The TOOL SHED

NUMBER 57 JUNE 1989

A Journal of Tool Collecting published by CRAFTS of New Jersey

WHO NAMED THE MONKEY WRENCH?

by W. M. Gooch
Atlantic Highlands, N.J.

from INDUSTRIAL-ARTS MAGAZINE
February 1928

Numerous articles have recently appeared stating positively but erroneously that the monkey wrench derived its name from James Monckey, its inventor. I do not know the source of this information, but the authors must have come to this conclusion only through unreliable hearsay.

Upon reading the statement several times, my curiosity was aroused and I endeavored to learn more about it. I wrote to the editors of the publications and they referred me elsewhere. I wrote to prominent manufacturers of monkey wrenches and they frankly admitted that they themselves didn't know. I searched through libraries. Librarians made searches for me. but I got nowhere until finally a manufacturer suggested that I write to Frank L. Coes of Worcester, Mass.

From Mr. Coes I have obtained information which appears to me to be logical. Much of it is authentic. He himself has done considerable searching in the field both here and abroad to ascertain whether a Mr. James Monckey had ever been granted a patent in this field. No trace whatsoever could be found of the name "Monckey" in any country, as an inventor or maker.

It is claimed that in the early part of the nineteenth century, an English patent was a very hard thing to obtain and therefore little used. It is possible, under these circumstances, that the name "monkey" is of English origin, but there is no documentary evidence to that effect.

It is true that a patent was issued to a Mr. Monk for the improvement of pipe wrenches, but this is neither the name "Monckey" nor the type of wrench being discussed.

There is evidence that a Mr. Trask wrote Mr. Coes' grandfather late in 1865 to the effect that the term "monkey wrench" had been in use long before that time. Mr. Trask said he believed the name came with the first use of the English wrench. He suggested that it probably was so called because you "twisted its tail to make it open its mouth".

From this material, I conclude that "Monckey" was not the name of the inventor of any sort of wrench, but a term applied to it, possibly for the above named reason. Mr. Trask's explanation seems a plausible one. Mr. Trask was proprietor of Trask Foundry, Springfield, Mass. at which Mr. Loring Coes worked in 1839-40 or 1840-41 as a gear patternmaker. The

(Continued on page 7)

KENNETH VLIET & GREGORY WELCH TO SPEAK JUNE 4, 1989

Starting with the popular Tailgate Swap & Sale at 1:00 P.M., CRAFTS will hold its meeting on Sunday, June 4th at the Hobart Masonic Lodge in High Bridge.

The formal meeting will begin promptly at 2:00 P.M. Ken Vliet and Greg Welch will speak on "Making the Pennsylvania Long Rifle". Both of these CRAFTSmen have constructed this type of weapon. They will be displaying their guns, tools. etc.

After a brief time for refreshment, be sure to participate in the "What's It" session chaired by Harry O'Niell. Don't forget to bring your rare, unidentified tools to challenge Harry and the rest of us.

CRAFTS of New Jersey

Collectors of Rare and Familiar Tools Society of New Jersey

President _____ STEPHEN ZLUKY, Whitehouse

Vice President _____ JOSEPH G. HAUCK, Lebanon

Secretary _____ BARBARA FARNHAM, Stockton

Treasurer _____ JOHN M. WHELAN, Murray Hill

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 seven dollars for the membership year of July 1 to June 30. Membership fees may be sent to the treasurer: John M. Whelan, 38 Colony Court, Murray Hill, N.J. 07974.

The Tool Shed

Published five times a year for members of CRAFTS of New Jersey. Editor: Frank W. Kingsbury, R.D. 1 Box 316, Glen Gardner, NJ 08826. Articles, especially about New Jersey tools and trades, are encouraged and may be sent to the editor.

SPEAKERS PROFILES
KENNETH VLIET & GREGORY WELCH

Both Kenneth Vliet and Gregory Welch have an interest in guns and their construction. They have each made two Pennsylvania Long Rifles, later called the Kentucky Rifle. They will be informing us about gun making tools, materials, and methods of construction of this gun.

