The TOOL SHED

NUMBER 159 March, 2010

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L.L.Davis and the Davis Level & Tool Co.

Makers of fine cast iron and wood levels 1867-1892

By Mel Miller

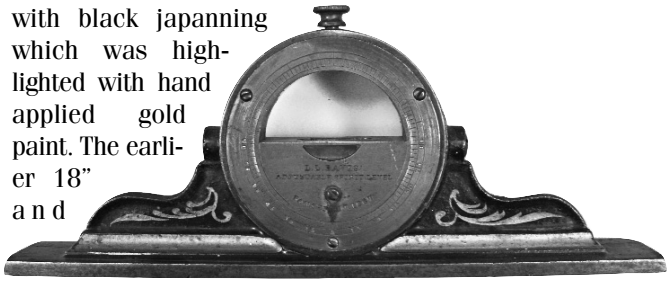
Davis level production can be broken down into 3 time periods. Within each of these time periods, different styles & types of levels were produced.

L. L. Davis Co. 1867 - 1875
Davis Level & Tool Co. 1875 - 1892
Davis Patent/M.W. Robinson Co. 1892

L. L. Davis 1867 – 1875

Leonard L. Davis began manufacturing levels in Springfield, Mass. in 1867, and over the following years produced some of the most beautiful, well made, and finely detailed levels of the century. He was an artist as well as a craftsman. He started with cast iron inclinometer levels which had a center brass vial unit which could be rotated 90 degrees for level or plumb use, or set to any degree in between using the scale on the brass retaining ring.

These "inclinometer" levels were offered in four sizes from the 6" mantle clock style thru 12", 18" & 24" sizes. These levels were finished with black japanning which was highlighted with hand applied gold paint. The earlier 18" and 24" sizes were 3 1/4" tall, and are commonly called "tall frame". Later L.L. Davis 18" & 24" levels were 2 3/4" tall. (This height was retained thru later level production.)



These levels were marked L L Davis' Adjustable Spirit Level

Shown above are examples of "tall frame" & regular size levels.

L. L. Davis produced a line of wood levels in inclinometer & carpenter styles, in mahogany and rosewood. They also produced a line of pocket levels with gold paint accents.

Throughout the production of Davis levels, there were many small changes made. By researching these "variations", I am able to put most levels in a chronological order or "type". Of course there are a number of small casting variations within most types and several changes to the stop screws. I have spent a lot of time observing Davis levels, and can place most of them in a chronological order. I also realize that most collectors aren't really interested in all of these minute details, so I won't clog up these pages with all of that information. I would be happy to discuss any of these details with other interested collectors.

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NEXT MEETING

April 11, 2010 –1PM

HOST Masonic Lodge Highbridge, NJ

Dave Segley

will demonstrate making Shaker Boxes.
The Shakers made wooden oval boxes in a range of sizes to hold everything from dried herbs to nails, everything except liquids.

Please mark your calendar

Collectors of Rare and Familiar Tools Society of New Jersey

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The purpose of CRAFTS of New Jersey is to encourage interest in early trades and industries, and in the identification, study, preservation and exhibition of tools and implements used and made in New Jersey as an integral part of our heritage.

Membership in CRAFTS is open to anyone who shares the above interests. Annual dues per person or couple are fifteen dollars for the membership year of July 1 through June 30. Membership fees may be sent to: Hank Allen, 524 Harristown Rd. Glen Rock, NJ 07452 (write check payable to CRAFTS of New Jersey).

CRAFTS of NJ meetings are held at the HOST Masonic Lodge in High Bridge, N.J.

Take 1-78 to Route 31 exit at Clinton. Go north on Route 31, two miles to second traffic light at the High Bridge exit. Turn right and go about half a mile to Dennis Avenue. 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

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e-mail- Jim@JimBodeTools.com

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

Llyoyd & Helen Buzzell Stillwater, ME
(An old member returning)

Alan Magnes Massapequa Park, NY

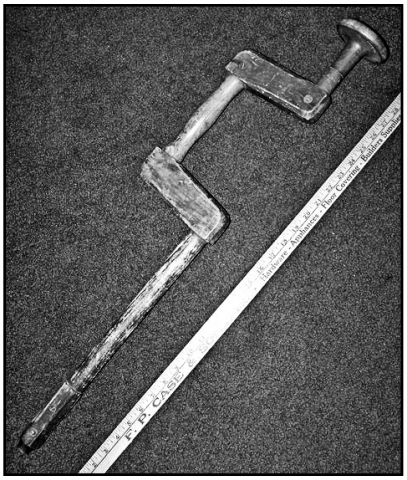
Pete Powers Oneonta, NY

■■■

President's Corner

Come on winter lets get this season over with. I am ready for the Spring, with all the tool action waiting to happen. The flea markets can let loose and tool auctions will reveal their treasures. The CRAFTS auction is around the corner and boy what an auction it is going to be. With all these sparklers we should have a packed house. So get your tailgate items polished up and tagged as it should be a busy morning with lots of buyers. Tailgating starts at sunrise and has a minimal $10 fee to assist CRAFTS financial obligations.

I received a photo from Frank Kosmerl showing me a brace he has in his collection. It is similar to the ones I wrote about in the Last Tool Shed. I think he was trying to impress me with the size of its lower body.



I received the note below from a CRAFTS member recently and was surprised to know that there is a CRAFTS member older than Jack Whelan.

CRAFTS 1st CENTENARIAN

Did you discover a "What's it" in your latest hunt? Jacob Lutz, who was 100 in February 2010 may be the one to identify the long – lost purpose of this "What's it". Jacob, a tool dealer and collector, has been a member of CRAFTS since its inception. Always most content in his workshop basement fixing an old tool, his passion really blossomed after retiring from 40 years in the photography business.

He was accompanied by his wife Ruth, selling at Lambertville Flea Market, Meyersville Grange, and various New Jersey antique shows beginning in 1969.

The photography skills after retirement were put to use to illustrate Alex Farnham's tool publications.

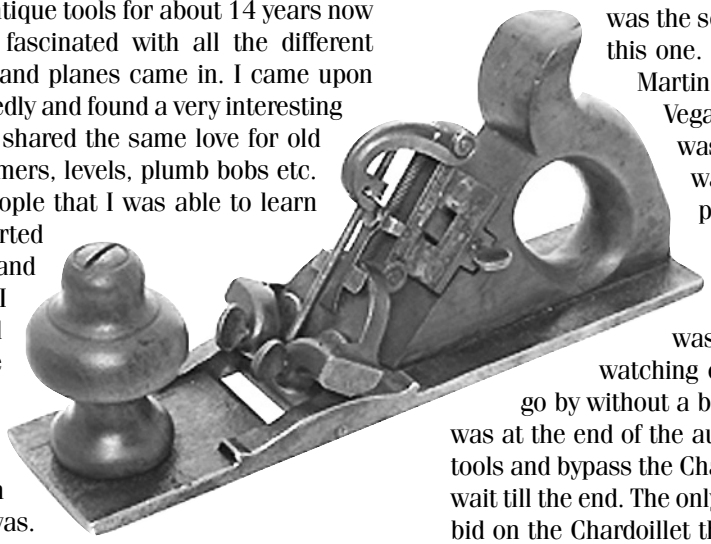
As I am writing this, Jacob still remains an inspiration and source of information to assist me, Judy, his daughter, in my part-time pursuit of tool selling and collecting.

