

# The TOOL SHED

NUMBER 47



JUNE 1987

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## CRAFTS AND BATES & BROWN TOOL SALES

by Alexander Farnham

Early in April, two of the outstanding tool auctions scheduled for 1987 were held just one week apart. The first was sponsored by CRAFTS of New Jersey and took place on April 4 in High Bridge, N.J. On the following Saturday, April 11, Bates & Brown, Inc., ran an auction in Wilmington, Delaware.

Though the two auctions differed somewhat in the quality and finish of the tools sold and in the prices realized, they had much in common. Most beneficial for the success of both was that they utilized the talents of the same auctioneer, Herb Kean.

At the CRAFTS auction Herb, with a little help from Steve Zlucky, sold 514 lots, averaging 105 per hour. For Bates & Brown they sold 580 lots, for an average of 108 per hour.

Another way in which both auctions were similar was the types of tools sold and the numbers in which they were sold. As is true of most of today's tool auctions, woodworking planes in their many varieties were predominant. Of these, the patented metallic planes were in the majority, with most having been produced by the Stanley Rule and Level Company in New Britain, Connecticut.

Approximately 70 Stanley planes were sold at the CRAFTS auction and 80 at Bates & Brown. At the latter, including planes and other tools, more than 110 Stanley lots were sold.

The most expensive lots at both auctions were planes made by Stanley. A No. 340 furring plane brought \$1200 at the CRAFTS sale and a No. 164 low-angle, heavy-duty block plane with about 30% of its handle decal brought just twice that sum when sold at Bates & Brown.

Two Stanley No. 1 smoothing planes sold at the CRAFTS sale, the finest for \$500, the other for \$300. At Bates &

Brown a reproduction of a Stanley No. 1 brought \$200. Several years ago, before these reproductions were disclosed by Herb Kean and J. Lee Murray, Jr., they were being made by someone wanting to cash in on their popularity. Now, the reproductions are rarer than the originals made by Stanley.

One plane that brought far more than expected at Wilmington was a Stanley No. 55 in its original metal box. The pre-sale estimate of its value was \$375-\$475. The bidding opened at \$750, and the plane sold for \$825.

Among several metallic planes by other makers which brought good prices at the Bates & Brown sale were a Bailey's Victor No. 1½ nickel-plated block plane, \$2200; Bailey's Victor No. 14, \$1300; Fale's Patent Variable Bench Plane missing some attachments, \$900; and Walker's Patent Adjustable Face Plane, \$800.

[Continued on page 5]

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MEETING ON JUNE 7:  
KENNETH WIRTZ WILL SPEAK

CRAFTS of New Jersey will hold its final meeting of the 1986-87 membership year on Sunday, June 7, at the Clinton Historical Museum Village in Clinton.

Tools sales will begin at 1:00 pm in the parking lot, and the business meeting will begin promptly at 2:00. As this will be the Annual Meeting of the Society, Directors and Officers will be elected for the coming year.

The program for the afternoon will feature Kenneth Wirtz who will speak on "Early American Mortising Tools." The "Whatsit?" session will follow.

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**Collectors of Rare and Familiar Tools Society  
of New Jersey**

President \_\_\_\_\_ STEPHEN ZLUKY, Whitehouse  
Vice President \_\_\_\_\_ HARRY J. O'NEILL, Annandale  
Secretary \_\_\_\_\_ BARBARA FARNHAM, Stockton  
Treasurer \_\_\_\_\_ JOHN M. WHELAN, Murray Hill

Membership in CRAFTS is open to anyone interested in early trades and industries, and the identification, study and preservation of tools and implements used and made in New Jersey. Annual dues 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, NJ 07974.

**The Tool Shed**

Published five times per year for members of CRAFTS of New Jersey. Editor: Robert Fridlington, 8 Keith Jeffries Ave., Cranford, NJ 07016. Contributions, especially about New Jersey tools and trades, are welcomed.

**CRAFTS AUCTION ROUNDUP**

by Joe Hauck

Well, another April and another CRAFTS auction success! This year our sale went over \$32,000, establishing a new record for CRAFTS.

As usual, it took a lot of help from a lot of members to make the auction such a resounding success, and a round of thanks is in order.

First of all, there was Harry O'Neill and Steve Zlucky who, as usual, did the lion's share of the cataloging with a big assist from Harry's nephew, Pete Macklin. On the afternoon before the auction the big move took place. With help from Lew Cooper, Alex Farnham, Paul Weidenschilling, Harry O'Neill, and Pete Macklin, we moved all of the tools from Harry's barn to the auction site.

