The TOOL SHED

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THE McKINNONS & THE ROCKAWAY AXE

By Bob Garay

The Rockaway pattern axe is a well-known and historic pattern. There were many different patterns made during the early colonial years here in America and some resembled this "Rockaway" pattern. Particularly camp axes and belt axes during the Revolutionary War. Thus William McKinnon was not the first to make such an axe, but his company became associated with this pattern to the degree that it was forevermore called the "Rockaway" pattern due to its manufactured location.

There are four main characteristics that stand out in this pattern. One feature is that the lower edge of the axe head blade has a curve from the inside edge to the bottom of the eye. The cutting blade also has a curve from the bottom to this inside edge. This was claimed to allow the chopper or woodsman to take a wider cut when felling. The third feature was a heavier and wider poll, which helped to balance the large cutting blade. Fourth is that it has a pronounced "lug" which is the bottom part of the eye that reaches out to the handle just below the center of the axe between the poll and the curved inside edge. Now McKinnon made other axes and edge tools but what made them well known and carried their business was the "Rockaway" pattern axe.

McKinnon Bros. axe showing the features of the Rockaway Pattern.

The McKinnon family has its roots in Scotland or Ireland before coming to America. William McKinnon, born 1816, either came to America in the early 1800's or was born here. The records on his origins are unclear. What is known is that he married Jane Shauger, (Sometimes spelled Shawger), in 1842. And here is where it gets very interesting. His wife, Jane Shauger was daughter to Henry Shauger, an iron worker and blacksmith himself in Rockaway. Thus it is reasonable that William McKinnon worked for Henry Shauger before marrying his daughter. More so because by 1845 William McKinnon came to be established as a blacksmith and axe maker in Rockaway only three years after his marriage.

Early mark of William McKinnon on his axe head.

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Sept. 14, 2014 - CRAFTS picnic
Brady Camp, NJ

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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 Road, 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, 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.

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CRAFTS WEBSITE
www.craftsofnj.org

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

NEW MEMBERS

Charles Anderson	High Bridge, NJ
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Martin Shepherd	Redwood City, CA
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Don Wilwol	Hoosick Falls, NY

President's Corner

I am happy to get this newsletter out to all our members by the end of the summer. And what a great summer it has been. I don't remember such fine temperatures in August before. I hope everyone has had a chance to get out and experience some of the fun our hobby offers. I attended the Donnelly Auction in Avoca this July mostly for the social experience. The Donnellys sure know how to host a tool event. This August I have been busy researching information for the McKinnon Rockaway Axe article included in this issue. I love history and was very fortunate to have met some swell people from Rockaway who shared their knowledge of this topic. A tour of some of the sites led us to the house of J.H.Blanchard. We met the current owner and he showed us the 3' high concrete foundations of the axe making shop he unearthed. Very exciting.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone at our upcoming picnic Sept 14th. Come early and set up a table to tail-gate some tools for a spell with us. Better yet, put together a small display so members can learn more about your interests. It is the sharing of this love of tools that makes our club so special. If you are staying for lunch don't forget to bring a desert. Just so you know, my favorite is apple pie.

As we all are getting older it is sad to hear of the passing of friends and club members. Most of the tool community knew of Jay Gaynor, who was the head of the trades at Williamsburg. He passed away recently and it is a huge loss. A few years ago I wrote about a trip I took to Williamsburg with my wife. Jay spent the whole afternoon giving us a personal tour of the place. He was such a giving person. No matter how busy he was he made you feel special. I am also saddened about the passing of my friend Jack Whelan. I was privileged to know Jack and we became close over the years. Probably one of the smartest guys I have ever known. My students in my shop classes were fortunate one year when he gave a presentation on making wooden planes. They took this information and made some of the most creative planes I have ever seen. I guess we all know that we will depart some day. Thus, this is why I feel getting together at gatherings like our picnic is so important. Hope to see you all there.

Regards, Bob

WANTED – Member's email addresses. If you have not been receiving email notices from Stew May, or dues acknowledgements from Hank Allen, please send your email address to hankallen@verizon.net.

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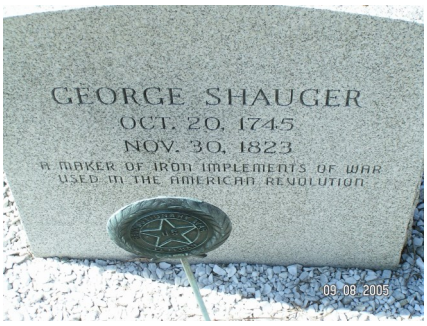
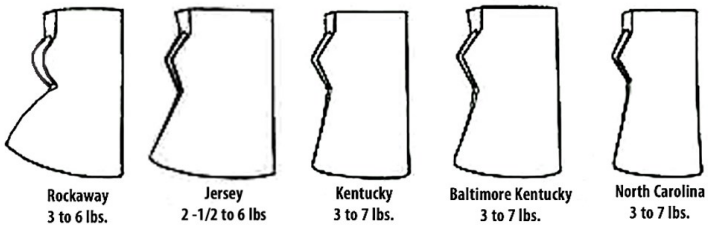
Henry Shauger was the son of George Shauger who came to America in 1764 as a skilled forgeman to work at the Hibernia Forge, four miles from Rockaway. This area of Morris County had some of the highest quality iron found in this country and was fully exploited by the English and others before the Revolutionary War. During the Revolutionary War he and 24 other men employed at the Hibernia Forge were given exemption from military duty by the New Jersey Legislature to work at the forge producing small cannons, cannon balls and other iron products needed by the military.



