The TOOL SHED

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NEW JERSEY LEVELS

by Don Rosebrook

I have been asked to write a second article on levels for the *ToolShed*. It seemed appropriate to write about New Jersey levels. Alex Farnham has written well about early New Jersey tool makers who made levels. That information will not be repeated here; the reader is referred to Mr. Farnham's books. Perhaps in the future, more information about the product lines of the New Jersey level makers can be published. There are, however, an adequate number of patented New Jersey levels or patents for levels by residents of New Jersey to form the basis for an article. I will also take advantage of this article to ask that if you know of any of these levels please let me know so that I may get a photograph for the appropriate volume of *Levels in America*.

My patent search is not yet complete, but the first level patent from New Jersey was granted to D.G. Davison and E. Pullen of Prospect Plains and J.S. Davison of Cranberry in 1863. This device, shown in the patent drawing in Figure 1, was merely a try square with a hollow handle containing a suspended plumb bob and openings in the sides through which it could be viewed. The Davison, et al. patent is apparently the first attempt anywhere to permanently connect a leveling mechanism to a square. The gadget protruding from the handle of the square, just above the blade, is never mentioned in the write-up of the patent. I have never seen this device. [This figure and all others are on an insert page to the *ToolShed*.]

The next level patent from New Jersey was by R. Leydig of Newark in 1866, and is shown in Figure 2. It consists of a vial contained in a casket with one end that can pivot on a post and the other end free to move up and down a threaded rod fixed between two graduated pieces of metal shaped in an arc of radius equal to the length of the member carrying the casket. The moveable end of this member is fitted with a lock screw to fix the position of the level at the desired angle. The right hand post is also fitted with a "spirit-bottle" for a plumb measurement. Many variations on this theme exist but I have never seen this specific device.

Don Rosebrook at the Brown Auction Show.

The third level patent issued to a New Jersey man was to M. Wilson of Elwood for an "Improvement in Combined Square, Bevel, Plumb and Gauge." Wilson's 1871 combination patent was to be the first of three by New Jersey inventors. The others were granted to J. Kitchen of Hurffville in 1877 and to Meier and Rumford of Elizabeth in 1911. Wilson's, shown in Figure 3A, was by far the simplest of the three, using fixed vials for both plumb and level and a simple unmarked bevel blade and gauge. Kitchen's invention, a "Combined Spirit Level and Square," shown in Figure 3B, is really a masterpiece for its time and is easily the most complex of the three. It contains two inclinometers (the first attributed to a New Jersey inventor), a bevel, a square (with one of the two inclinometers), a fixed vial, extent rods, and a provision to fix the angle of the weighted needle so as to carry the measurement elsewhere. *(continued on page 4)*

February 9 - CRAFTS Meeting
High Bridge, NJ, Masonic Lodge
Cleaning and Restoring Tools for All Tastes
Program by Herb Kean (*see page 2*)

CRAFTS of New Jersey

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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 twelve dollars for the membership year of July 1 through June 30. Membership fees may be sent to the Treasurer: Helen Whelan, 38 Colony Court, Murray Hill, NJ 07974.

CRAFTS of NJ meets at the HOST Masonic Lodge, High Bridge. 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 1 P.M.; meeting starts at 2 P.M.

The TOOL SHED

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CRAFTS Calendar of Events

Feb. 9, 1997 - CRAFTS meeting, High Bridge, N.J.

Jan. 31, 1997 - *ToolShed* (Apr. issue) free ad deadline.

Apr. 13, 1997 - CRAFTS meeting, High Bridge, N.J.

May 10, 1997 - CRAFTS auction (see *Auction Notes* [this page], and *President's Corner* on page 3 for information).

Speaker's Profile - Herb Kean

One of the highlights of the Antique Tool Discovery Day at the Mercer Museum last November was Herb Kean's demonstration on cleaning and restoring tools. Seating was provided, but Herb drew standing room only! I was reminded of a seminar that Herb and Max Richardson put on at a woodworking show many years ago. I have also been lucky enough to watch Herb work on tools in his shop at home. So I'm a believer.

We've all read about or participated in the ongoing debates about whether tools should be cleaned or restored at all, on one side, or how far one should go with these processes, on the other. We all have to decide where we stand between the museums and the beltsanders. And, we don't have to take the same positions on Chelor planes and unmarked screwdrivers. If we decide to clean or restore there's still the question of how to go about it.

On February 9th in High Bridge, Herb Kean will present "Cleaning and Restoring Tools for All Tastes." Without taking sides, he will discuss the positions one might take on cleaning and restoring. Then he will share with us some of the techniques he uses and demonstrate them on a variety of old tools. He will also show how to recover from an overambitious or botched effort. Bring some old tool that you've worked on, or can't decide what to do with, for discussion. Fifteen years ago I paid $25 for his seminar; on February 9th you can get it for nothing.

Hank Allen

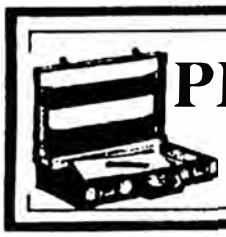
ToolShed Retropective - 1996

The beginning of 1997 is the time we thank all those who contributed to the *ToolShed* in 1996. Without them, we'd have just another newsletter. Thanks to: Al Bates, Ken Cope, Barret Dalrymple, Martin Donnelly, David Englund, Dennis Fisher, Todd Friberg, Chuck Granick, Joe Hauck, Mickey Holmes, Walter Jacob, Donald Johnstone, Herb Kean, Donald Miller, Edgar O'Quinn, Ron Pearson, Bill Rigler, Bill Sanford, Karl West, Jack Whelan, and Steve & Markay Zluky. We're impressed with what these friends have done for us, and we're very very appreciative. We're underway now with 1997. If you have any suggestions or contributions to make, don't hold back, let's hear from you. Hank Allen

Auction Notes

CRAFTS' 1997 auction will be held on May 10th in Flemington, N.J. The February meeting is the deadline for the delivery of tools; earlier delivery would be appreciated. If you can help with setup on Friday night or with the auction on Saturday, call Joe Hauck at 908-236-2072. You can receive a list of the items in the auction a week or two before the auction. Just send $2 (no SASE) and your name and address to: Steve Zluky, Box 243, Whitehouse, NJ 08888.

Hank Allen



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

The February meeting is somewhat unique in that many members use the opportunity to deliver their auction lots. As I roam the swap meet at this meeting I am typically asked, "Joe, do you think this would go good at the auction?" Therefore, I decided to try and answer that question and a few others related to our auction in this column. What kind of things go well in the auction? Basically clean items without problems are desirable. Desirable usually translates into things other collectors don't have and want. Do not expect to get a lot for a Stanley No.5 jack plane with a chipped tote and a weld that you almost can't see. If you need one, you can find one reasonably priced at any flea market. One of a kind items that you thought of selling but didn't know how to price are typically great items for our sale. Handforged items of exceptional craftsmanship, unusual rulers, wide molding planes, early Stanley, Victor, and other patented items also tend to do quite well. Good condition is important to many collectors unless the item is exceptionally rare. Unusual items from the N.Y., Penn., and N.J. area tend to do better since the crowd that attends is predominately from these states and tends to collect from their home turf (Stanley collectors are an exception, in that their appeal is national and going global).

