representing Custer County and after moving to Idaho Falls served again in the State Legislature and as Mayor of that city. Chase A. Clark was elected Governor of Idaho in 1940 and was appointed by Franklin D. Roosevelt as a federal judge. His only child, Bethine, wed United States Senator Frank Church.

Dillingham Bros. - 200 shares This organization owned and published THE MACKAY MINER.

Wm. Brennen - 100 shares Brennen Bros. was a Mackay business.

F. A. Stacy - 125 shares

Frank A. Stacy was a prominent figure in the development of Mackay. In 1906 he established the F. A. Stacy Mercantile Company and a few years later purchased the Lost River Commercial Company from J. H. Greene. Mr. Stacy was the manager and a director of the Mackay Telephone Company and a member of the American Legion, Masonic Lodge, Eastern Star, Lions Club, Pocatello Association of Insurance Agents and many other service and social organizations. "Mackay Lock #37" came from Mr. Stacy's personal possessions.

Henry Rehfuss - 50 shares Mr. Rehfuss is noteworthy in that he purchased an interest in the Weiffenbach Machine and Auto Supply Company in May 1910.

C. V. Hansen - 100 shares Mr. Hansen was Manager of the M. C. I. Stage Company and an influential Mackay citizen engaged in numerous other business and community activities.

Huddle & Bailey - 100 shares

This law firm included Mr. C. I. Huddle who assumed the position of Corporate Treasurer as reported by the Annual Statement dated June 27, 1910.

THE MACKAY LOCK PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE

A chronology of the manufacture of locks by the Junkunc Safe & Lock Company in Mackay begins in Pocatello with the association of two railroad machinists, John Junkunc and Casper Weiffenbach. It was there that the two became acquainted and discussions took place to pursue the idea to produce for sale the innovative combination lock contrived and developed, possibly with Casper Weiffenbach's assistance, by John Junkunc. On May 25, 1909 an application for patent was filed.

Mr. Weiffenbach established residence in Mackay and revelation of the plan to produce locks in Mackay was made in mid-July 1909. By the end of August, the Junkunc Safe & Lock Company had been incorporated and arrangements made for production at Frank Sweeney's Mackay Novelty Works. In mid-September, John Junkunc made a trip to Chicago to order specialized machinery to be used in the manufacturing process and to explore lock sale possibilities. At the time, some of the needed production equipment was already in place and schedules to make 150 locks a day established. A month later it was reported that equipment was in transit and production would commence upon its arrival.

At the end of October 1909, a front-page article appeared in <u>THE MACKAY</u> <u>MINER</u> reporting that a noted lock expert had attempted to open one of the Junkunc locks to no avail. This was touted to be a "big boost" for the future success of the company's product. A month later it was reported that John Junkunc had made a business trip to Pocatello and further that machinery was in place to begin production of locks in Mackay.

In January 1910, Casper Weiffenbach announced plans to open a machine shop in Mackay, but no mention of lock manufacturing was referenced. That same month, it was reported that Frank Sweeney's Mackay Novelty Works was expanding but, again, there was no mention of lock manufacturing activity. It was not until April 1910 that further mention was made in the local newspaper regarding lock manufacturing activity, and that was simply that the Mackay Novelty Works was under contract to do so. A month later it was reported that Casper Weiffenbach had sold an interest in his business to Henry Rehfuss, suggesting financial difficulty; yet it was reported that the activity was brisk. Just a month after that, however, it was announced that Frank Sweeney of the Mackay Novelty Works had purchased the Weiffenbach Garage, retaining Casper Weiffenbach to operate it. This certainly demonstrates business difficulties existed.

On July 21, 1910, an item of interest appeared in <u>THE MACKAY MINER</u> which stated that "John Junkunc, the lock man, has been here on business the past few days". This would imply that he no longer was considered a resident of Mackay. Then, the following week an article reported that, "John Junkunc, of the Junkunc Safe and Lock Co., arrived the middle of last week to clean up affairs of the company in this city. The contract with Mr. Sweeney, of the Mackay Novelty Works, for manufacturing the locks was closed. Mr. Junkunc departed the fore part of this week for Chicago, where he has interested a company in the manufacture of his patented Combination Padlock. The Stockholders of the company continue their interests as before".