Thank you, Dad!
Judy Martin

IT'S NOT GETTING AWAY THIS TIME

By Bob Cotti

I have been collecting antique tools for about 14 years now and have always been fascinated with all the different shapes and sizes that hand planes came in. I came upon tool collecting unexpectedly and found a very interesting group of people that all shared the same love for old tools. Be it planes, hammers, levels, plumb bobs etc. It was through these people that I was able to learn about old tools. I started going to tool shows and auctions and the more I went the more I wanted to know, and of course buy! Through this family of friends and shows I managed to buy and collect every book on tool collecting there was. One of the best of course was PTAMPIA I & II. It was in this book that I found a picture of the Chardoillet patented plane. There are literally thousand's of old tools of all shapes and sizes and beauty but to me this was absolutely gorgeous. The plane was a French patented plane circa1852. This plane had all the bells and whistles and was far ahead of its time. The elegant cast iron mechanism on this Chardoillet's patent plane combines function with beauty. The mechanism was patented in France in about 1852 and adjusts not only the depth of the cutter, but also the pitch of the cut. The knob on top of the scrolled casting (which is missing on this plane) moves the cutter up and down. The thumbscrew at the front of the birch handle makes the cutter angle adjustments, by letting the arm slide into a slot carved into the handle. The plane is marked with the designation "brevetes.g.d.g.", meaning that the device is protected by a government issued patent, with the disclaimer "sans guarantee du government", meaning that the government assumes no responsibility for enforcing the patent. The more I read about this plane the more I wanted to own one but they are extremely rare and costly.



I saw my first Chardoillet in person at a PNTC tool show in Oregon back in 2002, I think, and was floored by its beauty and grace. A couple of other Chardoillets have surfaced at auctions and on eBay over the years, but bought top dollar every time. I kept getting more frustrated thinking I will never get to own one. Of the few that are known in collections, they are all of the jack plane size or larger. A couple of years ago at Brown's Auction in October of 2007 a Chardoillet surfaced in a smoothing plane size, which was the only one I had ever heard about or seen. Again, the Chardoillet eluded me; I missed it only by minutes.

So here I am writing about how I finally obtained my Chardoillet. Martin Donnelly's auction at Nashua on Sept.19, 2009 had a Chardoillet's patent smooth plane listed as the only example of this size known; but actually it was the second one. I was determined to get this one. I had missed the last two years of Martin's auctions because of living in Las Vegas and money was tight. I decided I was going to Nashua and the plane was coming home with me. I brought plenty of tools with me to sell at the tool show. Selling was pretty slow by my standards but I managed to sell a couple of quality pieces. It was hard sitting still at the auction watching every tool that I was interested in go by without a bid. I had no choice, the Chardoillet was at the end of the auction. So my dilemma was, bid on tools and bypass the Chardoillet or bypass all the tools and wait till the end. The only problem with that was if I got outbid on the Chardoillet then I would go home with nothing. So it was a big gamble and one I was ready to take. Well as you probably surmised by now I did win it and the Chardoillet came home with me. It is one of my most prized tools and sits proudly on the shelf along with many other rare and ingenious planes. But by far this is my favorite. There hasn't been a lot written about this plane because quite frankly there's not a lot known other than what has already been written. As of this writing I am still trying to locate a copy of the French patent but have so far come up short. ■

Closeup of blade depth and angle adjustment. The blade is missing on this plane.

L.L.Davis and the Davis Level & tool Co.

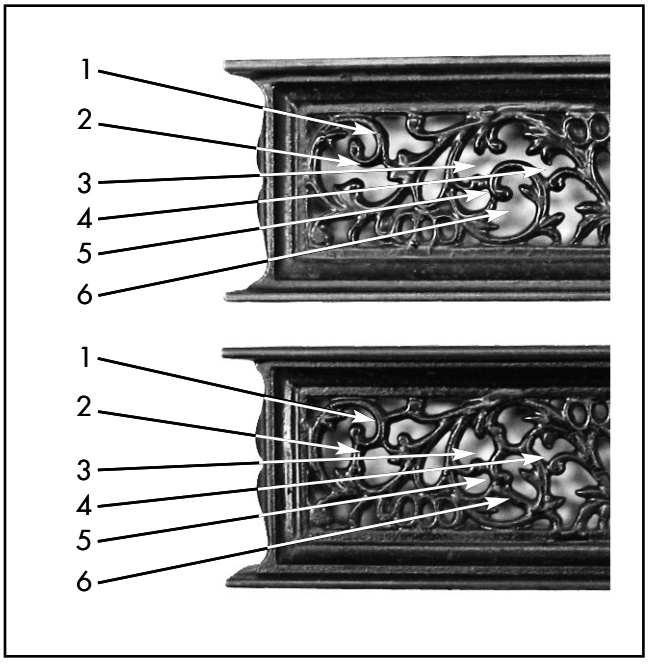
Continued from page 1

The Davis Level & Tool Co. 1875 – 1892

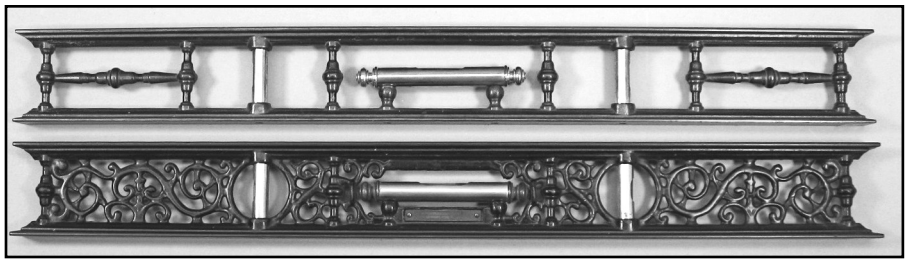
In 1875, L. L. Davis reorganized his company as the Davis Level & Tool Co, and continued production of his fine levels. These are generally marked Davis Level & Tool Co. The finish was again black japanning, but the gold paint accents were only carried on for a short time - mainly on the 6" & 12" inclinometer levels.

The filigree on the Davis Level & Tool Co. inclinometer levels was finer than the earlier L. L. Davis levels, and it appears that the filigree on the 12" models was so fine that it was too easily broken. The 12" models were modified by adding reinforcement to the filigree in several places. These "reinforcements" are easy to spot as they don't flow with the pattern of the filigree. This modification was apparently done early on, as the unreinforced versions are scarce - I would say that I see 50 or more of the " reinforced" versions for every unbroken unreinforced level.