You who were lucky enough to attend the November 20, 1983 meeting of CRAFTS, will remember Ken's interesting talk and display of his wooden toys at New Jersey Olde Towne. Ken has taught woodworking for twenty years—first in New Brunswick and presently at Watchung Hills Regional High School. He received his B.A. and M.A. in Industrial Arts Education at Trenton State College. He has received many awards at Art Shows. Most recent is an honorable mention at the 1989 Lamington Basket Art Show for a carving of a Canadian Goose which he exhibited and sold.

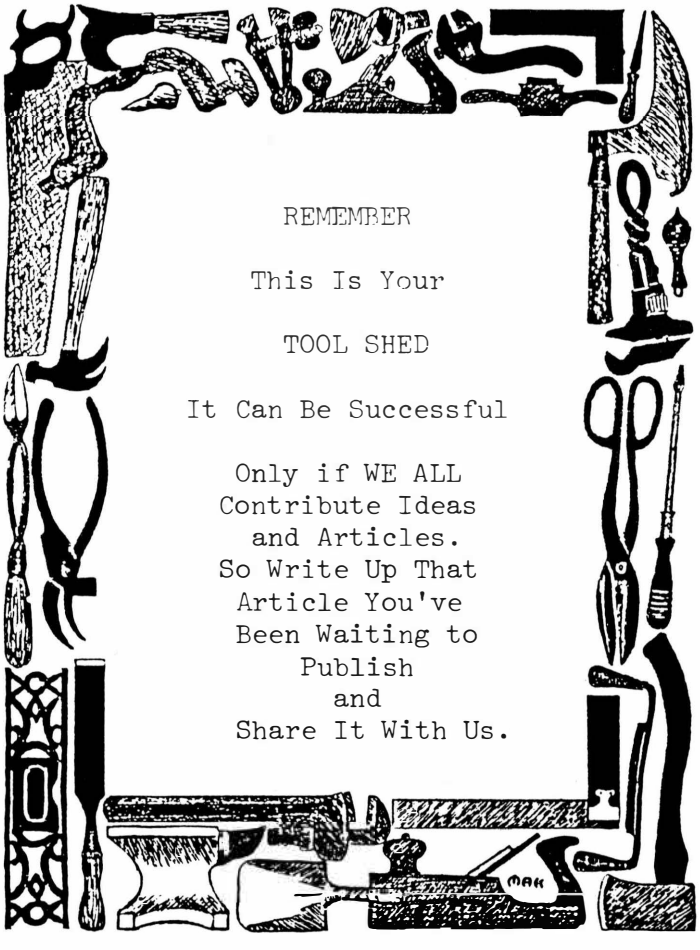
Ken and his wife Annette (our hostess) live on the family farm in Oldwick. They have two sons, Garret (21) and Adrian (17). Because of his ancestry, Ken is now writing an article about the early Dutch people and their tools—a group who came in 1640 and were known as the Holland Society.

Greg Welch has more than a passing interest in guns. Three times a year he instructs New Jersey hunters in the use of black powder. (There are twenty groups that receive such instruction throughout the state.)

Greg and his wife Barbara live on Dinner Pot Road on Bell Mountain in Oldwick. They have one son, Richard (24). Barbara is a registered nurse and Greg is active as a plant engineer with Chubb & Son. He spent four years in the Navy.

We are fortunate to have two such experienced CRAFTSmen share their knowledge of guns and their construction with us.

* * *



Kean Kuttin's

THE GOOD OLE DAYS

Have you ever yearned for the days when you eagerly bought marking gauges, squares and beat up bench planes? If you spent over $5 for anything, 'twas close to traumatic. But didn't you have a lot more fun than the more sophisticated collecting of today?

Now-a-days a beginner starts right out with all kinds of books and catalogs, and isn't very interested in "starter" tools. He bids right along with everybody else on rosewood plow-planes and ivory rules. As an auctioneer I suppose I should be cheering this, but as a collector I feel somewhat jealous. Where is his apprenticeship,—i.e. time served banging around garage sales and flea markets, learning the hard way? I really believe the guy is missing a lot of fun.