Tombstone of George Shauger dedicated in 1956 at Union Church Cemetery by his ancestors.

This forge was owned by the Right Honorable William, Earl of Stirling, Major General in the service of the United States during the Revolution. It seems highly feasible that camp axes and belt axes would be some of these military products needed. In fact in Bob Fridlington's research, he talked to military Americana expert, Frank Kravic, who said he has excavated hundreds of axes in the Hudson and Champaign Valleys at Revolutionary War campsites. He said he has found many axes that are close in shape of the New Jersey pattern and the early Rockaway pattern axes. Frank says this axe pattern was definitely developed during the 1763-1775 years, as no evidence of this pattern is found during the earlier French and Indian War.



Rockaway pattern and other similar patterns for felling axes.

Additionally, the Rockaway area of Morris County was the center of iron mines and forges during the early 1800's with the Morris Canal passing thru the center of town starting in 1832. In 1845, the village itself had 400 people, a fabulous big industrial center with a blooming mill, a slitting mill, and all kinds of iron-related businesses. Cutting timbers for the production of charcoal was a large enterprise during the late 18th and early 19th century.

The blacksmiths of Rockaway was sure to find an enterprising business making felling axes for this operation. Thus it is highly likely that George Shauger, working at the Hibernia Forge and later on his own, was making axes of the early New Jersey pattern. It is highly likely that thru the years this pattern was handed down to his son Henry, who later handed it down to his new son-in law, William McKinnon during the early 1800's.

When looking at the early axes that William McKinnon made, it is evident that he was following a New Jersey pattern and not the Rockaway pattern. There is not a lot of difference between the two. One of the major differences is the curve in the underside of the blade, which the early McKinnon axes do not exhibit. As Bob Fridlington in his research states he feels that William McKinnon the founder of the McKinnon axe did not produce a true "Rockaway" pattern, but it was later developed by his sons after his death in 1873. It is easy to see the difference when two axes of these different time periods are compared side by side.

Comparison of two McKinnon axes. Left is earlier William McKinnon axe that follows closely the New Jersey pattern. On right is a later axe made by his son William that shows the full development of the Rockaway pattern.

Early William McKinnon 4" slick chisel. Inset is early W. McKINNON makers mark.

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By 1860 his business was listed in the New Jersey Industrial Census as an edge tool maker rather than a blacksmith, with axes comprising two-thirds of the edge tool production. At this time his production was only about 500 axes a year. This low production may be the result of his claim that his axes were manufactured by hand and not machine made. These early axes were marked **W. McKINNON.** William McKinnon had five sons, all of whom apprenticed and became blacksmiths themselves. When he died, in 1873, his two youngest sons, Walter and William, took over the business, Walter was 21 and William was just 16. From this time, for about ten years the axes were marked **McKINNON BROS. ROCKAWAY, N.J.**

Broad Axe over-stamped with Wm. McKinnon mark for the repair done replacing the steel cutting edge.

The company stayed with small production runs and records list only two employees, and operated ten months a year. They worked from May to November an average of ten hour days. From November to May they worked a thirteen hour day. The census did not say which months they were closed. Water power from the fast moving Rockaway River supplied power for their work from the beginning. Later around 1883 William (the second) switched to steam power for his expansion of production. The factory was located in the center of town on the Rockaway River close to the Morris Canal. Later the Hibernia Rail Road passed right by the factory delivering high quality iron ore and for pick-up of their manufactured products for delivery to the Central Railroad of NJ at Port Oram, (modern day Wharton).

William McKinnon standing in front of his axe company next to the Rockaway River. Circa 1900

After about ten years the older brother Walter left the company and William took over the business. William expanded the production and by 1890 he was making over 7000 axes a year. These axes were marked, **Wm. McKINNON, ROCKAWAY, N.J.** During this time, **The Industries and Resources of New Jersey**, a promotional publication for local industries, stated;

"The axes and edge tools are all manufactured by hand in the best materials. Only the finishing touches being given by machinery. The leading specialty for which this factory has acquired a more than local celebrity are chopping axes for lumberman and wood choppers. They also manufacture broad, post and rail axes of special design, logging hoes, mill picks, water tuyers, chisels, drawing knives and a variety of edged tools of superior quality and adaptability."

Mortise axe made by Wm. McKinnon circa. 1890's.

