The TOOL SHED

NUMBER 118 SEPTEMBER 2001

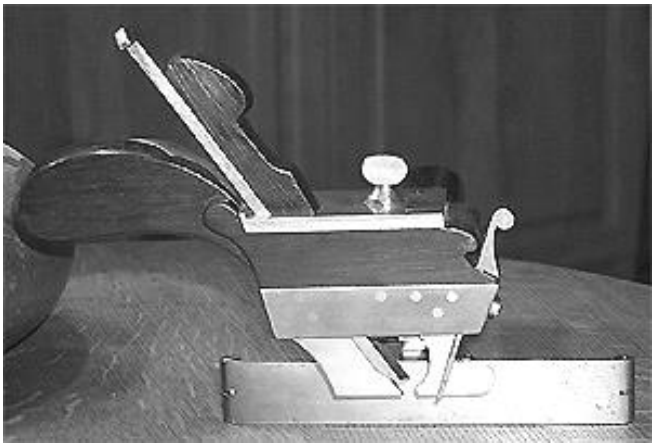
A Journal of Tool Collecting published by CRAFTS of New Jersey

# THOMAS FALCONER PLOW PLANE

## By Steve Johnson

The Thomas Falconer plough plane is one of those mysterious planes, cloaked in the obscurity of time, for which little is known and all avenues of research seem to lead to a dead-end. Those lucky enough to be at Clarence Blanchard's Brown Auction in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania during October 1998 actually got to see the plane and handle it to confirm its existence. The rest of us just heard the news trickling through the tool grapevine -- "winner of a Royal Society of Arts award", "a unique plane", "the finest plough plane made", etc, ... and later "a record price".

The Falconer plough plane (I am sticking with the English spelling, as the plane is English in origin) is a coachmaker's plough meant for plowing grooves, typically for decorative inlaid banding, on objects with curved sides. It is made from rosewood with gunmetal and brass fittings, and has a flexible steel fence, which can be adjusted to follow a large variety of curved work. It has been stunningly preserved; looking almost as it must have 150 years ago when it was made. I have been able to dig up some additional research on this fine plane, and hope to shed some more light into the dark alleys of the tool's past. At first (at the time of the Brown auction) there had been only three of these planes known, although five or six reproductions were made several years back (and these are easily distinguished from the real McCoy). Two of these originally known examples now reside in the United States, and the remaining example was once in the collection of the Science Museum of London, but has



now been returned to its owner. Since I began my research, two more examples of "Falconer-type" planes have surfaced -- and each of the five is different in significant aspects. I now believe Thomas Falconer was not a planemaker at all, simply a designer who came up with a good idea, received an award for it from the Royal Society, and then let others make planes based on the idea. The idea was never patented, so anyone could have made Falconer-type planes.

The Brown-auction example seems to be the earliest of all, as it has features harder or more expensive to produce than those on the later two and it lacks some features of practical use held by the other two. I believe it to be the actual plane presented to the Royal Society as documented later in this story. Some distinctive features of this plane:

- The nicker is unique to this plane and is missing or nonexistent on the other two examples.
- This plane is rosewood rather than ebony.
- The cutting iron is skewed rather than square.

***Continued on pg. 4***

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**September 9 - CRAFTS Picnic**

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 fifteen dollars for the membership year of July 1 through June 30. Membership fees may be sent to the Treasurer: John Whelan, 38 Colony Court, Murray Hill, NJ 07974 (write check payable to Crafts of New Jersey).

CRAFTS of NJ meets at the HOST Masonic Lodge, High Bridge. Take I-78 to Route 31 exit at Clinton. Go north on Rte. 31 two miles to second traffic light at the High Bridge exit. Turn right and go about half a mile to Dennis Ave. Turn left, then straight to the Masonic Lodge (on the left). Tailgate sales in the parking lot begin at 12 P.M.; meeting starts at 1 P.M.

***The TOOL SHED***
Published five times a year for members of CRAFTS of New Jersey. Editor: Bob Garay, 147 Dupont Ave, Hopatcong, NJ 07843 takeadip@optonline.net
Articles, especially about early tools and trades, are encouraged and may be sent to the Editor. If you have an idea for an article please contact the editor and assistance can be given to help write it.

CRAFTS 2001 Calendar of Events

Sept. 9 – CRAFTS picnic
Nov. 4 – CRAFTS meeting, High Bridge, N.J.
Feb. 3 – CRAFTS meeting, High Bridge, N.J.

**CRAFTS Website**
**http://craftsofnj.org**

**Is this your last TOOL SHED?**
It is if your mailing label says,
"Expires June 2001"
Send dues to Jack Whelan, see above.

# PRESIDENTS CORNER

First off, let me thank the slate committee headed by Herb Kean for putting together the candidates for the annual election. And of course, thank you members for your vote of support, and the continued support of the CRAFTS board. The past year has put us in good financial shape. With the help of Herb Kean, the Micalizzi brothers, and the auction committee headed by Greg Welsh, we have established the sinking fund for our apprentice program. This fall the Micalizzi fund will sponsor a judged woodworker's competition. High school students will follow the footsteps of Dominic Micalizzi as they design and build woodworking planes to win prizes.

The June meeting introduced us to Adam Howard, the resident blacksmith from the Clinton Historical Village. Adam gave a most interesting talk and demonstration. It was a pleasant surprise to more than a few of us who thought this was a rather simple craft. Adam is doing great things at the museum, expanding the scope of the shop and teaching blacksmithing. It would be worth your while to stop by and see him. Can you believe he bought a drop hammer forge that weighed over a 1,000 pounds on E-bay!

