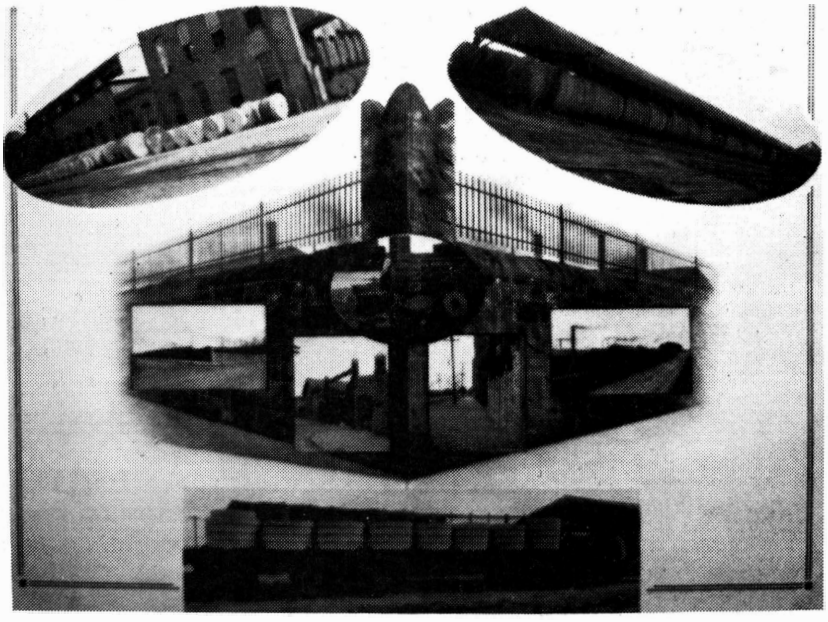
The TOOL SHED

NUMBER 56 APRIL 1989

A Journal of Tool Collecting published by CRAFTS of New Jersey

GRINDSTONES

from The Disston Crucible
July 1919



A subject of ever increasing interest and one that shows in goodly measure the magnitude of the work done in the Disston Works is the view of the Grindstone Wall and the immense number of grindstones used in the Disston plant. For this reason we reproduce the picture which appeared some years ago in the Disston Crucible, together with the short story relating thereto, which follows:

"Probably to the great majority of people the mention of grindstones awakens recollections of toilsome, perspiry hours at the crank in the wood-shed while the old man ground the nicks out of the axe. To these the foot-treadle type of two-foot stone with a punctured tomato can water supply represents the highest development in the line.

"It probably would be difficult for them to conceive of one concern using so many grindstones that the entire time of a gang of ten men was required to handle them. Yet this is the scale on which grindstones are used in the Disston Plant—ten men are kept busy replacing worn out stones with new.

"No toys, either, these grindstones. Various sizes are used, but all of them are over four feet in diameter and many of them six feet, with faces ranging from five to thirteen inches.

"The upper right hand picture is a photograph of one of the two big grindstone sheds. The left hand picture shows another large collection of grindstones awaiting their turns (pardon the pun). The lower picture shows a carload of stones as they reach the Disston Plant, and it is very seldom that one or more such cars is not to be seen on the siding to be unloaded.

"The picture in the center is a corner of the stone wall which encloses the front and side of the immense plant of the Disston Company. The wall is seven feet high above ground, one and a half feet thick and has a net length of nearly a mile. It is made from grindstones worn down in the manufacture of Disston Saws. Moreover, these stones represent the accumulation of only the few years from 1900 to 1907, in which year the stone wall was completed.

"Only these of the hundreds of thousands of stones used are left. The rest are all scattered. But just think of them as placed end to end and stretch-

(Continued on page 6)

CRAFTS of New Jersey

Collectors of Rare and Familiar Tools Society of New Jersey

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The purpose of CRAFTS of New Jersey is to encourage interest in early trades and industries and in the identification, study, preservation and exhibition of tools and implements used and made in New Jersey as an integral part of our heritage.