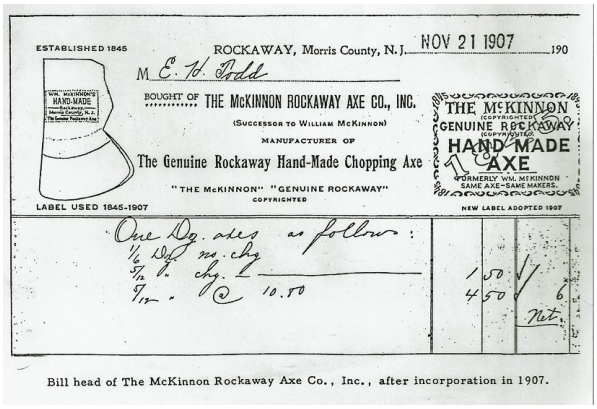
William McKinnon who now ran the expanded company was involved in an accident when he got caught in a machinery belt of a polishing wheel in 1902. It actually pulled him up into the machinery and tore him up rather badly. He lived for three more years and died in 1905. A son of his, Samuel D. McKinnon took over the business and stamped his axes - **McKinnon**, **Rockaway, N.J.**

In 1907 the business incorporated for the first time and became, **The McKinnon Rockaway Axe Co. Inc.** Part of the reason for the incorporation was to trademark their various products. They trademarked the name **"Rockaway"** and they trademarked the name **"McKinnon".** They realized big axe manufacturers had picked up and duplicated the Rockaway pattern and sold their axes as Rockaway axes. Companies making various axe patterns became a com-

A farming hoe made by Wm. McKinnon. Inset left is makers mark.

Photo inside the McKinnon axe Company. Working an axe head on the trip hammer is J.H.Blanchard while behind him with hammer in hand is William McKinnon.

mon practice by axe makers after the Civil War. The American Axe Company bought out over forty-five separate tool manufacturers, most of them axe companies. In 1907 this company manufactured a Rockaway pattern in at least six different axe trade names. The Hunt's Superior Axe which was an old Douglas Axe, the Southern Star, a Blood's Champion Axe and the Handmade Axe from Jamestown Axe Co. all had Rockaway patterns. One of the latest examples of the Rockaway pattern being manufactured was the Warren Axe and Tool Company in 1937. Their 1937 catalog had a distinctive Rockaway pattern listed, as a Rockaway.



ESTABLISHED 1845 ROCKAWAY, Morris County, N.J. NOV 21 1907 190

M. E. H. Todd

BOUGHT OF THE McKINNON ROCKAWAY AXE CO., INC.

(SUCCESSOR TO WILLIAM McKINNON)

MANUFACTURER OF

The Genuine Rockaway Hand-Made Chopping Axe

"THE McKINNON" "GENUINE ROCKAWAY"

COPYRIGHTED

THE McKINNON (COPYRIGHTED) GENUINE ROCKAWAY (COPYRIGHTED) HAND MADE AXE

FORMERLY WM. McKINNON SAME AXE—SAME MAKERS.

LABEL USED 1845-1907 NEW LABEL ADOPTED 1907

One Dz. axes as follows:

1/6 Dz. no. chg

5/12 " chg. 1

5/12 " @ 10.50 1 50 / 4 50 / 6 Net.

Bill head of The McKinnon Rockaway Axe Co., Inc., after incorporation in 1907.

Around 1920 the McKinnon axe factory burned down. The foreman who ran the production, James Harvey Blanchard, bought out the company and salvaged what he could. He constructed a small 15' by 25' shop behind his house at 72 Union St., about one mile from the McKinnon shop. His new company using the Rockaway pattern marked their axes – **J.H.BLANCHARD, ROCKAWAY, NJ.** Some say he had a rough time making the business successful. Some say that Blanchard did not know the McKinnon secrets of axe tempering. That is highly unlikely as he ran the axe production under McKinnon. In fact J.H. Blanchard was interrelated to the McKinnons. He was the son of James Blanchard, whose brother John was married to Eleanor Shauger, the older sister of Jane Shauger, who married the original William McKinnon. Thus Wm. McKinnon was his uncle.

J. H. BLANCHARD & Co.
Manufacturers of
ROCKAWAY HAND MADE AXES
With or Without Handles
All Kinds of Edge Tools and Lawn Mowers Sharpened
Union Street Phone Rockaway 76

I found advertisements in the Rockaway Record from 1928 - 1933 for Blanchard. (See right)

J.H.Blanchard was listed in the 1880 census as 20 years old and occupation – forgeman. Thus he is about 60 years old when he bought out the McKinnon operation. In his early years he worked at the Jackson Forge which was just across the street from the McKinnon shop and just upstream on the Rockaway River. He took over production of this forge at age 18 in 1877. The Col. Joseph Jackson Forge was built in 1733 and was one of the earliest forges in Rockaway and made products for the Revolutionary war effort. (Including axes.) The Blanchards ran this forge for three generations going back to 1783.

Rockaway axe with J.H. BLANCHARD maker's mark.

J.H.Blanchard continued the making of the Rockaway axe in his small shop behind his house. But in 1936 his business is listed as sharpening services only. This was the end of the Rockaway axe. J.H.Blanchard lived a long life and died in 1947 at the age of eighty-eight.