If you compare the right side of the top level to the right side of the bottom level - at the points indicated on the left sides - you will see the differences. Look especially at #s 1, 2, & 6 - they are the most obvious - where a straight connecting piece was added. Davis had probably paid good money for the patterns that proved to be too fragile, and he took the easy way out by "reinforcing" them instead of making new patterns in which the "additions" could have been made to flow with the pattern of the filigree.



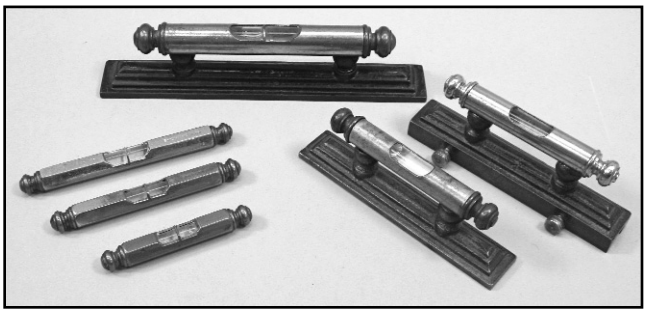
The Davis Level & Tool Co. also produced a line of cast iron "carpenter style" levels with level & plumb vials. The first of these "carpenter style" levels were unmarked and had no filigree, but had the distinctive finials on the end of the level vial found on many Davis levels. They were somewhat plain, and are called "spindle" levels in reference to the spindle shaped support columns. They were made in 4 sizes: 6", 12", 18", & 24" long. There has been some debate as to when these were first made. I have noted that some of them use an 1871 patent adjustment for the plumb vial, while others use an 1883 patent adjustment. Obviously, they were only made for a short time, and were fragile due to the limited amount of support between the top & bottom rails. The second type of carpenter levels was stronger, and the 12", 18", and 24" sizes now had a nice filigree pattern. Earlier versions had paper tags, which are usually missing.



Shown above are examples of the "spindle" and the second type of carpenter levels.

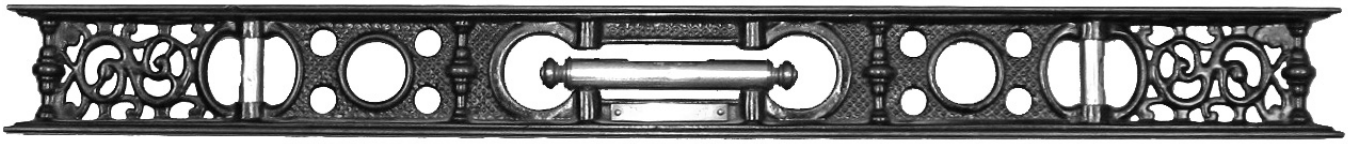
Later versions have brass tags with Davis Level & Tool Co. Springfield, Mass. on one side of the level, and patented May 29, 1877, 1883 on the other side. The line of wood levels was phased out at some time during this period.

The Davis Level & Tool Co. produced a new line of "pedestal" levels, and nickel plated hexagon bodied pocket levels. The pedestal levels were unmarked, but had the distinctive Davis finials. The hexagon levels were marked Davis Level & Tool Co, Springfield, Mass., and had the Davis finials also.

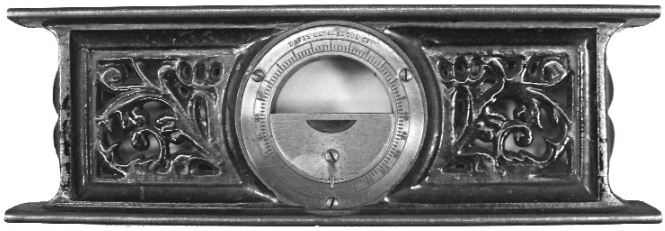


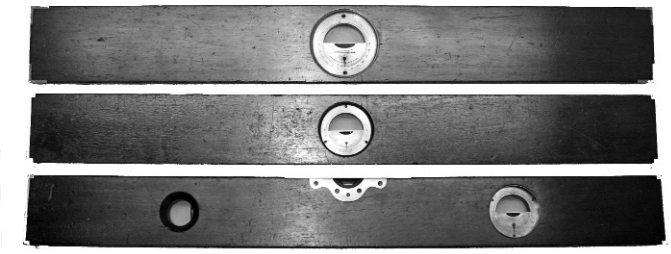
Somewhere around 1890, the Davis Level & Tool Co. discontinued the 6" "mantle clock" style and replaced it with a 7" inclinometer similar to the other 3 sizes.

Around the same time, they also introduced a cast iron carpenter style level with an inclinometer replacing one of the plumb vials. This style is referred to as the "offset inclinometer". This was the most expensive level in their line at the time. High price and short production time combine to make these levels scarce today.



Top *- Robinson level with simplier & sturdier cast middle section.*
Lower left *- Cast iron 7 inch inclinometer with filigree.*
Lower right *- 3 wood levels made by the Davis Level 7 Tool Co. with Inclinometer.*





Davis Patent / M. W. Robinson Co. 1892

In 1892, the Davis Level & Tool Co. sold the Davis Patent rights to the M. W. Robinson Co. They sold the remaining Davis stock, and manufactured the carpenter style, the pedestal & hexagon pocket levels for an unknown time. Robinson levels are generally distinguished by round end caps replacing the Davis finials, and areas of simpler casting replacing some of the filigree on the 18" & 24" sizes. These levels are generally marked with some form of: MWR Co, Davis Patent. This was a gradual transformation as the Davis stock was used up, and many levels are found with both Davis & Robinson characteristics.

Several Davis Level & Tool Co. inclinometer levels have been found in boxes labeled: M W Robinson Co. I haven't seen any evidence that Robinson manufactured any of the inclinometer levels themselves. But I have observed that the later Davis inclinometer levels were modified by making the ends thicker - probably in response to complaints about corners breaking off. Robinson did continue the offset inclinometer models, but they all have inclinometers marked Davis Level & Tool Co. ■

Mel Miller is a collector of Davis levels. His website is: http://melmillerantiquetools.com, and can be reached at: <melmiller43@comcast.net>

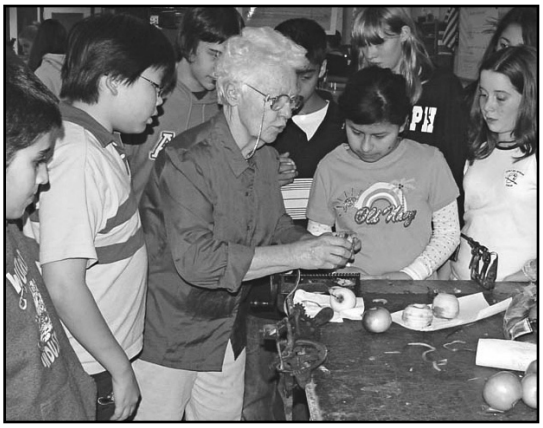
Ann Rokita Remembered

Steve & Mar Kay Zluky

Ann Rokita, a long time member of Crafts, passed away recently. We met Anna during the early eightys along with her brother Ludwig. Both of them were very good at finding many treasures during town cleanups and at garage sales. They had a unique sense to always find the most unusual primitives, tools and kitchen ware.