Legal notices appeared in <u>THE MACKAY MINER</u> for three consecutive weeks in January 1911 stating that the principal place of business for the Junkunc Safe & Lock Company had been changed to Pocatello.

THE MACKAY LOCK PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE (continued)

It would appear that the Mackay lock production experience was short lived and abruptly terminated. There is no evidence as to the full extent of lock production in the city, but it seems certain that it was less than planned and anticipated, for unexplained reasons. The absence of progress reports in the press relative to activity of the Junkunc Safe & Lock Company tend to support this conclusion.

There is little question that the idea incorporated in the patent issued to John Junkunc had merit, as subsequent history has shown. The reason for the "failure" to carry that idea through to a successful business endeavor in Mackay, Idaho at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century is a matter of speculation. It could be attributed to the lack of business sense on the part of John Junkunc and Casper Weiffenbach. Considering that John Junkunc joined his recently immigrated and older brother, Stephen, in Chicago after leaving Mackay to successfully pursue lock manufacturing, the answer may be much more personal and deeper than we can comprehend today.

THE MACKAY LOCKS

Presently, there are three locks known to exist that bear the embossments "Junkunc Safe & Lock Company" and "Mackay, Idaho". All are in the possession of Junkunc descendants. The successor company, Junkunc Bros., American Lock Company, has two of them. One of these was apparently taken by John Junkunc when he left Mackay and is embossed with the number "100". The other was acquired at auction from a private collector in 1994 and is embossed with the number "78". The third lock, "THE MACKAY LOCK", embossed with the number "37", is in the possession of Gil Junkunc, Grandnephew of John Junkunc and Grandson of Stephen Junkunc.

THE MACKAY LOCK

The story of THE MACKAY LOCK may be as interesting and moving to some as all else that can ever be documented regarding John Junkunc, the Junkunc Safe & Lock Company, or the Junkunc Bros., American Lock Company. THE MACKAY LOCK does itself represent something very personal and deeper than can be comprehended. This was expressed to the extent possible to the members present at the July 7, 1994 meeting of the South Custer Historical Society by Gil Junkunc as a representative of the Junkunc family. It was a result of that experience that the Society determined that THE MACKAY LOCK should be given to him.

THE MACKAY LOCK, by virtue of its serial number 37, is the oldest known lock produced by the Junkunc Safe & Lock Company. It was donated to the South Custer Historical Society by Mr. James W. Muffett, a lifetime resident of Mackay. Mr. Muffett acquired the lock as a gift from the estate and personal effects of Frank A. Stacy, as administered by the senior Mr. Stacy's son, Morris. Jim Muffett was present at the meeting of the South Custer Historical Society when the disposition of THE MACKAY LOCK was determined, and he publicly stated his pleasure with their decision. That same feeling was expressed in person to Gil Junkunc.

AFTER MACKAY

John Junkunc left Mackay in July 1910 less than a year after his arrival. Although the time spent was brief, it was the foundation of a long history that has followed. In Chicago, he continued his lock manufacturing pursuit as Junkunc Safe & Lock Company for a time with manufacturing performed by a more established firm. In 1912, he was joined by his brother, Stephen, in establishing Junkunc Bros. Manufacturers, which was engaged in the lock manufacturing business, operating out of the basement of Stephen's rented home. The brothers parted company in 1918 with John Junkunc continuing in the lock business and Stephen establishing his own tool and die operation, General Machinery & Manufacturing Company, which exists to this day. When John Junkunc purchased the assets and name of American Lock Company, he established Junkunc Bros., American Lock Company. That company continues today as one of the major concerns in the industry, commonly known as American Lock Company. Both General Machinery and American Lock are owned and operated by descendants of their founders and are recognized in their respective industries for emphasis on quality workmanship.

Addendum

On September 1, 1998 the surviving Junkunc heirs sold their interest in Junkunc Bros., American Lock Company to Goldner Hawn Johnson & Morrison, a Minneapolis acquisition firm.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sources of information gathered for the purposes of this presentation include past issues of THE MACKAY MINER made available by the Women's Club of Mackay and the South Custer Historical Society of Mackay, Idaho and from micro film obtained from the University of Idaho, a book written by Georgia Perdue Olsen entitled MACKAY'S YESTERDAYS, and personal recollections of Mackay residents and Junkunc family members.