Shortly thereafter the development of the chain saw would end many axe makers production. We in New Jersey are lucky to have two axe patterns. The Jersey Pattern developed during the late 1700's was made in Rockaway and the McKinnons added their own ingenuity to develop the Rockaway Pattern.

Thanks to the research of Bob Fridlington and documentation by James Aber for the groundwork of the Rockaway axe history. Also thanks goes to Stephen Fowler for information on the McKinnon Family history. Special thanks to Andrea & Tom Jackson for information on the Blanchards and a Rockaway tour. There is much more to include and I will follow up on my website—takeadiptools.com

THE B. NORMAN / J.G. BREARLEY CONNECTION

By Milton Potosky

A while back, I attended a winter auction of a house estate that included a wood-working shop that had been in a large three car garage separate from the house. All the contents of the house and garage were displayed out-doors on the ground and tables. It was a large auction and the day was bitterly cold and you had to be properly dressed to stand outdoors in the below freezing temperatures. Sometime after many hours in the cold the auctioneer came to the tools. Among what had been a garage loaded with both old and new tools, were two tables full of wood planes that were tossed in boxes and stacked on the tables. Many of the wedges and blades were loose or incorrectly fitted to the planes and scattered in several boxes, so it was difficult to really determine if a plane could be correctly re-assembled and I wasn't keen to try and reassemble them to the benefit of the other bidders. Many of the planes were of nice quality but the styles and cuts were generally common. When it came time to auction them they were offered as "choice". The bidding stopped with me, at a reasonably low bid, and the auctioneer asked me which ones I wanted. To the surprise and delight of the auctioneer, I took them all, not quite knowing how it would work out. But out of the mass of wood and metal, among many other planes, to my delight came a near complete set of "B. Norman" side bead planes, which were in crisp clean condition. Besides being a four star rating for the maker (AWP 4th edition B mark), the planes had an additional unrecorded (AWP 4th edition UR), maker of "J. G. Brearley & Co." marked randomly on the planes. If that was not enough, each plane is marked on both the toe and heel with the owners name "J. M Arnold". The markings, for the set, are as shown on the chart to the right.

the auction. The owner's name (J. M. Arnold) across all the planes, the uniform condition of the planes, all the planes having come from one location and all being similar to other B. Norman planes I have would indicate that they are a B. Norman set, but what is the connection between B. Norman and J.G. Bearley & Co. and why were the planes inconsistently marked.

The auction was held in the Ewing-West Trenton, NJ area just over the border from Trenton, NJ were B. Norman is reported to have worked or had his shop and only about 5 miles down the road from Pennington, NJ were Norman had later started a store and livery trade. The planes didn't move very far from the area they were made and have remained in very nice condition. I have never been one to spend hours researching libraries, data bases and other documents, as I much prefer to seek out the tools, no matter what the weather is like, but, I tried an on-line search and much to my surprise came up with the following listings for

B. Norman mark with owner mark J.M. Arnold.

The set appears to be missing the ½" size plane. The 3/8" plane is missing the iron and the 7/8" plane is missing the wedge. The missing pieces were probably hidden in other boxes of tools at

SIZE	TOE MARKINGS		HEEL MARKINGS	
	Maker	**Owner**	**Maker**	**Owner**
¼"	B. Norman	J.M.Arnold		J.M.Arnold
3/16"	B. Norman	J.M.Arnold	J.G. Brearley & Co.	J.M.Arnold
3/8"	B. Norman	J.M.Arnold		J.M.Arnold
5/8"	J.G. Brearley & Co.	J.M.Arnold		J.M.Arnold
¾"	J.G. Brearley & Co.	J.M.Arnold	J.G. Brearley & Co.	J.M.Arnold
7/8"	B. Norman	J.M.Arnold	J.G. Brearley & Co.	J.M.Arnold
8/8"	B. Norman	J.M.Arnold	J.G. Brearley & Co.	J.M.Arnold

Brearley in the Trenton Historical Business Directories.

1844 Trenton Business Directory: Brearley, S. & J. G., hardware iron & steel store, No. 9 Perry St.

1859 Trenton Business Directory: Brearley Jos. G. & Co., hardware, State St. corner of Greene
Brearley Charles & Co., hardware, corner 76 Warren
Brearley George & Co., steel & iron, corner 9 Perry
Brearley James, (George Brearley & Co.) 9 Perry

Above is front of plane marked J.G.Brearley & Co. and owners mark J.M.Arnold.

No doubt, the Brearley's were well established in the Trenton hardware, steel and iron business, spanning many years. The 1859 listing for Jos. G. Brearley & Co. was the probable match to the plane markings supporting that these planes were made by B. Norman and intended for sale through the Brearley hardware store. B. Norman is reported (AWP 4th edition) to have been listed in the Trenton 1854-55 directory as a planemaker, (I couldn't find this directory on-line) but left the city and plane making in 1856. His name does not appear in the 1859 on-line Directory. Neither was I able to find a listing for J. M Arnold. With such a short period of plane making in Trenton and having made planes wholesale for a hardware store, it is no wonder that his planes are considered rare. It would seem that the connection between B. Norman and J. G. Brearley & Co. is now established, adding another small bit of history to New Jersey tool makers. It still would be interesting though to know why the makers/ hardware store markings were random and inconsistent, but I doubt that will ever come to light.