On the day of the sale Frank Smith, Carl Bopp, Steve Orbine, Paul Murphy, Dom Micalizzi, Ken Vliet, and Pete Macklin (again!) were our runners. Once again, a strong performance was turned in by Jack Whelan's crack team of cashiers, made up of his wife Helen, Markay Zlucky, and Fran Smith.

And finally, of course, Herb Kean,

our auctioneer, and Chuck Granick, our tally keeper, did a flawless job, as always (Apparently Pete hasn't learned how to do these jobs yet).

A big thank you to one and all for a truly outstanding job—and an apology to anyone I may have overlooked. You are a great group of people.

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**SPEAKER PROFILE  
KENNETH WIRTZ**

Ken Wirtz, who will speak on "Early American Mortising Tools" at the June 7 meeting of CRAFTS, is well known to most of our members as an avid collector of antique tools. To all of those outside the tool-collecting fraternity, however, he is known as Dr. Kenneth Wirtz, a practicing psychologist.

A native of Michigan, Ken came to the Garden State twenty years ago and now resides in Park Ridge. He says that he has been involved in "serious" tool collecting for the past twelve or thirteen years. Ken came to collecting through his interest in woodworking, particularly his interest in restoring old houses. He reasoned that if you are going to restore an old house, you should do it with old tools.

Well, he stopped with the old houses (at least temporarily) after restoring two of them—one of which is on the National Register. But he couldn't stop buying tools. He now has some 3,500 of them, and he is still going strong.

Wirtz is particularly devoted to primitive tools, those that are hand made and hand forged. His interests are broad—just about every trade is represented in his collection. Yet, he is obviously discriminating—he has 3,500 tools and there is not a Stanley plane in the bunch.

In his June 7 talk Ken will discuss post-and-beam construction for barns as well as fence-post and other kinds of heavy mortising. He will also exhibit a wide selection of mortising tools, including examples of the three basic types of twibils.

Ken invites anyone who has an unusual or a special mortising tool in their collection to bring it on June 7 for display.

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# MYSTIC SEAPORT TOUR

## DELUXE TOUR BUS

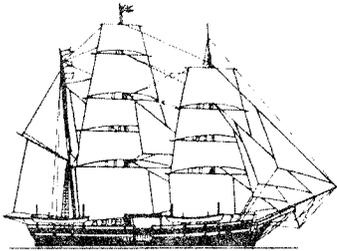
This year, CRAFTS would like to add something new to its list of summertime activities: a one-day excursion to MYSTIC SEAPORT MUSEUM in Connecticut, on July 5.

An attractive package has been put together, one that should appeal to both sexes and to all ages.

Travel will be by deluxe, forty passenger bus, with comfortable, reclining seats and an onboard restroom. The bus will leave from Lebanon, N.J., at 7:30 Sunday morning, July 5, and arrive at MYSTIC SEAPORT, Connecticut, about 11:00 a.m.

Members of the tour will be on their own for lunch, so you can either bring one with you or buy one after you arrive. There is a SEA SHANTY, with good seating accommodations for light lunches or refreshments.

The entire Seaport will be open, and there will be many special programs taking place throughout the day. We are trying to arrange a conducted tour for CRAFTS members through the tool and artifact storage area by the Seaport Curator.



An enjoyable STEAMBOAT CRUISE, complete with Dixieland band aboard, will leave at 5:00 p.m. When the boat returns, about 6:30, the entire group will assemble at the SEAMAN'S INN for a full-course dinner and socializing. This should be about 7:00 p.m. The Inn is open until 10:00, so we will have plenty of time. We will decide the time to leave for home at the dinner. The bus should arrive back at Lebanon about three hours after leaving MYSTIC SEAPORT.

The cost for this outing is only \$42.00 per person. But we must have 40 prepaid members and guests to obtain

this low, group rate. If we do not get a total of 40, the trip will be cancelled.

The \$42.00 price includes bus fare, MYSTIC SEAPORT admission, complete freedom of the Seaport, the evening river cruise, full-course dinner, and the storage-area tour if it can be arranged.

The bus depot in Lebanon is on the north side of Route 22, one mile west of the Lebanon-Cokesbury traffic light, or 1½ miles east of Clinton, N.J. (near the Barn Door). CRAFTS bus signs will be posted. The bus phone number is 1-800-842-0533.

