The TOOL SHED

NUMBER 137

June 2005

A Journal of Tool Collecting published by CRAFTS of New Jersey

Nibs on Saws - A Review

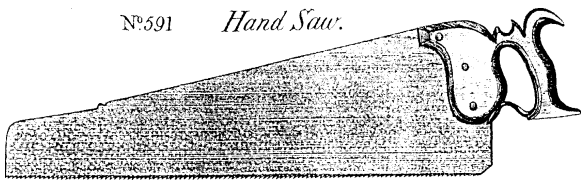
By Jim Packham

Thirty Fours ago, the Chronicle[1] carried the following short observations and inquiry.

"A Nib is a projection on the back of the handsaw close to the end. Some insists that the Nib had a function. *The Disston Saw Company* insist that the Nib has no practical use whatsoever', it merely serves to break the straight line of the blade and is an ornamentation only.

One craftsman, who has been using handsaws for nearly 50 years, says he was taught that the Nib was to clear out accumulated sawdust at intervals during the ripping of planks. The saw was inverted and the Nib pushed through a couple of times as if sawing. May we have your comments on this?

The illustration below is from Smith's Key[2], published in 1816. It shows an ordinary handsaw with a Nib as described in the Chronicle's inquiry. Most tool collectors have seen this style of handsaw.

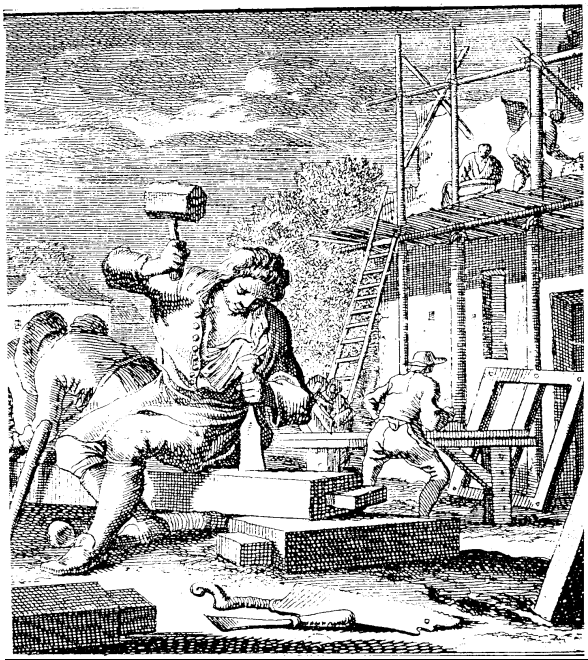


In the September 1970 Chronicle[3], its editor the late Ray Townsend, published a brief report on the responses of its readers. Most of those replying believed that the Nib was simply decoration, but two people had other opinions.

Robert Carlson always had believed the Nib had a function and was not purely decorative. First, it can be used as a nail cutter when one is encountered in working on houses and second, it can be used as a scribe to mark a planned saw cut rather that using a scratch awl or a knife.

Frank Sahlmann was convinced that the Nib had a function. Specifically he wrote, it serves to nick a board at the starting point for a cut. A nick made with the Nib makes it easier to start cutting especially if one is using a saw with coarse teeth.

Almost all manufacturers' catalogues during the 19th and early 20th centuries included illustrations of saws with Nibs or other illustrations of changes in the line of the back of the saw, but no product catalogue has been found that makes any comment for the reason for Nibs or



1698 engraving by Weigel[4] of carpenters at work. The handsaw in the foreground has a multiple curve at the toe, like a large nib.

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June 5th - CRAFTS Meeting
HOST Masonic Lodge, Highbridge, NJ

Collectors of Rare and Familiar Tools Society
of New Jersey

President……...….GREG WELSH, Califon
Vice President……BOB GARAY, Hopatcong
Secretary……DON KAHN, Hackensack
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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 meetings are held at the HOST Masonic Lodge in High Bridge, NJ.
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 10 A.M., meeting starts at 1 P.M.

The TOOL SHED

Published five times a year for members of CRAFTS of New Jersey. Editor: Dave Nowicki, 240 Woodlyn Ave. Glenside PA 19038. EMAIL - dnowicki@verizon.net.
Articles, especially about early tools and trades, are encouraged and may be sent to the Editor.

CRAFTS WEBSITE
www.craftsofnj.org

Containing general information about CRAFTS and its activities including: meeting schedules, Tool Shed articles, etc.

New Members

John DeAlessio, New Milford, CT
Donita and Arthur Gaffer, South Portland, ME
Joel Gross, Watchung, NJ
Joe Meyer, Cranbury, NJ
Kenneth Moyer, Schuylkill Haven, PA
John and Susan Rumpf, James Creek, PA.

President's Corner

It seems like just yesterday that I became "El Presidente"! It will be great to pass the hat to the new president and go back to just wearing the one hat of the auction manager. With the help of the many people throughout the past two years I was able to stumble through some easy and difficult times.

Now the reins will be passed to the next in line and I hope that all members will stand behind and help him in the oncoming year. Being president of any organization is difficult enough, but with no paid officers it becomes a real challenge. The Board of Directors of course, is the backbone of any volunteer or social organization and we seem to be blessed with a pretty solid group in this club. A social club can only survive if it has enough people willing to share in the duties of officers and board members. If you are so inclined to be a part of the leadership of Crafts, let an officer or board member know.

Time to switch gears and hats. Our annual auction went off pretty smoothly with the thanks of all the helpers setting up on Friday night and again with the sale on Saturday.

