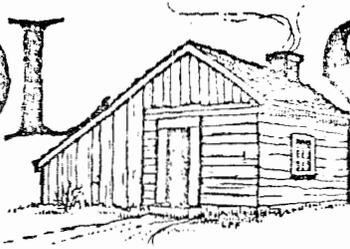


# The TOOL SHED

Vol. 1, No. 2



Apr. 1978

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## NEXT MEETING ON JUNE 4th

The next meeting of CRAFTS will be held on Sunday, June 4, from 2:00 to 5:00 p. m., at the Jeremiah Field Homestead, 260 River Road (Rte. #18), Piscataway. This will be the last meeting of the current year, and we will not meet again until next September.

The program for the afternoon will feature a talk by CRAFTSman Alexander Farnham on "New Jersey Tools." Fred Shippey will preside and discussion will follow Farnham's talk.

Harry O'Neill will again take over the "Whatsit?" session. Because of the popularity of this part of the program, we ask that members bring no more than one item for identification.

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

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## NOTES ON THE NIB by C. Carroll Palmer

The "nib" seen on the upper tip of old handsaw blades is a gun-sight-like projection that has long intrigued collectors. After forty years of collecting tools and talking with woodworkers, I have concluded that the nib had a purpose other than decoration. (Ed. Note: Eric Sloane refers to the nib as an "ornament"; R.A. Salaman says it "may be a surviving vestige of decorative features.")

One old carpenter told me that his "pappy" had taught him to turn his saw blade over when crosscutting or ripping hard wood. Placed at the edge of the wood, the nib would make a starting nick when the saw handle was rapped with the heel of the hand. If the saw teeth were coarse, this procedure would save the guiding thumb and fingers from laceration when the blade bounced while starting the cut with the sharp teeth. This

explanation is also given in the 1970 EAIA Chronicle, pages 31, 34, and 35.

A carpenter uncle of mine used to file three teeth, including the nib, into the upper edge of his saw blade. When the saw was reversed in the cut, these teeth were used to cut off hidden nails that were embedded in the wood.

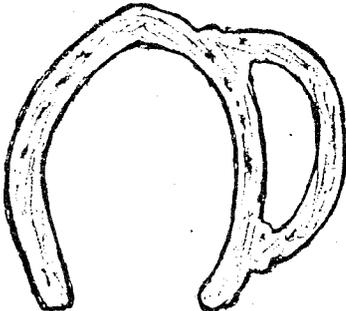
My carpenter grandfather made a slotted stick equal to the length of his saw blade, and he bored small holes through each end. He then used the stick as a sheath, tied over the teeth and knotted over the nib at one end and to the handle at the other end. This provided protection when he placed the saw in his tool carrier or his tool box.

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## THE NEW JERSEY MUD-SHOE

The art of shoeing horses goes back some 2500 years, and over that span of time a great variety of types and styles of shoes have evolved. Until about forty years ago, one of the most unusual types of horseshoe ever developed was widely used here in New Jersey. Although rare today, an occasional specimen can still be found.

Known as the mud-shoe, this curious product of the farrier's trade was worn by horses working in the salt-hay meadows, especially along the bays of Ocean County. In appearance it is like an ordinary horseshoe with a heavy iron loop attached



to the side, making it a kind of shoe-and-a-half, and it worked like a snow shoe, keeping the animal from sinking into the mud or becoming mired in boggy ground. Whether the mud-shoe was unique to New Jersey is an open question, but there is some evidence that it originated in the state.

In his excellent little book, Pages from the Past of Rural New Jersey (1949), Robert J. Sim relates the story given him by an elderly blacksmith who credited one Charles Mott with the invention of the mud-shoe. Mott, who harvested salt hay, was apparently dissatisfied with the "mud-boots" traditionally used on

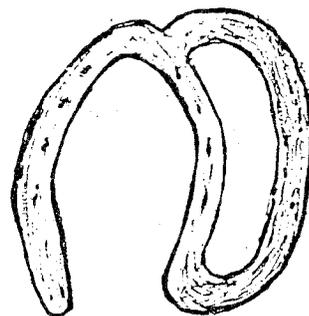
horses working in the meadows. The boots, variously made of leather, wood and even iron, were temporary affairs, strapped or clamped to the horse's rear hoofs. Mott obviously wanted something permanent--a shoe nailed directly to the hoof.

Sometime around 1900, Mott asked Bob Webster and George Bishop, who ran a blacksmith shop in Tuckerton, to make him a pair of shoes with loops welded to the outside curve, which would serve the same purpose as mud-boots. After some experimenting, it was found that the loops had to be bent upward slightly so they would not interfere with the horse's normal gait. Once perfected, their popularity spread, and blacksmiths along the shore turned out mud-shoes until tractors replaced horses in the meadows.

Although Sim does not mention it, there is also a story that worn-out mud-shoes were used to hold the bars on pasture gates.

So if you see an old mud-shoe sitting in a box of rusty iron at a flea market, don't turn up your nose and pass it by. It is an unusual bit of New Jerseyana. It is also worth something. Four years ago, Iron Horse Antiques (Catalog #7) had a New Jersey mud-shoe for sale. The price was \$18.00!

rjf



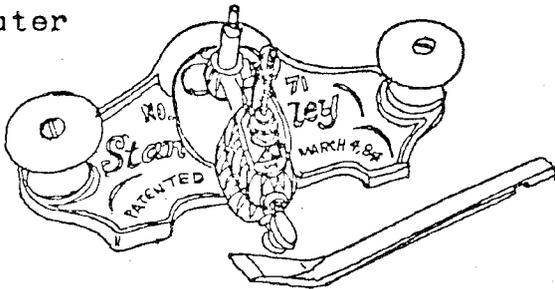
### A PICTORIAL CATALOG

At our last meeting in April, C. Carroll Palmer told us of his classification and indexing system based on tool use. Below we present an extract from the notebooks of