Another question is, "Why should I consign a good item to CRAFTS?" The first reason is that, as auction manager, I hate to grovel. But seriously, we get good prices for good items. The CRAFTS sale is known as a great event, we advertise in numerous periodicals, and attract a diverse group of users and collectors. Our commission is the lowest around, with items over $500 paying a mere 5%. Finally, the auction commissions help defray the cost of running the club.

Today's last question is, "What is a sparkler?" As far as I know this term was coined by Herb Kean; it describes an item that is highly desirable and aesthetically pleasing (and usually over $300). Sparklers are a big part of the advertising copy that we use to attract people to our auction. Perhaps I can describe a *sparkler* another way. When you attend our sale there is a table up front that is closely watched by Steve Zluky or Greg Welsh. This is a difficult assignment for, in addition to ensuring that these items are not dropped or damaged, they must continually wipe off fingerprints. That table has most of the *sparklers*.

As I write this on Dec. 1, I realize, if history is any indicator of the future, that by the time you read this your consignment lists are already in. I know that I gave you all a limit on how many lots you could submit. But what I want you all to know is that I will ALWAYS find room for a "sparkler". See you and your sparklers, at the February meeting.

Welcome new members Bob Ahrens, Hampton; Frederick Alekel, New Castle, DE; Al & Karen Anderson, Seattle, WA; Neil Austin, Trenton; Dennis Beals, Holland, PA; Craig Bentzley, Chalfont, PA; Robert Garan, Hopatcong; John Gras, Sellersville, PA; W. Grunow, Millington; Bruce Hatfield, Canal Winchester, OH; Robert Hawkins, Richmond Hill, NY; Ed Hobbs, Raleigh, NC; George Kobayashi, Kula, HI; William Kudler, Parkland, PA; Ron Lewis, Chesapeake, VA; Walter Lisien, Westford, MA; John McConnell, Stockholm; Darold Lee Neff, Piqua, OH; Robert O'Connor, Cortland Manor, NY; Anthony Pellecchia, Perkiomenville, PA; James Reese, Pasadena, TX; Garland Richardson, Council Grove, KS; Paul Sadagursky, Centerport, NY; Jim & Christa Schoenky, Redding, CA; Raymond Seager, Athens, NY; Ronald Shireman, New Oxford, PA; Mark Sky-Shrewsbury, Philadelphia, PA; J. Todd Smith, Telford, PA; Mort Sork, Narberth, PA; Wallace Therien, Fallston, MD; W. Young Thomas, Nazareth, PA; Ralph Walters, Perkiomenville, PA; Gary Wells, Sacramento, CA; Bruce Weymouth, Ellsworth, ME, and Thomas Young, Nazareth, PA.

The 1996 Brown Auction & Dealer Sale

Last October in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, Brown Auction Services provided what was arguably the most significant tool event of 1996. The Dealer Sale attracted almost all major dealers, who offered a mouthwatering assortment of rare specialties they had saved for this event. Commonplace tools were left at home, and big-ticket items predominated.

One longtime collector confessed to "sticker shock." Many felt that way, but the fact is that there is a growing demand for rare pieces and this is reflected in their prices. The auction prices certainly reinforce this assessment. The auction catalog had prompted mutterings that the estimated prices were too high, but the prices realized proved that Bud knows his business! Of the 70 lots hammered for over $600, 29 fell within his estimated price range, and 24 brought MORE than his high estimate. The auction grossed $247,160, the highest in its history and 25% above the previous high. The average hammer price was $325, and more than half of the lots brought over $150.

Grumbling about the perceived emphasis on wooden planes of the last auction was redressed in this one. They comprised only 20% of the lots. Expect grumbling from the wood fanciers this time, although they did have a choice of 34 plow planes, 6 crown moulders and 11 panel raisers. The star was, of course, the probably unique M.B. Tidey prototype, patented double-beveling plane in ebony, rosewood, ivory, and brass which sold for $27,000. An E.W. Carpenter patent plow went for $5,200. Two center-wheel boxwood plows by Sandusky and Ohio Tool went for $5,200 and $4,400 respectively. Of the 34 plow planes in the auction, seven sported ivory. The most dramatic was probably by DeForest in ebony with boxwood arms and ivory nuts and tips; it went for $3,900. The others, all by known 19th century makers, were ivory-tipped in ebony, rosewood, applewood, and boxwood; they brought between $1,050 and $1,450. A G++ F. Nicholson quarter round sold for $3,400 and an I. Jones moulder for $4,100. A few moulding planes by lesser makers, especially with unusual or complex profiles, did very well.

The Stanley contingent should have been happy with 146 lots to choose from (19% of the total). A #64 butcher block plane was hammered at $1,700. A #00 ivory rule brought $1,250. Miller's patents in gunmetal did well: a #44 at $2,550 and a #42 at $2,100. Another Miller patent item, a carpenter's gauge by George Miller, not Charles, brought $2,400. Other metal did well. The rare Sargent #162 scrub plane fetched $3,000, thought to be a record for a Sargent piece. A Kinney's patent ripping plane sold for $1,525. There were three Morris patent items: a smooth plane and a jointer each brought $1,400 and a scissor plow $1,500.

Two levels caused a stir. A rare Niels Jensen patented inclinometer went for $3,300 and another by E.A. Dodge went for $1,700. A "Panther" saw by Woodrough and McParlin brought $1,100, a record for a hand saw.

The auction was not only for those with deep pockets, however. There were 269 lots available for under $100, averaging $69. These were not flea market items, but tools of particular interest for one reason or another. I suspect that even the few who went home empty-handed found the event well worth while, just for having seen and handled some very uncommon and attractive tools.

If some of these prices realized seem high, consider that a 1910 Honus Wagner baseball card recently sold for $640,500! Would you rather have this card or all the tools in the last three Brown auctions? *Jack Whelan*

NEW JERSEY LEVELS (continued from page 1)

It is hinged in the middle to allow easy stowage (a feature not greatly exploited until the 1900s) and to allow protection of both inclinometers. The Meier and Rumford level was a segmented level of three parts with an inclinometer in each section. As shown in Figure 3C, a bevel with a graduated blade was incorporated into one section. The inclinometers were unique in that they were three dimensional and thus could be read from either the top or the bottom of the level and from both front and back at the same time. The Meier and Rumford patent dates to a time when several inventors were proposing segmented levels. I have not seen any of these three combination devices.