When I started, it didn't hurt too much to learn that the plane you just bought had an improper wedge—because you only paid $3.50 for it anyway. But when you buy a complete fake for some pretty decent bucks, it hurts bad. So the beginner today has to get serious from the start, and there goes most of the fun.

Graduating to the ranks of the advanced collector is no great thrill either. I find myself ignoring almost all the tools shown in shops and fleas because I can tell very quickly that they are already in my collection, and almost all are of the common variety anyway. So you could go an entire day at Lambertville/New Hope, or worse yet —an entire day at Adamstown, with very little to show for it. Oh sure, there will be the day you catch that big one. But those days are few and far between.

Isn't this whole plightful affair the natural evolution of things? Doesn't everything start off primitive and get sophisticated as it grows up? Alas, it's true; but wasn't it more fun swimming in the "ole deep hole" than it is today in the heated YMCA pool? I crave for the "good ole days" when buying a $2 square was real fun, particularly when someone told you that the handle was rosewood!

How then can some of us who are in this time frame go backwards again? How can we once more get to enjoy collecting? Give our collections to charity and start over?—not likely. Box everything and begin again? Most collections are in boxes right now anyhow. So what then?

Ever see the bumper sticker that reads: TAKE A BOY FISHING ? Fishermen have gone through this exact phenomenon. Catching sunfish on pin hooks and worms was great fun and you never lacked for fish. But as you progressed along, your equipment and your goals became more sophisticated than you might have really desired. Pretty soon you had all the right knowledge and tangible assets, but not too many fish. What to do? Live vicariously! Take a boy fishing and start over. Noone would really figure out that you were having more fun than the boy.

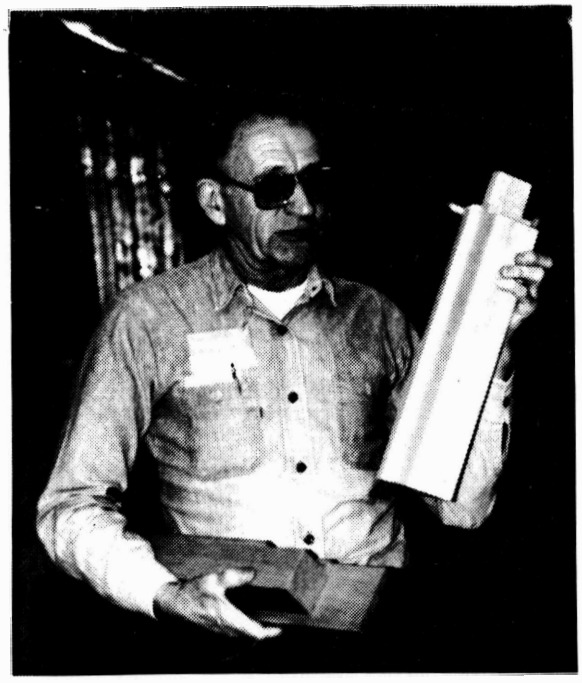
Taking a boy out "tooling" to kindle his interest in manual arts, fixing around the house, collecting, or just generating pride in his heritage is a notable cause all by itself. And if you happen to have more fun than him while doing it, who says thats a crime?

* * *

Editor: Discovered among unpublished articles, Herb informs us that he wrote this article in 1986. Still applies, doesn't it?