A reservation coupon for the MYSTIC SEAPORT trip is enclosed with this issue. It should be filled out and mailed to Jack Whelan as soon as possible. The deadline for reservations is June 21, but they will be made in the order they are received. So don't delay. And be sure to check the dinner entree on the coupon.

For further information on the MYSTIC SEAPORT trip, you can call:

Jack Whelan (201) 464-5424

or

Harry O'Neill (201) 638-6981

\* \* \* \* \*



### ABOUT MYSTIC SEAPORT MUSEUM

Mystic Seaport is a non-profit maritime museum and educational institution which offers a variety of educational programs, library services, and research facilities. The 17-acre museum, situated on the Mystic River in Mystic, Connecticut, contains tall ships, a complex of historic buildings, working craftsmen, a shipyard, and exhibit buildings which house scrimshaw, figureheads, ship models and marine art. Visitor services include dining and shopping on the grounds.

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## THE BILL PHILLIPS COLLECTION

It's always nice to see someone else's collection. You learn, you envy, and you may secretly feel better about your own. But there are some collections that are so overwhelming that you don't have much time to do any of the above. Now I knew that Bill Phillips had a rather extensive plane collection, and I was sure he had other things, due to his ravenous appetite for auctions; but I wasn't prepared for what happened to me that day last March.

In the morning, Harry O'Neill called and told me he was going to Pennsylvania to pick up some iron work at Bill Phillips place, and asked if I wanted to go with him. Doris had a "dust removal program" scheduled for that afternoon, and my workshop was the announced target. A good excuse to get away from it all fell into my lap. Merely mentioning that good ole "twinkle eye" Harry needed driving help did it (She still thinks Harry has a heart condition).

The drive to New Tripoli was nice, but I'd been out that way a hundred times, and I was getting anxious to see the collection. Bill didn't waste any time from the moment we got into his barn. He appointed himself tour guide and proceeded accordingly. Every place you looked in that barn was something of interest. Unusual "this" and different "that," and all with stories attached.

Harry was in his glory, because he loves all that primitive stuff. To me it was interesting enough, but I didn't have my jacket on and I was starting to freeze. I thought his collection was in the house, and we would proceed directly to it. No way! Bill took pity on me and moved the tour upstairs in the barn where he said it was "warmer." En route we passed endless shelves of hardware, farm tools, equipment, etc. We paused

once to open a huge grain chest filled with every hand saw made by mankind.

The plane room at the top of the barn was really to my liking. Rack after rack of wood planes and Stanley, many rare and seen by me for the first time. He did have some ho-hum duplicates and I kidded him about it. He rationalized that he "was going to sell them all—someday."

We circled through the labyrinth of that barn, stopping at every pillar and post for explanations for spokeshaves, rules, braces, levels, etc. It seemed that everything had a special nook. Finally we left the barn and headed for the house (Still no jacket!). But first came the garage. It was filled with tools, Americana, and more primitives. My interest was peaking here, because I am gravitating toward Americana in my auctions. I hardly noticed the icicles that were forming on my nose.

Finally the house and warmth at last. Some houses of avid collectors are brim full in a few rooms and perhaps the basement. Excluding one famous collector (who has stuff piled in his hallways), I had never seen a house where tools were literally everywhere—on shelves, on tables, on mantels, in closets, on top of cabinets, on the walls—everywhere. Room after room, it was the same. There were many good pieces, and if you accidentally missed one, you were marched right back to the spot and had it pointed out.

Finally the sanctum sanctorum--the only room that was without a single tool. It was a beautiful combination of an Empire and Victorian parlor, with all the flavor of nineteenth-century Philadelphia. In an embarrassed voice, he was barely audible when he said: "She won't let me keep anything in here."

However, the tour was far from over. Basement next—with row after row of transitional planes, Pennsylvania broad and goosewing axes, and some great farm pieces. I was in the swing of it now, not wanting it to end. No fear of that. We went out the back door to a shed and saw some professionally painted farm engines, etc.—pinstriping and all.

Next, the store. Bill has a kinda general store with prices from years ago. Harry and I bought some candy in a genuine time warp. The store reentered back to the barn where we originally started.

Bill pointed out all the stuff in the rafters that was missed on the first pass through. By now I was punchy and fully saturated. Even the greatest tool buff would have cried "Uncle."

When Harry and I pulled away, we were exhausted. But what a great afternoon!

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[Tool Sales, continued from page 1]

Other than the previously mentioned Stanley No. 340, the CRAFTS auction provided a few exciting metallic planes. Of these, the highest sums were paid for a Phillips Improved Plow Plane, \$500, and an Eclipse Plane Co. Scraper Plane patented in 1874, \$400.