It's not too soon to start thinking about your consignments for next year. There will be consignor forms available at the annual picnic and if you are unable to attend, a SASE to me will get you one by return mail.

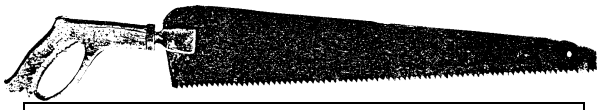
Once more, a special thanks for all the help and guidance these past two years, and please continue to support the new president.

Greg

(Continued from page 1)

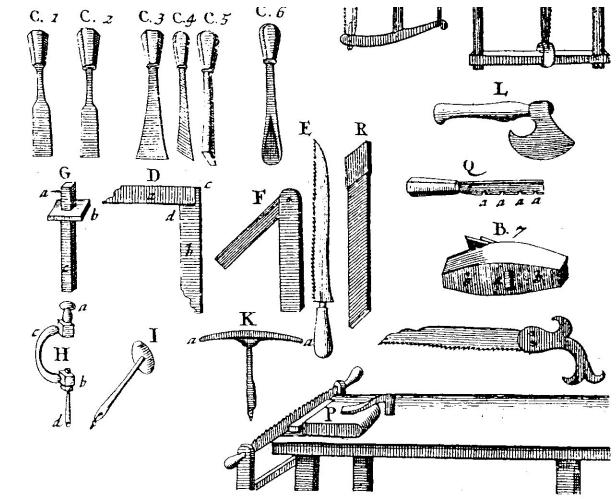
their potential uses. Many books and articles on woodworking tools and trades also include illustrations of handsaws that appear to have Nibs or other indentations in the back and toe areas of the saw, but most such publications make no comment on the subject of nibs.

Some illustrations follow of handsaw "nibs" as they appear in publications that did **not** offer comment. Then this article will review, in chronological order, many of the various books and articles that **have** offered comment on saw nibs, both before and since the brief references in the Chronicle in 1970.



Early saw as pictured in *Das Werkzug Des Zimmermans*

Next is an early German saw[5], having a double nib and hole near the toe. The handle is tang-mounted with a closed "pistol grip". This photograph is one of twelve pictures of 18th to 20th century hand saws illustrated in an outstanding 1986 German book on early carpenters' tools. Four of the twelve saws have nibs.



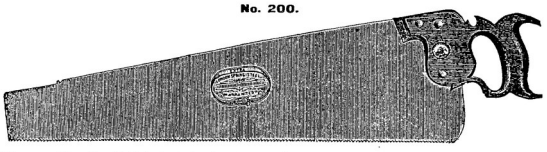
Joseph Moxon engraving of basic carpenter tools.

Joseph Moxon's *Mechanik Exercises*[6] has an engraving illustrating several basic tools of the carpenter. Six saws are shown of which one (lower right) is neither labeled nor mentioned in the text. It appears to be a hand saw with a pistol grip having an early version of the classic "fish-tail" shape of many saw handles

Henry Disston & Sons' Price List of 1876[7] includes engravings of some 31 different models of hand saws (in addition to circular saws and cross-cut saws). Of these, 16 show nibs like model 200 copied below. It was one of the models offered for "private branding". Of the fifteen other hand saws in the 1876 Disston catalogue, eight have straight backs and three have the recently introduced "skew" back, and four have a straight back with an offset curve near the toe.

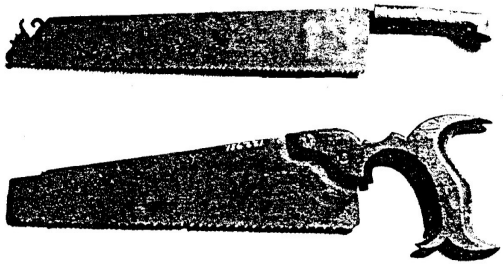
Some of the early saw catalogues offered the following mix of blade styles on hand saws:

Sargent Tools, 1894 - 5 with nibs, 7 straight back, and 3 skew back.
Sargent Tools, 1910 - 4 with nibs, 3 straight back and 2 skew back.
E.C. Atkins, c. 1915 – none with nibs, 12 straight back, 1 offset, and 11 skew back.
Simonds Saws, 1919 – 1 with nib, 8 straight back, 6 offset and 11 skew back.



Cherry Handle, Polished Edged, 4 Brass Centennial Screws, full width, Warranted, and Cross Filed. 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28 inches, Net.

In 1960, Spear and Jackson Limited of England published the S*tory of the Saw*[8] to mark their second century of operation as "the worlds oldest saw makers". This book includes the following photographs of two 18th century Swedish saws.



The upper saw has a pistol grip handle somewhat like that of the Weigel engraving and it has an even more complex shape at the back and toe of the blade. The lower saw has an open "fish-tail" handle and a nib. The authors make no comment about these saw shapes.

The Disston firm was founded by Henry Disston in 1846 in Philadelphia. He had apprenticed with the saw making firm of Lindley, Johnson and White. The Disston business became the largest in the United States and continued in operation until the 1970's. Sometime prior to 1875, Disston started publishing a *Handbook for Lumbermen*. It was described as "a treatise on the construction of saws and how to keep them in order". An updated edition of the Handbook was published every few years. By at least the 1902 edition[9] and after, the following sketch and sentence appeared in the Disston Handbooks.