Membership in CRAFTS is open to anyone who shares the above interests. Annual dues per person or couple are seven dollars for the membership year of July 1 to June 30. Membership fees may be sent to the Treasurer: John M. Whelan, 38 Colony Court, Murray Hill, N.J. 07974.

The Tool Shed

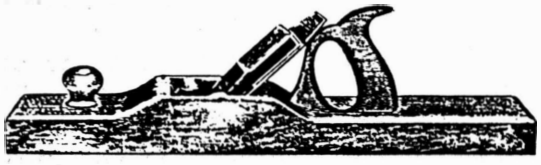
Published five times a year for members of CRAFTS of New Jersey. Editor: Frank W. Kingsbury, R.D. 1 Box 316, Glen Gardner, NJ 08826. Articles, especially about New Jersey tools and trades, are encouraged and may be sent to the editor.

HAROLD E. FOUNTAIN, SPEAKER AT APRIL 9, 1989 MEETING

CRAFTS of New Jersey will hold their April 9th meeting at the Hobart Masonic Lodge in High Bridge beginning with the Tailgate Swap and Sale time at 1:00 P.M.

At the 2:00 P.M. formal meeting, Harold E. Fountain will be speaking on "Features of a 1730 House". With the extensive knowledge and experience he brings to the subject, this should be an outstanding program.

The concluding attraction of the day, presided over by Harry O'Neill will be the "What's It?" tool identification event. Bring not more than two of your unidentified tools to challenge the "experts" and join us in outguessing them.



SPEAKER'S PROFILE HAROLD E. FOUNTAIN

No stranger at CRAFTS meetings, Harold Fountain's membership dates back to November of 1978. He and his wife, Ethelle are regular attendees in spite of the distance from their home in Westhampton, Long Island.* There in his basement Harold has on display his extensive collection acquired over many years. The majority of his quality tools are those used in various woodworking trades and crafts.

Since the close of World War II, when he began work as a carpenter, Harold has progressed; first to having his own business as a builder and later to specializing in millwork and stairbuilding.

He has previously been featured at two CRAFTS meetings. In April 1982 at East Jersey Olde Towne he spoke on "Basic Frame and Window Sash Making". At the Clinton Historical Museum in April 1985 his subject was "Stair Building: Tools and Techniques". Now, again in April and at a third location, his subject will be "Features of a 1730 House".

According to Fred Shippey, 'Harold is very knowledgable in this field and will cover some important materials not touched upon by the February speaker, Gene Kijowski. He will display several hand-made window frames and sash.

'When a 1730 sash was made, some familiar features were included:—top rail, meeting rail, bottom rail, stile, muntin bar, sash cord or chain, parting strip, lights, rabbet, putty, glazer points, putty line, sash lock, transom, blinds, slatts, lap joints, blind stop, Venetian blinds, ploughed stiles, and shutter.

'Hummel's book, With Hammer In Hand, urges the importance of hand-made window frames and sash in East Hampton, New York in 1765. Toway's speaker, Harold Fountain, will show us what carpenter work looked like in 1730, 65 years before the Dominy craftsmen of Long Island began this kind of labor.'

* Correction: Their home is in Westhampton Beach.

THE RAPE OF THE TOOL CHEST

by Lee Richmond

Among us tool collectors is an insidious breed of villain who has, until now gone unpunished and often unnoticed. Ever since these tools we so cherish became obsolete, this scoundrel has been allowed to perpetrate a most heinous crime on our dear helpless friends, and the crime continues to be committed, even as I write. Often, with the collaboration of so called collectors, atrocity after atrocity is committed.

What is the crime of which I speak so strongly? Quite simply, it is the breaking up of groups of tools which have been together since they were new, and belong together. By this I mean both sets of tools such as hollows and rounds or Beading planes, or groups of tools all used by the same craftsperson, and usually with the same owner's stamp. Quite often I see auctioneers, dealers, and pseudo collectors parting out sets of tools, without the least remorse for the grievous act they are committing in the name of profit. After more than a century of this abuse, it is almost impossible to find matched sets of very common tools such as dados, beads, H & Rs, chisels, or even match planes, and believe me, I have been looking! A complete tool chest has become virtually unattainable at any price.