The end of summer is upon us and that means it is time for our annual CRAFTS picnic. Kenny Vliet has once again arranged to have our event at the beautiful and spacious Brady Camp. You should have received your invitation and sent your money in by now. I just received from Lie-Nielsen two of the display prizes that will be awarded. A No.140 skew block plane and a small chisel plane similar to a Stanley No.62. Both are made in bronze. You really ought to think about setting up a display and try to win one of these beautiful and functional tools. The picnic is a great way to introduce a friend to Crafts, so please consider bringing a guest. Please also remember that only members in good standing are permitted to come and sell tools at the huge tailgate sale. As I write this I am still working on the speaker for our November meeting. See you all at the Brady Camp.

Welcome new members. John Clark, Cuddlebackville, NY; Joshua Clark, Stamford, CT; Gwyneth Eils, Schnecksville, PA; Ron Huebner, Argyle, TX; Greg & Suzanne Spencer, Silverdale, PA, and Cam Troilo, Yardley, PA.

***Joe***

# MEET YOUR DEALER
# SCOTTY CARTER – FINE TOOLS

Scotty Carter started in antiques with her first shop in 1958 at Hollis, New Hampshire just west of Nashua. Her husband, Wynn had a love for tools and they included this with their antique business. Back then there were plenty of farms and village shops that would call the Carters to clear out the whole shop of tools. Once Wynn set up a whole Cooper's shop in his basement just to get people interested. It wasn't easy to get people interested back then as no one was really into coopering. In 1975 they moved the antique business to Portsmouth, realizing that the location in town would be ideal. At that time, Wynn took many business trips to London, and he was always able to bring back plenty of fine tools for the shop to sell. While there he met tool dealers like Roy Arnold and Phillip Walker, who helped him with information about the London tool market.

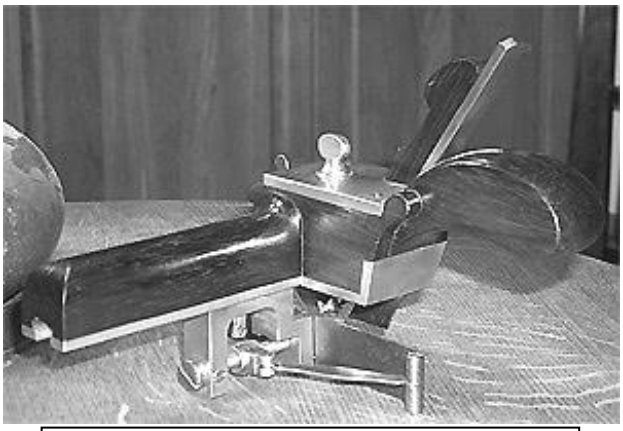
At first Scotty and her husband would ship back a crate of antiques but later realized shipping by container would allow them to get much more, and acquire better deals. This started the legendary Carter sales of olden days. They would send out notices of their recent tool acquisitions to all the dealers and collectors they had met over the years. It would announce their opening sale on a Saturday. Collectors and dealers would come from near by and far away, just for a chance at these great deals by the box load. The Carters would serve coffee and doughnuts before the 9:30 opening of the basement tool-room. As the time got closer to 9:30 people would start to maneuver their way to the doorway that opened to a spiral stairway. They would almost trample each other to see who would be the first one down there. As Scotty says, "there was so much enthusiasm that you couldn't help but enjoy the whole thing."

Things have changed over the years. Her husband passed away a few years back. She still goes to England, but like here, what she finds are that many collections are being broken up and not many un-collected tools are to be found. She has some friends there that she can call and tell them what she is looking for, and they will help her to find certain tools. She still sends out notices about her tool sales, and she still holds them at 9:30 on a Saturday. This way many craftsmen who want the tools as users can also attend. This is one of the ways things have changed. She gets many craftsmen who are looking for the older tools to use. They may spend two hours in the tool room trying to match up a plane to a molding. They say it can save them a lot of time if they can find certain molders. There are so many craftsmen working in this area along the coast where the older houses are. She says it is so satisfying to have them come back looking for more fine tools, as they tell her how well the ones they purchased in the past have worked.

She admits she is not much of a tool user, but likes to use some tools to work on antique picture frames. Over the years Scotty has collected many small planes. She likes the look and feel of these pretty tools. Her showcase by her office is always filled with many finely shaped brass and ivory plumb bobs. Scotty sums up her discussion with me explaining how the people who she has met over the years keep her interested and dealing in fine tools.

*Falconer Plow Plane Continued from pg. 1*

- Much of the hardware is handcrafted and fitted in a manner that suggests one-of-a-kind production.
- The depth stop interferes with the nicker when in its lowermost position. This error would be corrected in production models.
- There is no locking screw on the adjustment that changes the fence radius. The other two examples have this screw.