One of the more unusual pieces was patented by R. Russell of Newark in 1875. This device "Improvement in Mechanical Tools" was a square with a vial casket mounted on top of the long edge as shown in the patent drawing in Figure 4. The end of the long edge was also the point where a plummet was attached. To the side of the long edge was fixed an unusual pair of dividers that could also function as a surface gauge, awl, and shears. I have not seen this device.

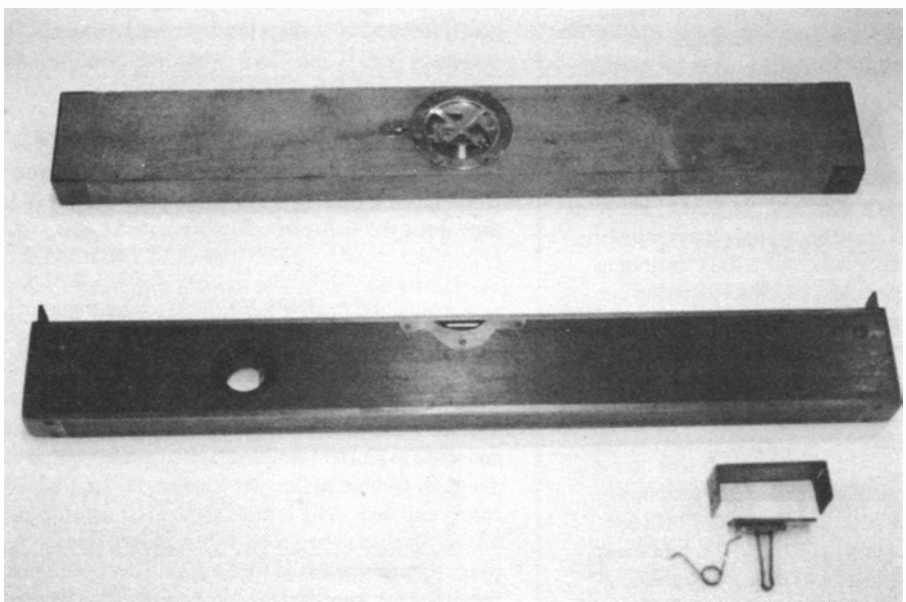


Photo 1. The Frambes inclinometer (top) and the Woods sighting level (bottom).

The first pure inclinometer patent granted to a New Jersey inventor was the 1884 level of R. Frambes of Bakersville. The drawing in Figure 5A may be compared to the photograph in Photo 1. (The Frambes inclinometer is at the top of the photo.) By such comparison it will be seen that the obvious change from concept to tool, is the location of the arresting button. Not so obvious is the fact that the arresting arm and spring work in a slightly different manner, but with the same principle. The tool in the photograph is set in a maple block, has brass end caps, and has a heavy cut glass top. The second pure inclinometer patent is that of K. Miller of Newark, granted in 1890. In the Miller patent, shown in Figure 5B-1, a weighted sector can be viewed against a graduated plate in the top or bottom surface of the level. As a measure of plumb, the point of the sector can be viewed through the front glass against a register mark on either side of the level. Figure 5B-2 is a proposed mantle clock version wherein the level can only be read through the top. I have not seen either form of this device.

B. Butt of Newark was granted the first shaft level patent for New Jersey in 1885. Two more pure shaft level patents were granted to New Jersey inventors. The next being to E. Taylor of Patterson in 1890 and the third to M. Chamberlain of Bartley in 1902. As with the combination patents mentioned above, the first patent was a very simple tool consisting of two spirit vials set into a frame with a V-bottom as shown in Figure 7A. Taylor's invention, shown in Figure 7B, adds a rule, an adjusting screw on the top, and a locking screw to allow the level to be fixed to a blade. However, the tool is primarily a shafting level. Chamberlain's invention, shown in Figure 7C, is not a shafting level in the same sense as the two previous devices. This device, rather than being designed for a longitudinal operation, is meant to be used perpendicular to the run of a shaft. Thus it will indicate the definitive top of the shaft and allow marking for cross grooves of various purposes. It seems that I have seen some of these devices and would like to locate them again.

There were perhaps four sighting levels with patents granted to New Jersey inventors. The first of these is well known, having been granted to O. Woods of Passaic in 1887. The concept of pop-up sights was not new in 1887. While it is difficult to see any real advantages to Woods' patent sights, they did become the best known of this type of sight. The patent drawing is shown in Figure 8A. The level and inset detail of the spring and sights from this

level are shown in Photo 1 (bottom). Interestingly enough the Woods' patent sights were sold in Stratten Bros. design levels (a Massachusetts firm), made by E.M. Chapin (a Connecticut firm), and carried the trade mark of Tower and Lyon (a New York firm). The level in the photo was the top of the line in brass bound rosewood. The second patent for a sighting level granted to a New Jersey inventor was granted to J. Paoli, an Italian citizen living in Hoboken in 1894. This patent was for a hand level, sometimes called a post level, shown in Figure 8B. Most people are familiar with this general type. Paoli's feature was a rhomboidal mirror whose utility was to increase the available field of vision. It seems as though Paoli may have had some connection to K. & E. The third patent for a sighting level was granted to J. Park of Atlantic City in 1912. This patent was not for a level per se, rather its features were designed for use with various levels such as the Stanley No. 36 depicted in the patent drawing shown in Figure 8C. The valuable feature of the Park invention was the use of two leveling blocks and a frame to both carry the standard level and to provide the sights. As depicted in the drawing the frame was to have been mounted on a swivel attached to that portion of the level carrying the leveling blocks. The final patent for a sighting level granted to a New Jersey inventor was to A.Veenstra of Patterson in 1918. The principle of the patent was the adjusting device affiliated with the attachment of the staff support as shown in Figure 8D.

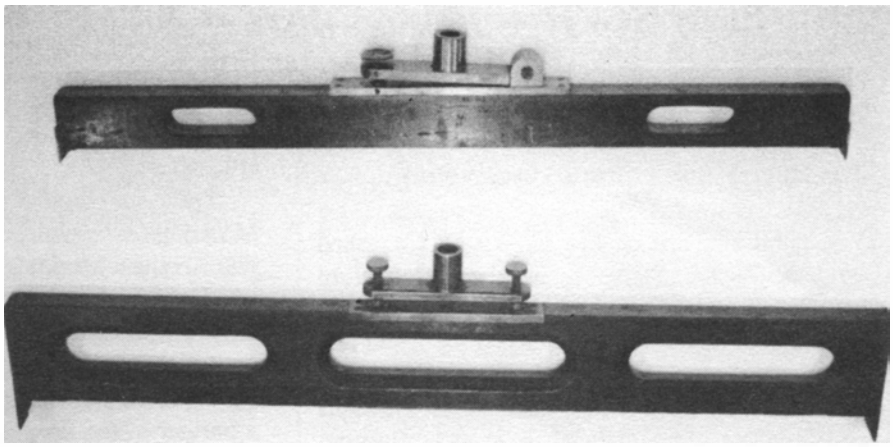


Photo 2. Two levels resembling the Veenstra patent level.

