The TOOL SHED

Number 5 Nov. 1978

• • • A Journal of Tool Collecting published by CRAFTS of New Jersey • • •

NEXT MEETING ON NOVEMBER 19th AT FIELD HOMESTEAD

The next meeting of CRAFTS of New Jersey will be held on Sunday, November 19, from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m., at the Field Homestead, 260 River Road (Rte. #18), Piscataway.

Fred Shippey, the program chairman, will preside over a twin bill. Carl Bopp, of Audubon, will speak on "Gage Tool Company Products." The Gage Company, of Vineland, has been one of Carl's special interests for some time, so look forward to an interesting talk. Carl has asked members who have them to bring a Gage plane or two to the meeting.

For the second half of the program, Bob DuPont, of Gillette, who was originally scheduled for last September, will speak on "Better Mousetraps." And Bob also invites anyone with a mousetrap to bring it with them to the meeting.

Harry O'Neill will take over for the "Whatsit?" session, and the committee again asks members to bring no more than one item for identification.

The meeting will conclude with informal tool talk and the "Swap & Sell."

Please remember that these are open meetings. If you know anyone interested in old tools (rare or familiar!), invite them to attend.

AUCTION REPORT: "CRAFTSMEN" AT HARROW, PA.

by Alex Farnham

Having seen a notice in the auction section of a newspaper for a sale in Harrow, Pa., on October 7, I prepared to attend. I clipped the auction ad which gave directions to the sale and told in glowing terms about the many tools and primitives to be sold. Cardboard boxes and rope were gathered to help me carry away the many tools I expected to acquire. Finally, with pads of paper and extra pens with which to note the prices the tools would bring, I set off down the road. About a mile from home I dis-

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Our meeting place, the Jeremiah Field Homestead ~ in the year 1868

A BRACE OF TOOL CATALOGS

by Robert Fridlington

Two members of CRAFTS have recently issued sale catalogs, both of which should be of considerable interest to members of the organization.

Bud Steere's "List #2" (September, 1978) had over 300 illustrated tools and a descriptive list of 283 planes. And there were prices to fit everybody's pocketbook. If my quick check was accurate, the top price in the catalog was $850 for a workbench and the bottom was $2 for a plane. My choices (my wish list, not my shopping list) were a Stanley #1 for $350 and a graceful, cage-head brace for $325. For those with a New Jersey interest, there was a beautiful pair of 24" Lowentraut calipers for $45 and an Andruss #10 round for $10. It was an impressive array of tools--who else offers FIVE wagon axle gauges?

But this isn't all. A few weeks after the catalog came out, those who had ordered or had tried to order received a second list with all of the left-over items marked down 20% to 25%. The $2 plane had not sold. On the new list it was offered for free.

If you want to buy from one of these catalogs, phone your order in, as the competition is speedy. I tried for one item; but it had been sold. About a week ago Bud notified me that he had found another one, almost identical to what I had wanted, and that it was mine if I was still interested. You can't ask for better service than that.

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MATING HE AND SHE

The article in the September, 1978, issue of The Tool Shed about the unusual little plane that Bob Fridlington picked up at a flea market brought an immediate response from Carl Bopp of Audubon.

Carl identified it as an air-tight plane from a set of "single" air tights, although he stated that he had never seen one that small. He added that these planes came in "double" sets as well (a point not mentioned in Salaman) and that complete sets of either variety are very rare.

Right on the heels of Carl's letter came one from Raymond R. Townsend of Williamsburg, Va. Ray, the former Editor of the EAIA Chronicle, is an indefatigable researcher of unusual tools who believes that you should "share your tool knowledge with others; don't bore Saint Peter with it."

Ray agrees with Carl, and he is not one to rest his case on slim documentation. While a lively correspondence continued, Ray searched out a number of references, and he referred the matter to several other prominent tool authorities, even to the Director of Architectural Research for Colonial Williamsburg. In the process he uncovered a wealth of material on air-tight joints, dust-proof joints, splined joints, feather joints, he joints and she joints.

There is a great deal more to this story, but we will hold it in abeyance. At last report Carl and Ray had their heads together at the EAIA meeting in Washington. They might come up with something.