At the February CRAFTS meeting, Bill Gustafson offered a nice, complete, carpenter's chest. Not an exotic inlaid cabinet maker's chest, but a good quality carpenter's box. He was asking $8500. People murmured in astonishment when they heard this price. I was not surptised. If this chest is indeed totally complete, then it is the first such American chest I have seen, or even heard of. Two of my friends come close to having a complete chest, but close doesn't really count in this case. I applaud Bill for resisting the urge to break up this chest for the lure of some quick profits, and only wish that I could afford to make him a fair offer on it. When one hollow by a scarce 18th century maker can easily break $1,000, then Bill's chest seems to me a bargain.

Hopefully people will soon realize the true scarcity they have created and will stop the perpetuation of this practice of parting out, as it is called in polite circles.

AUCTION

OUR 1989 ANTIQUE TOOL AUCTION

We are all looking forward to April 1st (and that's no fooling). How could anyone miss our CRAFTS Antique Tool Auction to be held at the Holiday Inn in Clinton? To be sure you have time to inspect the display of tools to be sold you should arrive before 9:00 A. M. The auction will get under way at 10:00 A. M.

Many of our CRAFTS members enjoyed the great auction last April (1988) and we heard many comments about the fine location and the facilities. That year set a club record in sales when over $38,000 was grossed. What will 1989 bring? Well, come and see!

* * *

Congratulations to L.I.A.T.C.A. on their Antique Tool Auction back on February 25th at Smithtown, Long Island. The Brush Barn was crowded and Auctioneer, Bob Grower kept the bidding moving along smoothly. Ron Grabowski, Ray Wisnieski and Bill Hermanek deserve much credit along with other L.I.A.T.C.A. members.

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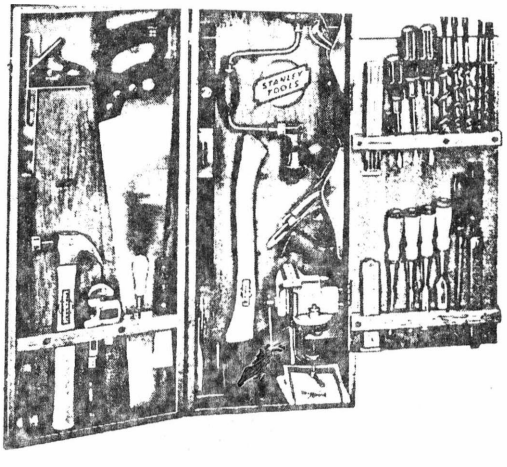


OUR FEBRUARY MEETING

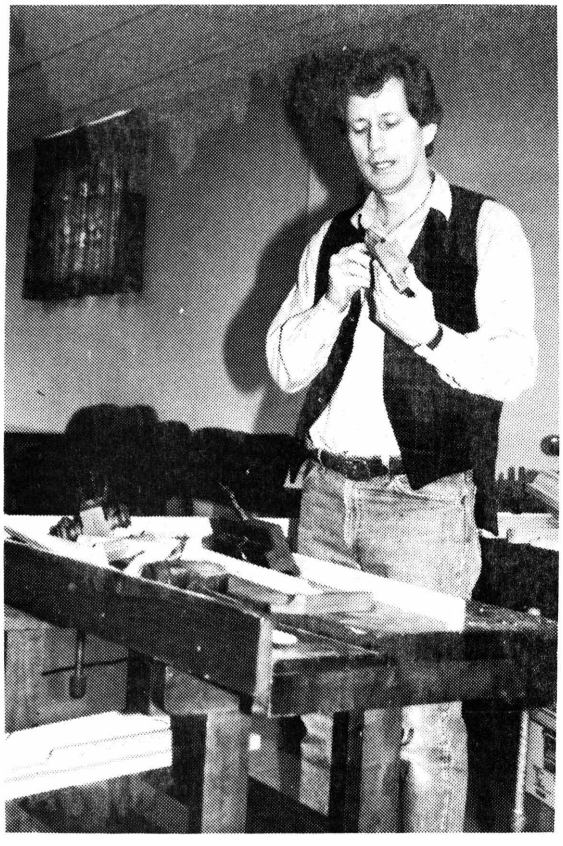
Can "Making Window Sash by Hand" be interesting? Our speaker, Gene Kijowski, knew how to do just that. He reviewed early window (the word was possibly wind hole) construction which predated sash and included the various means of securing and covering the opening. Next he described several ways that early gless was produced. Those members who had braved the elements and were fortunate enough to hear Gene were not disappointed.