Photo 2 shows two sighting levels resembling the Veenstra patent. Both levels are obviously manufactured but neither of them is marked. It is possible that they were made from a kit. The mechanism of action of the adjusting screw is slightly different for the two levels. The top level uses two screws that move independently to adjust the angle of the unit. The bottom level uses a single screw as shown in the patent but incorporates a hinge, the lack of which was an obvious drawback to the Veenstra patent. Both have sights incorporated into end plates.

Perhaps the most widely known of the New Jersey patent levels is incorporated in the 1888 patent granted to G. F. Hall of Newark and Justus Traut and assigned to Stanley Rule and Level Co. Figure 11 shows this patent drawing of the Stanley Odd Jobs. The patent title was "Attachment for Carpenters Rules." This is the second of the patents associated with the Odd Jobs.

Another combination device entitled "Gravity Plumb Level" was patented in 1899 by a Virginian, T. Hughes, but assigned one-half to C. Heath of Trenton. This device incorporated a simple inclinometer (gravity plumb level) and a tape measure as shown in Figure 12, each in separate covered compartments. There is nothing obviously novel about this tool except for the round compartment with the slit, and it seems unusual that the inventors could receive a patent even though the grant took over a year which was a long time in those days.

I am currently aware of two other level patents granted to New Jersey inventors. Both were meant for setting door jambs and both involved fairly long carcasses containing a suspended plumb bob. Each could be clamped to one side of a door jamb to allow for hands free work. I am not aware of the existence of an example of either one of them. In fact, a large number of interesting levels containing suspended plumb bobs were patented over the years, but very few of them have surfaced. If they were ever manufactured, they may have eventually been superseded by lightweight aluminum levels with open frames. Perhaps the owners removed the plumb bob when they were through with the level and discarded the simple (usually) wooden frames.

Don Rosebrook is preparing his first book on levels. That book will cover New England levels and their makers and their patents. Perhaps there will be time enough to include information about New York levels. At any rate New Jersey levels and their makers will be included in the second book. Any information the readers have regarding any unusual or patented levels will be greatly appreciated and gratefully acknowledged if it or a picture can be included in one of the books. Please contact Don directly at 1-800-659-3894.

Early New Jersey Toolmakers — A Continuing Search

by Alexander Farnham

Mockridge & Francis, Mysteries Solved and Unsolved

In 1975 the publishing firm of Wm. H. Wise & Co. asked me to write the chapter on tools for their book *Collecting New Jersey Antiques*. Though by then I had amassed a large number of both marked and unmarked tools and had access to several other large collections, I was unable to find more than a few tools stamped with the names and locations of New Jersey makers. One dado plane in my collection, however, was marked "MOCKRIDGE / & FRANCIS / NEWARK, N.J." Since 1975, when I first had cause to write about this partnership, I have found numerous other occasions to write about them in articles and in two books devoted to New Jersey toolmakers [1].

I believed at first that this partnership manufactured only a variety of planes, but through the years learned that they also produced several unusual tools such as witchets, C-clamps, sash-bar copers, double routers, and a recently discovered tool used to drive staples into the edges of shutter slats. See Photo 1. These slats were then linked to vertical, wooden rods by means of more staples. The linked staples formed *hinges* which allowed the slats to be opened and shut from indoors when the rod was pushed up or pulled down. See Photo 2. What Mockridge & Francis called this stapling mechanism I an not sure, but I shall call it a *slat stapler*. CRAFTS member Richard Burton found this slat stapler at an auction where he purchased it, though at the time he had no idea what purpose it served. He phoned and asked if I would look at it and tell him how it was used. We arranged to meet at the Lambertville flea market and, with the help of some other members of CRAFTS who were drinking coffee in the snack bar, we determined how the strange contraption worked.

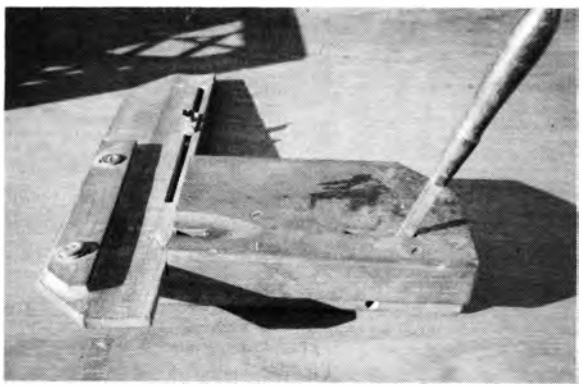


Photo 1.

By placing one end of a shutter slat against an adjustable brass stop, the slat is positioned to receive a staple where it is wanted. A movable wooden fence can be adjusted to accommodate either wide or narrow slats and so the staples can be driven deeper if necessary. A forward thrust of a handle supplies pressure to drive an iron rod against a staple, pushing it into the edge of a shutter slat. Made of beech wood and a few metal parts, this tool is simple but appears to be quite efficient.

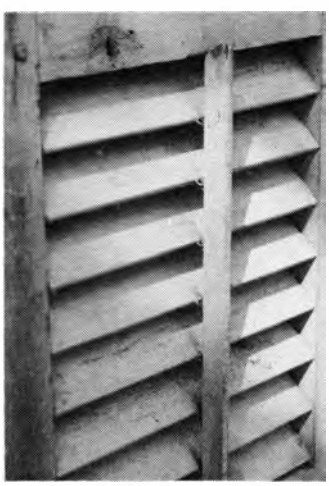


Photo 2.

The successful tool manufacturing partnership of Mockridge & Francis lasted from 1835 until 1869, in which year Abraham Mockridge took on as a partner his son Oscar, who had joined the business as a clerk in 1865. The name of the firm was changed to Mockridge & Son and remained so until it closed down around 1902. Elias Francis, following the end of his partnership with Mockridge, sold real estate as a partner in the firm of Lent, Bried, and Francis. A short time later he was a partner in the real estate company of Francis & Paulin and then in Elias Francis & Co. with George W. Francis. He continued selling real estate for the rest of his life, but he apparently never left tool making entirely. By the end of the 1870s he was listed in Newark directories as superintendent of Newark Plane, Rule & Level Co., which was located in Newark at 7 New Jersey Railroad Avenue opposite the Market Street Depot. In an 1879 Newark city directory there appears an advertisement stating that Newark Plane, Rule & Level Co. made "full sets of planes and all kinds of tools for carpenters, coopers, carriage and cabinetmakers furnished to order or made to draft. Level glasses reset, repairing and cutters made to order." The company is believed to have remained in business until 1866, but only two of their planes are known to exist. Whether they ever produced any of the other tools they advertised is unknown, but the existence of any have not yet been reported.