As to the plane, maybe Ray Townsend summed it up best: to facilitate the better mating of he and she. Who said tool collecting was dispassionate?

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Jack Clouser's "Ye Olde Tool Shed" (October, 1978) is a bit different than the previous issues. The pages are punched so that it can be placed in a three-ring binder and there are a number of new features. Indeed, in its new format it is almost a journal. Among the new features are book notices, a brief ar-

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AN APPRENTICE'S FIRST LESSON: SHARPENING HAND TOOLS

by Frederick A. Shippey

More than a half century ago, I was apprenticed to the carpenter trade in a sash and door shop in upstate New York. The firm specialized in custom-made doors, windows, and house trim of oak, chestnut, gum and mahogany. It was a union shop which employed approximately twenty bench and machine craftsmen. Included in this number were two teen-age apprentices, and I was one of them. As time passed we were shifted from one section of the shop to another, and I learned many important phases of the trade. In four years, an apprentice could become acquainted with a broad range of bench work, plus experience in the operation of various woodworking machines such as saw, dado, jointer, planer, morticer, tenoner, lathe, sander and the moulders.

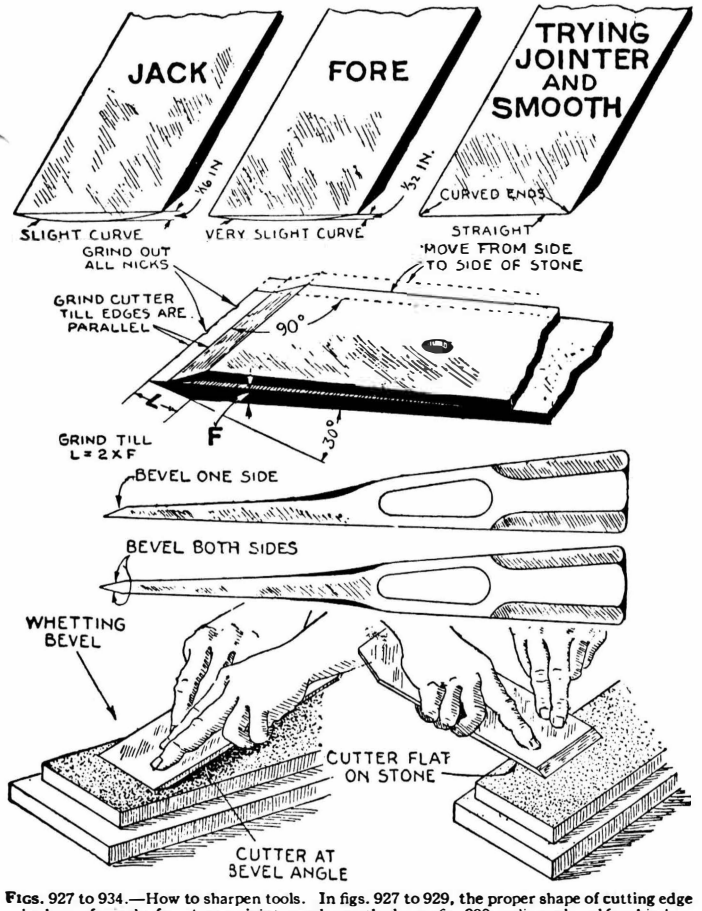
Among the craftsmen was a master cabinet maker whose name was Gus. He had learned the trade in his native Sweden. His large tool chest, crammed full, was an object of envy and admiration. He kept the tools clean and sharp, although Gus was a quiet, friendly and cooperative man, he would not loan his fine tools to fellow workers. He made no exceptions.

During the first year of my apprenticeship an incident occurred involving the shop foreman and myself. The Swedish cabinet maker overheard the conversation and discovered my fervent interest in learning the trade, but he made no comment at the time. Several days later, however, he made me a surprising offer. He said, "If you will give me half of your noon lunch period each working day for the next three and a half years, I will teach you all I can about carpentry."