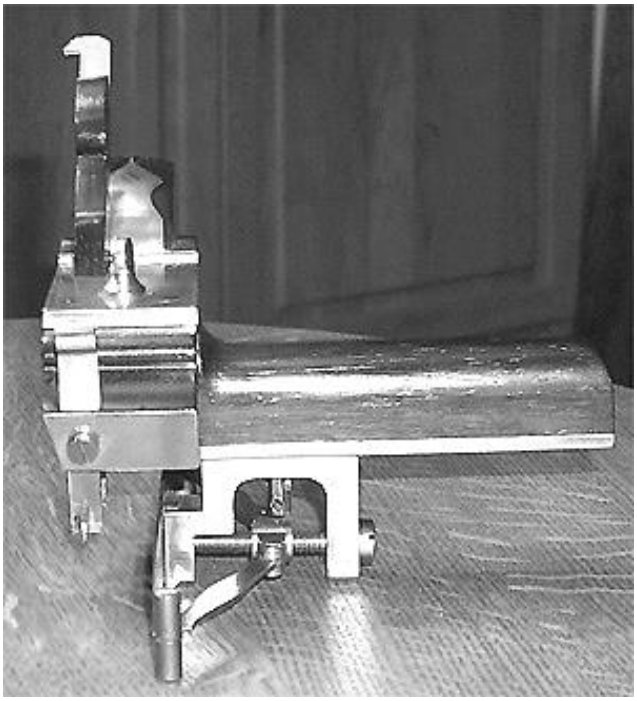


Back left side of Falconer plough plane

It is known that Thomas Falconer won the Silver Medal for his plane design from the Royal Society of Arts in 1846. His address is recorded as 10 Park Street, Limehouse. Limehouse is an area in the East End of London, near the West India docks. Limehouse was one of the main centers in London for shipbuilding in the 18th and early 19th centuries. It is believed that Mr. Falconer was a military man of some sort, a machinist and designer by hobby, and not a planemaker (no other records of him in the usual planemaker references are found). I prefer to believe he was involved with the shipbuilding industry due to his address, perhaps in the Royal Navy. However, I have not been able to confirm his actual profession.

The award granted to him by the Society of Arts was for the flexible steel fence and hollow-faced iron that combined to act as both a nicker and a cutting iron. (Falconer did not invent the circular plough plane; there are many earlier examples known. It is the adjustable fence which sets his plane apart from these, as each of the earlier planes was made to produce just one cut radius.)

The Royal Society of Arts was founded in 1754 by William Shipley with the mission to: "*...embolden enterprise, to enlarge science, to refine art, to improve our manufactures and to extend our commerce...*" Fifty million trees were planted in an awards effort run by the RSA from 1758 to 1821 - many of today's British



Front view of Falconer plough plane

woods are the direct result. The Great Exhibition of 1851 was initiated by the RSA and its President, Prince Albert. The British system of national school examinations was first launched by the RSA in 1856. It is still active today.

The minutes of the Royal Society's Committee of Mechanics from the fifth of March, 1846 are transcribed below:

> *Charles Holtzapffel, Esq. in the Chair. Present: Messrs. Woods, Newton, Varley*
>
> *... took into consideration a communication on an Improved Circular Plough by Mr. Thomas Falconer of 10 Park Street, Limehouse* ***Resolved. The Candidates have retired, it was resolved that Mr. Falconer's Plough is a new, very ingenious and useful instrument. It is resolved to recommend to the Society to present the Silver Medal and Five Pounds to Mr. Falconer on condition of his leaving one of his instruments with the Society****."*

Upon hearing of his award, Mr. Falconer wrote back to the Society in the letter dated 6 April 1846:

> *"As requested by your letter of the 19 March I attended at the Hall of the institution on the Wednesday evening following but at that time I had no opportunity of expressing personally my gratification for the premium your Committee deemed to award me. I therefore think it requisite thus to express with feeling of satisfaction my thanks - and my willingness to leave the improved Circular Plough in the Society's hands. I remain Sir, your Obedient Servant, Thomas Falconer."*

Note that Charles Holtzapffel of the famous London tool maker was chairing the Society at the time, and also made further reference to this plane in Volume II of his famous epic work "Turning and Mechanical Manipulation" (published 1875). Following a discussion of banding planes (planes related to the marking gauge, intended for cutting out grooves in circular work as in the rounded corners of piano-fortes and similar objects), Mr. Holtzapffel writes:

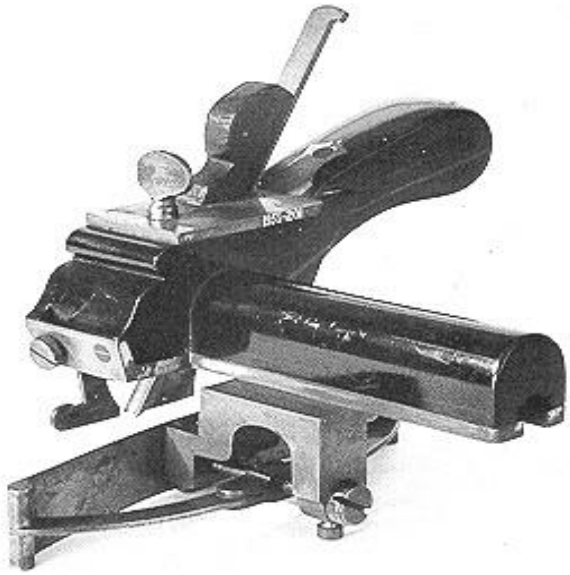
> "Mr. Falconer's plough, rewarded by the Society of Arts in the Session 1846, presents many points of improvement on the banding plane by Mr. Onwin, described in the text. The principles of the plough, *fig. 335, page 486*, are nearly followed, but instead of a variety of fences being used some concave others convex, the new instrument has a flexible steel fence attached to the plough by two stays which are jointed to the ends of the elastic fence. Whilst to the central part of the same is fitted a screw adjustment, so that the one fence may be made to assume any required curvature, either convex or concave and of course the right line also. The widths of the grooves are determined as usual by those of the cutters, which are provided with double pointed scorers or nickers, for cutting through such of the fibers of the work as lie transversely, and would otherwise be torn up. The entire construction of this circular plough is very judicious and complete, and the tool may be considered as greatly improved on those previously used for this purpose."