Besides his tool manufacturing partnership with Abraham Mockridge and later as superintendent of Newark, Plane & Level Co., it is probable that Elias Francis was also involved in partnerships with other toolmakers. A number of tools made in Newark have come to light bearing the name Francis as one of the manufacturing partners. Several harnessmaker's tools have been discovered marked FRANCIS & WARD. This firm is listed as being in business from 1856 to 1859. A very interesting saw set is stamped HASLAM & FRANCIS, and in my collection I have a beautifully made mortise gauge marked LYON & FRANCIS. Francis & Ward is listed in the Newark directories, but no mention of the other partnerships can

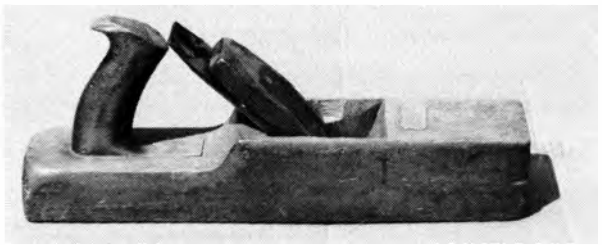


Photo 3.

be found even though I searched through directories from 1835 well into the 20th century. My reason for mentioning these partnerships is to point out the involvement of Elias Francis in the tool manufacturing industry.

Abraham Mockridge is known to have been an accomplished craftsman who made fine furniture as well as excellent tools. Elias Francis, on the other hand, has for years been thought of as a man of finance with little skill at woodworking. This, however, may not have been the case. At the 1995 CRAFTS auction I purchased a fruitwood razee plane with an inch and one-half long silver plate located in front of the throat. Engraved on the plate is as follows: "Made by E. Francis / For H.H. Miller / Or H.S. Wild / Determined to Vote / Dec. 24, 1881." See Photo 3. If indeed Francis made the plane himself he did a beautiful job, worthy of a fine craftsman. We can only guess at the truth. Being curious about the men whose names were engraved on the silver plate, I visited the special collections of the Alexander Library at Rutgers University in New Brunswick. Looking through their Newark directory for the years 1880 and 1881 I found a Henry H. Miller listed as working at John Jelliff & Co., makers of furniture at 794 & 796 Broad St., Newark. I also discovered an H.H. Miller of Miller & Co. whose home was at 325 Broad St. and an H.H. Miller who worked in New York City but lived in Newark at 225 Broad St. No H.S. Wild was listed, but there was a listing for H.L. Wild & Son who were in the leather business at 68 Market St., Newark.

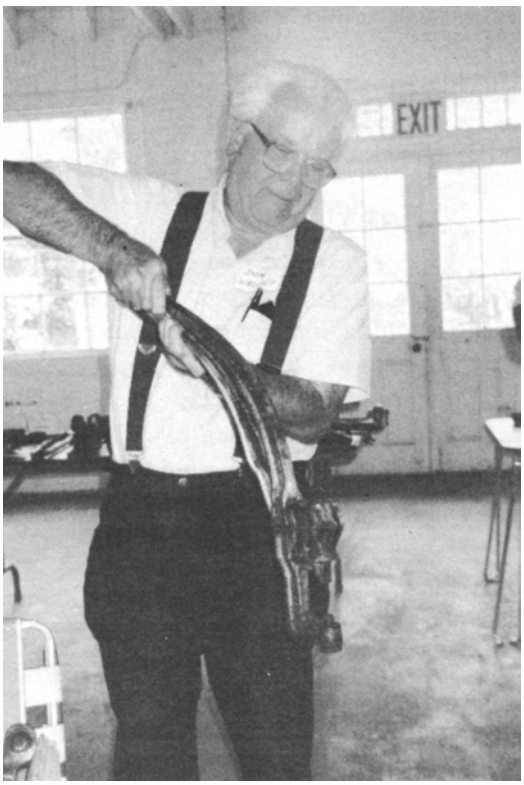
While directories from 1870 through 1890 contain no mention of H.S. Wild, the three Millers whose first and middle names started with an "H" continued to be listed. It would be almost impossible to determine whether it was one of these men who was the H.H. Miller whose name appeared on the plane. If it were possible there would still be numerous other mysteries to be solved. Who were the voters who would designate which of the two men who would receive the plane? What determined their vote? Why was the plate engraved before the vote was taken? Was the chosen recipient a woodworker who would use the plane, and, if so, what kind of woodworker? There could be a very intriguing story behind this presentation plane if all of these questions could be answered

I have posed the questions, supplied a little background, and now hope that those who read this article will come up with some answers.

(1) *Early Tools of New Jersey and the Men Who Made Them*, and *Search for Early New Jersey Toolmakers*.

Photos from the CRAFTS Picnic, Sept. 15, 1996

(also see page 12 for description)



Don Wallace with his "ugliest" tool.

Herb Kean and Joe Hauck auctioning a primitive lathe.

Happy 50th Birthday Old Sturbridge Village

by Bill McDougall

The September 1938 *Chronicle* of the Early American Industries Association printed the following quote from the souvenir program of the Sturbridge Bicentenniel which was held on June 19th 1938:

> *It is proposed to incorporate an educational organization which shall construct and maintain a model New England village of about the year 1800 [to be called] `Quinabaug Village' in Sturbridge, Massachusetts. This village will be built and run as nearly as possible as if it had been settled fairly early in the seventeenth century and had a normally prosperous development throughout that and the ensuing century.*

Photo 1. Bill McDougall outside blacksmith shop.

Albert Wells, the son of George Washington Wells who founded the American Optical Company, was an avid collector of the ordinary objects of New England's past - everything from butter churns to wrought iron tools and redware pots. In a few years the collection had grown to the point of crowding the family out of their Southbridge home, despite his having built several large additions thereto. The collection was then arranged for public display in the "Wells Historical Museum."

At the suggestion of his son George, Albert and his brother Cheney, who collected clocks, paperweights, and glass, undertook to create a living, working village where their collections could be displayed suitably and where handcrafts and lost skills might be carried on. Land was soon acquired and site preparation and the relocation of period buildings was begun. (Old Sturbridge Village appears to be an authentic village that has been preserved intact, but actually it is a collection of buildings from all over New England.)

Work on the Village proceeded fairly well until America's entry into World War II caused a reduction in staff and effort. In 1946 the name Quinabaug Village was changed to Old Sturbridge Village and it formally opened on June 8th, 1946. Eighty-one people visited the Village on opening day. To this day, 20 million people have walked its dirt trails and marveled at the buildings and the Village residents dressed in period costumes tending gardens and plowing the fields with teams of oxen.