The "nib" near the end of a hand-saw has no practical use whatever, it merely serves to break the straight line of

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April CRAFTS Meeting Program

Bob Garay on Hammer Collecting

By Dave Nowicki

Bob Garay might be better known for his love of saws but as his April presentation told us, he also has a keen appetite for hammers.

Bob began his discussion of hammers at, well, the beginning. As one of the oldest of all tools, hammers have shaped human advancement literally from the dawn of time. At first they were probably just stones which had been smoothed over time by water action from rivers and streams making them easy to hold. Early man could also have used large pieces of animal bone. The uses of these earliest hammers were many but probably included hunting, defense against larger predators or maybe an unruly neighbor, but they were probably used mostly for breaking things down into smaller useful sizes. Later as man became more skilled, materials like flint were carefully shaped into useful tools such as knives, spear points and arrow heads.

The first and most important improvement on the hammer was to add a handle. This allowed for increased leverage and ultimately increased the force of the hammer blow . Fastening a stone to a wood or bone handle was no easy task and as Bob explained, early man used various methods, (wrapping with vines or pieces of hide, etc.) to hold the head on.

After the handle, the next development that changed the hammer was the ability to make the head from a denser, more easily formed material, such as bronze, brass, and finally iron and steel. According to Bob, iron was being used by the Hittites as early as 4000 B.C. Heating these metals in a forge allowed the blacksmith to make hammers in virtually any size and shape needed, along with embellishments which could never be realized with any other material. This development alone created the age of purpose-made

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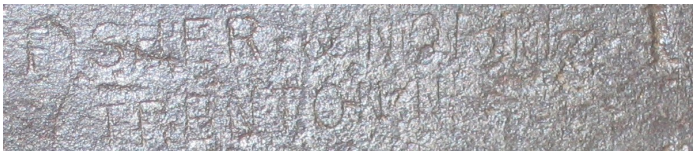
One of My Favorite New Jersey Tools

By Dave Nowicki

When it comes to "My Favorite Tool Made in New Jersey" it has to be my 16 pound Fisher and Norris anvil. I saw it for sale in the parking lot while attending a local tool auction. The only marking that I could make out was the number "1" cast on the base, under the horn. It was the smallest "good" anvil that I had ever seen for sale. It measured 8.5 inches overall and the face was 5.25 x 2.25 inches, small enough to make a great bench anvil I thought, so I bought it. I had no idea who the maker might be, it looked nothing like my 100 pound Fisher (this was before Richard Postman's book *Anvils in America)*. I thought about where I might have seen that distinctive profile before and remembered Alexander Farnham's book, *Early New Jersey Toolmakers And The Men Who Made Them*. When I got home I went straight for Alex's book. Sure enough, there it was on page 107, under Fisher Anvils. I read Alex's description of how these anvils were marked, noting that he said that some were …"found with Fisher & Norris stamped in small, barely perceptible letters along one side just below the face." It was a really grimy chunk of iron and it wasn't until I started scrubbing the anvil that I noticed a few letters, just where Alex said they might be, on the left side just below the face. With a little more cleaning I was able to make out Fisher and Norris Trenton NJ Cast Steel. I was later told that these small anvils were only marked this way for a short time, soon after Fisher and Norris was established in Trenton, NJ in 1843.



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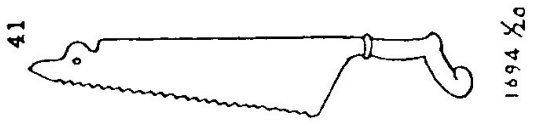
the back of the blade and is an ornamentation only.
This 1902 explanation of the "nib" is the earliest published comment the author has found.

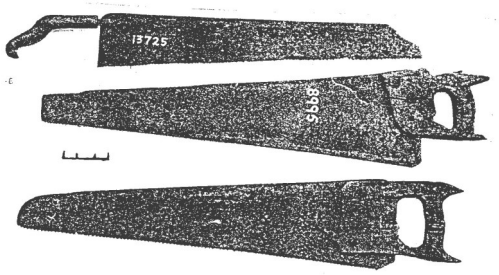
A letter[10] by Ray Townsend reported that the English news feature *Notes and Queries* of July 19th, 1902 included a question as follows, "Can any reader throw some light on the origin , name and use of the small projection on the back of a carpenter's saw near the tip?" A response on August 6th stated, "Inquiry of the foreman of a large iron-mongers' business results in the reply that the projection has no name or use, and that it is being discontinued by manufacturers".

British archeologist Flinders Petrie in his classic 1917 book, *Tools and Weapons*[11], included the sketch of a handsaw as copied below. It is remarkably similar to the saw in the Weigel engraving of carpenters at work.



The Petrie text comments, "The Dutch saw of 1694 shows the earlier form of the curious little notch on the back, which is still contained in the modern (1917) saws, without a meaning. It seems originally to have been a tapering of the blade to the end, interrupted by a projection, with a hole for hanging up the saw."

The first edition of *Ancient Carpenters Tools*[12] by Henry C. Mercer was published in 1929. The chapter titled Tools for Shaping and Fitting starts with a discussion of hand saws and a photograph of three old saws (copied here).



Mercer's text reads, in part. "The very rare upper specimen, found in a gravedigger's shed at the Buckingham Friends Meeting House, Bucks Co. PA …. is of date probably before 1768 …. A down cut with ornamental knob, partly rusted away, decorates the end of the blade on its top corner margin, which trivial and curious silhouette noted by Disston, without exception of its origin in *The Saw History*, 1916, and now appearing on many American open hand saws, appears clearly on the two lower specimines."

