

The TOOLSHED

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A NEW IDENTIFICATION FOR A "PLANEMAKER'S FLOAT"

by Robert Cameron

The patent drawings on the right show a tool which, when found today, is almost invariably identified as a planemaker's float.

I had one of these little tools in my collection. Because it bore a twentieth century patent date, however, I was always a bit skeptical about its alleged function.

When I finally checked the patent papers, they revealed that it is actually a keyhole saw, invented by Alden R. Brewer of Northport, Washington, and patented on September 8, 1917 (No. 1,240,173).

The tool is 16 inches long, overall. The handle is 5 1/4 inches; the blade, including the 3/4 inch tip is 10 3/4 inches. The blade is made of saw plate stock.

The opposite edges of the blade (Figures 2 and 3) are formed with a longitudinal double series of chisel-like teeth, creating a "wood rasp".

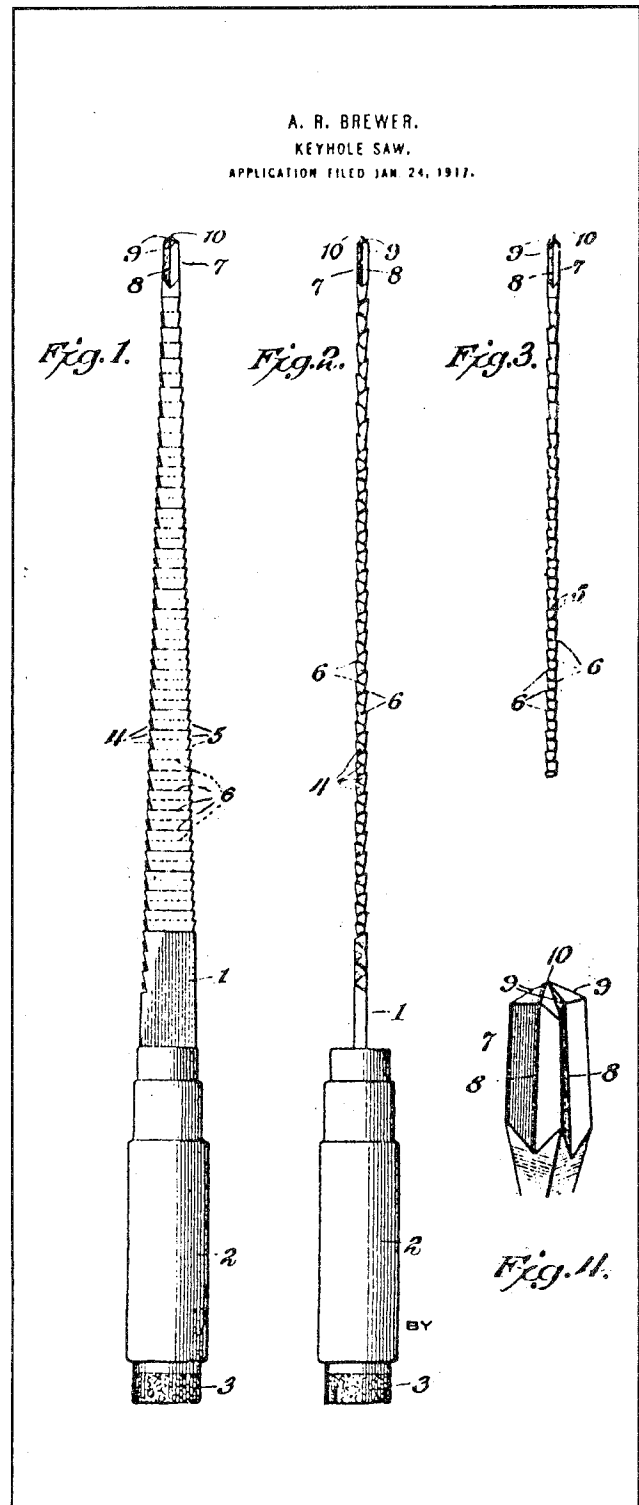
A 3/4 inch tip (shown on an enlarged scale in Figure 4) extends beyond the teeth. This tip can be used either as a boring point or as a chisel-like punch to be pounded directly through a board.