In 1956 the grasshopper was adopted as the Village's official symbol. I would have chosen the ant myself, especially after reading the fable of the ant and the grasshopper.

Every effort has been made to faithfully reproduce the tools and equipment used on early 19th century farms and to raise crops and livestock that farmers used at that time. Crafts-people, called interpreters and dressed in period costumes, faithfully create most items used by early 19th century villagers - nearly everything from baskets and brooms to sawn lumber and ironware - and enthusiastically explain the processes and answer questions.

Hank Allen and I (not dressed in period costumes) recently visited the Village on our way to the Crane auction in Nashua and talked with several of the interpreters. We watched the blacksmith making mulling irons which look like long-handled soldering irons. See Photo 2. They were kept by the fireplace and, when heated, were plunged into tankards of cider (or perish the thought, beer or ale): hence *mulled cider* (or *mulled beer*?). They are also called loggerheads and were occasionally used as weapons to settle an argument, thus the expression

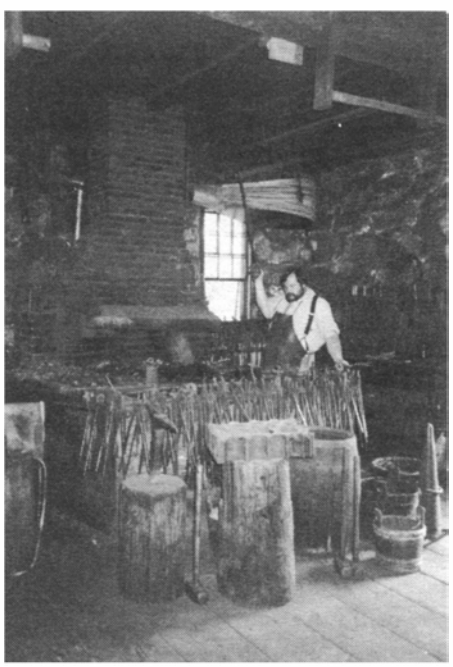


Photo 2. The village blacksmith.

"to be at loggerheads." Somehow "to be at mulling irons" just doesn't have that ring to it.

We visited with the tinsmith whose tools were much the same as Bill Sanford's which were described in the September *ToolShed*, and with the cooper who was seated on a shaving horse making barrel staves with a drawknife. See Photo 3.

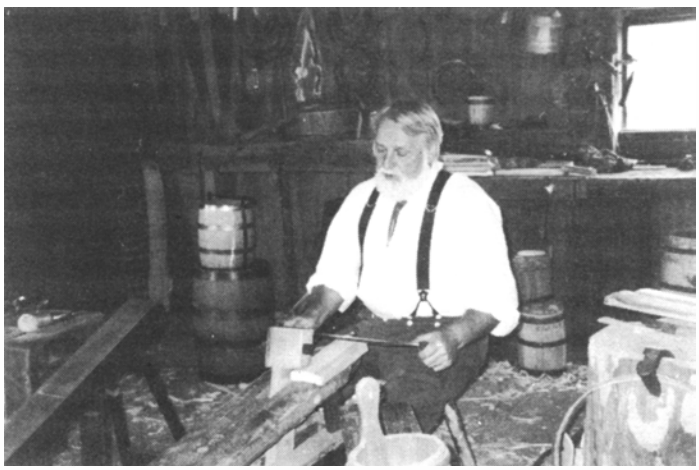


Photo 3. The village cooper.

The gristmill was not running, but we saw a millstone ready to be dressed, that is to have its grooves reworked with a chisel-like hammer called a mill pick. The apparatus used to lift the top millstone, swing it away from the bottom one, and turn it over for dressing is shown in Photo 4. This work required a skilled mechanic, usually an itinerant millstone dresser who serviced several mills. The mill still runs by water power transmitted from a large water wheel on the side of the mill through wooden gears in the basement. The bottom millstone is stationary, but the top one turns faster than 100 revolutions per minute. Except for lugging around heavy bags of grain and breathing dust all day, the miller had a tolerable job and was allowed by law to receive one-sixteenth of the grain brought to him to be ground.

Like most villages, Old Sturbridge has a meeting house which we visited. This one has a large room filled with enclosed wooden pews. When the meeting house was built the pews were auctioned off to the villagers, thus providing for most of the building's cost. The closer to the front, the more the pews cost. So, of course, the wealthiest people sat in the front. The pews in the rear were generally occupied by tool collectors.

The sawmill, which has its own large water wheel, was not running, but a large white oak beam was dogged to the carriage ready for the sawyer to complete the first cut after his mulled cider break. See Photo 5. These mills are fascinating to watch. The large saw blade in tension travels up and down cutting on the down stroke. The carriage is also moved by water power. All three mills at the Village obtain their power from a mill pond created by damming the Quinebaug [sic] River which runs through the Village.

The carding mill also runs by water power and was very interesting to watch. Wool carding machines from the 1820s demonstrate how one of the steps in the clothmaking process was mechanized. A tub wheel and belt reflect early 19th century improvements in water power technology. The wool, from which the sheep has been carefully removed, is placed in a trough at one end of the machine and is picked up by the first in a series of rollers which have hundreds of short wires around their surface, each bent in the same direction. Each roller meshes with another whose wires are bent in the opposite direction. This machine was a revolutionary improvement over over the old method wherein wooden hand cards with leather faces studded with wire hooks were used to pull the wool fibers straight. The wool was removed by reversing the loaded card and pulling it off the hooks. Photo 6 (on next page) shows a batting card machine which produces a continuous wide batt for use in quilts or clothing. Strips of wool can be pulled off the batts and spun into yarn. The processing of wool began with scouring. Around 1800 the usual scouring mixture was scalding water and urine. Today a chemical solvent is used. After rinsing and drying it was picked to remove foreign matter such as seeds and burrs and to loosen up the locks of wool fiber.

Photo 4. Millstone ready for dressing.