It was interesting to learn that the original purpose of the mullions, located 7" or 8" apart, was to keep out intruders. As early as 1577 the openings were sometimes covered by a lattice of woven diagonal slats. These could have suggested the diamond-shaped panes of leaded glass windows which began about 1600. Windows were first permanently mounted in the framing of the house. They were later hinged as casement windows or made to slide sideways or up and down. The idea of weights and cased frames, "the new fancy sash windows" was first documented in 1701 by an order that was sent to England from this side of the Atlantic.

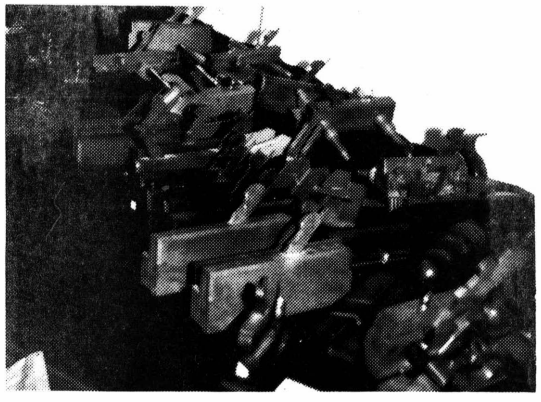
Our February Speaker, Gene Kijowski

Gene demonstrated by showing us a rolling mill that was used to shape the lead canes into an "H" cross section to accomodate the panes. Houses with windows of seven or more panes were taxed for them in 1695. Often the valued glass was stored when the owner was to be away from home, as a treasured commodity. In the late 1600s pirates once stole the door locks and glass.

After showing a number of slides that depicted the history and then the later construction of early sash, Gene demonstrated the use of the tools and of his workbench in making sash. He unveiled an impressive number of planes and other sash maker's tools both from England and from America.



Gene Kijowski with His Tool Bench



Gene Kijowski Demonstrates with Window Sash

Joe Hauck and Gene Kijowski Examine a Plane

LETTERS

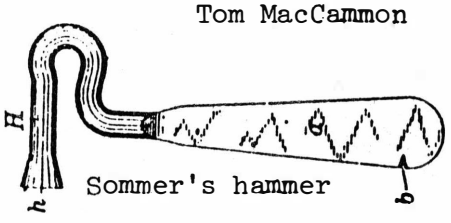
Dear Editor:

Regarding the John Sommer hammer, and the letter from Noah Little in the February 1989 TOOL SHED, he might be interested to know that one of these hammers sold for 49 bucks in my recent newsletter auction. They were mainly used as "cigar box" hammers. I have one that was given away by a candy company—much the same as the "English toffee" hammers.

Sorry you are losing Larry Fuhro—his "Pop Rivets" was a real plus.

Keep on hammering!

Tom MacCammon



Sommer's hammer

Dear Editor:

The gent with the embroidered wrench on his shirt (pictured in the February TOOL SHED) is Edward Hill, a member of P.A.S.T., a collector of iron and maker of fancy boxes. He lives in San Pedro, California.

Regards,
Larry Brundage
Corona del Mar, CA

Dear Mr. Kingsbury:

Pages 4 and 9 of my Feb. 89 TOOL SHED are blank. Can you send the missing pages? Thanks.