For the most part, wood-bodied planes did not do nearly as well as the metal ones at either auction. The highest paid for wooden planes at the Bates & Brown sale was \$1000 for an E.W. Carpenter's Improved Arm Plow, \$900 for a No. 133 Sandusky rosewood plow, and \$700 for a similar one by J. Kellogg.

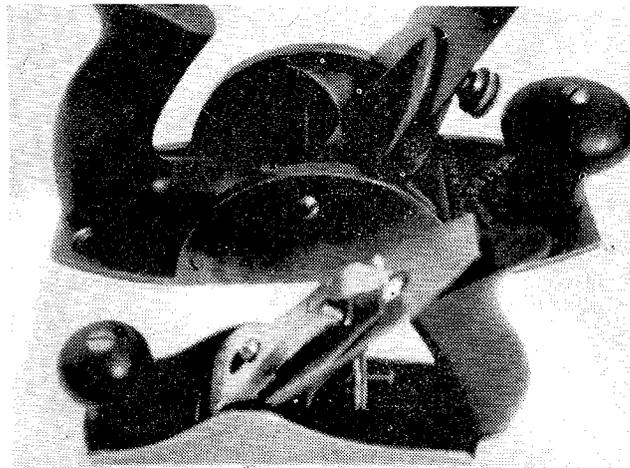
At the CRAFTS auction, a rare basketmaker's spelk plane brought \$275; a slightly scorched Union Factory panel plane with 4" wide iron, \$175; a 3½" cornice plane by Pennell and Miller, \$175; and another marked CUMMINGS with a 2 5/8" iron, \$175.

Though most New Jersey planes did not do as well as they have in the past, a rare bead marked J. WHITE / CAMDEN, N.J. brought a bid of \$250 from Emil Pollak, whose second "Guide to American Wooden Planes" is due to be published shortly. As of this writing, no other plane stamped with this Camden, N.J., mark is known to exist, so perhaps it should have brought more.

Other New Jersey planes, not so rare, were a Newark carriagemaker's plane by Mockridge & Francis, \$95; and a tothing plane by the same firm, \$60. A late sash plane marked MOCKRIDGE & SON went for \$80. Other Newark planes were a thumbnail moulding plane made by S.E. Farrand, \$30, and a dado plane by J. Andruss, \$17.50. A Gage Tool Company No. 4 plane made in Vineland, N.J., went for \$50.

Also sold was a wrench-brace marked P. LOWENTRAUT MFG. CO. / NEWARK, N.J. and 20th CENTURY. Patented on May 21, 1901, this unique tool sold for \$110.

But some other New Jersey tools brought less than \$10 each.



CRAFTS Auction: Foreground, a Stanley Sweetheart No. 1, \$500; Background, an Eclipse Plane Co. Scraper Plane, \$400.

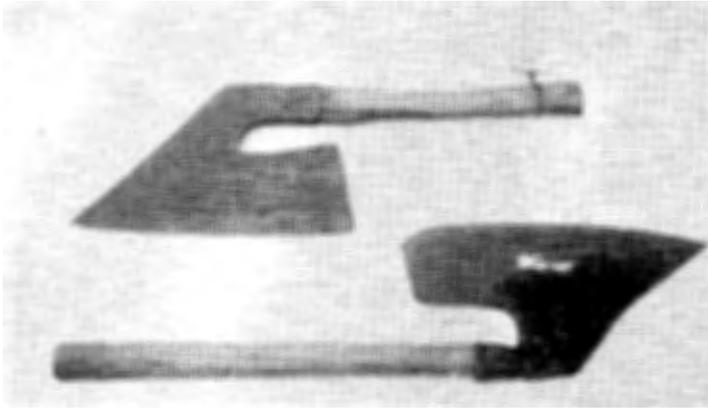
At both auctions those tools that were rare or unusual brought prices higher than estimated, while some of the more common ones, even if quite early, sold for prices lower than ten years ago. Tools such as froes, bark spuds, adzes, drawshaves, reamers, axes, and slicks brought fairly poor prices.

Goosewing axes were sold at both auctions. At the CRAFTS sale there were three goosewings. The first to go was fitted with an extremely long handle; it brought \$150. The other two had more conventional handles. One looked quite European, was marked STAHL, and sold for \$250. The other was unmarked and went for \$200.