P.S Should anyone find the missing ½" side bead I would be appreciative to hear from them at Twybill@msn.com

IN MEMORY OF JOHN WHELAN

John Whelan, former CRAFTS President and Treasurer, passed away on August 10, 2014 just before reaching the age of 93 years. He was not only a significant part of the CRAFTS family, but also the entire tool collecting community. Jack was especially interested in wooden planes and had a vast collection of all types; American, European, and Asian. This interest led him to author the well received book - ***"The Wooden Plane, Its History, Form and Function"***. Jack not only collected wooden planes, he also made planes to further his understanding of their configuration and operation. This led him to author the book - ***"Making Traditional Wooden Planes",*** which gave detailed instruction on making various styles of planes. His understanding of the styles and functions of wooden planes made him a well known authority. He authored a regular column in the Early American Industries Assoc. newsletter - ***The Chronicle*** called ***"Plane Chatter"*** for many years.

Jack grew up in New Jersey and received his Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering from Steven's Institute of Technology. Two years later he received his Master of Science Degree in Chemistry from Steven's as well. While working at Union Carbide Corporation he received hi Ph.D. in Organic Chemistry. He retired after 35-years at Union Carbide in 1976.

It was at this time that he turned his attention toward antique tools and especially wooden planes. Together with his wife Helen, both became very active in CRAFTS. They gave their time and talents in furthering our tool group. Jack will be missed by all of his friends in the tool community but especially his friends in CRAFTS. Jack is survived by a daughter, Kathleen and two sons, Dennis and Kerry and by his grand daughter Kailey.

Jack & Helen at a CRAFTS picnic when Jack is receiving the Presidents award.

SHIPBUILDER'S BEVELS AND THE DORY

By David E. Heckel

Dories have been traced as far back in history as 300 A.D. Early dories were built along the banks of the Douro, which flows from Northern Spain through Portugal to the sea. It's quite possible the name of this small craft comes from the name of that river.

The English colonists in Canada used dories for fishing, and took them nested aboard their large schooners after ground fish on the Grand Banks. Dories are still common for fishing in Labrador, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec and the

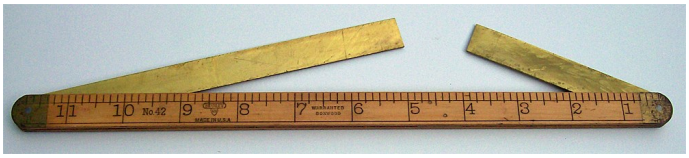
coast of Maine. Many along those shores once supported their families from a dory when one man with a couple of hand lines or two men with nets harvested the nearby waters from day to day.

The shipbuilder's bevel was used for many operations in the craft of dory building. Its main purpose was to transfer angles from patterns to the parts waiting to be cut out and trimmed to fit. The craft of boatbuilding requires a tool that can be utilized in the transfer and cutting of many angles. The bevel tongues were held in place in the body by friction joints. The two different lengths of the tongues were to enable the builder to place the rule in a confined space.

Stanley Rule and Level Company made shipbuilder's bevels from 1854 to 1933. Lufkin, Stephens, Chapin-Stephens, Upson Nut Company, Belcher Brothers, J & G H Walker, Marples, Onions & Company and others also produced shipbuilder's bevels. These were all very similar in form. Stanley manufactured single bladed bevels for short periods of time. Since most shipbuilding occurred along the shores of the oceans of the world, shipbuilders had access to exotic woods brought to their seaports. A typical ship carpenter's tool chest usually held tools made from exotic woods such as rosewood, Caribbean mahog-

Above - Stanley # 42 ½ single brass blade rosewood body. Right - close-up of Stanley maker's mark.

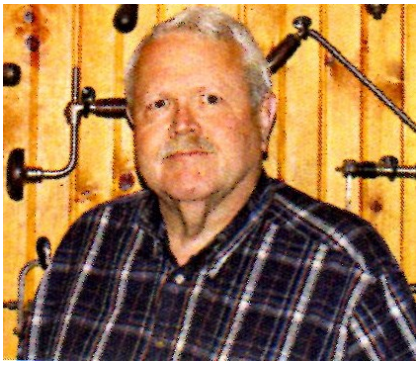
Above - Marples rosewood ships bevel. Right - close-up of makers mark.



Stanley # 42 shipbuilder's bevel.
(Most other manufacturers look like this one.)

Above - Owner made Caribbean Mahogany.