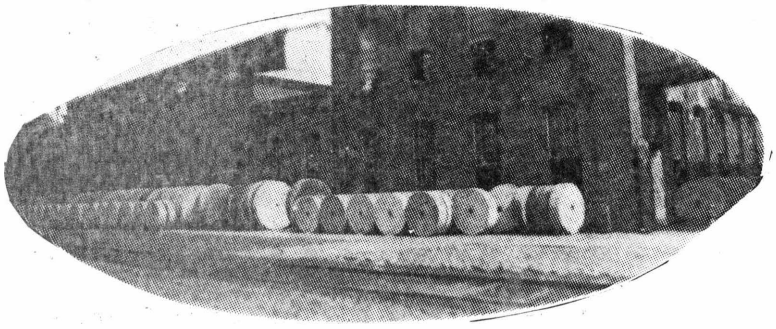
Ralph Drew

Editor's note: After the copy goes to the printer, I do not have sheets or copies to mail out. If this should be your problem, please contact Steve Zluky for a complete copy.

GRINDSTONES (Continued from page 1)

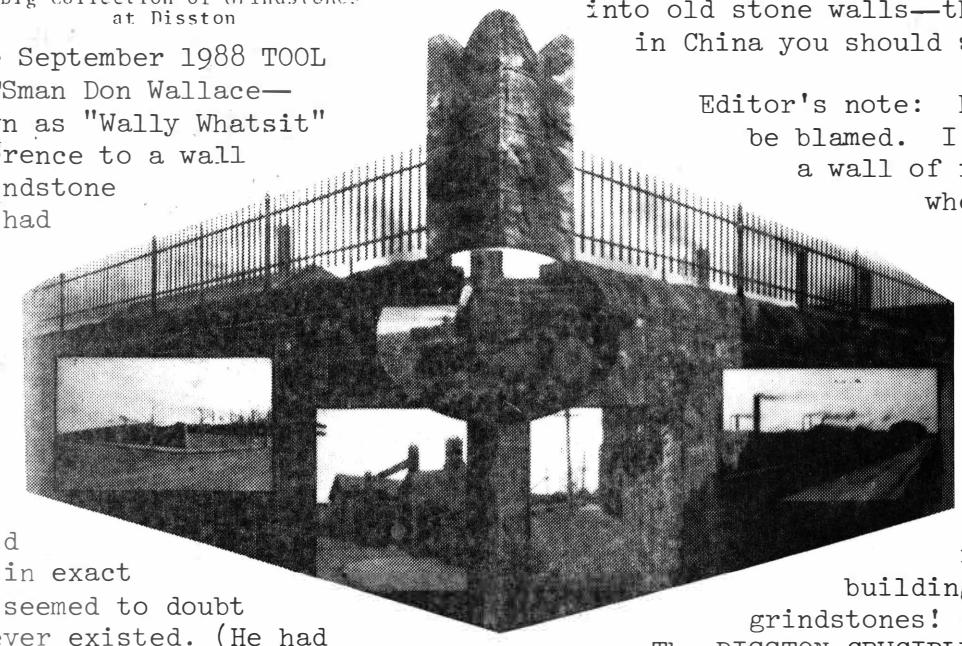
ing for hundreds of miles. Then think of the one in the wood-shed. 'All things are comparative.'"

We are indebted to Carl Bopp for this interesting article on grindstones. He states his purpose for wanting to have this information published as follows:

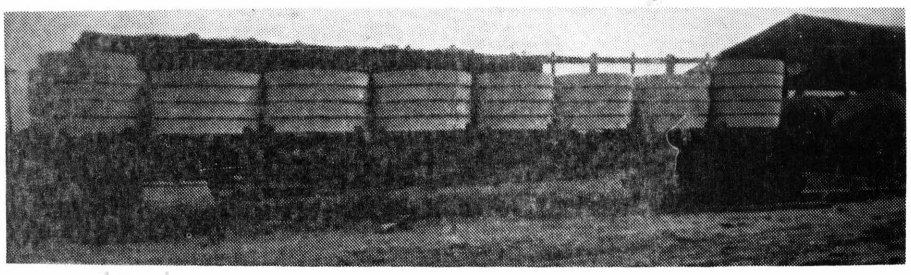


A Big Collection of Grindstones at Disston

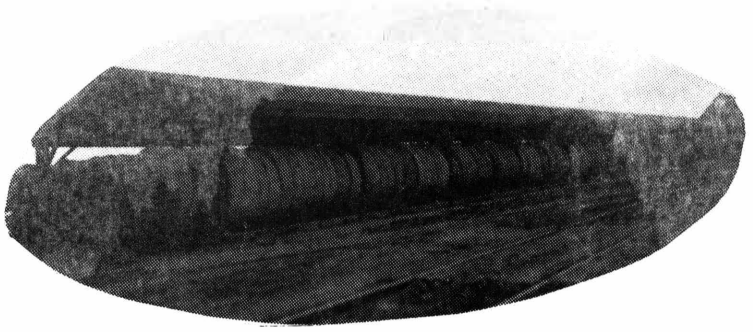
In the September 1988 TOOL SHED, CRAFTSman Don Wallace—better known as "Wally Whatsit"—made reference to a wall made of grindstone wheels. I had told Don about this wall that was built at the old Disston Saw Works in Philadelphia. While he did not say so in exact words, Don seemed to doubt this wall ever existed. (He had been to the old Disston Factory and did not see it.) In the TOOL SHED he said "I'll have to pause again the next time I pass Disston's deserted plant to see the stone wall made of grinding wheels, according to Carl."



A Corner of the Stone Wall that Encloses the Disston Plant



A Carload of Grindstones as They Reach the Plant



One of the Two Big Grindstone Sheds at the Disston Plant

In the photos, the center shows the wall in various views. A stone mason can be seen cutting up one of the old wheels in one of the views.

So you see, Don, the Disston Co. used a lot of grindstones, and yes, there was a stone wall made from old used ones.

P.S. By the way, Don, if you are into old stone walls—there is one in China you should see.

Editor's note: Don is not to be blamed. I thought it was a wall of round stones when you said it was made of grinding wheels, not of shaped stones that once were round. No mention was made of how many chisels it took to make building stones out of grindstones!

The DISSTON CRUCIBLE was a magazine published by the Henry Disston & Sons Keystone Saw, Tool, Steel and File Works. Don has a number of old copies of this most interesting publication.

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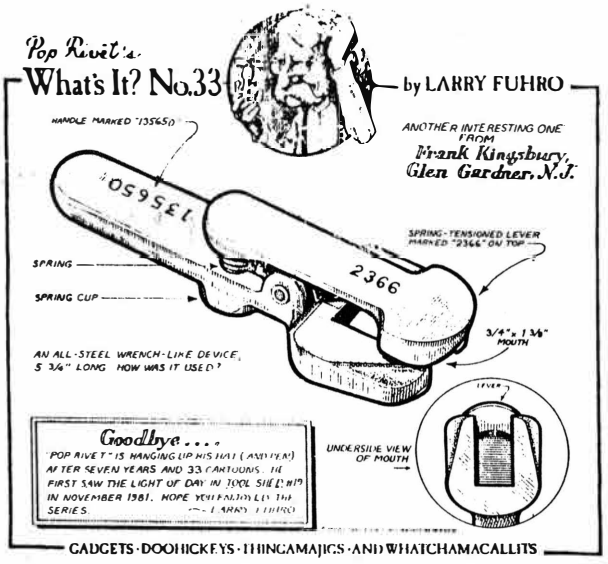


Dear Editor:

I think you will find that your "What's It" No. 33 (February 1989 TOOL SHED) is a "key" to run an electric trolley car.

Carl Bopp

Dear Editor:

Read with interest the February issue, #55 of the TOOL SHED. I believe the tool shown in Pop Rivet's "What's It? No. 33" was used by trolley car motormen. A motorman used three wrenches to operate the trolley car. Most trolleys could be operated from either end so the wrenches were removable from the end not in use thus preventing misuse of the controls by schoolboys.

The main wrench was the big crank wrench which controlled the trolley speed. The second wrench was in front of the motorman. It swung in a horizontal plane and controlled the brakes, opened the doors, and controlled the valve that allowed sand to flow on the tracks in front of the wheels in icy weather. The third wrench is the one shown in "What's It?" It is the reversing switch used to reverse the polarity of the electric motors to drive the trolley in the opposite direction. Located on the main control panel by the main switch, the reversing switch had two positions—forward and reverse —ninety degrees apart.