Master and apprentice started on a regimen the very next day. We ate our lunches, leaving at least thirty minutes daily for bench work together. Gus's initial project was to teach me how to sharpen a variety of hand tools. He began with the carpenter's crosscut saw. First he insisted that I make a wooden saw vise. This frame held the saw securely full length, while each tooth was carefully filed. Held at the appropriate angle, a three-cornered file was pressed down gently on the pushing stroke and lifted slightly on the return stroke. A relatively even pressure was utilized for every filing stroke and a count was kept--usually two strokes per opening between teeth. Every other tooth was filed from an angled position. The the saw was turned end for end

in the frame and filed on the other side. Earlier the saw had been set.

When the hand saw had been sharpened, Gus turned the tool upside down, held it level, and then placed a needle on the trough of tooth points at the handle end. Next, he tilted the saw lengthwise to see whether the needle would slide down the trough and drop off the fore end. If it did, then the teeth had been filed to uniform size and had been set evenly! A second test was also applied. Holding the saw handle between thumb and forefinger only, Gus sawed a wide board in two, all the while allowing the tool to cut its own way through the wood. If the teeth were filed unevenly (i.e., shorter on one side of the blade than on the other), or were set unevenly, the saw would "run," cutting a curved or crooked line. On the other hand, if the saw was sharpened and set properly, the tool would cut a straight line across the board with little or no guidance from the operator's hand. In sharpening tools, the apprentice was expected to measure up to the Swedish cabinet maker's high standards.



from Audels Carpenters & Builders Guide, 1923

FIGS. 927 to 934.—How to sharpen tools. In figs. 927 to 929, the proper shape of cutting edge is shown for jack, fore, trying, jointer and smooth planes; fig. 930, ordinary bevel for chisels—for precision: make bevel angle 15° for paring; 20° for firmer, and 30° for framing chisel; figs. 931 and 932, show single and double bevel hatchets; figs. 933 and 934, method of honing.

When the master was satisfied with my progress on the hand saw, he turned to the task of sharpening edge tools--particularly the chisel and the plane iron. For Gus, this pro-

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ticle ("How to Clean a Plow Plane"), a want column, club news (with a nice piece on CRAFTS), auction prices, antique tool shop listings, and other items of interest.

The heart of the catalog, though, is the tools, nearly 300 pieces, each beautifully illustrated. My choices here (again my wish list!) were a Stanley #196 for $775, a five-foot cooper's jointer for $160, and an ebony and brass bow drill and bow for $265. There were some good cooper's tools, including two block hooks and two head vises, and several outstanding pattern maker's planes with multiple soles and irons.

Here too it is wise to phone your order in, as there apparently are people who sit by their mail box and wait for this catalog to arrive. If you hesitate, the good items might be lost.

But even if you not interested in buying, the sheer enjoyment of looking through these catalogs make them well worth the price of $1.50.

Bud Steere's next catalog is coming out this month. His address is 110 Glenwood Dr., N. Kingstown, R.I. 02852.

The next issue of "Ye Olde Tool Shed" will be in the spring. The address is Box T, Route 32, Cornwall, N.Y. 12518.

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cess involved three steps. First, the chisel or iron had to be hollow ground--ground to show the arc described by the perimeter of the grinding wheel. This arc should be a smooth, continuous sweep from the face to the back edge of the tool, showing an angle of approximately 8 degrees for the chisel and about 5 degrees for a smooth plane iron. Other angles of the bezel are used for special purposes. At the outset, if the tool was in an abused condition, patience was needed in the grinding operation, accompanied by frqyent dips of the tool in water for cooling lest the metal be "burned." I was taught to grind "free hand," without the aid of a tool rest. Nevertheless, the bezel had to be made at right angles to the tool's edge. Moreover, grinding requires skill and experience in order to put the tool against the wheel in the same position after each cooling. A proper grind leaves a wire edge on the tool.

Second, I learned to whet the tool on an oil stone of modest dimensions--one by two by six inches. Gus used a mixture of machine oil and kerosene. The kerosene kept the oil stone clean. I was taught to hold the chisel or plane iron at a slightly steeper angle than that of the ground bezel. Also, I learned to whet the back side of the tool as it lay flat on the surface of the oil stone. Gus urged that the quality of the

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cutting edge really depends on the smoothness of the back of the blade. Hence the back side had to be whetted adequately. I do not recall hearing Gus mention the need to do a fancy letter S movement during the whetting process. If required, this would have been a little difficult to accomplish with a wide chisel or a two-inch plane iron on such a narrow oil-stone surface. Eventually, the need would arise to take off the wire edge by drawing the cutting edge of the tool across the grain of a piece of scrap wood. This was done only after the tool had been whetted both on the bezel side and on the back. Following the removal of the wire edge, another stroke or two completed this stage of the sharpening process.