Thru the years she belonged to CRAFTS she always made sure to bring an interesting display at our yearly picnic. She loved apple peelers, peach peelers, rug beaters etc. Whenever Ann found something good she alway s stopped by for our help with pricing glassware, primitives, tools and many other items. She never told us where she found them and what her sources were. Just that she was in a town when they had clean up day.

After the death of her brother, she continued to find things. We visited her many times and she showed us her garage and basement but there wasn't anything that impressed us, but at the next antique show she had a number of odd and interesting pieces. We always wondered where her secret room was.

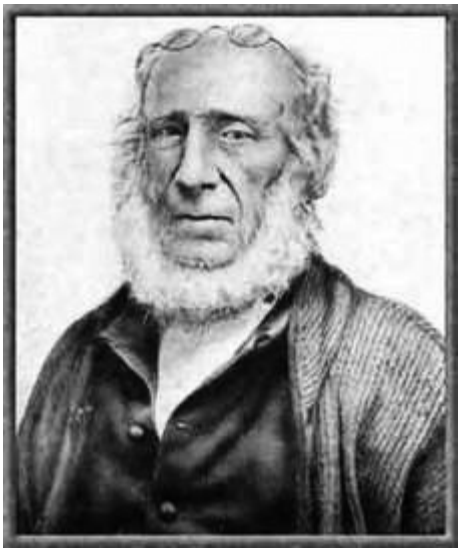


Ann loved her Polish heritage and a few years ago she finally visited Poland. We used to discuss our traditions Slovak and Polish which were very similar. Ann was very close to her remaining brother and his family. She made sure that she spent the Christmas Holidays with her nephew and nieces passing on to them the old customs and traditions especially concerning Christmas Eve.

She was a very outgoing person who loved life and had many friends who were there for her when needed. Ann showed her true spirit the last two years in battling cancer and going through chemotherapy. She fought hard and long to the very end. She will be missed by her family and her many friends.

Dennis Menscer – Cane Fly Rod Maker

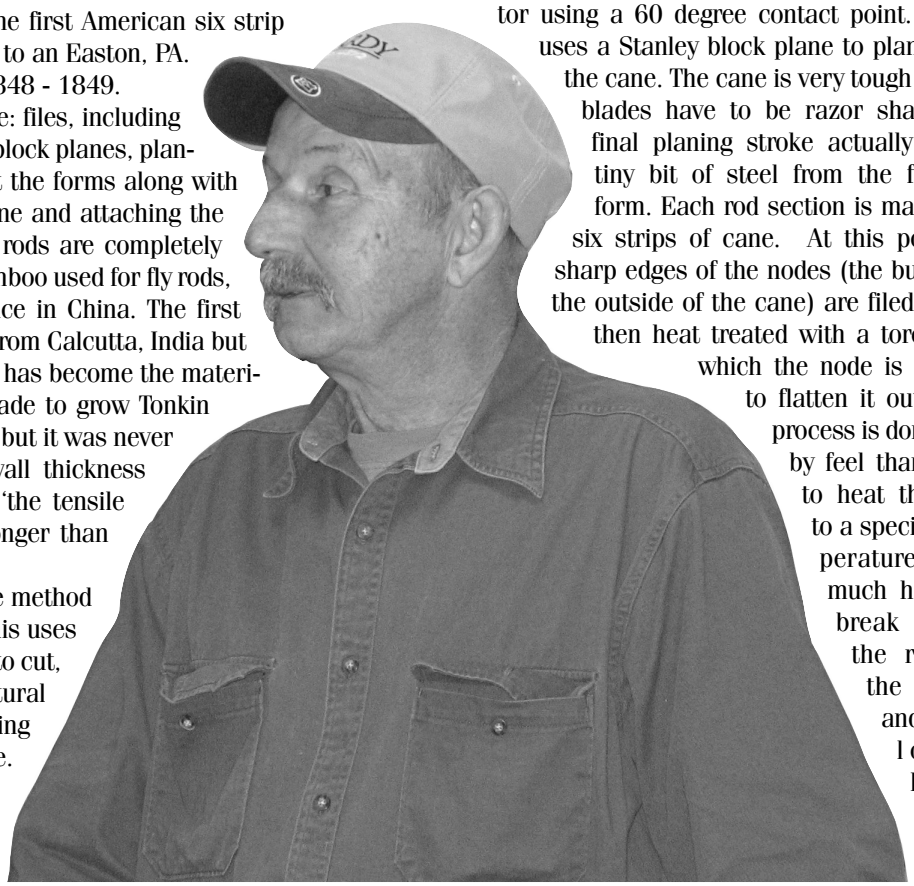
The speaker for our November meeting was Dennis Menscer who came to explain how he makes cane fly rods. He had been a commercial fisherman with his own lobster boat for 33 years. Today, he lives in Hancock, NY on the west branch of the Delaware River and, under the name of Little River Rods, is noted as one of the top 10 cane fly rod makers in the country. He started learning about bamboo rod construction when he decided that he wanted to repair an old salmon rod that he purchased in Florida. With some knowledge gained through that exercise he then thought he'd like to try his hand at making a cane fly rod. While there were a few books available, like "*A Master Guide To Building A Bamboo Fly Rod*", by Hoagy Carmichael (son of the legendary American composer) with Everett Garrison, which showed the planing process; finding all of the information necessary to make a fly rod was not available in one all-inclusive volume. Dennis told us that it takes a thorough sifting through the information contained in about five different books to learn how to make a rod. It seems that each author would give some very good information and just enough misinformation so as to not give away their secrets. Cane fly rods have been made in America for about 230 years. The first American six strip split bamboo rods are attributed to an Easton, PA. gun maker, Samuel Phillipe in 1848 - 1849.

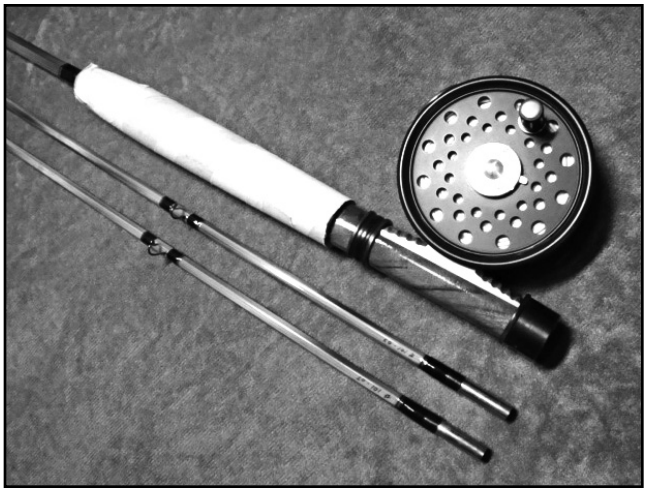


Samuel Phillipe

The tools that Dennis uses are: files, including a difficult to find # 8 Grobet file, block planes, planing forms, a dial gauge to adjust the forms along with various jigs for gluing up the cane and attaching the line guides. All of Menscer's fly rods are completely hand made. Tonkin Cane, the bamboo used for fly rods, comes only from a small province in China. The first cane rods were made with cane from Calcutta, India but Tonkin cane supplanted that and has become the material of choice. An attempt was made to grow Tonkin Cane in other parts of the world, but it was never of the same quality. "It's the wall thickness that's important", says Dennis, 'the tensile strength of cane is actually stronger than that of steel."