High praise indeed from so revered and skilled a toolmaker as Mr. Holtzapffel! Note the reference to the nickers, which would indicate that the current Falconer is the prototypical example, as it is the only one with nickers! The only other reference I could find to Falconer's plane was in R. A. Salaman's "Dictionary of Woodworking Tools", published in 1975. Mr. Salaman recounts Holtzapffel's description, and goes on to describe the Science Museum example in greater detail:

> "The pistol-shaped handle is solid with the ebony stock and an ebony stem carrying the movable fence. The plate or skate has a flat sole with the section in front of the iron adjustable in the direction of its length. The plough iron or cutter is hollow-ground on the face, making the action similar to that of a double nicker or spur; it also has the usual V-groove on the back to keep it in position on the plate. The fence is a flexible steel strip and can be adjusted to work straight, concave, or convex. For use on circular work such as hand-railing and circle-on-circle joinery."

Also, now you can begin to see the genius of Mr. Falconer and the impact his invention would have on coopering and other forms of circular woodworking. It was the flexible steel fence of his plane that won the Society award for him! Leonard Bailey's American patent of March 3, 1871 (for a flexible steel sole) would seem to have an English precedent 25 years earlier! It is from Bailey's patent that all the subsequent American flexible sole planes are derived.

In trying to track the provenience of the Falconer plough, much of the history is lost. Once out of Mr. Falconer's hands, the plane disappeared for 150 years. Then in 1996 it surfaced in England and Mr. Don Rich, a tool collector from Reeders, Pennsylvania purchased it. Don had a love affair with the plow plane, and especially loved coachmaker's plows. He began research on the plane but unfortunately passed away before completing his research. I had the benefit of some of his research in preparing this article, as well as the remembrances of Herb Kean, another long-time collector who was a friend of Don's and had examined the plane closely. From both of these men I got the feeling of a fascination with this plane, its mysterious history, and its historical value. I too share this fascination, and I believe it is one of the most significant tools I have seen.



One of the other two known examples, previously at the Science Museum in London. Note the absence of a nicker and the locking screw underneath.

# YOUR COUNTRY AUCTIONEER
# RICHARD CRANE

It was a few years ago that I found out about the Crane Auction in Hillsboro, New Hampshire. I had been going to New Hampshire for family vacations for many years and was always excited about the antique tools that I would find. When I attended my first Crane auction I arrived at seven o'clock Saturday morning, plenty of time to pick up some fine treasures in the swap meet held outside. Inside there were antique tools I had only seen in books before. Richard Crane started the auction promptly with a New Hampshire country story and from that point on the action began. I was able to get a few tools from the auction but left more rewarded with the experience of attending one of his tool events. This past July Richard Crane agreed to a short interview for the Crafts Toolshed.

***[Editor]*** How long have you been involved with tool auctioneering?
***[Crane]*** I have worked as a tool auctioneer for over thirty-two years. I have mostly been at Hillsboro, New Hampshire but also have auctioned in Maine, Vermont, and Connecticut. I auctioned the Early American Industries fiftieth anniversary auction. I always wanted to be an auctioneer, and when the time became right in life I went to the Greene Auction College in Mason City, Iowa. When I came back I thought about what was I going to sell. I looked around for a month or so before I decided I knew enough about tools and decided that's what I would work with.

***[Editor]*** Were you the first tool auctioneer?
***[Crane]*** Just about, there was another man by the name of Jack Bittner. Jack was a friend of mine as we went to auction school together and graduated in the same class. He started selling in Vermont, and I was selling in New Hampshire. When we first started auctioning tools some people were skeptical of us. There were some people Jack could work with and others I could work with. When we found a collection we would discuss who should take it according to the personality of the collector. Now-a-days there would probably be fifty people head-to-head even if there were only two planes in the collection.

***[Editor]*** How did you learn about tools?
***[Crane]*** My great-grandfather had a nice shop on the farm and I grew up there as a kid picking up and playing in the shavings. I got to do some of the work with him and learned woodworking. In high school I took some shop courses and learned about tools there also. I then went to the University of New Hampshire and worked in the shop of the Thompson School two-year program. After working there for a year, they figured I knew enough so I became sort of a teacher's assistant in the shop. As I grew up, there were nine children in my family and all of them ended up farming or marrying a farmer. We would get together when someone needed a roof put on and we would all help. We would all go from farm to farm doing that type of work and later putting in plumbing and electrical. I also worked with a carpenter on weekends down in Massachusetts when I was going to college. He would come and pick me up, and I would work framing houses and so forth earning cash to get through college.

***[Editor]*** What did you major in college?
***[Crane]*** In college I ended up with a degree of all things in salesmanship. You see I was looking forward to this auctioneering back then. I ended up with a second degree in Soil and Water Conservation. When I first got out, I got a job with the Federal Government. I was with that for thirty years.

Richard Crane calling for bids on great tools.

***[Editor]*** What was your early experiences finding tools.
***[Crane]*** They were all over the place. I can remember going into houses where they would take the iron out of the wooden planes as they burned them for firewood. The women loved them as they made a real hot fire when canning time came. We would often find whole carpenter's toolboxes with all their woodworking tools still intact. We would sell them all together with the toolbox included. We often would go in and clean out complete shops of all their tools. Tools sure were plentiful back in those days.

***[Editor]*** Are you a collector of tools or anything else?
***[Crane]*** I used tools; I didn't collect them. I always felt that an auctioneer could not be a collector and an auctioneer both. Because, if I had anything real good, I would want to add it in my collection. You know I didn't have to collect. I

had other people's collections to go through and categorize, look at and enjoy. So I probably looked at and handled more tools then many serious collectors. I was just happy that I had the chance to handle so many fine tools. I was pleased to get so much money for the consignor and really happy for the one who was able to add it to his collection.