Third, a final step was probably optional. But it is included here because I was taught that way. It has proven useful in fine cabinet work. Gus always completed the sharpening process by stropping the chisel or plane iron on the edge of his left palm. The process was carefully done, taking reasonable safety precautions. Only the back side of the tool came into contact with his hand. A half-dozen strokes usually sufficed. Finally, Gus tested the sharpness of the chisel or iron in two ways. A sharp tool can peel the surface of a finger nail or shave the hair of one's forearm. Of course, the ultimate test is the ease with which the tool smooths a wood surface or cuts out a mortice. Gus insisted that a craftsman rarely cuts himself using a sharp tool. Beware the dull ones!

These ways of sharpening tools probably will not satisfy everyone's needs, but they obtain satisfactory results for me. In recollecting my apprenticeship days, I remember Gus for what he taught me about carpentry and for his high standards of craftsmanship. Only after I had learned to sharpen a saw, chisel and plane iron did the master cabinet maker allow me free access to his remarkable tool chest. Evidently he was satisfied that this apprentice was making satisfactory progress in learning carpentry. A belated thank you, Gus, for your interest in the farm boy from Eagle Mills.

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cont'd. from pg. 1 ~ Auction

covered that I had left my wallet on the dresser so I had to return for it, as it would be quite frustrating to see all those wonderful tools sold and not be able to participate. After leaving home for the second time, I wended my way across the Delaware into Pennsylvania. Since I had painted some pictures in Harrow, finding the auction was not difficult even though it was situated on a back road and there was little to indicate that a sale was to take place.

After parking at the edge of a field, I walked towards a barn in the distance. At the barnyard I found a few shabbily dressed farmers wandering among several dilapidated barns and sheds piled high with scrap iron, harness, old newspapers and kindling. I was discouraged and about to return home when I discovered among the piles of junk a beautiful handwrought wheelwright's traveler. Then upon digging into a box of scrap, a signed mill pick came to light. After going through a number of other boxes and finding more goodies, I decided to stay. By the time I had walked back to my car and driven it closer to the barns, I found considerably more competition had arrived. Among them were three CRAFTSmen: our new president, Steve Zluky, Harry O'Neill and Dorsey Reading. I also recognized several antique tool dealers. The main topic of conversation was the lack of items worth bidding on and the abundance of junk. Two prominent tool dealers left soon after auctioneer Henry K. Freed started the sale. The first hundred or so items sold were the run-of-the-mill auction junk, but after about two hours some good early handwrought tools began to show up. The first was a very rusty reaping hook which brought $7. Next a small draw knife in the same condition sold for $4, and a fish gig went for $2.50. Hay saws brought from $5 to $6, and flails in good condition $17.50 to $25. Flails in poorer condition later brought from $4 to $8. The only blacksmith anvil, which I estimated weighed between 125 and 150 lbs., sold for $90. Two tinsmith anvils sold towards the end of the auction for $30 each. Other smith tools sold were two leg vises at $15 and $19, a crank-powered forge for $75, a drilling machine $27.50, a large bottom fuller $13, a flatter $5, and two forge rakes at $7 each. A handwrought pair of tin shears sold along with a good hay hook for $5.50, and bench shears went for $20. The beautiful traveler which convinced me to stay at the auction sold for $30, and the mill pick in a box lot along with some other goodies went for $2. Two very rusty and chipped hewing broad axes brought $17.50 and $20. An early handwrought shoemaker's hammer head went for 50¢ after I convinced the auctioneer to sell it separately. An early harness clamp, minus its leather hinge and wood handle, sold for $4.50.

Most of the tools sold were hidden away in boarded-up sheds and could not be examined before they were put on the auction block. They were in rough condition, covered with rust and dirt, but despite this and the chilling winds, most who attended the auction felt it had been worth their while.