Mercer also copies the "Weigel" engraving (attributing it to a Dutch set of engravings of 1718) and notes the similarity of its saw design to the one photographed above.

In 1964, the British tool historian W. M. Goodman published *The History of Woodworking Tools.* Goodman's discussion of the development of handsaws in the 17th and 18th centuries includes photos of early Dutch and Swedish saws as copied below.

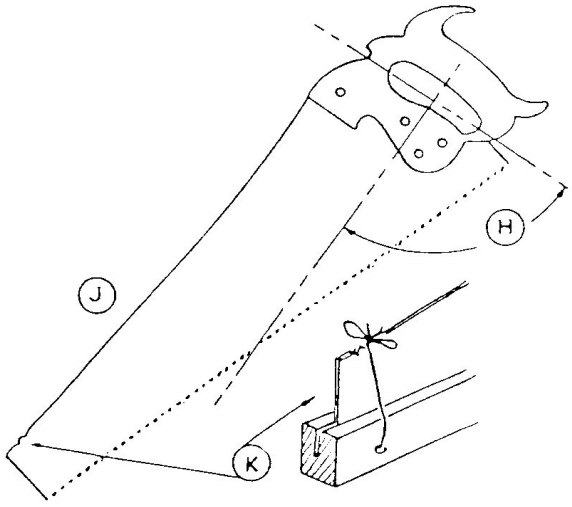
Respecting the Swedish saw, Goodman says[13], "This saw has been included here because it shows the toe-end decora-

148. 18th-century Dutch Hand-saw *Fries Museum, Leeuwarder*

149. 18th-century Swedish Hand-saw *Nordiska Museet, Stockholm*

tion in its most elaborate form. It may give an answer to that hardy annual in the school workroom: 'Please sir, what is the little tooth at the top of the blade for?' It has no obvious purpose, and is most likely a vestige of the shaped toe of the first broad-bladed saws."

A British writer named Percy Blandford published *Country Craft Tools* in 1974. A sketch[14] of several saw types includes a conventional closed handle saw. (This portion of Blandford's sketch is copied below.)



Blandford's text reads, "The back of the saw might be straight, or Americans favored the hollow of a 'skew-back', which some craftsmen claimed to be superior, but this is difficult to explain. Sometimes a nib was provided near the end of the blade, to retain the string of a sheath made by cutting a

(Continued on page 6)

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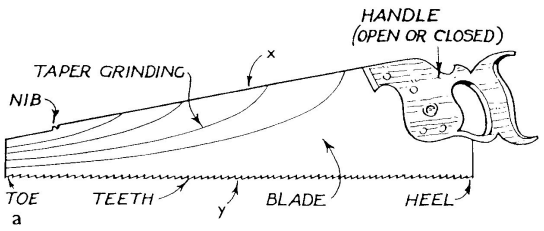
slit in a piece of wood."

He also writes that, "The quirks and twists in (the handle's) outline contribute nothing except decoration and strength in a few vital places."

R.A. Salaman's *Dictionary of Tools used in the woodworking and allied trades c. 1700-1970* was first published in 1975. Almost immediately it became **the** standard reference book on woodworking tools.



Salaman's listing for "Saw, Hand"[15] includes the drawing copied above and, in part, this text: "The grip is shaped to fit the hand comfortably and to give the user control over the pressure to be applied. Until recently, the handle was elaborately carved, with 'fish-tail' extremities and decorative curves; today these have been mostly eliminated. Until recently a small notch was cut in the back of most Hand Saws a short distance from the toe, leaving a projecting tooth or 'nib'. Its purpose is not known, but it may be a surviving vestige of decorative features to be found on seventeenth and eighteenth-century saws, especially in Scandinavian or Dutch tools of this period."

In the October 1983 issue of *The Fine Tool Journal*[16], an article by Raymond R. Townsend discusses in detail most known information about the origins and functions of saw nibs. Townsend includes most of the sources already quoted here, but in greater detail. He also provides and analysis of the variations found in the shape of saw nibs as illustrated in makers' catalogues in the U.S.A., Britain and Europe. The main shapes noted are 'round', 'rectangular' and 'pyramidal'. An unusual hand saw made by R. H. Smith & Co. Ltd. Of St. Catharines, Ontario has two rectangular nibs with a pyramidal shape in between. An example of that saw is notes as being in the collection of Ernest W. Rhuda of Nova Scotia.

R.H. Smith & Co. saw profile with two nibs.

Townsend notes many of the uses claimed for the nib and writes, "There is no doubt that some of the uses stated are true, but it does not mean that the NIB was placed on the saw for these purposes. He concludes, "Unless positive proof can be found that the NIB had a designed function, it must be concluded that it is pure decoration."

The Townsend article produced many letters from readers of the Fine Tool Journal. Several were published in subsequent issues[16]. Some respondents such as Brian Ringo of Canton NY were in total disagreement. Others such as Frank Kubin of DeLancy, NY and Leo Larsen of Portland, OR offered descriptions of what they understood to be the use of the nib. Robin Wyllie of Nova Scotia sent a well-documented explanation of the use of the saw nibs in holding a saw blade guard (more on Wylie's points later).

John Grabb of Chillicothe, OH wrote that, "An old carpenter told me that he used the nib to layout circles by hooking the nib on a nail and holding a pencil at a point along the teeth to draw a circle. The diameter varied according to where he held the pencil."