***[Editor]*** Are there any tool collectors who were special to you?
***[Crane]*** One that comes to mind is Ken Roberts. He came to my early auctions and was a very good supporter. I remember he came to my very first tool auction up there at the barnyard. I remember him saying "God Dick, I don't know what's wrong with these people. Why don't they take hold and bid more." You see, at that point they were not used to going to an auction only for tools and bidding amongst themselves. We would get a tool and no one would open up a bid on it. After a while, if I didn't get a bid right away I would just put it in a pile that would have filled a pickup truck. At the end of the auction I ended up selling the whole pile for just twenty-five dollars. I bet there is a good many of those people around today who wished they bought that pile. My good friend Fred Courser, who has passed away, said, "You just keep on going Dick, and at the end you sell them all." He said, "By golly, they'll come in on the next one." It wasn't long before we had more people than you could have thought of up there at that barn. We really packed them in. They used to come up there the night before an auction and have a get-together. Some of those July gatherings were real barnburners. It sure was a special place.

***[Editor]*** How has tool collecting changed?
***[Crane]*** Well when we started to sell we had a bigger supply of tools. Most of the people back then were older people. The sales were for people sixty-five and up. I suppose they retired and were looking for something to do and started collecting tools, which is great. When we started in the sales there were quite a group of people who were collecting tools, and they were serious collectors. They would get together and they might spend twenty minutes talking and looking at one tool. They were different; they bought tools to collect them and research their use and history. Now we have the tool collector-dealer. If he gets a good piece at the right price he may collect it or resell it for a profit. There weren't as many dealers in it just for the money as there are now. Back then they were tool collectors who researched the tools and would write about them and share their knowledge. It was a great thing they did because it helped the tool collector. As the supply of good tools get smaller I see today's collectors at tool flea markets really get into it. That's why I like to get here early before the auction; you can see them swarming in on a truckload as it pulls in. I can stand back and watch to see who the serious collectors are and who is interested in what kind of tools. You know it's a big game today.

***[Editor]*** Why do you think other areas of antiques seem to get more value?
***[Crane]*** I think most of the boys who are into tools, (collecting tools that is), know what the value of a dollar is. Don't get me wrong, others do to, but the tool boys have worked with their hands and a lot of them have been in construction or woodworking and those dollars come harder. Tool collecting has always attracted the common person who has a special fondness for these tools. It's this kind of person that tools have usually attracted. The people who spend big money on other antiques have no affection for antique tools. I think that has a lot to do with it.
***[Editor]*** What is it with the derby hat and red suspenders?
***[Crane]*** Well I'll tell you, it's like this. The suspenders came about when I was going to have a sale in Bow, New Hampshire. At the time my father was sick and in the hospital. I went over to see him the day before the sale and visited with him. My father never was able to come to one of my auctions because of being sick. My mother was there and I told them about the sale. After we talked a while he said to my mother, "I want you to go to the store and get Richard a pair of red suspenders. He said you know when he's pitching hay his pants were always falling down. I keep thinking of him up in front of an audience selling something holding it way up and down go his britches." So she went out and got a pair of red suspenders and I put them on. They are a tribute to my father.

Now the derby hat came about when I sold my first auction at the farm. We sold some things to get going that belonged in the family. This box came out that my mother's father had. His name was Steven Mitchell and he was a friend of Grover Cleveland. Now Grover Cleveland got to be president. Out of this box came the hat that he had worn to Grover Cleveland's inaugural ball. So I put it on my head foolishly and started talking about it. It fit well so I sold the box by itself for $150. A few days later I got a letter from a lawyer who was there from New York City, and he said he thought I ought to keep the hat as a symbol. He thought it looked good on me. That's probably the only thing I ever collected over the years.

Tool tailgating at the July auction. Richard likes to stand back and watch the interaction between buyers and dealers.

# A TRUE STANLEY COLLECTOR
## BILL HERMANEK

Tool collecting started for me when I was about to get married and my future wife wanted a coffee table. I said I would make one and proceeded to take out all of my power tools and build a trestle style coffee table. When I finished the table all my friends and family thought it was great. Yet I wondered how someone one hundred years ago might have made one. I didn't have a clue what hand tools would be needed. I went to the bookstore to see if I could find a book on old tools that would give me insight of what early craftsmen would have used. There was a very elementary book on old hand tools and this sparked my interest. I marveled at these unique wood planes, levels and braces. I was thinking that these might be interesting to collect since probably nobody else wants these things. (Foolish me!)

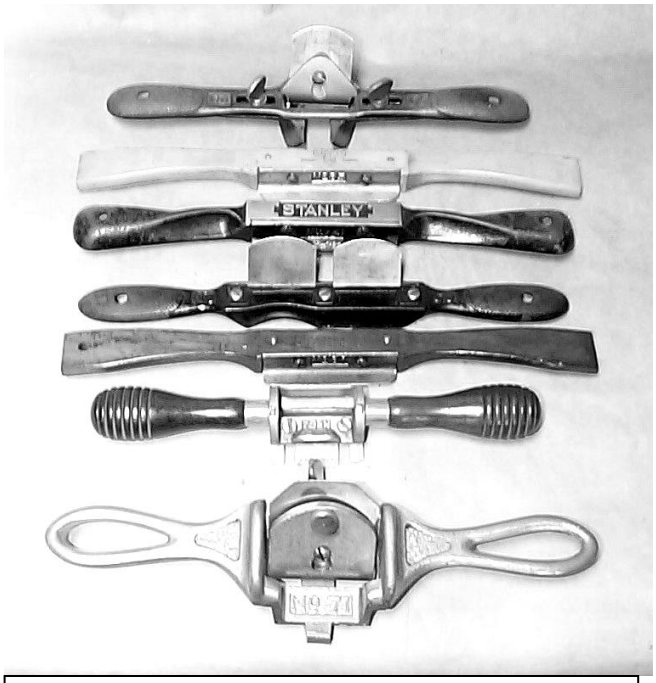
Bill enjoys sitting amongst his collection.