I have used the tool in the manner described by its inventor. It works--but I now have a slightly bent version of the original. Many that have been used as boring tools or punches have had their tips broken off, making them about 3/4 inch shorter and enhancing their resemblance to floats.

The tool can be readily identified by the patent date stamped in the tang (the date often has the last digit of 1917 missing), by the saw teeth along its edges, and by its long tapered form.

* * *

Robert Cameron's article originally appeared in the June 1982 Issue #22 of the TOOLSHED. It is timely for today, as several of these "Planemaker's Floats" have recently been misidentified.





Collectors of Rare and Familiar Tools Society
of New Jersey

President _____ JOHN M. WHELAN, Murray Hill
Vice President _____ JOSEPH G. HAUCK, Lebanon
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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 ten dollars for the membership year of July 1 to June 30. Membership fees may be sent to the Treasurer: Helen Whelan, 38 Colony Court, Murray Hill, N.J. 07974.

The Tool Shed

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

SPEAKER'S PROFILE JEAN LE MEE

With an interest in Design and in Control Systems (regulators and feed back systems), our speaker for the June 2nd meeting of CRAFTS has a varied background. Born and raised in Brittany and having served for four years in the French Navy, he spent three years in London before coming to the United States. He earned his Master's Degree in Electrical Engineering and his PhD in Mechanical Engineering ('63), both at Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh.

Dr. Jean LeMee' authored several articles on engineering while employed by Westinghouse Research in Pittsburgh. He has been with Cooper Union since 1964, and is completing his sixth year as Chairman of the Department of Mechanical Engineering there. His slides, of models that were displayed (Jan. 17 to Feb. 16) at a show there, will serve to illustrate his topic...."Patents and the Process of Invention".

Jean also expressed his interest in Sanskrit, Sanskrit grammar, and in using its concepts in design. He has published a translation of Sanskrit poems. He and his wife Katharine (also a PhD, but from Columbia) have one daughter, Hannah, and live in the Englewood area, New Jersey.

Guest Speaker

JEAN LE MEE' = PATENTS & INVENTIONS

On Sunday, June 2nd, 1991, the CRAFTS of New Jersey will meet at the HOST Masonic Lodge in High Bridge, N.J. After the "Tail-gate Swap and Sell" in the parking lot, there will be a brief business meeting at 2:00 P.M. At that time we must vote again on our By-Laws that were mailed out with the June 1990 TOOL SHED.

Our speaker, Jean LeMee' of Cooper Union, New York City, will then be enlightening us with an illustrated talk on the subject of "Patents and the Process of Invention". (Sounds intriguing.)

Don't forget to allow time to examine the exhibits set up by other members. And then there's the What's It? session with Don Wallace.




You Can't Steal Second

with

Your Foot

on

First!



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

As you can see from the enclosed Prices Realized list (if you were not at the auction), this year's effort was most gratifying. Volume was a bit under last year's record breaker, but still large enough to provide a substantial fraction of the Club's total income. To the many people who helped in maintaining our success in this effort, the Club owes thanks. The major contributors, as ever, were Steve Zlucky, Joe Hauck and Herb Kean, but to all who helped in tool transport and as runners, thank you. The efficient work of MarKay Zlucky, Fran Smith and helpers smoothed the check-out procedure and I'm sure you appreciate that.

The size of our annual Auction serves to remind us that the Club is growing. The Club I joined a little over ten years ago had about 140 members, met in the Indian Queen Tavern at East Jersey Olde Towne, and once in a while had a little auction in the High Bridge Fire house. We are now over three hundred fifty, and the Auction attracts buyers from a wide area.

As a new member, I enjoyed the meetings and learned a lot. For several years I was taking, not giving. I might put a few chairs away after the meeting, but "other people" did all of the real work.