Erv Schaffer of Madison, WI wrote, "Mr. Townsend has clearly stated several times that the evidence does not support any use other than decoration for the nib. Until such evidence is found to the contrary, we can only hypothesize what its original use was. Both the opinions that the nib is a guard tie notch and a scoring point are excellent guesses. Being a rather pragmatic sort, I prefer to believe that the nib had a function. However, I must accept the evidence thus far discovered that no use, other than decoration, was intended, until evidence to the contrary is found."

Vernon U. Ward (then editor of the *Fine Tool Journal*) implicitly offered his own comments[18] about the saw nib quoting a list of nib functions that had just been published in the February 1984 issue of the magazine *Carpenter*. That list follows here:

1. Maker or starter tooth,
2. Used to describe an arc,
3. Clean sawdust from a cut,
4. Sighting like the sight on a rifle,
5. Retain a sheath string,
6. Clapboard Gauge for narrow siding,
7. Hook to retrieve cut-off pieces out of reach,
8. Hook to pull lumber toward you on a saw horse,
9. Used to obtain the correct angle for filing,
10. Notch the size of teeth for filing guide,
11. Vestige of handle locking notch for pit saws,
12. Facilitate the slitting of decorative metal panels,
13. Remove nails in broken slate,
14. Practice tooth for saw filer, to check steel hardness,
15. Holds blade during acid bath pickling,
16. Vestige of hook originally used for pruning,
17. Sight to avoid pulling back too far,
18. No function whatever,
19. Vestige of the decoration on early Dutch saws.

Michael Dunbar's 1989 book *Restoring, Tuning and Using Classic Woodworking Tools* contained a short reference to the saw nib[19]. His illustration is shown on the next page. The text notes the differing views about the nib but quotes the Disston Handbook respecting its purely decora-

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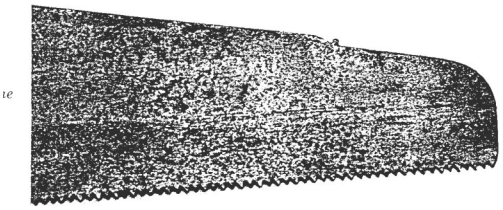
tive function.



Erwin L. Schaffer, a prominent collector and historian of hand saws, prepared a 1994 review[20] of the 1902 edition of the Disston Handbook that had just been reprinted. In the review, Schaffer notes that there were few changes from edition to edition of the Disston Handbooks, giving as an example, "the recurring note provided by Henry Disston himself on the function of the 'nib' on handsaws. As this is often a controversial issue, let me quote Disston (page 138) …. *The nib near the end of a handsaw has no practical use whatever, it merely serves to break the straight line of the back of blade and is ornamentation only."*

Schaffer continues, "that's how Disston viewed the nib's function on his saws! It is interesting to note that once 'skewback' saws came into prominence, the nib was not included on them but was continued on many straight back models."

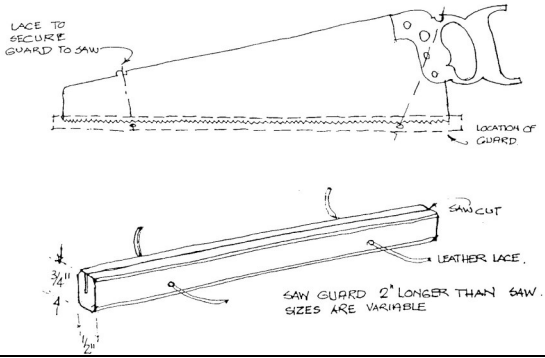
These comments in the June 1994 issue of the C*hronicle*, stimulated a full article on the topic by James Gauntlett of Boise, ID. His article[21] appeared in the December 1994 issue of *The Chronicle*. The Gauntlett article was titled NIBS AIN'T JUST FOR WRITING and it started with a sketch shown on the next page.

The author carefully worded his position at the start of these words. "Schaffer quotes Henry Disston, *The nib is of no use*… which of course is untrue. This article does not imply that original purpose of the nib was to hold on a guard, but it does refute the statement that the nib had no use."

Gauntlett then relates an experience some 50 years earlier when he showed his new nibless saw to one of the older men in the shop who asked, "How're you goin' to keep the guard on if its got no nib?" The article then notes a connection between hand saws with and without nibs in an early Disston catalogue. Those with nibs also have an extra notch in the top of the handle as shown in the author's sketch of a handsaw with nib and guard.

After noting the protective value of the saw guard when carrying a saw in a tool box, James Gauntlet concludes his article with these words. "All of the above does not claim to be the reason for the nib in the dark ages, but it is a response to the idea that the nib never has been of use. Is it possible that Henry Disston knew a great deal about making saws but did not know how to use them?"

In the January, 2000 issue if YESTERDAY'S TOOLS, the editor commented[22] on the old question, "what is the purpose of the nib on top of the blade near the tip of some old saws?" The question had been raised at the October 1999 meeting of The Tool Group. Following a discussion of saw developments in Canada's lumber mills.