OUR APRIL MEETING

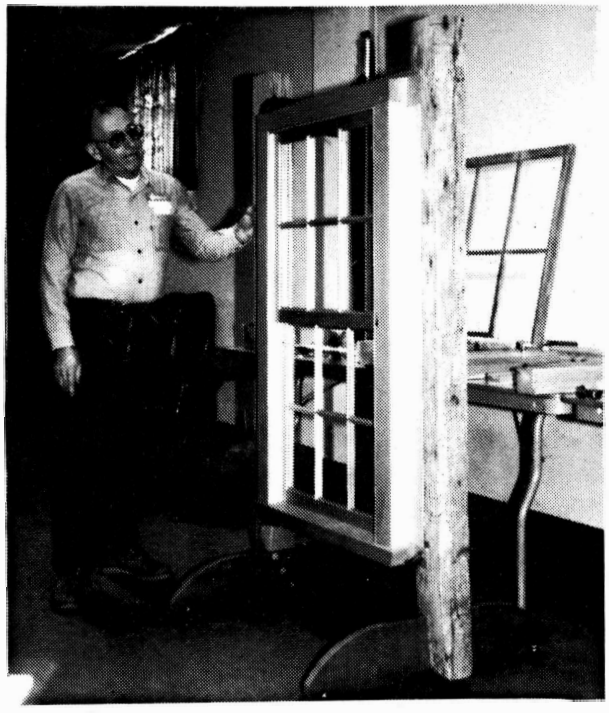
The restoration of the Orange Webb House, originally built as an Inn, circa 1720, gave our speaker, Harold Fountain, the opportunity to reproduce one of its distinctive features, its windows. During that period the construction of windows was in transition as double hung windows were just appearing and methods of installation were being developed.



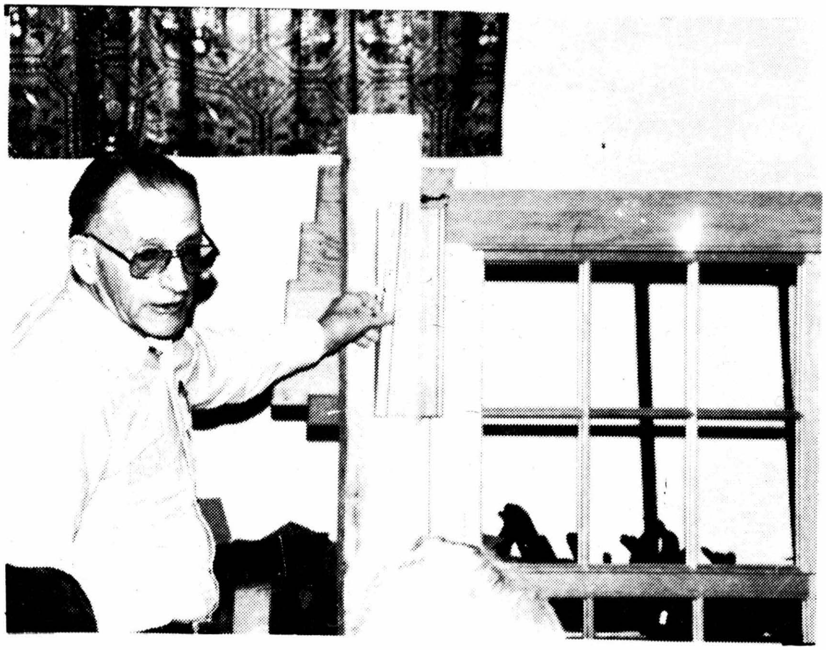
Harold's working model demonstrated how upper and lower portions of the frame could project as "horns" that fitted into mortises in the surrounding upright timbers which were secured with two nails at each corner of the frame. The window frame was built to project beyond the siding. Fitted between the "horns", a thin weather stop butted against the frame and covered the unevenness of the hand-hewn stud, making it necessary to chamfer the siding where it overlapped the strip.

Next Harold explained the construction of the frame, demonstrating with preshaped sections as well as actual pieces of the original frames from the restoration. Sash was made to accomodate the size of glass available (11" x 15" in this case). An additional 1/16" was added for each pane and a "story stick" made to incorporate the total sash measurements. The original sash had glass from five different periods. Made in England, the oldest, spun with a blowpipe, had warpages and sometimes bubbles in an arc as the four foot diameter glass (thicker at the perimeter) was cut into panes. The older the glass, the more intense its green color. The sash and frame were never glued but were held together by friction (which took a mallet to separate) and by pegs. The latter, being ½" diameter and six-sided with a

Harold Fountain



Demonstrating Frame Construction



Interior Trim Demonstrated by Harold
Photo by Kenneth W. Jones

chamfered end, were driven into 3/8" holes. Round pegs will not stay in round holes. The advise given was, "Compress your wood so that when it dries out the joint is good."