Though most tools at the Bates & Brown sale brought good to excellent prices, the goosewings did not do too well. One with a 13" edge and minus a handle sold for \$100. Another, signed KRATSCH, with an 11" edge and fitted with a handle that was extremely bent, brought a low \$75. These are prices one might have found twenty years ago.

Center-bit post-mortice axes were also sold at both auctions. The one at the Bates & Brown sale was marked BRADY LANC'R PA. and went for \$80. An unmarked one sold by CRAFTS brought \$55. Planemaker's floats sold for \$70 and \$75 at the CRAFTS auction, and they were two

for \$75 at the B & B sale. At the same sale a bow drill with ivory spool and rosewood handle went for \$450, while three others of lesser materials brought from \$40 to \$105. At the CRAFTS sale a bow drill of rosewood and brass along with a bow sold for \$200.



CRAFTS Auction: Goosewing Axe at Top, \$200; The One With the Long Handle, \$150.

Miniatures of any kind seem to fascinate collectors. At the Bates & Brown sale a tiny router of rosewood stock with ivory wedge and sole brought \$500. There were also several tiny planes. One, a smoothing plane of beech, marked MOSELEY & SON / LONDON, was only 3 11/16 inches long and sold for \$130.

At the CRAFTS sale a similar plane, marked SORBY, went for \$32.50. A pair of diminutive boxwood rabbit planes, not much more than an inch long, brought \$70. At the same auction, a lot consisting of a child's small buck saw and a miniature block plane sold for \$50.

Another type of tool fascinating to the collector are calipers shaped like human legs. One lot sold at the Bates & Brown auction was made up of two such calipers. Along with a typical dancing master caliper, stamped COMPLIMENTS OF SNAP-ON-TOOLS INC. was a beautifully crafted one in the shape of a nude woman. This lot brought \$300, which was twice as much as the high estimate. At the same auction, another lot that sold way above its high estimate was a cobbler's hammer with a 6" long head, dated 1772. It brought \$250.

Despite the advantages that Bates & Brown seemed to have, the auction results seem pretty well balanced. The 514 lots sold at the CRAFTS auction went for a total of around \$32,000, while approximately \$82,000 was the total for Bates & Brown. The difference in the sums taken in may be largely due to the greater number of rare patented metallic planes sold at the Bates & Brown action. Unlike twenty or thirty years ago when eighteenth and early nineteenth century tools were mostly sought after, these patented metallic planes seem to be more desirable today.

One thing can be said of both auctions. They benefitted from the salesmanship of Herb Kean, and there is none better at selling tools.

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### THE J. L. SOMMER HAMMER

Talk about New Jersey tools! We thank Frank Kingsbury for tipping us off about this one.

The inventor, John L. Sommer of Newark, N.J., patented the design shown below in 1897, claiming: "This invention consist in a novel shape for a hammer substantially as herein shown and described." That's it.

We wonder why it never caught on.

DESIGN.

J. L. SOMMER.  
HAMMER.

No. 27,949.

Patented Dec. 7, 1897.

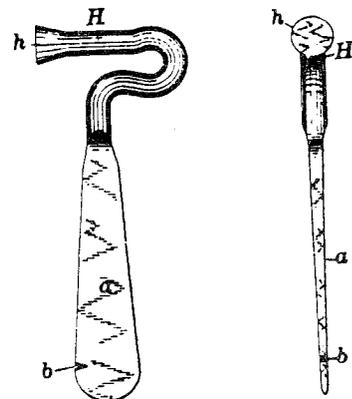


Fig. 1.

Fig. 2.

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WILLIAM PIRSSON'S RATCHET WRENCH

The drawings on this page show the improved ratchet wrench invented by William Pirsson of Newark, N.J. and

patented on May 29, 1866.

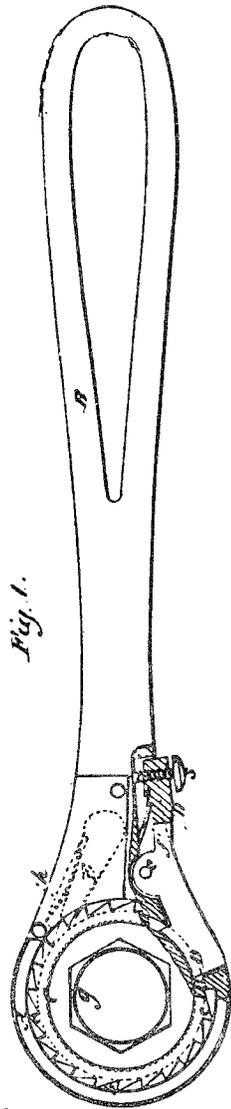
Our thanks to Dr. Frank W. Kingsbury for providing this information.