I scoped out Long Island and found the Copiague Flea Market, which was held every Sunday. Every week I went down there and literally brought home boxes of tools. After awhile I was known as the "tool guy" by most vendors and they started holding tools for me. I bought up everything I could afford. One day by chance I was talking with a vendor and she said do you know Sam? Just then he was walking down the aisle and she introduced me to Sam Merin. He asked me how long I had collected and if I wanted to join the "tool club"? I said, "What tool club, you mean other people collect this stuff?" He said "We have about sixty of us in the club here in Long Island." Well I went to the first meeting and they had a show-and-tell before each meeting. It was really a bragging table of what you picked up in the last month or so. I couldn't believe my eyes, Ultimatum braces, rosewood levels, planes I had never seen before, primitives and tools from all the various trades. Now I was really hooked.

I decided to collect about fifty tools and that would be a sufficient representation of old tools. Well that quickly doubled to one hundred tools. Then I said OK two hundred and I will stop there and that will be enough. Well that number came and went and I shot for five hundred. When I hit that number I was so engrossed in antique tools I decided to stop limiting and just collect. The collection now hovers around two thousand tools.

Bill has a fondness for his little Victor pocket planes. His favorite is the very rare #12 ¼ pictured above at the bottom. It is nickel-plated and in new condition. The #12 ½ pictured in the center is japanned with nickel trim on the two knobs. The #12 on top is all japanned, with no nickel.

Bill's first inclination that Stanley was his destiny was when he first saw the Millers patent plow plane. The Stanley #42 is his favorite plane because of its beautiful looks.




Bill has all of the unique Stanley spokeshaves. Pictured at the top is a #65 adjustable chamfering shave. Second is the #84 boxwood razor edge shave. Third down is his #76 cast iron razor edge shave. Next is the #60 hollow and flat double cutter shave. Next the #81 razor edge shave is similar to the other two razor edge shaves but this one is made of beautiful rosewood. Second from the bottom is the #67 universal shave with interchangeable handles to work in tight spots. It also has two different bottoms for flat, concave or convex work. Lastly on the bottom is the #71 all brass rabbet shave with often missing fence.

About nine years ago I attended a Bud Brown auction where I saw a gorgeous #42 gunmetal Stanley plane. I said to my wife that I wanted it but didn't have the $1200 it would go for at the time. Being understanding as she is, and having a lot more common sense, she said "If that's what you really want why don't you specialize." I thought about it for a while and thought Stanley was my destiny. I'm an engineer by trade and I guess I like the methodical means of collecting and decided I like this number thing. The decision was made to sell all my machinist tools, wood planes, braces, levels, etc that weren't Stanley. Now I collect everything with the Stanley logo on it. It is the best choice I ever made in collecting since Stanley is still the hottest thing on the antique market. I paired up with Patrick Leach and we did a video on Stanley planes by the numbers. I was even featured in an article by the New York Times. I attend most of the major events and set up a dealer's table to help support my collection. I was vice president of the Early

Here are a few of the many unique Stanley gauges collected. From left pictured is a #197 with rosewood head. It has pins on one end and a roller cutter on the other. The #198 next to it is the same except it has two marking rods. Next is the very rare #90 Williams Patent combo gauge. It has a rosewood head and a brass rod. The second from right is a #264 ½ gauge. On right is a #92 butt & rabbet gauge with a brass rod and rosewood head. On the bottom are two variations of the #60 gauge. The one with a brass slide is a #60 ½ gauge.

As you can see Bill collects everything Stanley. Some of the uncommon items are a basketball, coffee mugs, watches and Stanley race car models.

Trades and Crafts and president for twelve years of the Long Island Tool Collectors Association.

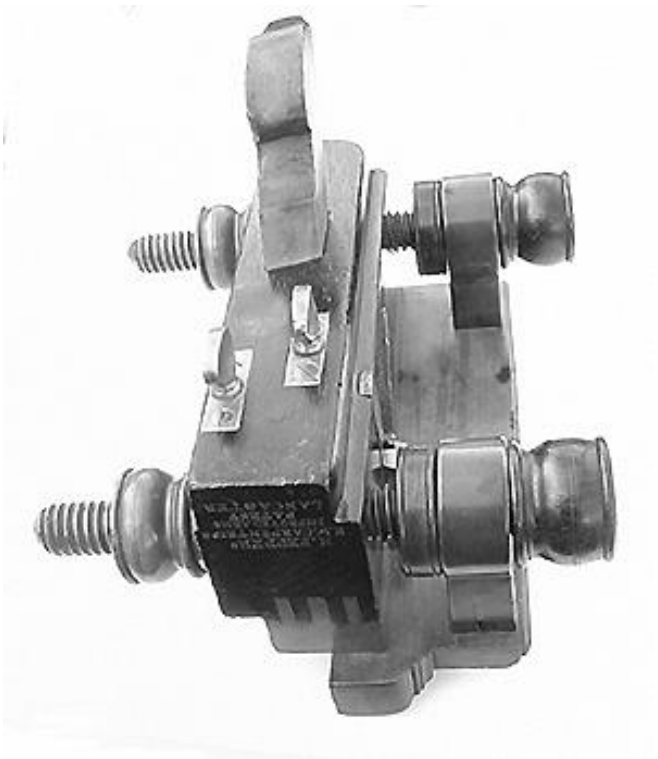
My wife thinks I should get rid of my collection, and she's probably right but it's hard to let go since it took over twenty years to build the collection to this size and depth. In the last few years I have got interested in cars, especially Corvettes. I presently have three that we have restored along with a collection of six hundred die cast cars. The best part about collecting is the people I have met over the years. It sure has been a lot of fun.