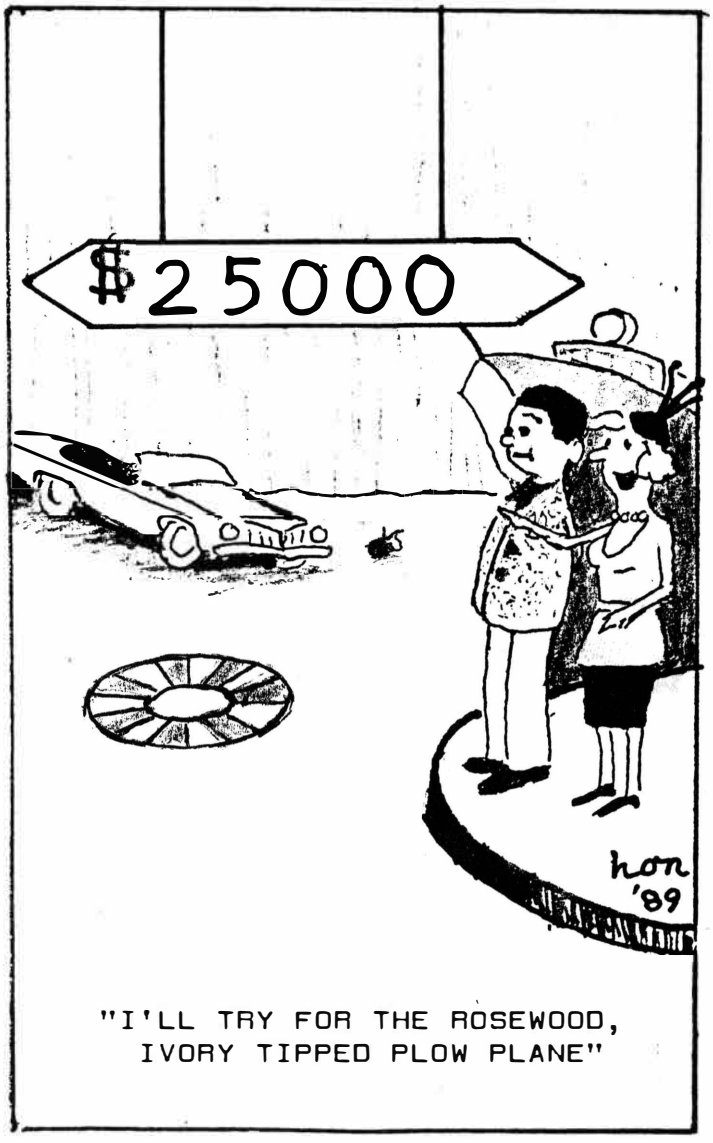
Keep up the good job you're doing with the TOOL SHED.

