

The TOOL SHED

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A GLIMPSE AT TWO NEW JERSEY TOOLMAKERS

by Carl E. Bopp

George Wheatcroft, a jointer-tool maker from Newark, N. J., was probably a successor of John Wheatcroft & Sons of Sheffield, England.¹

Like many other tool manufacturers of the mid-nineteenth century, Wheatcroft exhibited his products at trade fairs. The records of Philadelphia's Franklin Institute fairs list him as an exhibitor of braces from 1850 to 1853.²

The Franklin Institute held fairs annually, and all types of domestic manufactured goods were displayed.³ A panel of judges awarded gold, silver, and bronze medals (1st, 2nd, and 3rd premiums) to the outstanding entries in each category.⁴ The competition for these awards was not only among the products on display—they were also judged against the products from previous fairs and against similar items known on the market.

The braces that George Wheatcroft displayed were probably of the type we call "Sheffield style wooden braces," as he is known to have made these.⁵ Unfortunately, Wheatcroft's braces did not make a great impression on the Franklin Institute judges. Their remarks for each of the years were as follows:

1850: "Not equal to other makers."⁶

1851: "Not equal to former exhibitions."⁷

1852: "Equal to former exhibitions."⁸

1853: "A fair article."

Though the latter remark sounds like faint praise, it was the highest

honor given to those who did not win a medal, and it indicated that Wheatcroft's entries were getting progressively better. Regrettably, I do not know whether Wheatcroft entered any fairs

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FEBRUARY 8th MEETING AT FIELD HOMESTEAD

CRAFTS of New Jersey will hold its mid-winter meeting on Sunday, February 8, at the Field Homestead, 260 River Road (Rte. 18) in Piscataway.

As a concession to the weather and the early sunset, the time and format have been changed a bit. The meeting will begin with the Swap & Sell at 1:00 p. m. The formal program for the afternoon will start promptly at 2:00.

The speaker for the program will be Herb Kean, who will talk on "Basic Coopering." Herb will lead us step by step through the construction of a barrel—and in the process exhibit a portion of his outstanding collection of cooper's tools. Anyone who has a fine, favorite, or unusual cooper's tool is asked to bring it along for exhibition.

Fred Shippey, the program chairman, has also arranged a showing of a color movie on coopering, courtesy of the EAIA film library.

The program for the afternoon will conclude with the "Whatsit?" session, with Harry O'Neill presiding.

The remaining meetings for the current year will be on April 5 and June 7.



Collectors of Rare and Familiar Tools Society of New Jersey

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

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on either end. It bears an owner's stamp of L. B. Clark and the conventional Mockridge & Francis maker's mark, which is inverted—that is, imprinted upside down.

Mort had a couple of questions concerning his plane. The first was: "Are there any of these planes around your area?" New Jersey should be so lucky. We have heard that M & F made a three arm plow but have never seen one.

His second question concerns the Mockridge and Francis mark. Was it

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DECORATIVE ARTS TRUST APPOINTS LEWIS COOPER

Wendell D. Garrett, Editor and Publisher of The Magazine Antiques and President of the Decorative Arts Trust has announced the appointment of Lewis C. Cooper as the first full-time Director of the latter organization.

Cooper, who serves on the Board of Directors of CRAFTS of New Jersey, recently retired after a long career in the nuclear industry which included more than twenty-two years with the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (now the U.S. Department of Energy).

The Decorative Arts Trust is a broad-based, non-profit educational organization which offers a variety of services to collectors, dealers, and museum curators, such as seminars in cooperation with historical and cultural groups, a speakers registry, advice on the preservation and disposition of antiques, and a quarterly newsletter.

Everyone in CRAFTS wishes Lewis the very best in his new career.

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We received a letter a while back from CRAFTSman Mort Berman, who lives in the sunny climes of San Luis Obispo, California, where no one worries about paying the heating bills. Mort, who lays claim to being the westernmost member of our organization (sort of a one-man CRAFTS-West), was quite interested in the article on Mockridge & Son that appeared in the March, 1979, issue of the Tool Shed.

The reason for his interest is that "the best piece" in the Berman tool collection is a Mockridge & Francis plow plane, which he picked up on the West Coast. And what a plane it is! Unfortunately, we could not make a clear reproduction of the beautiful color photo that he enclosed.

The plane, which appears to be beech, is a closed-tote, three-arm plow with a center adjusting mechanism. The adjusting arm looks like a threaded steel rod with large, solid-brass knobs

NEWARK, NEW JERSEY, PLANEMAKERS IN THE 1830's

Names of men listed as plane-makers in Newark, N. J., directories, who do not appear in WPINCA [Kenneth D. Roberts, Wooden Planes in 19th Century America (1978)], are given below. Some of these men may have been bench hands and not in business for themselves. Examples of their labels, if they exist, would be useful.