Meet Your Dealer
Jim Gehring



Jim Gehring, the new owner of Brown Tool Auctions and the Fine Tool Journal, grew up in the St. Louis area. With a father who was a confirmed do-it-yourselfer and shade tree mechanic, he learned to use tools at an early age. Although he became a lawyer rather than going into honest work, he continued to pursue woodworking on weekends.

Jim had always been interested in the few antique tools he found at flea markets and antique fairs, but had no idea that a world of antique tool collectors even existed until the birth of the internet. When he discovered eBay, he went a little nuts, and under the eBay name "lutraman" became known as that crazy lawyer from Chicago who would bid on anything as long as it looked like a tool. Levels were his first love, and he soon developed a friendship with legendary level collector Don Rosebrook, who told him about the world of tool collecting organizations and meets.

Jim's first national tool meet was the 2000 M-WTCA meet in Cincinnati, where his display - on Stratton No. 10 machinist's levels - won the award for best out of theme. Since then, he's been a regular attendant at national meets, both M-WTCA and EAIA, and auctions, and regional meets where possible. In addition to levels, he collects marking gauges and bevels, braces, hammers, and plows. He also collects other types of old technology, and has done displays of index typewriters, orreries and planetaria, and gadget canes at various meets. In 2009 he cornered Clarence Blanchard and demanded to know why the Fine Tool Journal didn't have any writers on levels and measuring tools, and since then has been writing a regular column called "Half a Bubble Off" for the Journal.

Although primarily a collector, and still practicing law full time, he had always dreamed of becoming a dealer. In 2012, he bought the Fine Tool Journal from Clarence, and this spring he took the next step and acquired Brown's, bringing Brown's and the Journal back under common ownership. He and Clarence collaborated on the spring auction, and the fall auction on November 1 will be the first under the new ownership.

For the last 25 years, Jim has been part owner, and chief maintenance engineer, of Ronora Lodge, a campground and retreat center located in southwest Michigan (www.ronoralodge.com), which now serves as the home of the Fine Tool Journal and Brown's, which unfortunately means that his workshop has been completely taken over by boxes of antique tools waiting to be catalogued and described.

Jim loves his new job, although there's no doubt its proving a challenge. He still has his day job, although he dreams of the day he can retire and devote full time to tools, and writing descriptions for three live and four absentee auctions a year is keeping him busy. He's painfully aware of the gaps in his knowledge - before taking on this job, he knew almost nothing about saws and wrenches - but he has lots of help and encouragement from fellow collectors, and a capable staff to take care of the business details, and he can now spend hours each week immersed in studying, learning about, and describing some of the finest and rarest antique tools in existence. For a lifelong collector, that's almost as good as owning them.

any, live oak, and coco bolo. These carpenters also made their own tools to suit the demanding work of

<u>Warren Passmore Donates Tools</u>—Long time CRAFTS member Warren Passmore passed away recently. He was a very active member of CRAFTS and enjoyed the history of tools and their uses. I was contacted by his nephew, Larry Passmore, that he was cleaning out the barn that they had relocated to his New Jersey property from Pennsylvania back in the 1980's. He had a lot of tools that Warren collected that he wanted to donate to CRAFTS. These were common antique tools but good for the woodworker who wanted good users. Recently at out June meeting members happily rummaged thru the boxes of tools and came away with some of Warrens treasures. I am sure Warren would have been pleased with the smiles on our members faces as they got some of his tools for free. Thanks Warren!

CRAFTS June 2014 meeting – "The Kentucky Rifle, a True American Heritage" - Ronald C. Gabel – Speaker

Review by Dave Nowicki

Hand made Flint Lock

Ron is a James Julia Auctions firearms consultant who writes the condition reports for their auctions of firearms. His specialty is "Kentucky Rifles". This is a type of gun that was made in Pennsylvania, and is unlike any other gun made in the world. They were modeled after the European guns made in the early 1700's. The rifles were the most accurate gun in the world for more than one hundred years, and right up until the 1940's they were used in matches with the US Army rifle team.

When the first white men came into Pennsylvania as explorers they encountered Indians as they came up from the south along the Susquehanna River. This area was home to many different tribes and, to the early explorers, trading was a good way to make some money. Also, this was an area with a large population of fur bearing animals that were sought after by these frontiersmen. Philadelphia was established as a deep-water port which brought in many settlers and as the population began to swell the explorers moved to the north and west along the established Indian trails. Immigrant gunsmiths also followed the settlers west to York and Lancaster or north to Easton and established themselves in small towns along the way. Gunsmiths were no longer under the guild system as their European brothers were and now they had the freedom to innovate. As their innovations were developed and refined the cumulative knowledge was passed along to their apprentices. In Europe, today, the Kentucky Rifle is classified as art and a purely American invention, as no part was copied from any other gun. The stocks were made from beautiful, sometimes highly figured, woods and there is a considerable amount of carving and engraving involved during the manufacture of them. The locks and barrels were forged and molds were made for the trigger guards and various other parts. Some of the earlier patch boxes were made of heavy cast brass and brass inlay was used extensively. Barrels were made from a flat piece of iron which was heated red hot by a blacksmith and then bent around a rod called a mandrel. The edges were hammered together and the seam was heat welded together. The mandrel was removed and what remained was a long tube. The hole in the center was refined by drilling out the length of the barrel to produce a consistent size. Somewhere around 1810, barrel mills were established along the Perkiomen Creek just below Reading, PA. Roughed out barrels were then sent to a finishing mill in Kempton, PA, near where Dixon's gun shop is today, for final filing and rifling. The rifling process required special dies or cutters to be pulled through the barrel to produce the characteristic twisting groove down the length of the barrel. A single twist was all that was generally required for these guns. The reason for rifling was to create grooves for the bullet to follow assuring that the ball left the barrel with a spin. This introduced longitudinal stability to the ball and produced a more accurate trajectory. This process may sound primitive but the workmanship certainly was not.