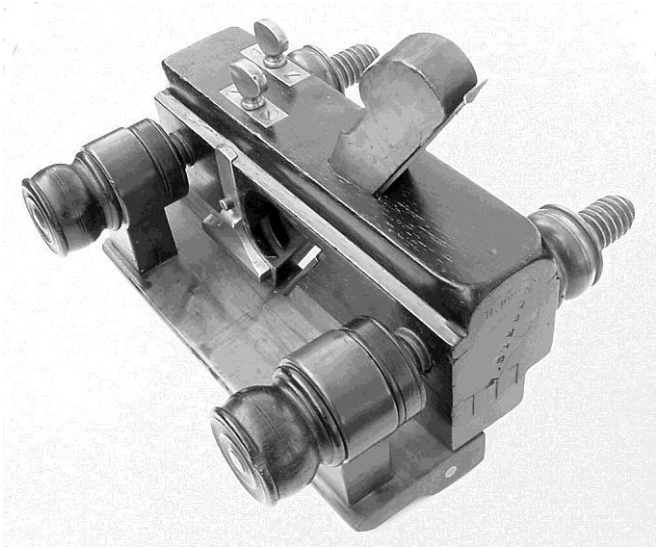
# MY FAVORITE TOOL
## By Chuck Granick

Around ten or so years ago, I received a phone call from what was to become one of the tool community's most respected dealers. He had just come across an unusual tool, and was calling to ask if I had heard of another like it. The tool he described was an E.W.Carpenter, Lancaster patent arm plane. While not common, it is certainly rare. However, what made this plane different was that the patent mechanism was attached to a double fillister plane, which combined a sash fillister and a moving fillister into one plane. The plane had two brass thumbscrew depth stop mechanisms.

If this were not enough, all these features were on a rosewood body with full width finger jointed boxwood boxing. The fence was boxwood, as was the oversize wedge, arms, and outboard nuts. The inboard nuts and washers were rosewood.

Needless to say I was interested. The dealer quickly shipped out the piece for my inspection. I tried not to be overly optimistic, as any collector will agree that very rarely is someone else's description of a piece anywhere near as good as the one you have created in your own mind's eye.





Fortunately, the actual piece did not disappoint me in any way. As was typical of all of Carpenter's work the proportions were oversized. That coupled with the outrageousness of the contrasting finger joints made for a killer piece, which I had to have.

A quick call back to the dealer resulted in the feared response – a high asking price by the standards of the day. I immediately called my two favorite tool confidants for their opinions. Both Joe Hauck and Herb Kean said to go for it. Herb actually surprised me, as he was historically "frugal". Of course it wasn't their money! While both have recently taken full credit for their good judgement in convincing me to buy the plane, there was never any doubt in my mind the piece would be mine.

An interesting side note that has proven to be icing on the cake is that the plane is marked with a "W. STEERE" owner's stamp. There was a W. Steere who was a West Virginia planemaker that utilized a similar design to Carpenter's split blade patent in his planes. Perhaps it was that W. Steere who owned this plane.

In my twenty-five years of tool collecting, I have been fortunate in acquiring a number of "sparklers". For me though, my Carpenter has it all: a great maker, unique design, exotic materials, and pizzazz!

# THE WAY IT WAS

Old collectors will get a kick out of this stroll down memory lane. New collectors will shake their heads and roll their eyes, and (I hope), give out a chuckle or two. Yes, tool collecting has changed, but so has everything else in life. This article is more about the change in the people who collect tools, namely Doris and I. I'm sure that there are others like us. Lets go back a few years, (more like 25). Put your time-machine cap on and try to imagine the days when there was no horn blowing if you had a millisecond delay at a traffic light. Picture us in our Chevy wagon on our way up to the "wilds" of New England to get the third most important thing in life. (My slogan was different than the Marines. It was: FAMILY, COUNTRY, and TOOLS.)

In those days, it was very effective to have a string of "pickers". As pickers are practically extinct today, some of the new collectors might not recognize the term. A picker was a semi-knowledgeable person who went to all the small country auctions, where all kinds of treasures could be gleaned at a mere pittance. If you had a good relationship with the picker, he would save all this stuff until you came by, and then unload it all in one lot. A "good relationship" meant that you didn't whine about some of his stupid purchases, but merely plunked down the money that he asked for without a lot of hemming and hawing. This was not as painful as it might appear. His price was always twice what he paid for the lot, and usually one or two good pieces covered it. At the first opportunity, you just trashed the meaningless stuff, rather than take up precious space in the car. It seems unbelievable today, but we came back from those trips with the car bottoming on the springs and the back window completely blocked.

Our travel program was a lot different then, than it is now. We never made reservations, because we never knew how long we were going to be at each picker. We didn't start looking for a motel until after dinner, when there weren't many really nice places left. Expensive places to stay (or eat) were pretty much out of the program. That never bothered me, but as I look back now, I realize it must not have been too exciting for Doris. But she was a real trooper about it, (at least for the first few years).