The Orange Webb House was originally located by the water at Greenport on the eastern end of Long Island. It was more accessible by ship from New England than by land from New York. The area had good soil for crops as well as a good location for whaling. The lumber used in the inn's construction was probably from Connecticut or Massachusetts. It is said that George Washington stayed there as a colonel when he was sailing to Boston.

Harold's thorough knowledge and explanation of his project brought out a number of thoughtful questions and comments from the members on hand. It was apparent that he is an accomplished craftsman and highly respected by the Oyster Ponds Historical Society who are restoring this historic treasure.

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LETTERS

March 18, 1989

Dear Editor:

Thanks to Jack Whelan for the issues of the TOOL SHED. As a new member, I know I have much to learn. However, I may be able to contribute to the general knowledge as well. To wit: The patent application on page 10 of the November '88 issue is for a cigar box opener. The best clue is detail b. The notch engaged the brad after the blade (handle) was forced between the cover and box. It may have been used to cut the brad.

I have three such cigar box openers which I can bring to a meeting for inspection and discussion. The hammer was used to reseal the cigar box.

The enclosed picture is of a similar type hammer which was used to break taffy into edible size pieces. It is marked "Schwarz & Son" in script on one side.

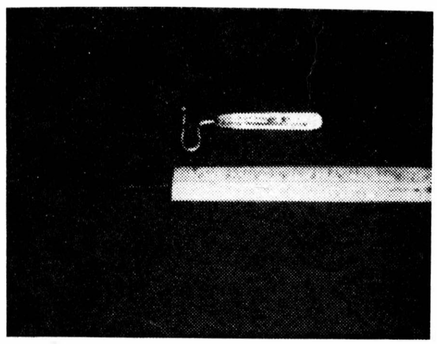
MAKERS OF THE
GENUINE TURKISH CHEWING TAFFY

is printed on the reverse.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Smith

(This letter just missed our April issue)

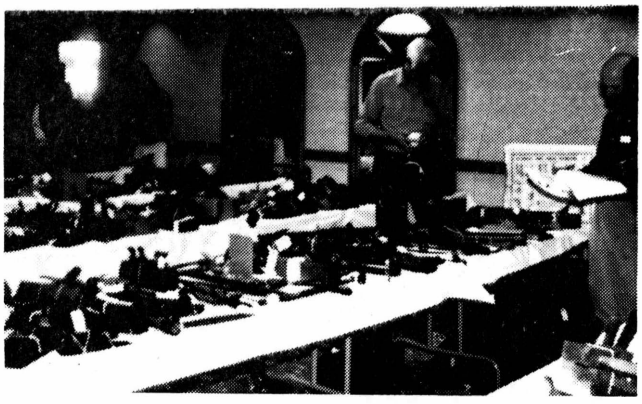


AUCTION

1989 AUCTION: A GREAT TEAM

The April 1st auction was no joke, as those who attended can attest. Approximately 650 lots were sold for a total sales of almost $44,000; both amounts were CRAFTS records. As usual the auction took lots of work and we got a record amount of help. The usual stalwarts were heavily involved.

Harry O'Neill handled all the hotel negotiations and the newspaper advertising as well as helping Steve Zluky with the cataloging. Steve again worked on virtually everything and Herb Kean did a fine job in keeping up a good pace in spite of the number of lots. He was assisted by Ron Berube who spelled him thus providing strong auctioneering from start to finish.



Tables Laden with Tools in Lots

"$100 right there!"--Herb Kean with Steve Zluky

Joan Fridlington and Fran Smith

All the volunteer's help was much appreciated (and I sure hope I didn't forget anyone):

Set-up:
Jack Whelan, Fred Shippey & son, Bob & Joan Fridlington, Dave Anderson, Chuck Morgan, Ken Vliet & son, John Demsey, Gregg Welch, Frank Kingsbury, Ken Hopfel, Paul Murphy, Lew Cooper, Dick Hepner and Harry O"Neill.

Runners:
Chuck Morgan, Ken Hopfel, Ron London, Ed Simon, Steve Orbine, Ray Wisniewski, Ron Gabowski, Bill Hermanek, Dick Hepner, Frank Smith, Dave Anderson, Vern Kerrick, Paul Murphy, Lance Sweeney, and Ken Vliet.

