

# The TOOL SHED

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## SEPTEMBER 17th MEETING WILL OPEN 1978-79 YEAR

CRAFTS of New Jersey will hold its first meeting of the 1978-79 year on Sunday, September 17, from 2:00 to 5:00 p. m. The meeting will be held at the Jeremiah Field Homestead, 260 River Road (Rte. #18), Piscataway.

The meeting will begin promptly at 2:00. Fred Shippey will again preside over the program, featuring talks by Alice and Warren Peterson on "Types of Pressing Irons" and by Bob DuPont on "Better Mouse Traps." There will be comments and discussion following the speakers.

Harry O'Neill will be in charge of the "Whatsit?" session. The program committee again has asked that members and friends bring only item for identification.

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

The second meeting of the current year will be held on Sunday, November 19, and will feature Carl Bopp speaking on Gage Planes. So mark your Calendar.

### OFFICERS ELECTED

The annual election of officers for CRAFTS of New Jersey was held at the regular meeting on June 4, 1978.

Officers elected, all for one year terms were: Ed Bragg, President; Stephen Zlucky, Vice President; Robert Fridlington, Secretary; and C. Carroll Palmer, Treasurer.

The following members were elected to the Board of Directors. Elected to three-year terms were Fred Shippey, Herb Kean and Harry J. O'Neill. Elected to two-year terms were Larry Fuhro, William Gustafson and R. James Aber. Elected for a term of one year were Robert DuPont, Warren Peterson and Alexander Farnham.

Ms. Marjorie Kler was chosen as CRAFTS representative to East Jersey Olde Towne.

### BRAGG LEAVING

Just as this issue of The Tool Shed was ready for the mail we learned that CRAFTS President Ed Bragg is leaving New Jersey and moving to a farm in New York.

Ed provided the inspiration and effort that led to the founding of CRAFTS last year. Since that time, he and his gracious wife, Ruth, have been mainstays of the Society, and they have been largely responsible for its success. We all owe them our deepest thanks.

We should also add a note of thanks to twelve-year old Tommy Bragg, the youngest of the CRAFTS-men and one of our most industrious workers.

We wish Ed and Ruth our very best in their back-to-the-land venture. They are good friends and we will miss them.

## AN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY LABOR DAY

Doing anything on Labor Day? Why not stay off the roads and join your fellow CRAFTSmen in a demonstration and display of antique tools at East Jersey Olde Towne on Monday, September 4th.

EJOT Curator, Marjorie Kler, has arranged for CRAFTS to staff an "Eighteenth-Century Labor" program at Olde Towne on Labor Day. Static displays and demonstrations of old tools will be presented by the CRAFTSmen as was done at the highly successful July 4th program (See next column).

This will be the first time that East Jersey Olde Towne has been open other than on July 4th, and CRAFTS will provide the only program. So let's give them a good show!

East Jersey Olde Towne is located in Johnson Park on River Road (Rt. 18) in Piscataway, near the Middlesex County Park Headquarters. The program will run from 11:00 am till 2:00 pm, but we should be set up by 10:30 am. If you are interested in participating, call Ed Bragg at (201)356-3830 or Larry Fuhro at (201)241-7829.



## FOURTH OF JULY

CRAFTSmen Ed Bragg, Larry Fuhro, Bill Gustafson, Herb Kean, Harry O'Neill and Carl Sundberg presented a program of tool demonstrations and displays to nearly 2,000 soggy spectators at East Jersey Olde Towne's July 4th open house.

Although it rained on and off all day, the mood was festive, and a good time was had by all. An especially popular item at the show was Harry O'Neill's foot-powered (bicycle style) jig saw.

A New Jersey Public Television crew filmed the CRAFTSmen at work. And sure enough, that night TV viewers saw Harry happily peddling away at his machine.