When Carroll Palmer moved out of the area and vacated the Treasurer's post, Emil Pollak sweet-talked me into accepting it. It took some persuasion, but Emil is good at that. After doing the books for my first auction, I wasn't too sure that taking the job had been a good idea. But the rewards of closer contact with the members (and especially with the directors) far exceeded the efforts required by my chores. Over these years I've formed new friendships that I value very highly. Looking back, agreeing to work for CRAFTS was one of my better decisions.

As in any club of our type, the work is done by relatively few people. I've named a few of them above, and you no doubt can add to the list. None of these people could be paid enough in money (even if we had it) to compensate

them for their time and effort, and for the dedication they have to our common interests. (I'm sure you are all aware that no officer or member is ever paid for their work.) Their rewards, and mine, are in the personal satisfaction of accomplishing something that is worth doing.

The method of allocating job responsibility has changed little since the early days of the Club: one job, one man. With our growth, some of these jobs have grown to the point of demanding more time than is available. Steve Zlucky found that the two tasks of the Presidency and collecting and cataloging tools for the Auction, took more hours than he had free, and turned one of them over to me. Larry Fuhro, then Bob Fridlington, nurtured THE TOOLSHED from a simple newsletter into a respected organ. Frank and Mary Alice Kingsbury continued improvement (including making a major saving in production costs that had threatened our current dues level). They have indicated that they wish to pass on this responsibility, and we are seeking a replacement.

If we are to continue to grow, while retaining the benefits of being an association of friends rather than a business organization, we must find ways to subdivide the tasks to be accomplished. The areas of responsibility must be compatible with the time available to be spent, by one person, on a leisure activity; yet defined clearly enough to ensure continuation of our present progress. I feel strongly that the rewards in personal satisfaction will not be divided, but will be multiplied, by such subdivision.

This means, of course, that many of you will be asked to accept responsibility for such limited assignments, and to make a commitment to a continuing service to CRAFTS. I sincerely hope that some of you will contact me and volunteer to serve. If you are approached with a proposal to accept such an assignment, I hope that you will listen carefully and give it serious consideration. I did, and will never regret it.

* * *

REMINDER: DUES for the 1991 - 1992 year are due in June. Please see Helen Whelan or mail your \$10.00 to her at 38 Colony Court, Murray Hill, N.J. 07974.



1017 Blandin
Fort Worth, TX 76111
April 17, 1991

859 Route 32
N. Franklin, CT 06254
March 19, 1991

Dear CRAFTS Members:

I am writing a book about inventor William Baxter of Newark, New Jersey. Among Mr. Baxter's inventions are a number of hand tools. They include a tap/auger handle, an adjustable diagonal wrench and an adjustable "S" wrench.

As part of my research, I am interested in documenting the companies that manufactured Baxter's tools. I am seeking photocopies of tool catalogues that show Baxter wrenches. I would also like to ask the members who own Baxter wrenches to send me the name of the manufacturer stamped on their tools. Additionally, I would like to know what size wrenches they have in their collections.

I am also interested in purchasing wrenches for a Baxter display at the New England Museum of Wirelsss amd Steam where I have restored a Baxter steam engine to operating condition.

I appreciate your assistance in documenting this chapter of this fascinating man's contribution to America's technological development and I look forward to hearing from your soon.

Sincerely,

George King III

* * *

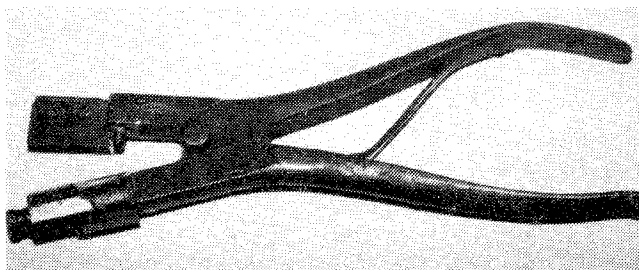
DISPLAY AT APRIL MEETING

At our April 7th meeting, Ken Hopfel and Paul Weidenschilling combined their efforts and their tools to present an interesting display of tools made by William Johnson of Newark. Their exhibit, entitled "Variations of the William Johnson Name Stamp" uniquely presented a variety of tools with an historical twist.