A great job was done by Jack Whelan, Fran Smith, Joan Fridlington, and Markay Zluky in handling the registration of bidders, sales and collections

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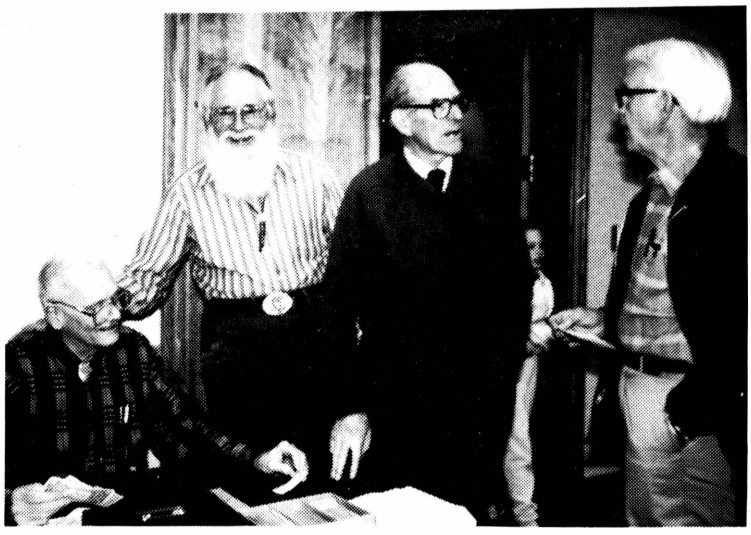

At the Auction
Jack Whelan, Frank W. Kingsbury,
Kenneth V. Myers & Mark E. Singley

Steve Zluky and Gregg Welch worked the whole sale, feeding the runners lots.

And finally, a big thanks to the consignors who gave us good tools and plenty of them. Once again, thanks for all your help!

Joe Hauck

* * *

ANTIQUE TOOL TAG SALE
Over 200 pieces
June 3, 1989

9:00 A.M. sharp to 4:00 P.M. Red Parrot Antiques, Route 206 center of Andover. Hope to see you.

Herb Kean.

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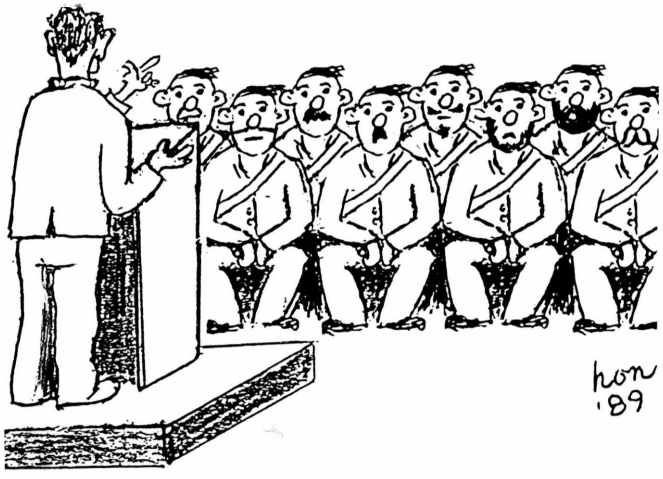
MONKEY WRENCH (Continued from page 1)

aforementioned Frank L. Coes is the grandson of Loring Coes.