- 1836-37 Thomas Burns, plane-maker
- 1836-37 George W. Andrus(s), wholesale plane factory
- 1835-36-37 Farrand & Gould, plane and machine makers/brass and iron turners
- 1835-36-37 John King, planemaker
- 1835-36-37 John A. King, plane-maker
- 1837 Timothy B. Noe, plane-maker
- 1835 Parkhurst & Coe (probably Charles Parkhurst, planemaker, and Joseph D. Coe, turner)
- 1836-37 Charles Parkhurst, planemaker
- 1835-36 John B. Searing, plane-maker (John D. Searing, 1836-37, planemaker, appears in the directory and is listed in WPINCA. Perhaps John B. and John D. are the same man, although their dates overlap. WPINCA also gives James Searing)
- 1835-36 John Teasman, plane-maker
- 1837 David Wills, plane-maker

Besides this group there are some ambiguous entries.

- 1835-36-37 John P. Conger, tool manufacturer
- Henry Homer, general tool maker

Isaac Pierson, tool maker

In 1835, '36 and '37 John A. King is listed in the directories as a plane-maker. In 1835 and '36 John Teasman also appears. It is not clear whether these men had their own shops or were bench hands; but if they were proprietors, specimens of their labels are particularly to be desired for, like Ceasar Chelor, they were blacks. It should be noted that there were probably two John Kings in Newark in the same period, for a John King without a middle initial is also listed in the directories of '35, '36 and '37. Teasman and John A. King were described in their entries as "col'd." John King was not so described.

(The above article is a composite of two pieces which were published in Plane Talk: The Bulletin of the British-American Rhykenological Society. The list of planemakers is from Vol. V (No. 2), and the concluding paragraph, dealing with black planemakers, is from Vol. V (No. 4). Both are reprinted here with the kind permission of BARS.)

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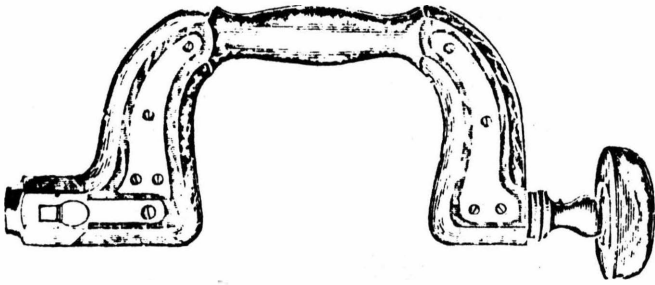
usual for it to be upside down? A review of our shelves turned up only narrow moulding planes by M & F, but some of you serious plane collectors should be able to answer this one. How about it?

On another matter entirely, We would be remiss if we did not express our appreciation to Bob Nelson of PATINA for the kind words that he had for CRAFTS and the Tool Shed in the last issue of the PATINA-GRAM. We are only a little embarrassed that immediately after his description of the Tool Shed as "eight full size pages" we come out with a four-page issue.

And we extend our warmest congratulations to PATINA for passing the 100 member mark.

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after 1853 and so, at this time, cannot say if he ever won a Franklin Institute medal—although he was getting close.



Another New Jersey tool maker traced through Philadelphia sources was Nathan F. Norton. Norton was a plane maker from Camden, N. J., just across the Delaware River from Philadelphia.⁹

Like many of his fellow plane makers on the opposite shore, Norton moved around a lot. He was first listed in Camden in 1850, at Bridge Avenue AB (above) Front. Although he was still at this location in 1851, by 1852 he was at 5th AB (above) Plum. In 1854 he was back on Bridge Avenue, this time Bel (below) 2nd. And in 1855 and 1856 we find him at 5th N. Morris (north of Morris, or 5th and North Morris?). Where Norton moved after 1856 heaven only knows, as he is not listed in the 1857, 1858, or 1859 directories.

Norton's planes are marked:
N. Norton
Camden, NJ
Warranted

Today, Nathan F. Norton planes are quite scarce. In years of collecting on both sides of the river, I have seen only a few of them.

Notes

¹Kenneth D. Roberts, Some 19th Century English Woodworking Tools (1980) lists John Wheatcroft as a Sheffield bracemaker (1825-1828) and Jno. Wheatcroft & Sons (1830).

²Archives Collection, Franklin Institute, Philadelphia, Pa.

³Only American-made products were to be exhibited. An entry at the 1849 fair was listed as "1 Case Braces

& Wrenches." Following the description is a note asking "is it English?" and what looks like a signature, "Cireeli." Apparently the issue was decided, as the note goes on to say, "Braces removed."

⁴Judges were supposed to be knowledgeable in the categories they were judging. Hand tools were in Class XII—Hardware and Cutlery.

⁵A Sheffield style brace marked "Geo. Wheatcroft, Newark, N. J." was listed in Iron Horse Antiques Catalog #6 (1974).

⁶At the 1850 fair Brown & Wells, Philadelphia, Pa., won a first premium for brace and bits and jointer's tools.

⁷Probably referring back to the 1850 fair.

⁸One could not win an award by being "equal to." You had to be "better than." (Sorry George!)

⁹The Philadelphia city directories have a section in the back for Camden, N. J.

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A STANLEY BIPLANE ?



Larry Campanell tells us that once upon a time two well-known twin CRAFTSMen (their names will go unmentioned) placed a want ad in an antiques paper. The ad said: "Wanted Stanley Planes...", and it specified certain numbers.

The problem was that the paper ran the ad in the aviation section. But then, where else would you put an ad for planes?

Larry never did tell us how many airplanes Walter and Charles added to their collection.

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