COLLECTORS OF RARE AND  
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OF NEW JERSEY

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### AN UNUSUAL PLANE

The plane illustrated below was purchased at a flea market early this summer by Bob Fridlington. The plane is made of rosewood, with the stock measuring 6 1/2" X 2 5/8" X 7/8".

Along with this one, Bob also got a matching rosewood round of the same length. Although beautifully crafted, both planes appear to be homemade. The dealer from whom

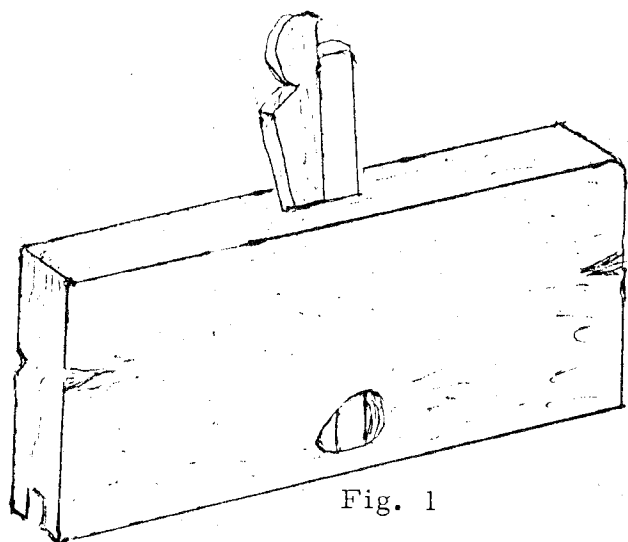


Fig. 1

they were purchased said that there had originally been a "set" of five, but three had been sold. They came from a tool chest containing more than fifty molding planes of various types, all bearing an owner's stamp of "W. Egbert."

The iron in the plane illustrated in Figure 1 has a square shaft with an arched foot extending forward at a right angle, thus creating an inverted gouge (see Figure 2). The gouge is sharpened around the outside edge.

The shaft of the iron is perpendicular to the sole (actually, it is just forward of perpendicular--that is, slightly more than 90°--but the difference is so slight that it probably is

not significant), and it is wedged in the conventional manner.

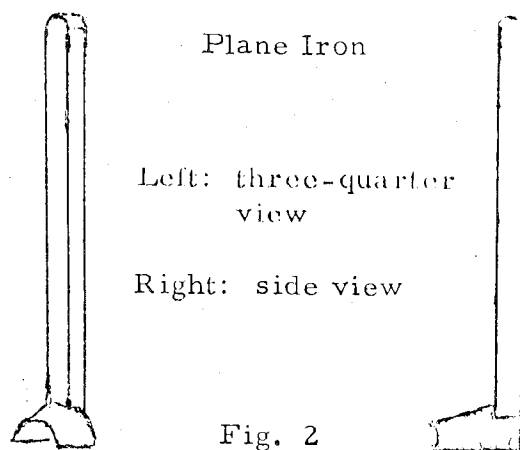


Fig. 2

The sole of the plane has a different profile at each end. In front of the iron the quarter-inch wide center groove is square; behind the iron the groove is semicylindrical (see Figure 3).

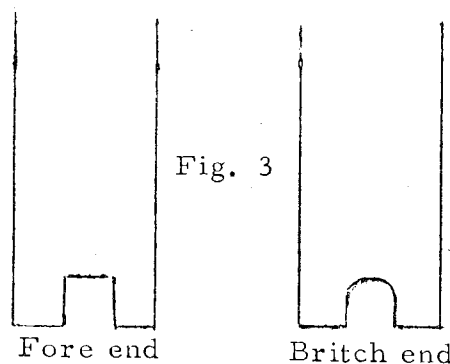


Fig. 3

One function the plane could perform would be to convert a raised fillet into a raised bead. But why not use a conventional beading plane for this purpose? The inverted gouge must serve some special function.

If any of the rhykenologists out there have further information on this plane, please send it to the Editor of The Tool Shed.