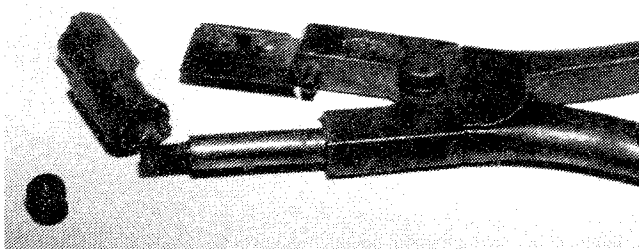
To Whom It May Concern:

I have recently acquired a hand tool manufactured by J. B. Wiss of Newark, New Jersey. I am trying to locate someone from the Wiss Company or someone who can identify this tool and what it was used for. I believe it was used by a shoe cobbler but I am not sure.

Any help you can give will be appreciated. If you are unable to identify this tool, is it possible another company could help? If so, would you please forward or return to me? I am enclosing a self addressed stamped envelope and pictures.



Tool Made by J. B. Wiss. What is it used for?



Detail of Above Tool Showing Removable Parts.

The tool on one side has a hole punch and a slitting blade. The other side is a brass back up that also rotates.

Please return the pictures and any information you may have on this tool, or forward to someone who may be able to identify this for me.

Sincerely,

(SEE THE EDITOR)

Lee E. Byrd



A BLANKET AUCTION

No, it's not an auction of blankets. It's an auction of blankets full of stuff. My son, Steve, told me about my first one last year. Things up his way (in Maine) are a little more laid back than they are here; and some types of tools are plentiful there. This might account for the rather casual attitude taken toward these tools in the more rural areas. But, if you get a chance to attend one of these auctions, you might not believe what you are seeing.

Picture a chilly morning with everyone standing outside a barn full of auction lots (in this case tools). At some random hour, when there is enough of a crowd formed, the doors of the barn are opened and the auctioneer mounts his stool. There is no P.A. system, so everyone bunches up close for visibility (and warmth).

The first item that you see is a blanket thrown on the ground directly in front of the auctioneer. Then a stream of runners emerge from the barn carrying tools. Each, in turn, holds up his tool; the auctioneer quickly describes it, and then asks for bids. Whether he gets a bid or not, the tool is placed (or thrown) on the blanket and the next runner repeats the same routine with his tool.

It takes a few minutes to grasp the fact that the bidding is cumulative for all the tools on the blanket. Now this technique is used occasionally in our area when a piece doesn't "open" due to a lack of interest. The auctioneer, rather than withdrawing the piece, will put another lot with it, and bid both lots together. But never will he bid 20 or more lots simultaneously as with the blanket auction! There is little chance of keeping track of what the total blanket value is; it just moves too fast. You have to "gut feel" it. Needless to say, the price is very low when this kind of risk is present.

I asked Steve, "How long do they keep throwing stuff on the blanket?" His answer was, "Until it gets too heavy or it reaches \$100--- whichever comes first." I was too shocked to bid, but Steve wasn't. He got the first three

blankets for \$75, \$85 and \$120---the third blanket had molding planes. The tools from the three lots completely covered the floor of his van. A blanketful is an awesome "boxlot"!

The better items were individually bid on, but I couldn't get interested in anything until I saw the blanket thrown down again. This time I decided to keep a running count of the total value. The blanket hit maximum weight before the \$100 limit. There were at least 10 spuds, 10 axes, 5 adzes and who knows what else. The bid was \$80 and my tally showed around \$150. It seemed to me we should bid, so I poked Steve, but he just shook me off. "The van won't take the weight," was his only comment. I felt that we should make two trips, but by the time I got out this explanation, the lot was sold. Steve did then agree to come back for a second pick up, so I was in my glory on the next blanket lot. They were all cooper's tools, but they hit the \$100 mark before the weight limit, so the runners did not add any more to the fifteen or so pieces that were already on the blanket. Another fellow and I just bid from there.