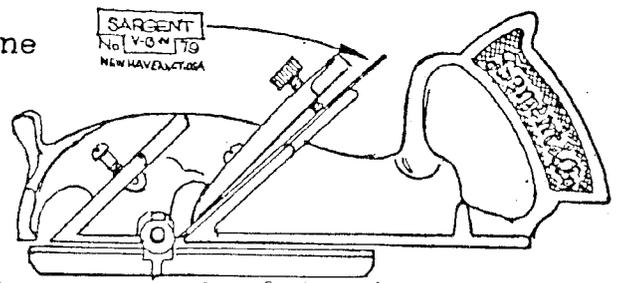
CRAFTSman Jim Aber of Glen Rock to illustrate yet another method of keeping track of a collection. As you can see, Jim is quite adept with a pen and pencil.

Sept. 18, 1976 - Garage Sale, 39-14 Wilson St., Fair Lawn, N.J.

Router



Plane



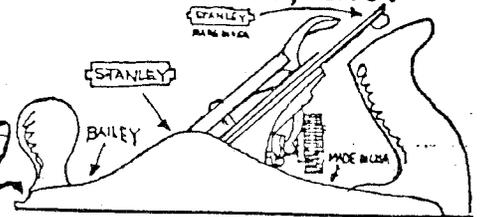
Screw for fence missing.  
Thumbscrew from depth gauge missing.

Sept. 18, 1976 - Garage Sale, 379 Wildwood Ave., Franklin Lakes, N.J.

Winchester Axe



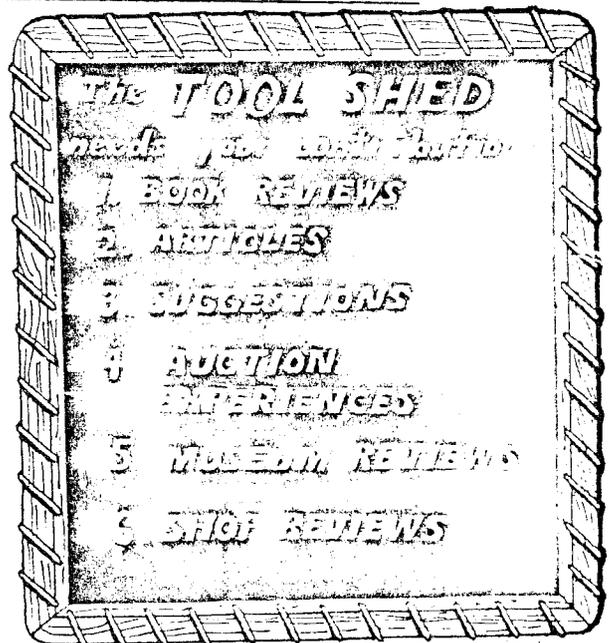
Stanley No. 3 Plane

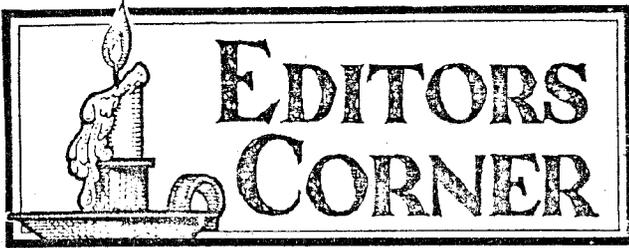


Child's tool Belt and holster

### BRANCHVILLE AUCTION REPORT - by Larry Fuhro

Several CRAFTSMen attended a 391-lot tool auction on April 15 at the old Grange Hall (Castner Estate Sales) in Branchville, Sussex County. The auction featured few unusual or outstanding tools, the bulk of the lots being run-of-the-mill. Prices, however, ran from moderate to high. The tools had once been in the collection of a New York resident and had long been in storage. Most of the items brought in prices ranging from (cont. on page 4, col. 2)





The members of CRAFTS are indebted to Mr. Elliot Sayward and the Early Trades and Crafts Society for the excellent ETC publications that were distributed at our March meeting. It was a thoughtful and generous gesture on the part of the Long Islanders and one that was obviously appreciated by everyone present.

Indeed, the ETC materials created so much interest that at the end of the meeting several of our members expressed the hope that CRAFTS would be able to produce similar works. It is an interesting idea and one that should be considered.

As a new organization CRAFTS is still in the process of determining where it will focus its energies and its interests. A publishing venture of this kind would certainly be a worthwhile project, particularly if we could bring out some booklets on the tools of New Jersey. But it would also be a challenge and would require some work and imagination.

The first step, of course, would be to determine whether anyone is seriously interested in contributing to such an undertaking. If there is, perhaps a committee should be appointed to investigate the possibilities and make some recommendations.

Wouldn't it be nice if one day Elliot Sayward could distribute a CRAFTS publication at a meeting of the Early Trades and Crafts Society.

rjf

#### AUCTION (Cont. from p. 3)

\$7.00 to \$20.00, but it was surprising how many seemingly mediocre tools came in very high.

The top bid item in the auction was a five-foot-long cooper's jointer at \$350. Other top money items were a goose-wing axe, \$275; a double-yoke carriage router, \$87.50; a Scotch-type gentleman's brace, \$77.50; an early Stanley #55 plane, \$77.50; a cooper's scorp, \$67.50; and a cooper's barrel-head lifter, \$62.50. The \$275 bid on the goose-wing axe was surprising in that it had a replacement handle and was over-cleaned (bright and shiny!).



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#### COLLECTORS OF RARE AND FAMILIAR TOOLS SOCIETY OF NEW JERSEY

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The Tool Shed is published six times per year for members of CRAFTS.  
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