Special recognition is given to Maye and Don Qualls of Moore, Idaho who hosted the writer's visit to Mackay in July 1994. More than hosting, the Qualls participated in research, introduced the writer to Mackay and its residents, and befriended a stranger.

Jim Muffett of Mackay, Idaho is also due special acknowledgement in that he has been a source of specific information, insight into the days gone by, and simply a delightful person to have met. Time spent with Jim and his wife, Wanda, chatting on their front porch will forever be a pleasant memory and reminder of things that are important.

Gil Junkunc Alta Loma, California July 1995



UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

JOHN JUNKUNC, OF POCATELLO, IDAHO.

LOCK.

Specification of Letters Potent. Patented Feb. 1, 1910. Application filed May 25, 1909. Serial No. 403,189.

948.280.

To all whom it may concern: The it known that I. Menry JUNKUNC, a citizen of the United States, residing at Postello, in the county of Bannesk and State of Idaho, have made certain new and state of Idaho, have made certain new and the lack 2's provided on one side with 60. Spaced haterally projecting hals or hosses and combinisting the storemark and and combinisting the storemark and combination, hallbeck, of simple and chemsel and in which the combination and the stored and the and in which the combination and the stored and the and in which the combination and the stored and the and in which the combination and the stored and the and in which the combination and the stored and the and in which the combination and the stored and the and in which the combination and the stored and the and in which the combination and the stored and the and in which the combination and the stored and the and in which the combination and the stored and the stored and the and in which the combination and the stored and the and in which the combination and the stored and the and in which the combination and the stored and the

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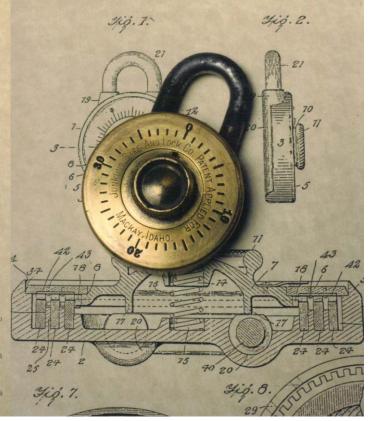
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J. JUNKUNC. LOCK.

948,280.

APPLICATION FILED MAY 25, 1909.

Patented Feb. 1, 1910. 2 SHEETS-SHEET 1.



Click Here to Download John Junkunc's Patent

ADDITIONAL HISTORY AND INFORMATION By Gil Junkunc Upland, California April 2019

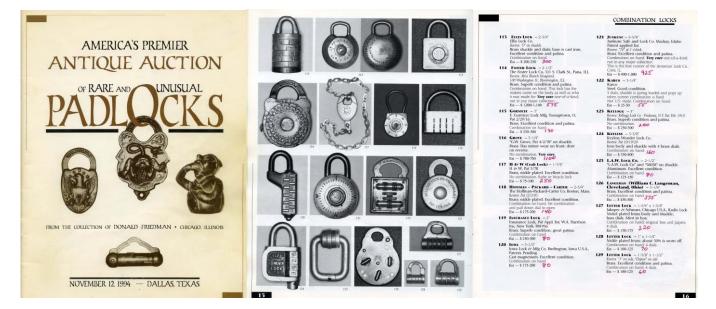
(Grandnephew of John Junkunc and Grandson of Stephen Junkunc)

(In Hungary the surname was spelled "Junkuncz") (In Hungarian a "cz" ending is pronounced as the "s" in "its") (The surname is typically now pronounced Junk-uns)

I am aware of three "Mackay Locks".

I got #37 from the historical society/museum in Mackay, Idaho.

#78 was acquired at the auction (Catalog #121) of Don Friedman (Chicago Illinois) November 12, 1994 Dallas Texas by Junkunc Brothers Lock Company.



When the lock was to be auctioned, I contacted the company and asked if they would make a pointer for my lock and the one being auctioned as both were missing. That was because I knew the lock they had did still have the pointer (missing in my photos that were taken previously). I also suggested that screws be made as well, since I suspected the threads were not standard. That turned out to be the case. That is how the company became aware of the auction and outbid "silent" me to obtain it.

#100 was apparently retained by John Junkunc and was in possession of the company ever since.

In other words, all of the known Mackay locks are in the possession of Junkunc Family members/descendants.