Each rod maker has a favorite method to split out the cane strips. Dennis uses a meat cleaver and a mallet, not to cut, but to rive the cane along its natural grain. Dennis then uses two planing forms to shape the strips of cane. The first one is a roughing form made of wood with one side beveled at 30 degrees with the other side is beveled at 60 degrees. The second form, the finishing form, steel with each side beveled at 60 degrees, which is the final shape for each strip of cane. The taper of the metal form is adjustable every five inches with two bolts, one bolt to increase the width and the other to decrease the width. Each rod tapers from a half inch wide at one end and down to 15 thousandths of an inch at the other and is set with a dial indicator using a 60 degree contact point. Dennis uses a Stanley block plane to plane down the cane. The cane is very tough and the blades have to be razor sharp. The final planing stroke actually cuts a tiny bit of steel from the finishing form. Each rod section is made from six strips of cane. At this point the sharp edges of the nodes (the bumps on the outside of the cane) are filed off and then heat treated with a torch after which the node is pressed to flatten it out. This process is done more by feel than trying to heat the cane to a specific temperature. Too much heat will break down the resin in the cane and will no longer hold the fibers



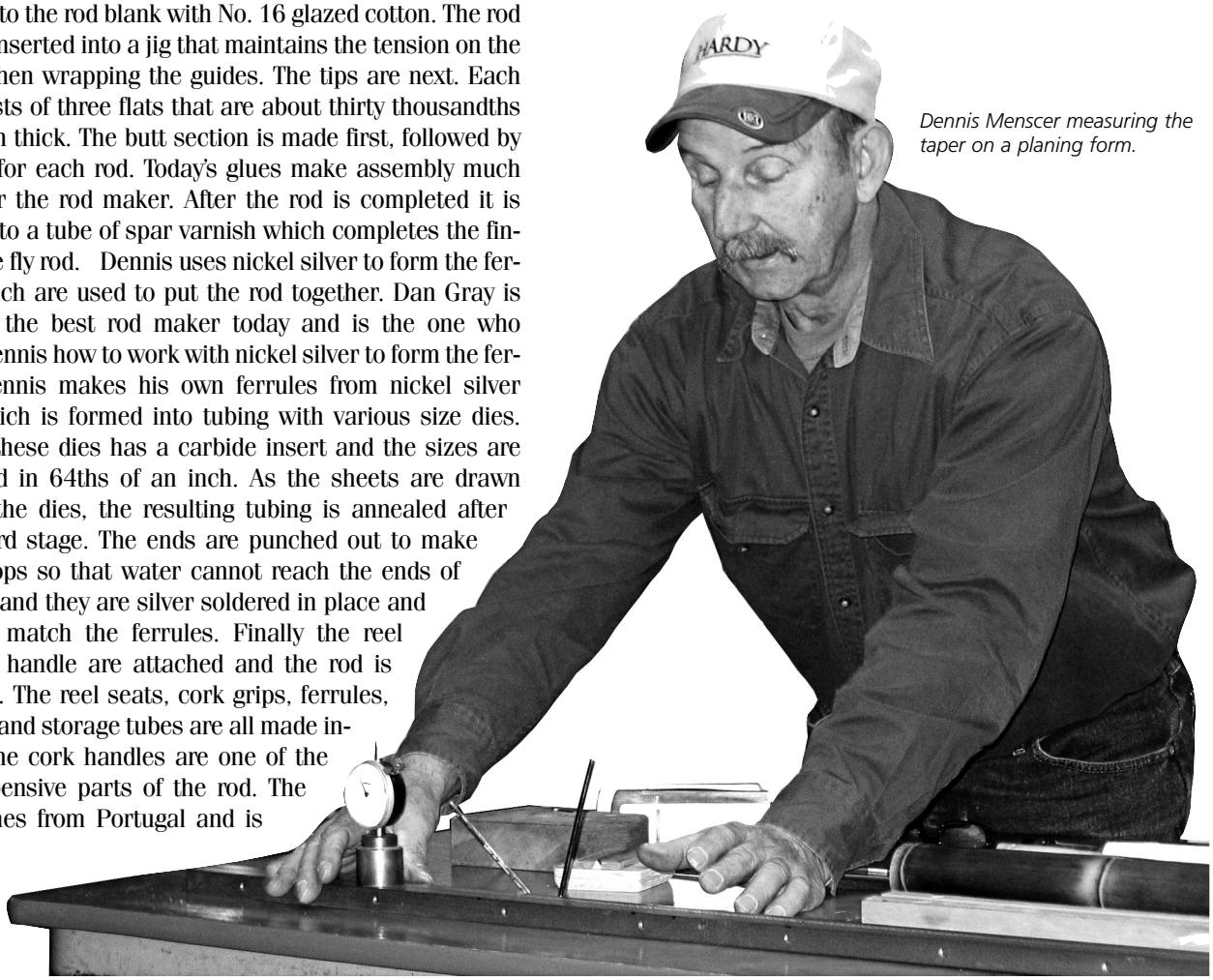


3 piece rod made by Dennis.

together. During assembly these nodes are staggered so that no two nodes will ever line-up adjacent to each other. The next step is the glue-up which begins at the fat end of the rod and continues on to the thinnest, with the glue applied to each piece sparingly. The fit between the six strips of cane is so tight that the joinery is barely discernable. The next step is to attach the line guides. These are attached to the rod blank with No. 16 glazed cotton. The rod blank is inserted into a jig that maintains the tension on the thread when wrapping the guides. The tips are next. Each tip consists of three flats that are about thirty thousandths of an inch thick. The butt section is made first, followed by two tips for each rod. Today's glues make assembly much easier for the rod maker. After the rod is completed it is dipped into a tube of spar varnish which completes the finish on the fly rod. Dennis uses nickel silver to form the ferrules which are used to put the rod together. Dan Gray is probably the best rod maker today and is the one who taught Dennis how to work with nickel silver to form the ferrules. Dennis makes his own ferrules from nickel silver sheet which is formed into tubing with various size dies. Each of these dies has a carbide insert and the sizes are calibrated in 64ths of an inch. As the sheets are drawn through the dies, the resulting tubing is annealed after every third stage. The ends are punched out to make water stops so that water cannot reach the ends of the cane and they are silver soldered in place and made to match the ferrules. Finally the reel seat and handle are attached and the rod is complete. The reel seats, cork grips, ferrules, rod bags and storage tubes are all made in-house. The cork handles are one of the most expensive parts of the rod. The cork comes from Portugal and is priced at $3.00 for each one-half inch ring. It takes 10 rings to make a handle. Dennis is able to make his own line guides but says it's not cost effective.