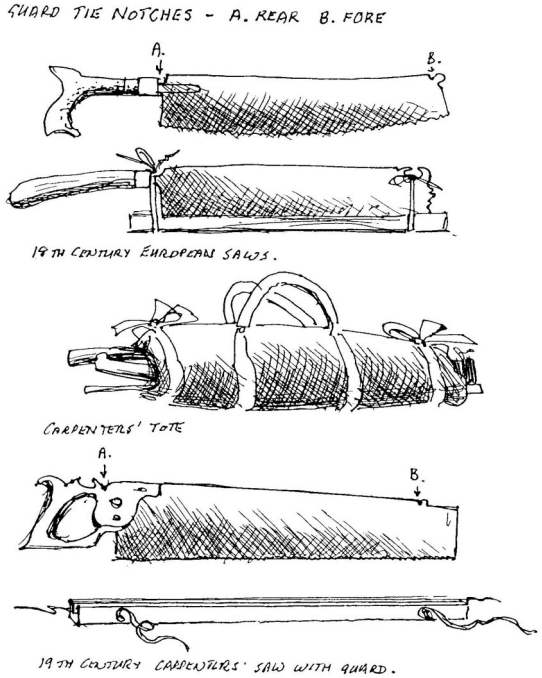
Sketch of saw with nib, handle notch and guard by James Gauntlett.

The editor quoted the Disston Handbook of 1902 and then added, "Despite this clear statement, some woodworkers and tool collectors persist in offering other complicated explanations of the nibs purpose. One person (Gauntlett above) even wrote, *Is it possible that Henry Disston knew a great deal about making saws but did not know how to use them?*

This editorial comment brought a personal communication[22] from a tool collector, historian, friend, and fellow member of The Tool Group, Robin Wyllie of East LeHave, Nova Scotia.

Wyllie provided the sketch below and offered the following explanation as to why 19th and 20th century rip and crosscut saws have nibs on the end:

> "The answer is, quite simply, that the nib is a vestigial but still functional remnant of the forward guard tie notch found on European 18th century saws.



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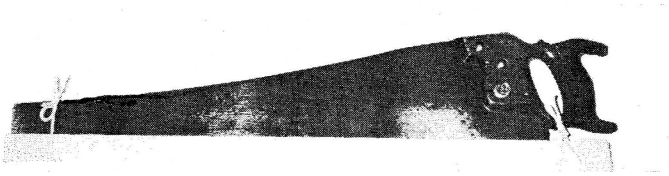
> "Since the earliest times, carpenters have carried their tools to and from work on a daily basis. Roman carpenters carried theirs in wooden buckets. Europeans of the Middle Ages used woven baskets and later British and American workers carried them in canvas bags, or totes. All were most easily carried by sticking a pole, or an adze through there handles and slinging them over one's shoulder".
>
> "With all the tools jumbled together, it was essential to protect their edges. Axes, slicks and adzes were sheathed in thick leather pouches; chisels and bits were carried in canvas rolls and saw teeth were seated in wooden guards. Generally home-made, the guards were secured with cord or tape which was tied over the front and rear notches on the saw. This prevented them from slipping.
>
> 'With the post war introduction of plastic clip-on guards, the notches have all but disappeared from contemporary saws and



> sleek plastic grips have replaced the ornate beech and fruitwood handles which make the 19th century hand saw so collectable."

What can be concluded from this review of information and opinion about nibs on hand saws?

It seems possible that several of the uses proposed actually were carried out by carpenters at one time or another. Writers (such as Blanford, Gauntlett and Wyllie) who describe the use of nibs in fastening saw guards offer an obviously rational and practical use, but offer no contemporary evidence that this was the purpose of the nib.

On the other hand, several writers (such as Petrie, Mercer, Goodman, Salaman, Townsend and Schaffer) support the opinion that the nib's purpose was simply decoration both in its 17th century origins and in its 18th and 19th century manufacturing.

This reviewer draws his personal conclusion based on three points:

1. The only recorded information from a saw maker (the Disston handbooks) states that (the nib) … "is an ornamentation only." It is unfortunate that Disston's words also said that the "nib has no practical use whatever". This may confuse the question of its **intended purpose** compared with its **use in practice.**
2. Many woodworking tools of the 17th to 19th centuries had decorative elements that persisted in general style over long periods of time. The elaborate curves and the chip carving of handsaw handles are just one example that could parallel the decorative role of the nib on the saw blade.
3. If the purpose for the nib had been to hold a saw guard tie, a simple notch would have been sufficient rather than typical 19th century designs having two notches and a nib of varying profile. Furthermore, it is <u>not</u> <u>necessary</u> to have a nib or notch at all to hold a saw guard. To the left is a photo of one of the author's nibless 19th century hand saws; it has a fully practical wooden guard simply tied around the blade and through the handle.

Echoing Townsend and Schaffer, this reviewer concludes that, pending contrary evidence from contemporary sources, nibs on hand saws most probably were <u>intended only for decoration.</u>

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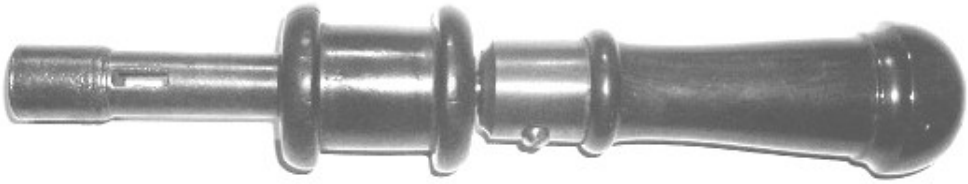
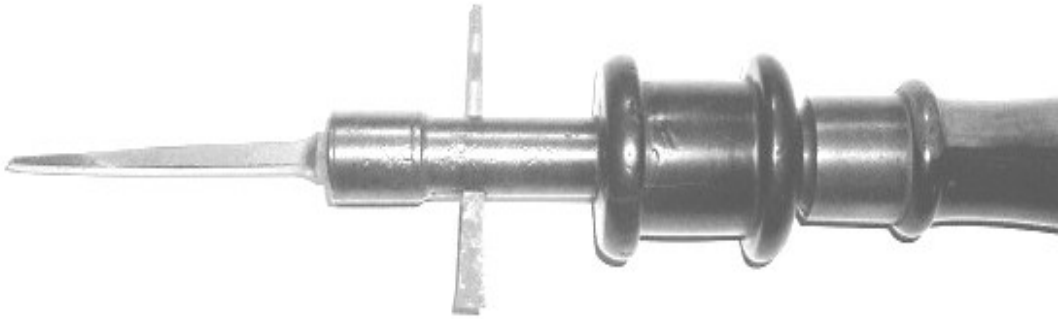
THE TOOL WIZARD