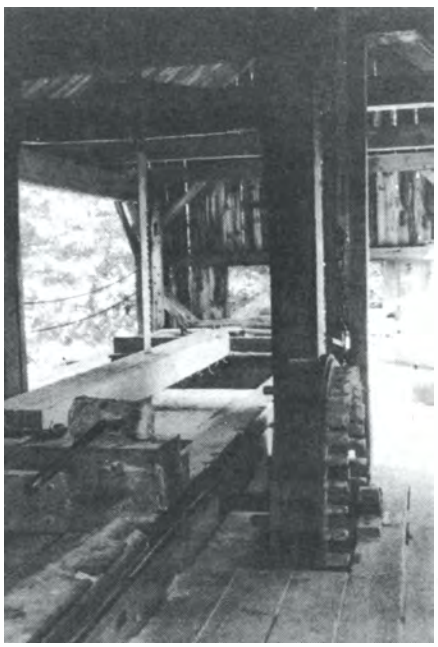


Photo 5. The sawmill

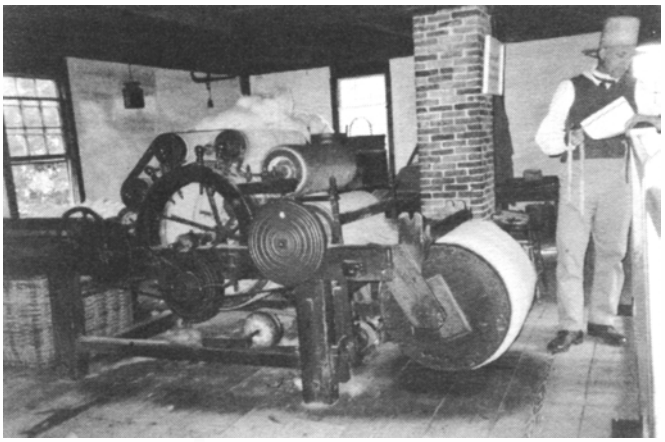


Photo 6. The batting card machine.

After a pleasant and educational afternoon, and a brief stop at the Bullard Tavern, we left with fond memories and a promise to return.

Ed: This is Bill's third article for the *ToolShed*. After reading it you can imagine he's fun to be with. Thanks Bill. Old Sturbridge Village is on Route 20 in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, just off Route 84 and the Mass. Turnpike. It's open 9-5 daily from early April until late October, and on an abbreviated schedule at other times. In addition to the recreated Village there are programs, exhibitions, and special events: for example a blacksmithing workshop. Memberships are available. For information call 508-347- 3362.

FRED COURSER 1915 - 1996

If you've been to a few New England auctions, you probably know Fred Courser. Although he was not a member of CRAFTS, the passing of this unique man among tool collectors merits mention in the *ToolShed*. He was a lifelong farmer and forester in Warner, New Hampshire, raising sheep, cattle, and trees. His three sons, Tim, Bill, and Gerry, now carry on that work.

You may remember Martin Donnelly mentioning Fred in his article "My Favorite Day" in the November 1994 *ToolShed*. Martin characterized Fred as, "... an all time hammer collector whose expertise in percussion technology is legendary." I first heard about Fred in a 1984 issue of Yankee Magazine. (That article was the spark that led me to tool collecting.) When asked how many hammers he had he replied, "As many as there are stars in the sky." I learned just recently from Vera and Bud Steere that Fred's mailbox is shaped like a hammer.

He was the one who encouraged Richard Crane to start auctioning tools. "Why not?" he argued, "They auction everything else." Until then there had been no organized auction outlet for tools, although there had been a few isolated auctions such as the Keillor sales on Long Island. I was to meet Fred at my first Crane auction in 1988, and to seek him out at every Crane auction I've attended since then. He visited Richard Crane on November 9 and was apparently in good health. He died quietly on November 12. I will miss him.

If you have *Instruments of Change*, that wonderful 1985 catalog of the exibition of New Hampshire hand tools and their makers by the New Hampshire Historical Society, you know he was on the advisory committee for that exhibition which featured many of his New Hampshire tools - and not just hammers. His daughter, Rebecca, now works for the Society.

Fred started collecting at age 8 by sifting through the ashes of burned down buildings. If you've read any history of toolmakers, you'll recall that fires were not uncommon. That apparently was still the case in the 1920s in New Hampshire.

I don't know if there's anyone who can take the place of this rare New Hampshire character. Who else would wear a flannel shirt and carry a blanket to sit in the blazing sun at a July Crane auction? But, with four children and ten grandchildren, just maybe ... Now that he's gone, he can count the stars and know for sure how many hammers he had.

Thanks to Fred's longtime friend, Richard Crane, for his help with this notice.

Hank Allen

Kean Kuttin's

What We Do For Tools

Collectors will brave almost any kind of weather and endure almost any kind of hardship to pursue their treasures. Talk about your mail carriers with appointed rounds, collectors have it all over them. There is only one problem with this somewhat masochistic conduct: some of us are married and expose our spouses to this nutty behavior. Such was the case a few years back when Doris agreed to go on a "tooling hunt" with me.

She was aware that these forages usually took three or four days, but we always had a nice time (when she wasn't waiting for me to consummate a tool deal). So off we went up the Delaware River, bouncing from one shop to another and stopping at all the pickers that I had lined up.

I don't remember how I was doing huntingwise as the whole affair is blurred over with the events that followed. That night was burned into Doris' memory. Even to this day I still hear about it.

The first evening out we stopped at a wonderful restaurant for dinner. There was a motel attached to it overlooking the Delaware. It was a great spot, and I anticipated sitting on the porch of the room and drinking in the spring air. But - there was no room! The owners were in the process of selling the place, and had closed the motel temporarily. We asked about another spot, but to no avail. It seemed that it was a special weekend of some kind; I think it was the opening of trout season. I phoned what few motels there were in the area, but no luck.

We weren't that far from home and could have easily made it in a few hours. Cancel a tooling hunt? Never! Sleep in the car? To mention that would have been perilous in the frame of mind that Doris was in. What then?

One of the locals slid up to me as if the info he was about to release was of international importance. There was a hunting and fishing lodge nearby, and he would make a call for me if I wanted. I could hardly say no under the circumstances. Yes, they had a room, but only if I hurried. He gave me directions to get there that bordered on a map for an archaeological dig. My head was spinning and I knew I'd never make it in time considering the warning given by the "desk clerk". The local fellow was a cousin or something to the owner, so I prevailed upon him to get his relative to hold the room for us.

Hemming and hawing, and scratching of head, took forever. But he called to find out that the only way they would do it was if I gave him the money. "No credit card machines?" I asked. Just a dirty look in return. The room was so cheap that I felt it was worth the shot, so I did it. "Now," he told us, "you can come to the big party that's going on this evening in the ballroom."

Our newly found friend took us into the "ballroom" where we were introduced to the crowd. It was some type of geriatric club; Doris and I were high schoolers in comparison. I won't comment on the evening other than the booze was cheap for the admission price.

As early as we could leave without hurting anyone's feelings, we beat it. The few drinks I had worsened the nearly incomprehensible directions to the lodge. It took forever to get there. But finally the huge deer antlers hanging cockeyed from the signpost (lighted by a large, shaded bulb) came into view. Doris was starting to get apprehensive as we approached a quonset hut with the name of the lodge burned into an old board. I went inside.