Dennis has made about 200 rods in 15 years. Each rod averages about 60 hours to complete and Dennis has a two year waiting list. He charges $1,295 and he gets complaints from other makers who charge from $2,800 to $5,000. When asked why he didn't raise his prices he said that he was discussing this issue with a friend who asked, "Dennis, do you want to sell rods or make rods." So the decision was made. Many of the top makers have been doing it for many years and just don't make as many as they used to.

Here are a few of Dennis' final thoughts: The best cane fly rods are American made. Cane rods last much longer than graphite rods, and with care, their value continues to rise and they will become heirlooms. According to Menscer, "Unless the rod is completely shattered, a cane rod can be repaired. That is not possible with a graphite rod. Also, most rods break because of mishandling, they were either stepped on or crushed in a car door, not because the fish was too big. Cane rod making has made a comeback in the last five years from a dying art with only a handful of makers to about 5000 active makers today." ■



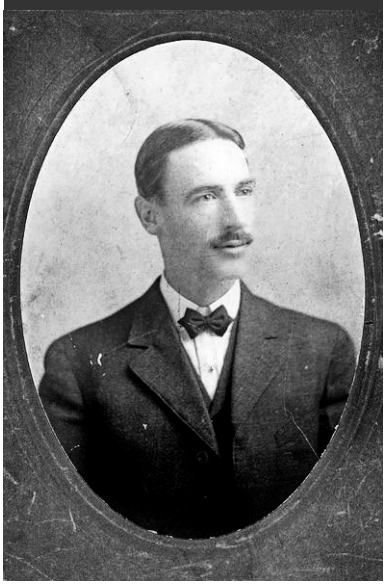
Dennis Menscer measuring the taper on a planing form.

Information on Albert Morange

Inventor of the Morange Patent Wrench

By Lynn Dowd

Story of the acquisition of the Morange wrench and excerpts of e-mails I received from descendents of Albert Sealy Morange.

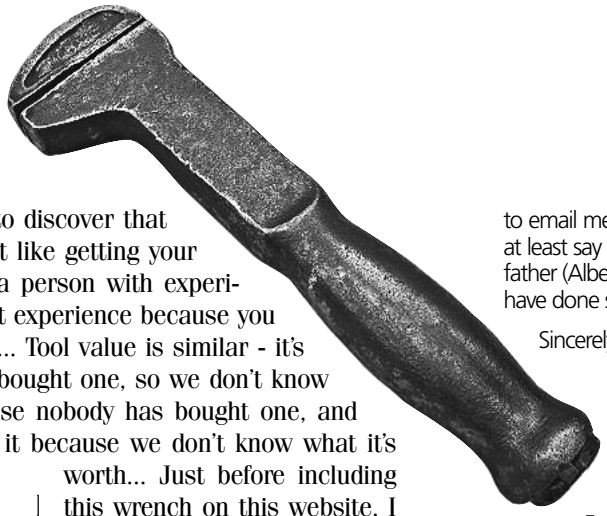


Tool acquisition has always been a process of thought followed by action. The thought "If I was an old tool, where would I be?" followed by lots of driving. There are rare occasions, however, when tools arrive at my doorstep, begging for a new home. Who am I to deny them? A man showed up at my gate, saying he heard I bought old tools. When I confirmed this rumor, we went out to his truck and he pulled out a box filled with miscellaneous small hand tools. It was an interesting group, and he was particularly intent on showing me this old wrench. It was a solid steel wrench with a nice, simple form, good heft, and, at first glance, no apparent adjustment mechanism. He took great delight in showing me how it worked. When I dug through the rest of the box, admiring the other odds and ends he had to offer, we settled on a price we were both happy with and he went on his way, leaving me with an eclectic assortment of tools, some of which I had never seen before. I then settled in to figure out exactly what it was I had just spent my hard earned money for.

The wrench measures eight inches in overall length when closed. The adjustment mechanism, which the old boy took such great delight in demonstrating, is a hinged cap on the end which flips open to reveal a short handle which cranks much like the flip out handle on steel or cloth measuring tapes. The inside surface of the cap is marked (as well as I can tell) 1 L 1/64, 1 R 1/8. When the wrench is open, the neck reveals graduations of 1/16 of an inch for a total distance of 1 1/4 inch.

There is a name on the head which I could not decipher at first. The casting appears slightly muddled, as if they had more important things to worry about when making this wrench. There is a patent date stamped into the lower jaw which, again, is hard to make out due to bumps and knocks a wrench gets under normal use.

The first step in finding information on this wrench was to try to determine the name. As you can tell by the photo, that was no big help, as there were several combinations of letters that it appeared to be. Information on the internet was a bust, so I went to the Schulz's book ANTIQUE & UNUSUAL WRENCHES for a visual comparison, as I figured it was almost antique, and it was darn sure unusual. That source provided no answers, nor did any of the other tool catalogs in my possession, so I decided to pull out the big guns. I e-mailed Emery Goad, notorious wrench maven and current president of SWTCA. I provided a description, as well as photos. Emery replied that he had never seen a wrench like this before, and could provide no information on it. I then took it a step further and contacted Stan Shulz, editor of the Missouri Valley Wrench Club newsletter, and son of the couple who authored the book mentioned above. Stan allowed as how he had never seen one before, either, but asked if he could include the photos in the next newsletter. He had great confidence in the subscribers to the newsletter, and felt that one of them would have information on this oddball wrench. Stan's confidence was well placed, as he contacted me several months later stating he had received several replies with information, and one member had come forth with a copy of the patent papers and a scan of his example of this wrench. Stan checked his database of past auctions and found where one had sold several years back. He felt it was an incomplete example, but it brought $150, nonetheless.The pertinent information about this wrench supplied to Stan by an unnamed source (Thank You, whoever you are) is as follows: The name is MORANGE. Patent number 844,954 was issued to Albert Sealy Morange of Stratford, Connecticut on February 19, 1907. With the acquisition of this important information, my curiosity was satisfied. For the most part, anyway. I was still curious as to its value. On the off chance that I someday caved in to the supplications of a collector who "just couldn't go on living without this wrench", I needed to know approximately what that collector considered his life worth. Factoring in that there were only three examples extant - the one belonging to the person who supplied Stan the information, the incomplete example in the auction records, and mine - I figured it should bring a little more than that "crisp, new, five dollar bill" offered by that one fella' who I showed it to (bless his



heart). I have come to discover that tool evaluation is a lot like getting your first job - they want a person with experience, but you can't get experience because you don't have experience... Tool value is similar - it's rare, but nobody has bought one, so we don't know what it's worth because nobody has bought one, and we're hesitant to buy it because we don't know what it's worth... Just before including this wrench on this website, I took one more kiss at the pig. I searched the internet one more time for "Morange Patent Wrench". A link came up to a listing in the March 2003 "Live Free or Die" auction. There was a very nice description with an estimated bid range of $250 to $500. (This makes the fourth known example, unless the other complete example mentioned above are one and the same). I contacted MJD tools asking if they still had a record of the final bid price, and a very nice lady responded saying yes, they did. The wrench sold for $1,375. I'm kinda' glad I didn't take that crisp, new, five dollar bill.