The accuracy of these guns was improved by changing the size or caliber of the ball and way it was loaded into the barrel. The guns from Europe were, large caliber, smooth bore muskets. The "Brown Bess" English musket was .75 caliber, and, to make it easier and faster to load, the ball was always smaller, sometimes quite a bit smaller. When the ball was loaded it was rammed home with considerable force to seat the ball firmly on the powder charge. This caused some deformity in the ball and when the gun was fired, the ball would not run true for long distances. Their accuracy was usually limited to about fifty yards, but, on the positive side they could be reloaded very quickly. The accuracy problem was solved in the Kentucky rifle through the use of a ball that was a smaller size and each was custom made to fit the inside diameter of the barrel. The gunsmith who made the rifle would also provide a bullet mold for each gun. A welcome byproduct of using the smaller ball was the economics of using less powder and lead. Remember the patch box? In order to provide a good seat for the ball a patch of cloth or leather was wiped over some grease to provide some lubrication and placed over the end of the barrel. A ball was placed on the patch and, with a hickory ramrod, the tight fitting ball was firmly pushed down the barrel to seat on the powder charge. Also, the longer barrel allowed the powder charge to burn more completely which allowed longer and considerably more accurate shots. Because of the closer tolerances and the added rifling the Kentucky Rifle needed to be kept very clean as black powder residue would quickly foul the barrel. Although they also could not be reloaded as quickly as a musket their accuracy was considerably greater, 200 yards or more.

Beautiful examples of the Kentucky Rifle

At this time Ron opened his presentation to questions. The following is only a small portion of what was actually discussed.

Q: If the guns were made in Pennsylvania why are they called Kentucky Rifles?

A: In the early days of the thirteen original colonies, the unexplored frontier was considered, "out there" or Kentucky and anyone travelling to these areas was going to Kentucky. In 1824 Andrew Jackson fought a battle with 2000 British soldiers in New Orleans and his victory was celebrated in a song called "The Hunters of Kentucky" which served to praise him and his army of 200 frontiersmen from Kentucky and their Kentucky Rifles. This story helped to propel Jackson's successful bid for the presidency in 1828. There were many names for the rifle, American Rifle, Squirrel gun, Pennsylvania rifle and Long rifle but Kentucky Rifle is the name that stuck.

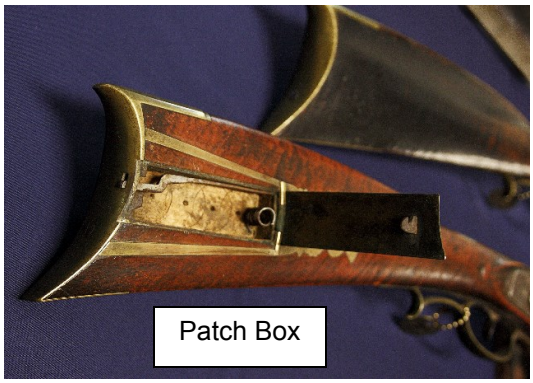
Ron Gable - Antique Arms Consultant

Q: What are some references that you would recommend for someone to study the history of these guns?

A: George Shumway wrote a number of books on the subject and "Rifles of Colonial America, Volumes I and II" are considered two of his best. Joe Kindig, also a noted collector, wrote "Thoughts on the Kentucky Rifle in its Golden Age". This work changed the prevailing attitude that the rifle was purely a weapon into something that could be appreciated as an art form.

Q: How would you go about grading a Long rifle?

A: When grading a Kentucky Rifle condition is the first thing that should be taken into consideration. Is it original? Is it flint or percussion? Has it been modified? Were any parts replaced? Is it a Revolutionary War period gun or something from the Civil War period? Next, comes the desirability factor. Who made it and how pretty it is, which refers to the overall color, number of inlays, engraving, carving, etc. The prettier it is the more desirable it is and pizazz will sell a Kentucky Rifle faster than anything.



Patch Box

Q: What was the percentage of guns that were converted from flintlock to percussion?

A: As powder was improved, allowing a faster more complete burn, you no longer needed the long barrel. The barrels were cut down and the flintlock was changed to percussion. Approximately 80% of the existing rifles were modified in this fashion. The question today is, Should you convert a gun back to flint and extend the barrel or should you leave it alone because it was a historical modification that happened during the life of the gun? Most will convert them back because you want to hang it up and have it look the way it did when it was made.