# SOME NOTES ON PRESSING IRONS

by R. James Aber

The common style of flat iron was often called a "sadiron". This was a derivation from a word meaning solid. Solid they were, and tiring to use. The heavier the iron the longer it held the heat.

Sadiron were manufactured in triangular and double-pointed shapes. Some had stationary handles and others came with detachable handles that could be used with a set of irons. The first sadirons were blacksmith-made but a number of manufacturers began factory production. These are the irons most usually seen. Many bear the initials of the maker and the weight in pounds in raised letters and numerals on the top of the iron.

Sadiron usually had iron handles which heated along with the base and required a cloth to protect the user's hands. The 1902 Sears Roebuck catalog offered a square asbestos pad for holding hot irons at 5¢ each.

Sadiron were very heavy and clumsy to use but were the only thing available for many years. The development of electricity later enabled manufacturers to produce a lightweight iron.

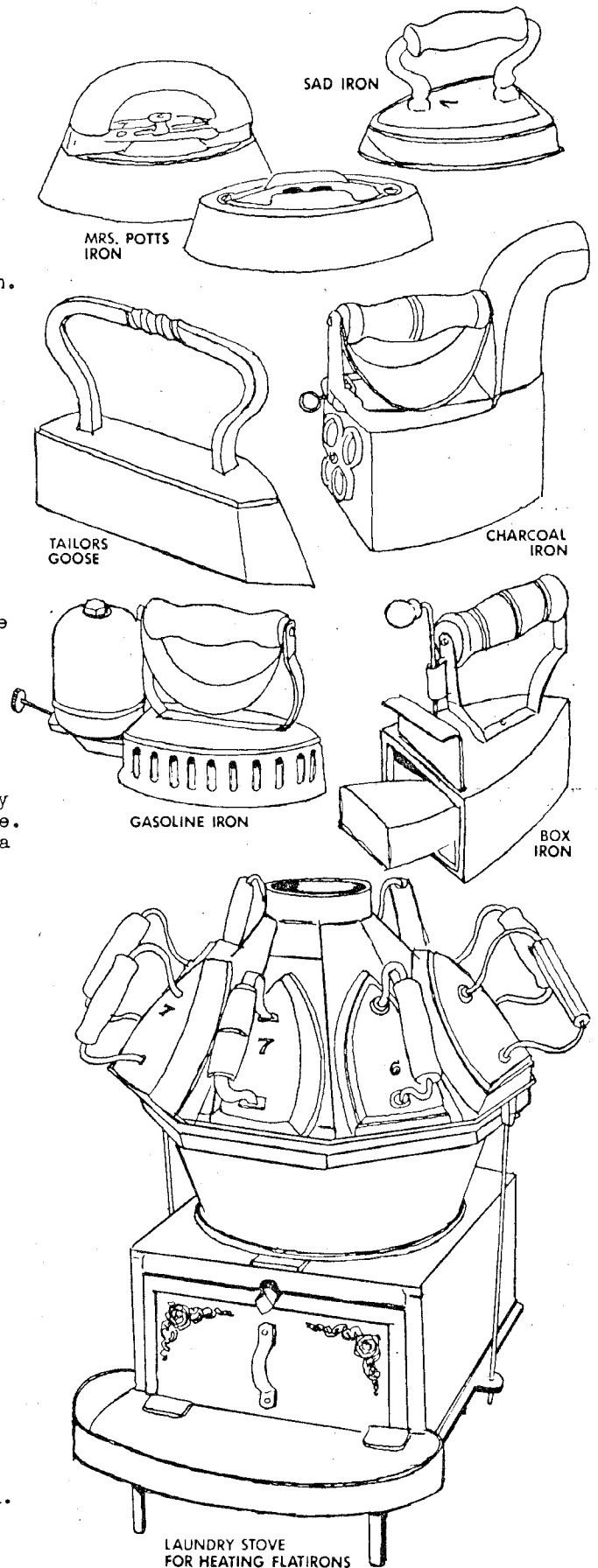
However, even the first electric irons were unnecessarily heavy. Apparently the designers and housewives thought weight was necessary to do a good job of smoothing. Fortunately it has been proven that heat does the job sufficiently and so today's irons weigh a fraction of the old sadiron.