One trip still stands out in my mind. It was in the dead of winter, and we just about got into a motel in White River Junction, Vermont. The snow was starting to come down, but the roads were reasonably clear at the time. I had not seen the last picker on the schedule for the day, so right after supper I gave him a call. Yep, he would be home that evening. Doris would have no part of driving in a snowstorm to see someone who MIGHT have a worthwhile tool or two.

So, off I went by myself, to finalize the day. I felt good about the pickins that day, as the back of the wagon was almost filled. I sing a lot, (not very well), and I was at the top of my voice as I moved along through that blinding snow. Without the least warning, my rear window exploded! And I mean exploded. I was sure it was some lunatic

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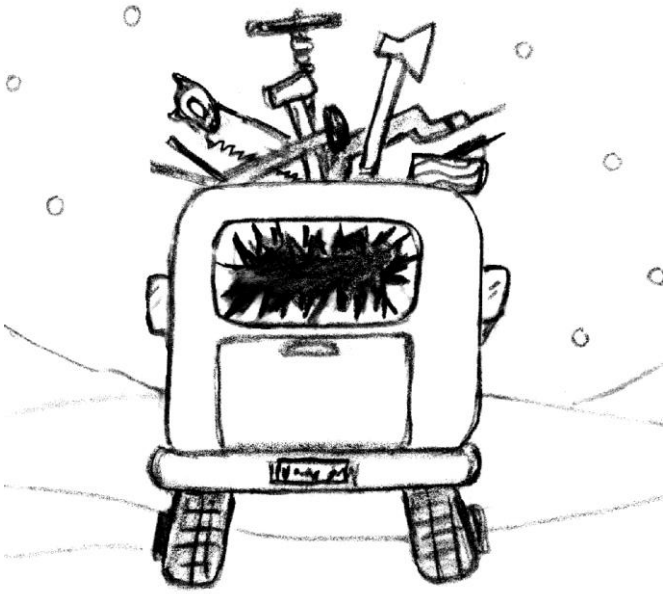


***Doris, you won't believe what happened!***

***Keen Kuttin's continued***

with a shotgun, so I sped away. Only when I was "safe" did I pull over to assess the damages. There was nothing left of the window, but oddly enough there was very little glass inside the wagon. A shotgun blast would have certainly put a ton of glass inside. (Only later did I learn that General Motors was having trouble with the contact of the rear defroster with the hatchback window.) The contact must have heated up and the below-zero temperature did the rest. I journeyed on to my destination, without much spirit, as I could picture the problem getting home. The picker and I taped cardboard to the window. It helped, but I was concerned that someone could easily help themselves to my precious cargo when I parked at the motel. Doris said that no one in their right mind would steal "that junk". But I lugged most of it upstairs in our room anyway. You can imagine what that small room looked like with boxes of stuff everywhere.

The next day I had a sheet of plastic temporarily installed in the window. (GM replaced it properly later). We had one more day of stops. Although Doris was ready to call it quits, I convinced her to bundle up, as the plastic didn't fit too well and the heater was struggling to keep the icicles off our noses. Naturally, I had to tell each person, wherever we stopped, the story of the exploding window. Maybe they felt sorry for me, or maybe it was my lucky day, as I had one of the best tooling days that I can remember.

We bounded in and out of the car in those days, not wanting to waste a moment. Today, it's a project just getting out of the car. And I have to have someone carry the boxes if they are too heavy. The only saving grace is that I no longer buy bulky iron, and getting boxes of stuff really doesn't happen that often. Today we call ahead for reservation, both for the motel and for dinner. We stay at some very nice places and eat at some excellent restaurants. But all the pickers are gone, and very few shops handle tools anymore. It's just not the same. But I'll never forget THE WAY IT WAS.

# TOOL EVENTS

Sept. 7-8 Live Free or Die Auction, Auctions start at 9:31AM Fri. & Sat. Holiday Inn, Nashua NH, Martin Donnelly Tools, www.mjdtools.com/auction, or call - (800) 869-0695

Sept. 7-9 Hay Creek Fall Festival – Geigertown, PA. Joanna Furnace, Gates open at 7:00AM, main attractions are from 10 AM – 5 PM, Over 150 judged traditional and home crafts demonstrations, antique car/tractor shows, Civil War reenactments & displays, and more.

Sept. 9 CRAFTS picnic, Lamington, NJ, tool tailgating starts at 8AM, catered lunch at noon. Judged tool displays with prizes. Call Ken Vliet at (610) 837-5933

Sept. 9 Fine Tool Journal Absentee Auction, All bids must be in by Sept 8th. You can view listing and bid at www.finetoolj.com or call, (800) 248-4831

Sept. 25 – Oct. 8 EAIA 2001 Tool Tour, England & Scotland.

Sept. 27 Tony Murland Auction, Needham Mkt. UK

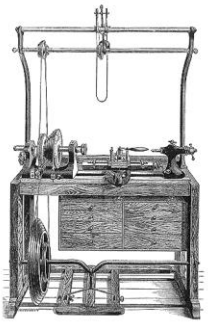
Sept. 29 David Stanley Int'l Auction, UK

Oct. 19-20 Brown's Sale & Auction, Harrisburg, PA Description: Dealer Sale will be held on Friday starting at 1:00PM. The 19th International Antique Tool Auction held Sat. is one of the finest line-ups we have had the pleasure of offering for your consideration. A total of 816 lots will include everything from good user tools to the highest quality collectible tools. Color catalog available, See web page: www.FineToolJ.com

Nov. 10 Spicers Auction, N. Kingston, RI

Nov. 17 Mercer Museum Tool Day, come see exceptional tool displays by CRAFTS members. Hands on exhibits for adults and children. Tour the Mercer tool museum.

**Union Hill Antique Tools**



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