Steve and I ended up with two vanloads of rather average lots, and about 20 pieces that were real winners: e.g. an ivory and ebony hatsizer---written up in the CHRONICLE. The last lot was the horse weathervane on top of the barn. It was pretty old, and in decent shape. The auctioneer announced that whoever won the bid would have to climb up and hacksaw it down. Needless to say, the bidding was not energetic. Steve won it and promised to cut it down when he came back the next day.

As the farm we were at was somewhat of an historical item in the county, the local "weekly" reporter came out the next day to take a picture of Steve cutting down the weathervane. He made it into an "end-of-an-era" story.

Now here's the wrapup. A movie company, shooting on location nearby, saw the picture in the paper and got in touch with Steve to rent the weathervane. When they came to his shop to pick it up, they saw all kinds of Americana that they "had to have". (Money doesn't seem to be any object with these people.) So Steve got to pay for all those tools with the rental money. And in a couple of weeks, he got the weathervane and the rest of the Americana back to sell again.

We should all be so lucky!



AUCTION NEWS

Another April gone by and another successful Auction, thanks to the help of many. In spite of failing to win any of the rare New Jersey items from the late Harry O'Neill's collection, I still managed to win some interesting lots. I know many others went home with treasures. Once again we had almost 200 bidders.



Jack Whelan, Joe Hauck and Auctioneer, Ron Berube

A new twist on the thank you's; since I lost my notes, I have to do this from memory. So this will work like a First Edition Tool Book. Those of you whom I omit are like rare tools: drop me a line or give me a call and I will mention you in our next edition.

The First thank you goes to Steve Zluky for all the cataloging and his work managing the lots and runners the day of the sale, along with Greg Welch. The Friday night set up was assisted by Lew Cooper, Dick Hepner, Paul Murphy, Jack Whelan, Ken Hopfel, Herb Kean, Chuck Morgan, Frank Kingsbury, Ed Sonntag, Paul Weiderschilling and, pulling overnight duty, Dominic Micalizzi.

The runners were great again: Ron Grabowski, Ray Wisnieski, and Bob Zarich (pinch hitting for Bill Hermanek) took the first shift. The next team was Frank Smith, Stewart Shippey, and Ed Modugno; followed by Ken Vliet, Dave Andreasson and Ron London.

The cashiering team tried to keep me

straight. A big thank you to Markay Zluky, Fran Smith, and Helen & Jack Whelan.

And finally, thanks also to Ron Berube, our auctioneer and to Herb Kean, who spelled him, as well as Chuck Granick who spelled me as clerk. Now Chuck, if you had only written down all those names!



Chuck Granick, Clerking & Ron Berube

We have been tossing around some ideas for changes in our auctions in the future. I would welcome any suggestions you may have.

Joe Hauck

COMING EVENTS

SUNDAY, JUNE 2nd--CRAFTS MEETING at High Bridge, "Patents and the Process of Invention" by Jean LeMee.

WEDNESDAY TO SATURDAY, JUNE 12th to 15th--E.A.I.A. Annual Meeting at the Landis Valley Museum and Eden Resort Hotel near Lancaster, PA.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 15th--CRAFTS PICNIC at Brady Camp, Pottersville, N.J.

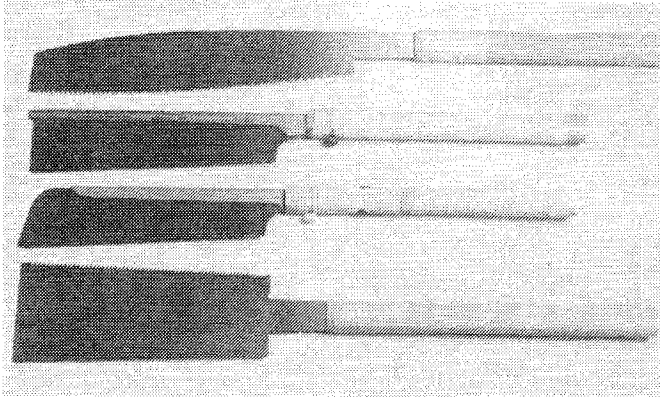
THURSDAY to SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3rd to 5th--Joint Meeting of E.A.I.A. and Midwest Tool Collectors at Knoxville, TN.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 2nd--National Antique Tool Auction, Bud Brown, at Wilson World, Morgantown, PA.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 10--CRAFTS MEETING at High Bridge.