Sadiron were used in pairs or sets. One was left heating while the other was used. They were heated on a stove or on a stand over a fire. Before they could be used, they were rubbed on a piece of brown or waxed paper to clean off soot and dirt from the stove or fire.

While most homes would have only 2 or 3 sadiron which could be heated on the kitchen stove or in the fireplace, commercial laundries needed many irons and they had specially made heating stoves designed for this purpose. The stoves were made of cast iron and were heated by a coal fire. A flue was attached in the center to carry off smoke and gases and the irons ringed the stove supported at an angle. This made them easy to pick up and replace as they cooled in use. Fuel was fed through a door in the front near the bottom and the draught controlled the rate of burning and the rate at which the irons could be reheated as they were used. This stove also radiated a lot of heat into the work room. Being a laundress on a hot, humid summer's day must have been an exhausting job.

In 1871 an iron with an interchangeable wooden handle was invented in America by Mrs. Potts. Mrs. Potts' sad iron were pointed in front and back in contrast to the usual flat-backed sadiron. Offered in the 1902 Sears catalog at 67¢ a set which consisted of one iron with rounded end, weight 4 pounds; two with regular ends, one weighing 5 1/8 pounds and one 5 3/8 pounds; one detachable wood handle with forged stretcher and one iron stand. Cost for the same set with polished bottoms and nickel plating was 73¢.

Other makers soon copied the idea of the detachable handle. The N. R. Streeter Company



Drawings by the author.

of Groton, N.Y. made a line called "Sensible Irons". These and their stands often are found at garage sales or flea markets.

The walnut handle did not get as hot since it was detached from the heating iron and used only to pick up the heated iron and while ironing.

Other 19th century irons were box irons. These had a door in the back and the bases were hollow. A heated slug was inserted in the base and provided a clean heat since the iron was not placed on the stove or in the fire. Several slugs could be heating while one was in use in the iron.

Another type of iron was heated by putting burning charcoal in the base. The base had sliding louvres in the back which controlled the draught to make the charcoal burn faster to produce more heat. It had a chimney on the front to carry fumes away. By blowing into the back or swinging the iron back and forth the charcoal was fanned to produce more heat in the iron.

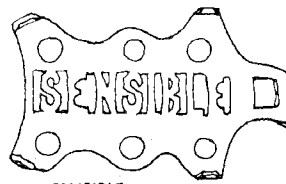
Another type of iron was heated by burning gasoline. It had a gasoline tank mounted on the back of the iron and a fire burned in the base of the iron. These were very dangerous from the standpoint of flames shooting out of the base and burning the user and from the risk of explosion. They were not too widely used.

A finishing or tally iron was used to smooth the edges of garments. These have been referred to as "goffering irons" but this term is not correct. Goffering was a crimping process used in gathering and pleating ruffles. The iron did not come in contact with the fabric but was inserted into a metal sheath and the material to be ironed was slid over the sheath. This kept the clothes clean. The irons were cigar-shaped and like a soldering iron had a wooden handle and a long rod supporting them. They were heated in the fire and could be safely carried to the sheath by the wooden handle. Some of the stands for the sheaths were elaborately turned brass with three feet. Very similar in design to candle table bases. Most were simple round iron bases which held a curved rod with the sheath mounted on the top in a horizontal position.