OBITUARY

ALBERT MORANGE

Albert S. Morange, aged 53 years, died early this morning at his home, 15 Glendale avenue, after a long illness. Mr. Morange has resided in this city for the past six years and has been employed at the Orcutt wagon works. He is survived by his wife, three sons, Cletus, James and Arnott Morange of this city; five daughters, Marie, Marcelle, Frances and Florence of this city and Mrs. Grace Johnson of Athol; four brothers, Edward, Louis, Peter and Joseph Morange of New York city, and one sister, Mother Gertrude of the religious order of the Lady of the Senecal of New York city. The time of the funeral will be announced later.

For most of us who collect tools, the information we receive about the tools we collect comes from articles and books, painstakingly researched by the more scholarly among us.We gather information from presentations and conversations we are privy to at tool collector club meets, newsletters, and internet forums. Seldom do we get a glimpse of the tool and its inventor from those more intimately connected. Such was the honor bestowed upon me when I received the following e-mail:

From: Kelcey Morange
Subject: Morange Wrench

Hi there, I was searching the web and your site came up showcasing the Morange wrench. Albert Morange was my great-grandfather, and my father knows a bit more about the wrench if you should ever want anymore information. (We are not a family of great inventors or anything, so this seemingly insignificant contribution to the vast array of available hand tools is kind of stockpile of family lore).If you are ever interested, please feel free to email me, and I will put you in touch with him. If not, let me at least say thank you for showcasing it, as I am sure my grandfather (Albert's son James) would have been very proud that you have done so.)

Sincerely, Kelcey Morange

I wasted no time responding to Kelcey, asking that she put me in touch with her Father. The next day, I was contacted by Kelcey's Father.

From: Richard Morange
Subject: Morange Wrench
Mr. Dowd,

I was just pointed to the web page where you speak of the Morange wrench. Thanks for posting the pictures. Albert Sealy Morange was my grandfather and, while I have copies of the patent drawings, I've never actually seen even a picture of the actual wrench. My dad spoke of the patents held by his father and took me to a library to show me the reference when I was a kid. With the internet, it's a lot easier for me to show my own children - one of whom sent me the link to your site.

Albert Morange was a jack of all trades, who died, in Northampton, MA, of lead poisoning, after a short career as a decorative scroll painter for a company that made milk wagons. They spray painted the new-fangled truck bodies with lead based paint in the same area, however, and, between the licking of his brushes at the end of the day to keep them pointed and the fumes of the spraying, you might say he left the family a bit earlier than he had anticipated. He also invented an opener for paper covered cans, the type that powdered milk came in, that cut the paper and lifted the lid at the same time. Neither invention brought any money in, and he died a poor man. The letters from my grandmother to her brother speak of their hopes for the wrench, but it was never manufactured in any great quantity. It's interesting to see tool collectors praise its innovation and design this 80 years plus after it was such a failure! Maybe they simply didn't get it at the time. At any rate, I'm pleased to finally see one in a photo display. Perhaps I'll get lucky one of these days and wander into an old tool shop where they have one. I ask occasionally, but so far, no go.

Richard (Whitey) Morange

After my reply to Whitey, thanking him for his e-mail and asking for permission to reprint his information on this website, he replied with the following:

I do indeed know what it means to want the "back story" on the things you collect. I have a couple dozen old cameras and I try to know the whole story on each of them including ownership and the history of the own-

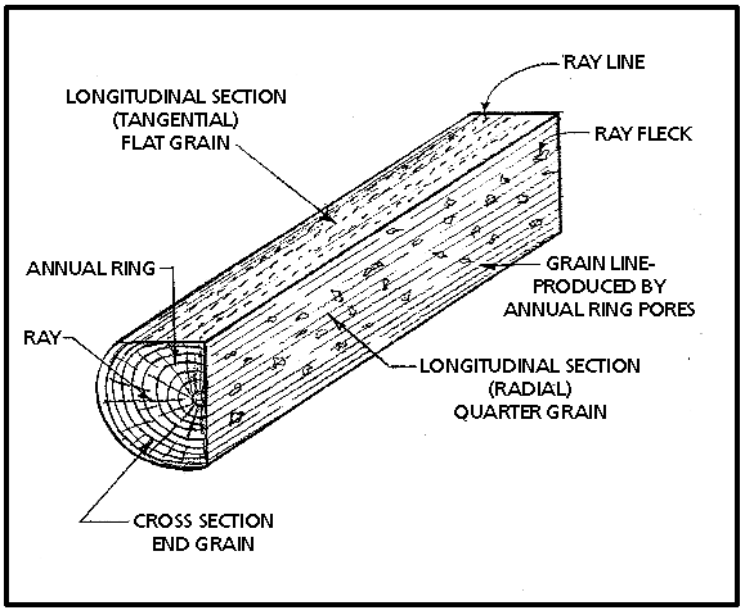
Continued on page 11

BIRCH & BEECH

There seems to be a value difference between early birch molding planes and early beech molding planes. Birch seems to be higher priced. How can one tell the difference in the wood?

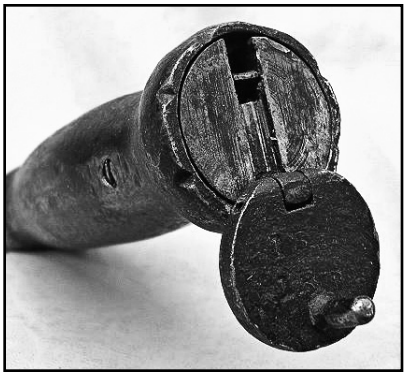
The value difference is not always true, but nevertheless here is the difference between beech and birch: Below is a sketch from Collecting Antique Tools. It shows the three sections that are the usual cuts that planes are made from. The two longitudinal sections are called "tangential" (flat grain) and "radial" (quarter grain). Tangential means close to tangent to the annual rings, and radial means on a radius from the center of the log. There are two characteristics of the wood that we will consider for identification (although there are quite a few other technical ones).