Q: Were Kentucky Rifles made in places other than Pennsylvania?

A: The Moravians were the ones who made the rifles and they worked from Philadelphia to Easton, PA and south to York, PA. The evolution of the gun took about fifteen years, with much experimentation, before it got to its final form. It was the Moravians who had a school in Christian Springs, outside of Nazareth. PA, who were the first to teach gunsmithing and the manufacturing of the Kentucky Rifle. As the Moravians travelled south through West Virginia, Maryland and finally to Virginia they took that knowledge with them. There are several very early guns that were found in Virginia and were known to have been made there. As time went on guns were also made in western Pennsylvania and eventually as far away as what is now the State of Kentucky.

Q: How would you assess the school that a gun was made from?

A: There were many characteristics, favored by specific gunsmiths, which would determine where a gun was made. As an example, Lehigh County guns have an arrowhead design on the side plate. If a gun has a butt plate that wraps around and you can see it from the side it was not made in Lehigh County, the gunsmiths there didn't do it that way, they inlet the plate into the wood. The Lehigh County wrists are egg shaped and not round. The patch box on a gun from Bucks County opened down, it was hinged on the bottom and not at the back. That's the only place that they did that.

Q: Are they really as accurate as the stories say they are? The stories read like folklore but during the Revolutionary War a man from Easton, PA who was a sniper at the battle of Bemis Heights, during the Saratoga campaign, took a 300 yard shot at British General Simon Frasier, who, while sitting on his horse, was fatally wounded and died later that evening.

Q: What were the lengths of the barrels?

A: They were as short as 38 inches and as long as 55 inches.

Q: What is the range of values for these guns?

A: At the Colonial National Historical Park, in Williamsburg, VA where they try to make everything the way it was done in the 18th century, an early asking price for a reproduction Kentucky Rifle, made exactly the same way they were made in the 18th century, was about $8000, today it's more like $16,000. All original, highly decorated guns by well-known early makers have been known to bring hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Ron gave us a lively and interesting presentation, mixing the significant history of the Kentucky Rifle with many stories and anecdotes gleaned from his more than fifty year involvement with these guns. At the end of his presentation he invited everyone to take a look at the wonderful collection of guns that he brought with him and graciously offered to stay and continue to discuss them.

The TOOL SHED

CRAFTS of New Jersey
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TOOL EVENTS

Sept. 1-30 – U.S. Machinist Tools, 25 yr. collection, Special Sales Offer, contact Roger K. Smith, 978-895-0308 rksdd537@mass.rr.com

Sept. 13 – EAIA Regional Meet – Willy Hill Forge, Lectures and Demos on American Blacksmith & Foundry Work, www.earlyamericanindustries.org

Sept. 14 – Crafts of NJ, Annual Picnic, Brady Camp, NJ. takeadip@optonline.net

Sept. 19-20 – Donnelly Antique Tool Auction, Nashua, NH. Martin Donnelly, 800-869-0695, www.mjdtools.com

Oct. 5 – Tools of the Trades Show and Sale, Ontario, Canada, John Pirie, 905 928 9412, www.ontarioantiquetools.com

Oct. 18-19 – 35th Annual Fall Harvest & Sawmill Show - Jacktown Community Center, Bangor, PA. 610-588-6900, www.jacktown.org

Oct. 31 – Nov.1, 2 - 45th International Tool Auction & Sale – Brown Auction Services, Radisson Inn, Camphill, PA. Jim Gehring- 800 248 8114, www.finetoolj.com

Nov. 2 - Crafts of New Jersey, Monthly Meeting, Host – Masonic Lodge, High Bridge, NJ. Bob Garay, takeadip@optonline.net

WANT ADS

HELP WITH TOOL COLLECTIONS – A retired shop teacher, I can assist you with a tool collection. Finding buyers for your tools. Call Bob Garay (973) 398-5875 or email- takeadip@optonline.net.

VINTAGE TOOLS for woodworking, machining, leather working and more. See us at New England area tool meets, online at www-TimelessToolsand Treasures.com or email jane@janebutler.com.

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

JIMBODETOOLS.COM – The largest antique tool website on earth buying and selling fine antique tools. email jim@jimbodetools.com.

WANTED – Molding planes made of apple wood, & better molding planes from Hudson River valley makers. Joe Hauck 908-236-2072.

THE TOOL EXCHANGE –Australia's home of fine old tools for sale. Our website has over 18,000 photos of tools. We ship to over 30 countries. www.toolexchange.com.au

WVTOOLS: CRAFTS member and eBay seller concentrating on bitstock tools and more.

ANTIQUE TOOL RESTORATION - John Porritt - (518)392-0603 or email porritt3@gmail.com

WANTED - Bell System tools and electrician's pliers. Ted Davidson 609-731-6915

SAW SHARPENING - Restoration & sales of all types of saws Joe Federici - www.secondchancesawworks.com