Mr. Wizard,
I just bought a bow drill, but I can't figure out what goes in the rectangular slot just below the opening for the bit. Is there a piece missing? A club member

Dear Club Member---
Not to worry. Nothing is missing. You have an early drift type chuck. I am enclosing three photos of a similar one. The first shows the slot without the bit. The second shows the bit tang half way down the slot. (It's made to fit that way.) And the third shows the drift half way through the opening between the end of the tang and the end of the slot. As the drift is tapered, it is made to go about where you see it in the photo before you have to whack it to force the bit loose. Pretty clever these ancients. ----- The Tool Wizard.





(Continued from page 4)

Slater's hammers

tools to suit virtually every imaginable need.

Fastening the head to the handle was always difficult whether the hammer was stone or metal but keeping the head on was something else altogether . Straps were at first added to the heads in various ways, either by welding them onto the head or integrating them into the casting. In either case the straps were fastened to the handle with nails or rivets. But it was David Maydole's invention of the "adze-eye" hammer that all but resolved this problematic issue of keeping the head on. His tapered opening in the head allowed a handle to be inserted and subsequently wedged into place thus assuring the user, and more importantly those around him, that the head wouldn't fly off during use.

Cigar box hammers

Bob discussed the ways in which hammers were fine tuned to suit specialized crafts like the slater's hammers for roofers, boat builders caulking mallets with "tuned" slots in the heads said to reduce some of the audible noise from a boatyard full of users, file maker and "saw doctors" hammers with their large curious "dog" heads, and the myriad of blacksmith and whitesmith's hammers with their special shapes for metal forming. Specialization also created new markets for these tools and "new and improved" models kept coming. Hammers were also used as promotional items for advertising and were incorporated in cigar box openers, crate openers and small candy hammers for the confection business.

Combination tools incorporating a hammer.

During the Victorian era hammers were incorporated into combination tools offering a single tool with several other functions, ostensibly to reduce the number of tools needed to solve life's everyday problems. Multiple claws for nail removal, various methods for holding nails so that the user could , single handed, start and drive a nail, a useful feature when working at heights.

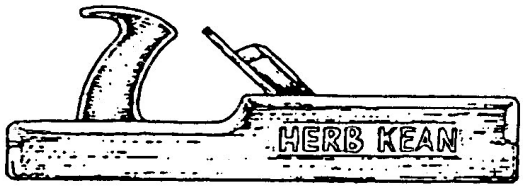
Estwing's latest hammer, a radical "weight-forward" design

The use of wood for handles was not left alone by the truly creative and other materials began to make appearances. Handles made with leather, rubber, plastic, fiberglass, steel and even carbon fiber can be found today. As ancient as the hammer is, patents for improvements continue to be filed. For example, the latest hammer from Estwing is their truly radical "Weight-Forward" design and Stanley has developed a "tuning-fork" anti-vibration handle, which was designed to reduce the amount of vibration transmitted by the tool to the user.

Their long period of use and development assures that hammers are available in an enormous array of sizes, shapes and materials. Used hammers are commonly found at antique shops, flea markets, garage sales, swap meets and auctions, to name a few. Because of that and the fact that most can be had for less than five dollars, hammers are prime candidates for beginning tool collectors or anyone who is looking for an easy way to expand their field of tool collecting. Bob brought a large and varied collection of hammers to the enjoyment of those in attendance and I'm sure that everyone left with a greater appreciation of the variety of forms, sizes and materials that make up this ancient tool

The large ring on the wire fence tool allowed it to be carried on a cowboy's saddle. The Starret machinist hammer has a magnifying glass in the head.

I'm not a hammer collector but when I got home I made a quick count of those that I had picked up over the years. I couldn't believe it, I counted 17! Hmmm...maybe I am. -ED



Kean Kuttin's

THE ADIRONDACKS CAPER

We spent many a daytrip in the Poconos and the Catskills, but to get to the Adirondacks it takes an overnight or a three day weekend.

But the weather was just right for a big weekend, and off we went to the "Dacks".

I guess we were in the right mood, because everything looked greener, and prettier. Besides that, the traffic was lighter than usual, for some unexplained reason. We had a great day and found a small motel that had a friendly proprietor who was just starting up and trying to make an impression.

That night we had a lakeside dinner at a Norwegian restaurant and saw the sun go down in brilliant colors across the water, and the lights of the bungalows twinkle on. It was a perfect trip --- but at that point I hadn't bought a single tool! Doris felt that was just fine, but I was getting antsy.