*W. Pirsson,*

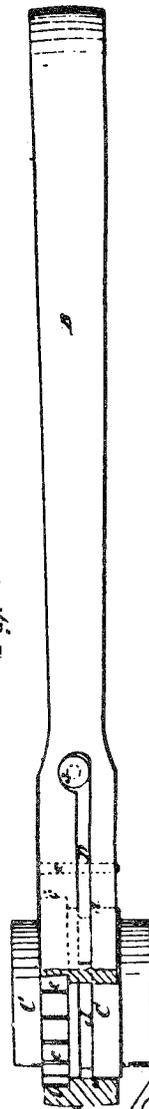
*Wrench.*

*N<sup>o</sup> 55,157.*

*Patented May 29, 1866.*



*Fig. 1.*



*Fig. 2.*

*Witnesses.*  
*J. M. Combs*  
*Attest.*

*Inventor*

*W. Pirsson*

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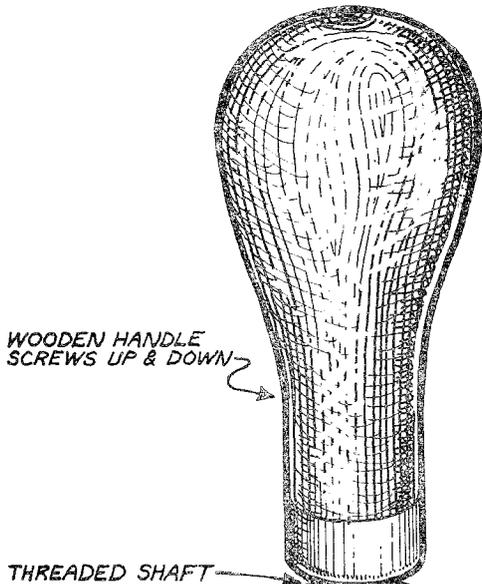
Pop Rivet's

# What's It? No.26



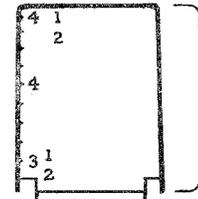
by LARRY FUHRO

Another conundrum  
from Vince Soukup,  
Otisville, N.Y.



WOODEN HANDLE  
SCREWS UP & DOWN

- FACTORY MADE, CAST STEEL
- TRACES OF NICKEL PLATING
- THE WORD "PATENT" APPEARS ON THE TOOL.



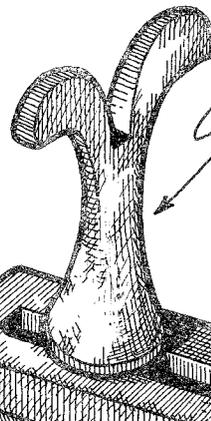
DETAIL OF  
FRONT  
BLADE  
MARKINGS  
(SEE BELOW)

THREADED SHAFT

FLEXIBLE  
STEEL TAB  
PUSHED DOWN  
BY TURNING THE  
SCREW HANDLE

RAZOR-SHARP BLADE

BODY OF TOOL IS 5" LONG



WINGED & THREADED BOLT  
TIGHTENS DOWN ON BRACKET,  
HOLDING IT IN PLACE.

SLIDING  
BRACKET

1 1/2"

BLADE IS  
NOTCHED  
IN 1/8"  
INCREMENTS  
FOR 1" ALONG  
THIS SIDE.

SHARP BLADE

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## GADGETS · DOOHICKEYS · THINGAMAJIGS · AND WHATCHAMACALLITS

DUES! DUES! DUES!  
DUES! DUES! DUES!

CONGRATULATIONS TO  
HAROLD RAE

This is a gentle reminder that dues for the 1987-88 membership year are payable on July 1.

The dues remain at a mere \$7.00 for individual memberships or husband-wife memberships. This is still the best bargain in town.

If you prefer, you may pay for two years at once (\$14.00).

Send to: CRAFTS  
c/o J.M. Whelan  
38 Colony Court  
Murray Hill, NJ 07974

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When Harold Rae offered to bind copies of "The Tool Shed" for our members, he did not know what he was getting into.

Harold has now completed the job, and we hope his life has returned to something like normal.

"The Tool Shed" salutes a master bookbinder for the extraordinary job he turned in. The beautifully finished volumes are truly works of art, something their owners will cherish throughout their lifetimes.

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