JAPANESE TOOLS

Spread out on two tables in the front of our meeting room was an interesting array of wood-working tools, waterstones and a sumitsubo. Henry Lanz, formerly a mechanical engineer in reearch and development in the aircraft industry, and now Vice President of Garrett Wade Company, was there to introduce them, and the unique manner in which some of them are used.



Some Japanese Carpenter's Saws

It was the appearance of the saws, that seemed the most distinctive. They looked so small and weak---incapable of getting a good "bite". But their shorter, thinner blade cuts while pulling up, which keeps them taut and makes a narrower kerf, and thus cuts faster. In Japan, the craftsman often sits on the floor, holding his work with his feet and his saw with both hands. A double-sided saw may be both a crosscut and a rip saw. The blade tapers from wide to narrow by the handle and the larger saws are coarser, the shorter for finer work. The blades are brittle and will fracture if kinked. There are special blades for hard or soft wood, and pruning saws for green or dry wood.

The chisels, formed by laminating a steel cutting edge to a softer body, are hollow-ground on the back, sometimes with multiple grooves. They have a steel socket that is separate but a continuation of the neck, which gives a sleek appearance, and there is a steel hoop around the end of the handle.

A plane, made from a single block of red or white oak, has somewhat the appearance of an early American plane. However, wedge-shaped blade fits into a slot of the same shape and each plane has been individually fitted so the

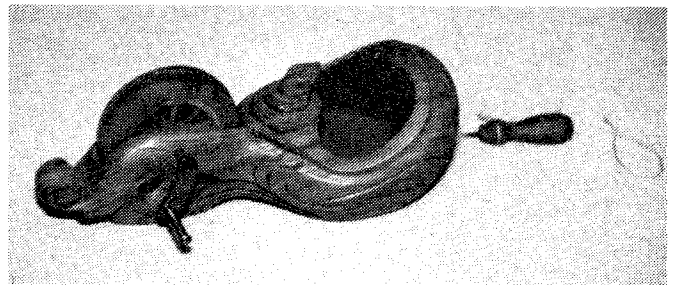
blade cannot be moved from one plane to another. The plane blade has a hollow-ground back like the chisel and is another tool that functions on the pull rather than the push stroke.

Japanese sharpening stones range from clay-like compounds to chalk-like stones, and, being soft, work best with water rather than oil.

The most attractive tool from an artistic standpoint was the sumitsubo or the Japanese equivalent of a chalk line and plumb line. They vary in size from one like Henry Lanz is holding in the above picture to the size he is indicating with his hands and are often very ornate. To use one as a chalk line, the hollow is filled with ink-saturated wadding and the silk thread from the wheel is drawn over it, then secured by the pin. Also on display were knives---one "fish"-