The next morning I was up early, and rented a canoe at the General Store on the lakefront. I did reasonably well fishing, considering it was in the middle of the summer, but came in earlier than predicted as I ran out of bait. Doris was still having coffee and jawing with the motel owner when I got back, so I decided to scout out the town for anyone who might know someone who had tools.

Naturally the folks in the general store knew everyone for miles around, and since I had rented a canoe and bought bait, they considered me eligible to receive information. The consensus of those sitting around was that "old man Parsons" was the one to see about tools. He was supposed to have "a whole barn full."

Well, we have all gone through the anticipation of finding the "Mother Lode" after getting these friendly recommendations, but I didn't get my hopes up. In fact I went back to get Doris, as Parsons lived up in the hills and I felt it would be a nice scenic drive.

It took some doing, but we finally found the place. It looked like a bomb had hit it. I have seen some sloppy farmhouses before, but this one took the cake. Doris was for going back, but I had to see if there were any tools lurking around in that barn.

After much "helloing" and dog barking, a scurfy old guy with a long beard, who looked like he just woke up, came out with a large frown on his face. I put on my best "country" act and finally got across what we were doing there. Doris, who from the age of 10 had a great compassionate feeling for "little old men", fell in love with Rip Van Winkle and they hit it off right away.

He told me to go into the barn if I wanted to see the tools, and he would just sit and talk to Doris. Was I glad she came along!

Well, the story could end here as the barn was full of rusty farm implements and ratty farm tools. So I was ready to go. But Doris was in her "make everything right" mode and was convincing Rip to come into town with us. I couldn't believe my ears. But what was even worse is that the damn fool listened to her and went in to clean up and change clothes. We took him to town and he showed us a few scenic spots that were worth the time.

But for the entire three days of scrounging in shops and markets, I didn't get one really good tool! Things are sure changing in the tool world. I can remember the days when a three day trip would have had my old wagon down on the springs. I have to admit that it took too much time away from the vacation, tooling around that much, but it sure was fun. Doris likes it better the way it is now. And I guess I will just have to get used to it.

$15 Reward

Was stolen on the night of the fourth of September from the house of George Hoffman, in West-Whiteland township, the following property, viz:-one pair Sash Plains, one Brace and Bits, 3 Augers, one 7-8 Bead, one smoothing plane, one Saw, one Hatchet some Chisels. Gouges, &c. part of them branded with my name. The sum of ten dollars will be given for the apprehension and conviction of the Thief, and five dollars for the delivery of the Tools. R. Webster

Downingtown, Sept 11

From the Village Record, West-Chester, Penn.
September 19, 1833

WANT ADS

Need help disposing of your tools or home items? Entire or partial house clean-outs available. Call Steve Zluky, (908)534-2710.

Seeking: McKinnon axe of Rockaway, NJ made between 1845 and 1905. Please call Stephen at (732) 682-8236.

Wanted: Petroliana-anything that has to do with old gas stations such as signs, oil cans, gas pumps etc.
Bill Hermanek (631) 360-1216, bhermanek@aol.com

Wanted: Foot powered band saw for collection and to demonstrate. Need not be complete. Have other foot powered machinery for possible trade. Ed Hobbs
(919) 828-2754, hobbsed@portbridge.com

Wanted: Napanoch Axes and other items from Napanoch, NY
Robert Arra (845) 647-1213, homefixer@hvc.rr.com

Wanted: North Bros. non ratcheting screwdrivers, No. 90 and No. 95 , good plus or better condition, various lengths.
Dave Nowicki (215) 576-5527, dnowicki@verizon.net

FOR SALE

A new reference book for patent research.

A detailed manual on how to research patents on line on the USPTO website. Includes tables of issue dates and patent #'s up to 1900, together with tables of patent classes. All you need to know to locate and print out patents quickly! 73 pp., 8½"x11", spiral bound. $20.00 + $2.50 shipping. Contact Philip Stanley, 36 Stockton Street, Apt. 2, Worcester MA 01610
or at **philstan@rcn.com**

" The Museum of Early Trades and Crafts"

… located in Madison, NJ is looking to borrow 19th century or earlier tools used to manufacture musical instruments for an exhibit on the musical instrument trade to run from the end of June 2005 to January 2006. If you have any tools you might be willing to lend please contact Peter Rothenberg at (973) 377- 2982or **curator@metc.org**

TOOL EVENTS 2005

June 5th - CRAFTS Meeting 1PM HOST Masonic Lodge Highbridge, NJ, New Jersey

July 8-9 - Martin Donnelly Live Free or Die Tool Fair
Hillsborough Center, NH mjd@mjdtools.com

July 11-15 EAIA-Eastfield Summer Workshops
East Nassau, NY

July 27th - David Stanley 46th International Auction
David@davidstanley.com or Ian@davidstanley.com

Aug 3 - Tony Murland **Tool Shop International Auction,**
tony@antiquetools.co.uk

Aug 13 Live Free or Die Auction, Avoca, NY
mjd@mjdtools.com

September 2-3 **The Biggest Tool Show West of the Mid-West**
The Rocky Mountain and Southwest Tool Collectors
Sheraton Uptown Hotel, Albuquerque, NM
For info call Bill McDougall
(505) 344-9272

Sept 9&10 Live Free or Die Auction, Nashua, NH
mjd@mjdtools.com

September 11 - CRAFTS Picnic, Brady Camp,
Lamington, NJ. Tailgating starts at 8AM, catered lunch at noon.
Judged tool displays with prizes. Call Ken Vliet at 610-837-5933