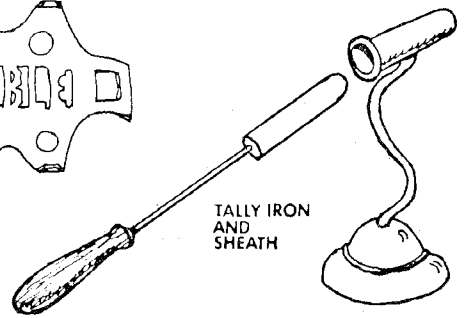
Tailors used long narrow irons with an iron handle and referred to as a "goose". They were sold by the pound. In 1902, Sears offered a 12 pound one for 48¢. By 1908 the price had risen to 70¢. In 1902 a twenty pound goose cost 80¢. In 1908 the price was \$1.18. They were made in weights from twelve to twenty four pounds. The tailors wanted the heavier weight for pressing wool and for flattening seams.

Irons were sold with stands to rest the iron on when the fabric was being shifted to an unironed portion. These stands are collected today, and reproductions have been made by the millions and are being used for holding hot kettles and dishes or as decorations. They are often erroneously referred to as "trivits". But the correct name is "stand". Trivits were used to hold hot cooking pots taken from the fire. Some trivits were actually used in the fire with the cooking pot placed on top.

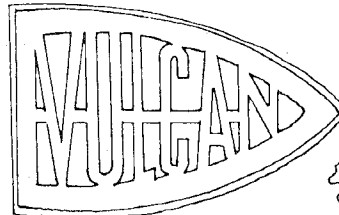
Sleeve irons were a form of sadiron. Very elongated in shape to allow them to reach up into the cuff of a sleeve or to smooth deep ruffles. They also came with a choice of stationary or detachable handles.



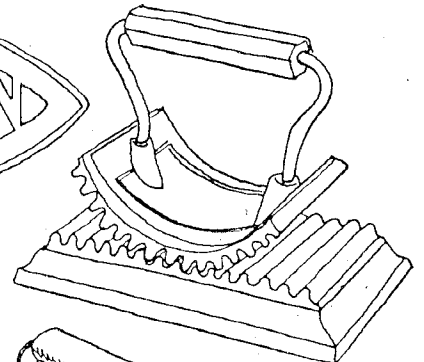
SENSIBLE IRON STAND



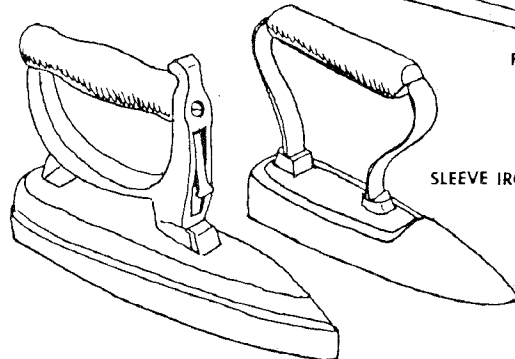
TALLY IRON AND SHEATH



VULCAN IRON STAND



FLUTING IRON



SLEEVE IRONS

Another special purpose iron was the fluting iron. It was used to press pleats and ruffles. The iron was rectangular in shape and corrugated in profile. It was heated and used with a corrugated base called a crimper. The material was placed on the base and pleats ironed into it when the corrugated ridges of the top piece meshed with the corrugations in the base piece.

Several types of fluting machines were also marketed. They were operated by a hand crank which moved the fabric between two revolving hollow corrugated rollers. These rollers were heated by hot slugs of metal which were inserted into them.

In 1896 electrically heated irons were introduced for home use. In 1904 GE produced an electric iron which weighed 8 pounds. The heat was controlled by plugging in and unplugging the iron. If too much heat was used the clothes were scorched. It took a nice judgement to use these irons. In 1913 the first iron with a built-in heel stand was introduced. This eliminated the need for a separate stand.

A thermostatically controlled electric iron was finally offered in 1928. Today's spray and steam versions are thermostatically controlled by dials marked for various kinds of fabrics and weigh only ounces. They are a far cry from the heavy sadirons of our grandmother's day. However today's modern version owes its predecessors acknowledgement for practical design and serviceability.