Henry Lanz with his Sumitsubo

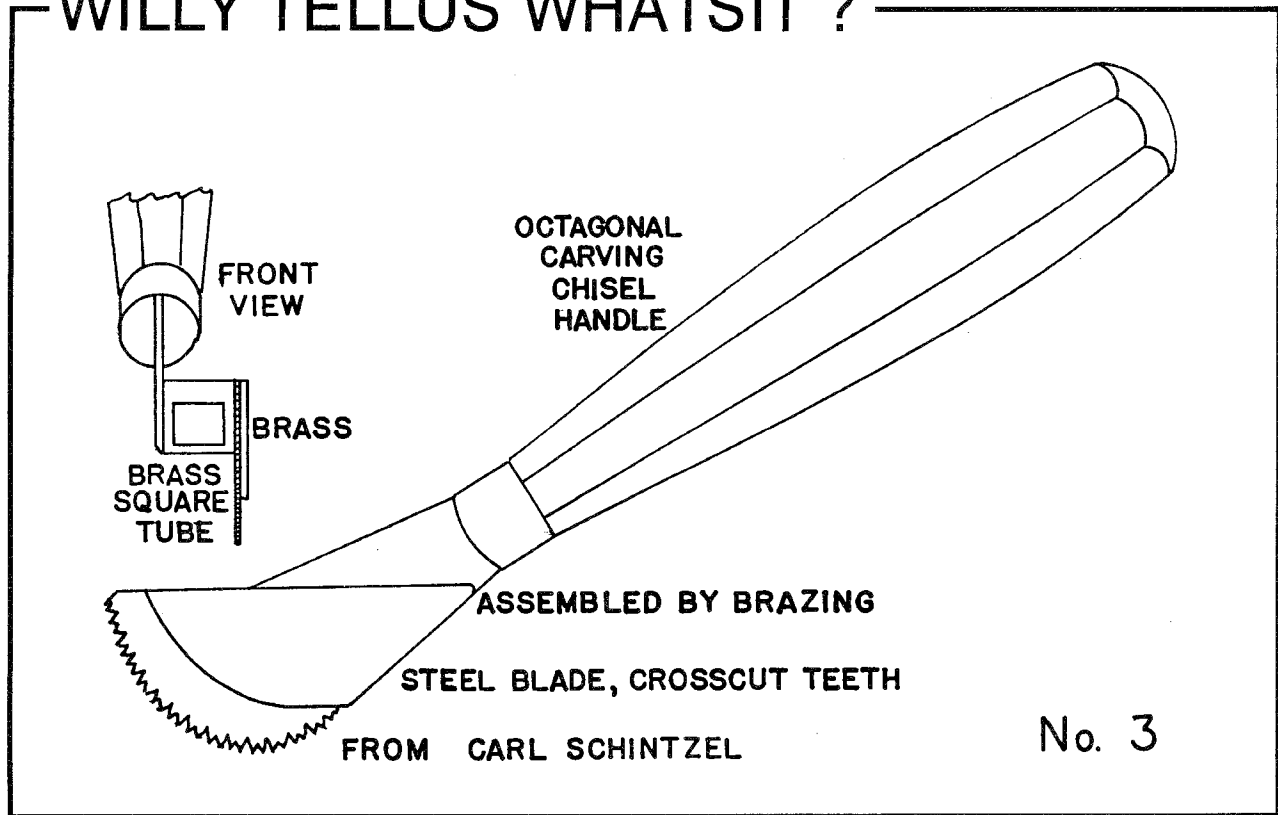


Sumitsubo Carved to Symbolize the Year of the Snake

shaped---and hammers with embossed and engraved tiger and dragon designs on the side of the heads.

In Japan toolmaking is often a family affair with ten to twelve people and skills have passed down by the apprentice system. Japan is the only place where you can still buy tools of any shape or size made according to your specification. Our speaker has personally visited in such places of business as well as entering an ancient, but still active mine where Awase finish-stones are found in narrow veins.

WILLY TELLUS WHATSIT ?



3 / 25 / 91

Dear Mr. Whelan:

The Whatsit No. 1, February 1991, looks like a scraper used in a machine shop to remove a very small amount of metal from a surface.

Respectfully,
Sam Spector

Willy says he was taught how to scrape slide valves for a steam engine by an old pro who used a much heavier, unhandled, square blade. Can any of you machinists out there comment on this suggestion?

DEADLINE for the September 1991 issue of THE TOOL SHED is June 30th, so that the Editors may complete it before leaving on vacation.

We welcome your letters, articles, and pictures. Any suggestions for articles are also much appreciated.

* * *

Believe me, of all the people in the world, those who want the most are those who have the most.-----Earl Ghere

CRAFTS of New Jersey meets at the HOST Masonic Lodge in High Bridge. Take Interstate 78 to the Route 31 exit at Clinton. Go north on Route 31 two miles to the second traffic light at the High Bridge exit. Turn right and go about 1/2 mile to Dennis Avenue on the left. Turn and go to the Masonic Lodge. Tailgate sales in the parking lot begin at 1:00 P.M. Meeting at 2:00.