Frank Maples

FOR SALE

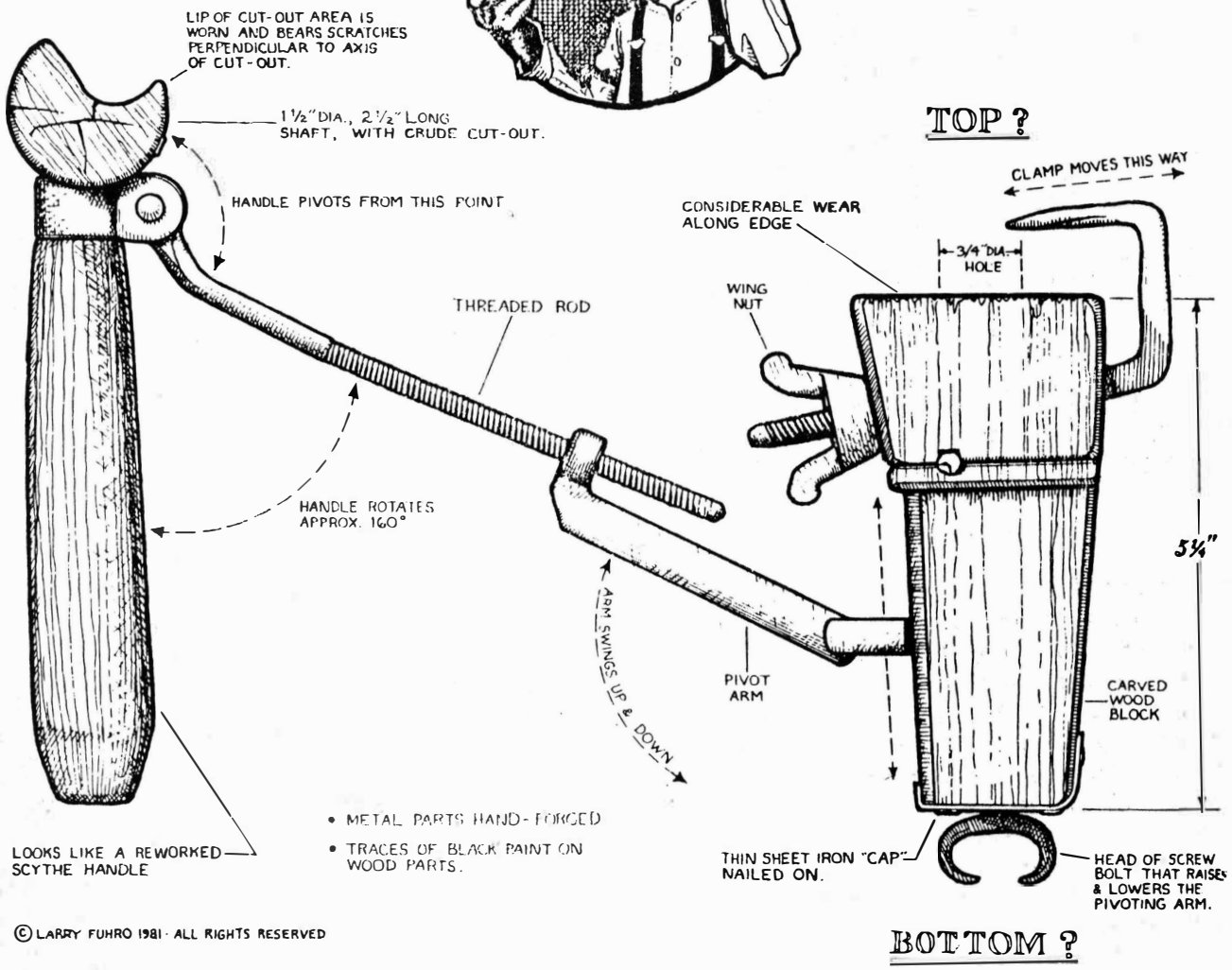
I recently discovered a Stanley 196 blade and would like to offer it to a collector for twenty dollars. The blade comes with its chip breaker and has some light rust. I haven't cleaned it yet but imagine it would be just a light bit of pitting. It's not the money I'm after; I really just want to get this blade to someone who can use it.

Thank you,
Richard L. Parker
11 Riverside Drive
Wilmington, DE 19809
(302) 762-1209



Pop Rivet's What's It? No. 1

by LARRY FUHRO



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GADGETS · DOOHICKEYS · THINGAMAJIGS · AND WHATCHAMACALLITS

Pop Rivet began his celebrated career in November 1981 with this illustration. Since there was no firm identification at that time, we are presening it for further speculation or (who knows?) an amazing answer! The original was brought to a CRAFTS meeting by Bill Gustafson. Is this confounding gadget still around?

CRAFTS of New Jersey meets at the Hobart Masonic Lodge in High Bridge.
* Tailgate sales will begin at 1:00 PM in the large parking lot.
* The regular meeting will begin at 2:00 PM.

Directions: Take I-78 to the Route 31 Exit at Clinton. Go north on Route 31 two miles to a traffic light. Turn right at the light and go about one-half mile to Dennis Ave. (the Roselle Savings Bank is on the far left corner). Turn left and go up the hill to the Masonic Temple.