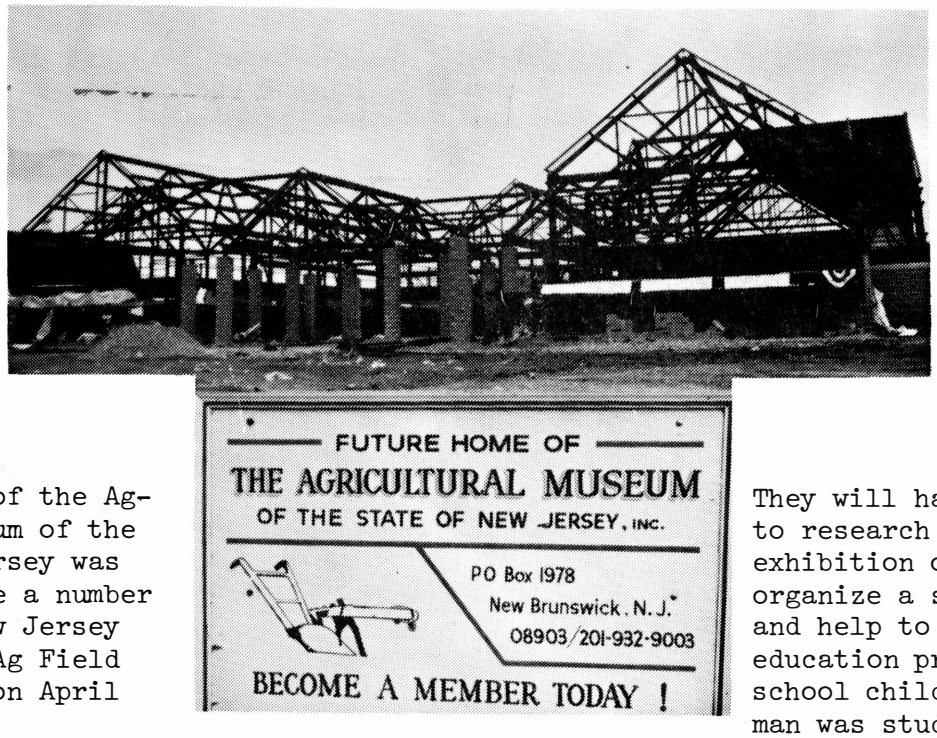
Along with this misconception of the derivation of the name, there also goes the misconception as to how generally the term is used. This particular type of wrench is not universally known as the "monkey wrench". It is not always sold as such nor ordered as such. "Screw wrench" is the name which large buyers prefer. There is nothing definite or universal in the nickname. In fact, it is not used in the south at all, except where there has been, for a long period, an influx of northern white mechanics. In some sections they call this wrench spanner and in others screw apenner, both of these terms being direct importations from England and Scotland.

Over a period of twenty years, incoming orders were watched by a large concern and never once was the term "monkey" applied to a wrench on a wholesale order. In other words, the term "monkey wrench" is seldom if ever used by people dealing in them on a large scale. In time, the name will undoubtedly be dropped entirely.
(Editor: Never, it will live forever!)
Thanks to Ray Townsend for this article.



'NOW WE'LL TRY FOR 120 LOTS PER HR
PLEASE CHECK YOUR SEAT BELTS!"

Inspired by Herb Kean, Auctioneer.



The Staff of the Agricultural Museum of the State of New Jersey was delighted to see a number of CRAFTS of New Jersey members at the Ag Field Day Open House on April 29th.

Al Hodge arrived and blessed us with a donation of important trade catalogs for farm implements that will be vital in interpreting our collection. These beautiful catalogs advertised such products as Planet Jr.(We have an entire collection from the Allen Family), Sharpless Tubular Cream Separators, Myers Hay Tools, Iron Age, and Corn King.

This summer the museum is offering students the opportunity to receive four credits from the American Studies Dept. at Douglass College to participate in the various functions of the museum. They will have a chance to research and prepare exhibition of objects, organize a special event, and help to develop our education program for school children. One woman was student coordinator of the Douglass College Folk Festival the last two years, and is awaiting nomination to the Peace Corps. She felt some exposure to early agricultural methods might help her in the country she'll be sent to.

We are also offering a course in the conservation of early objects, since we'll need a lot of help before we can exhibit them in November. Of course, there are so many (approximately 3,000) we can use all the dedicated volunteers we can muster! If you are interested please call Curator Phyllis Mount at 201-214-0077.

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It's a bird! It's a plane! It's a What's It? Yes, it fooled and confused them all!

It's a spice bush arm extender used to hang (and remove) the cord on a bird feeder from the nail out on the porch.

The Editor

DEADLINE—Although it seems a long way off, the September issue of the TOOL SHED needs your help. Because the editor will be on vacation, the deadline for articles, letters & pictures will be August 7. Mail them early!

HAVE AN EXCITING SUMMER!