1) The pores of the tree — They are like vertical tubes that bring the nutrients from the roots to the leaves. In the spring time they are usually more pronounced, and form an annual ring in the cross-section that denotes each year of life. In the longitudinal sections they appear as somewhat parallel lines. See sketch. In the cross-section, the diameter of the pores of birch are larger than beech. You will need 5x magnification to see this. The pores in birch In the longitudinal sections appear much longer than those in beech. You can almost see this with the naked eye. However, the real difference between beech and birch is in the rays.



2) The rays of the tree — They emanate from the pith (center) and go out to the periphery of the cross-section. In the cross-section they are almost straight lines varying in width and are perpendicular to the annual rings. In the tangential section, they appear as small dashes, and in the radial section as random-shaped flecks. See sketch. The rays in the cross-section of beech are quite pronounced, and can be easily seen with the naked eye. Under 5X they jump right out at you. In birch, you will have trouble seeing them even under 5X. The rays in the tangential section of beech are a series of short parallel lines that again can be seen with the naked eye, but 5X does the job better. In birch they are much shorter and harder to see with the naked eye. Even under 5X they don't have the lengthy appearance as beech. And lastly, the rays in the radial section of beech are crazy-shaped flecks (sometimes garish) that remind you somewhat of "tigered oak". In birch these flecks are hard to see with the naked eye and under 5X they are very much smaller than beech.

The best way to tell beech from birch is to get scrap pieces of both that you can cut into the three sections each. Sand them smoothly and polish with 0000 steel wool. You will never forget the differences. It will be more difficult on the actual planes, as the patina may hide some of the characteristics. But once you get used to the dummy pieces at 5X, you will be able to tell the difference in the planes easily at 5X, and eventually by eye. ■



Top *- Left is maker's name "MORANGE" on wrench head.* ***Center*** *- is wrench head dissambled.* ***Right*** *- shows top flips open to make crank handle to adjust wrench.*

Information on Albert Morange

Continued from page 9

ers when possible. It's a bit overwhelming at times, but then, it's also why collecting is fascinating, isn't it? I don't have as much as I remember at hand about Albert and his inventions, though I will continue to look through the not-yet-scanned collection of stuff in the files my wife has kept on the family. Attached is Albert's obit. I'll try to get a picture of him to you if you'd like. The family moved around a bit and, as I said in the first email, Albert was a jack of all trades. I do know that when he was "waiting for the wrench to come through" he made several trips to Providence, RI, and there is a good chance that it was manufactured there. The Providence area was rife with small foundries and tool works, as were many of the old mill towns in this region. One of my chief sources for camera gear was a relative who went to work in that field in Providence in the twenties. He became the chief metallurgist for them, despite having only an 8th grade education when he started.

The other patent for Albert is:
Patent number: 1341513
Filing date: Dec 1, 1919
Issue date: May 1920
Inventor: Morange

You may feel free to put any of this information on your website that is of interest to you. Best, Whitey Morange

Lynn,

On further research of the family papers, I came across a letter from my grandmother to her brother (rather enigmatically dated Thursday evening) where she speaks of my grandfather's progress in getting the wrench manufactured. In it she states that they are waiting to hear from the Rhode Island Tool Company about the details of manufacture. This company was a reorganization of the Providence Tool Co. and was located in a building that is still extant in Providence. The papers say that the Rhode Island Tool Company was still in business in 1999, though the second link seems to indicate that they are no longer working, at least not at that address. There is one Google link for the Rhode Island Tool Company at 1832 Pleasant St. in Dekalb, IL. Here's a link to the RI historical Society's papers on Providence Tool: http://www.rihs.org/mssinv/Mss089.htm, and here's some pictures of the building: http://www.artinruins.com/arch/still-inuse/ritool/#

Now that I have this info, I'm going to try to get down to Providence to see if the RIHS papers include a manufacturing contract for the wrench, though probably not right away, since I have just gone back to work after some time away. I'll keep you up on what I find.

Whitey Morange

Lynn Dowd is an antique tool collector and dealer from Garland Texas. His website- www.dowdtools.com *has more information on antique tools of interest to collectors.*

CRAFTS Spring Tool Auction

April 24, 2010
Oldwick Fire House, Rt 523 Oldwick, NJ.

This auction is open to the public – Bring a friend.

Auction starts at 9:30 AM; lots are available for inspection beginning at 7:30 AM. We do not charge buyers premium so there is no added 10% to the total bid. What you bid is what you pay (plus tax if applicable). Dealers bring proof of tax exemption.

Abundant member tailgate sales begin at 6:30, ($10 contribution to CRAFTS for participating tailgaters).

See CRAFTS website (CRAFTSOFNJ.ORG) for sampling of sparklers in the auction.

The TOOL SHED

CRAFTS of New Jersey
15 N.River styx Road
Hopatcong, NJ 07843

Upcoming Tool Events

March 13 - Patina 33rd Spring Auction, McLean, Virginia - American Legion Post 270, 1355 Balls Hill Road. Contact Lee Richmond, lee@thebestthings.com.

March 14 - Western New York Antique Tool Collectors Meet, Holiday Inn, just off the New York State Thruway at Exit 48. Contact Chuck Wirtenson, 315-363-7682 or Cwirten1@twcny.rr.com.

March 19-20 - Live Free or Die Antique Tool Auction, Ramada Inn East, Indianapolis, Indiana, www.mjdtools.com

March 20 - David Stanley General Tool Auction, England. David@davidstanley.com

March 26-27 - 36th International Show/Auction – Brown Auction Services, Camp Hill, PA. Radisson Inn. Contact: Clarence Blanchard, 800-248-8114 or ceb@finetoolj.com

March 27 - Cabin Fever Auction, Harvester Lions Club, 4835 Central School Road, Louis, MO 63304. Www.greatplanestrading.com. Mike Urness at Ratdaddy@mac.com or at (314)497-7884.

April 11 - CRAFTS of NJ monthly meeting, host Masonic Lodge, Highbridge, NJ Bob Garay (takeadip@optonline.net)

April 16 – 17 - Live Free or Die Antique Tool Auction, Nashua NH. www.mjdtools.com

April 24 – CRAFTS auction, Oldwick Fire House, Rt 523 Oldwick, NJ. Call Greg Welsh (908) 439-3266 or glwelsh@earthlink.net

Want Ads

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

JIMBODETOOLS.COM
The Largest Antique Tool Website on Earth Buying and Selling Fine Antique Tools Ph: 518-537-8665 email: jim@jim-bodetools.com
JUST A NOTE to advise anyone interested that I have just added a number of articles and other information to the web site Yesteryears tools.com Thanks, Tom Lamond - Tom@yesteryearstools.com

TIMELESSTOOLSANDTREASURES.COM - Vintage tools for woodworking, machining, leather and more. See us online or at the Donnelly auctions in Nashua, NH

WANTED: Fancy old levels by Davis and any literature, etc., on the Davis Level & Tool Co. that would help with my Davis study. Thanks, Mel Miller, 360-274-4973 or melmiller43@comcast.net

■ ■ ■ ■

Next Meeting • April 11, 2010 –1PM • HOST Masonic Lodge • Highbridge, NJ