"Everything is taken in the **main lodge**," he explained, "but we kept one room for you in the **barracks**." I imagined the worst, and that's exactly what I got. The rooms were sectioned with sheetrock that was on one side of the studs only. The light was run in on an extension cord from an outlet in the hall. There was no closet, sink, toilet, or anything - just a window, a door, and a bed that could hardly be counted as a double.

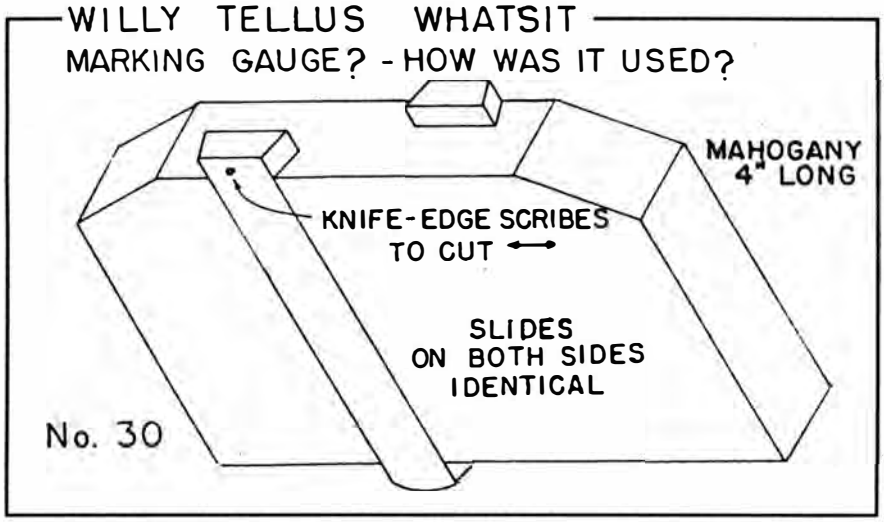
I went out to the car to advise Doris that sleeping in the car would probably suit her better. To my surprise, she stormed into the hovel and made ready for the night. I had a few good tools in the car, so I dragged them in with the luggage. There was hardly any room to walk around. It was awful!

The snores and coughs could be heard from rooms as far as three and four away. The doors kept slamming all night. I couldn't understand how Doris could put up with it. Whenever I mentioned that we ought to just leave, a wry smile came across her face and she merely said, "Why would you want to leave such a wonderful place as this?"

Just when I had gotten used to the snoring, and the doors had stopped slamming, some lunatic came running down the hall, banging on everyone's door, and shouting, "Get up, get up, the Day of Reckoning is here!" This was the last straw. We left.

After an hour the sun came up, and we stopped at a diner for breakfast. Neither of us talked about the experience. Doris had that knowing look. She was sure I would never let that happen again, **tools or no tools**!

Herb Kean



Auction Schedule

Jan. 25, Holiday Inn West, York, Penn., Barry Hurchalla's auction followed bythe M-WTCA Area P meeting on January 26. Call Barry 610-323-0333.
Feb. 22, Holiday Inn, Nashua, N.H., Your Country Auctioneer's Cabin Fever Auction. Call Lee Murray for information 603-456-3705.
March (date to be set), Gablesville AC, Boyertown, Penn., Barry Hurchalla's regular monthly auction. Call Barry 610-323-0333 to get on his mailing list.
March 7-8, Days Inn Airport, Indianapolis, Indiana, Tom Witte's Spring Tool Show & Auction. Call Tom 616-668-4161.
March 29, England. David Stanley's 29th International Catalog Auction. Call Mechanick's Workbench for a catalog 508-748-1680.
April 18-19, Holiday Inn, Nashua, N.H., Your Country Auctioneer's Antique Tool Catalog Auction and Dealer Show, Call Lee Murray for information 603-456-3705.

Tips

In the December issue of *Fine Woodworking*, the article "Antiquing Hardware" describes how to patinate brass and steel. Co-author Stephen Winchester transforms the shiny, zinc-plated finish on new hinges to a primitive-looking dull black with a handforged appearance. He removes the zinc plating using muriatic acid (with proper precautions). I'm always on the lookout for for early iron screws to replace those missing on levels, etc., and it occurs to me that Winchester's process is a way to obtain them from new zinc- plated screws (slotted, of course). *Hank Allen*

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The CRAFTS Picnic

Our September picnic, threatened for the preceeding week by forecasts of rain, was held in beautiful sunshine. Picnic Chairman Ken Vliet was dauntless. "It never rains on my picnic," he assured us. Another constant is that the fooo is always good, but unlike last year there were no thirsty bees diving at our food and drink. Membership Chairman Greg Welsh distributed the *ToolShed Treasury* to attendees. The displays were impressive. Anna Rokita won for her apple pealers, corers, etc., and Dominic Micalizzi won for his minature advertising anvils. The traditional contests for individual tools led to a double winner. Bob Nelson's fancy scraper won most beautiful, and his lead mold for forming a bead on a square post won for most unusual. Don Wallace's spring conditioner won ugliest tool by a mile. Best repair or make do was awarded to Charlie Hildebrant's fence post driver. Judges were Michael Farrauto, Ed Modugno, Ed Smith, and D.A. Webemick. Actually, I was a judge too, but these guys were so sharp and so quick that I never got to vote! A few dozen tools changed hands at the auction conducted by the usual suspects: Chuck Granick, Herb Kean, and Joe Hauck. *Hank Allen*

Buy, Swap, & Sell

CRAFTS members only may have a free 5 line (40 word) ad that is primarily related to the exchange of tools or information. Each additional line (over 5) is $1. Send to: Stuart Shippey, 251 Hillside Ave., Chatham NJ 07928-1732 (FAX 201 301-9781). Ads accepted on a space permitting basis. Please print or type them.

Wanted

STANLEY "HANDYMAN" Tools, Catalogs, Advertising, etc. that deals with this line of tools. Bill Hermanek, 31 Wildwood La., Smithtown, NY 11787. 516 360-1216.

Information on WEATHERSTRIP PLANE marked FORSYTHE & STANLEY patent. Plane has transitional features and is 10" long. Please contact John Porritt, 7 Montague Place, Belle Vue, Shrewsbury, Salop SY3 7NF, UK.

18th or early 19th century tools / planes with owner mark: I. DINSMORE, J. DINSMORE, DINSMORE, I. HEMINGS, J. HEMMINGS, HEMMINGS. Call or write Roger Springate, 2408 Topeka Rd, Lexington, KY 40503. 606 277-3660

WRENCHES, all kinds of old adjustable & farm wrenches including Quick adjusts and all Perfect Handle Tools. Will travel or pay shipping. Judy & Ed Friedman, 16 Regency Dr., Wappingers Falls, NY 12590. 914 298-4009.

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Articles and/or pictures for "Displaying Tools." If you have a great display, but don't want to do it alone, call and we'll help. Call Hank Allen 201 444-9440 or write to the address on page 2.

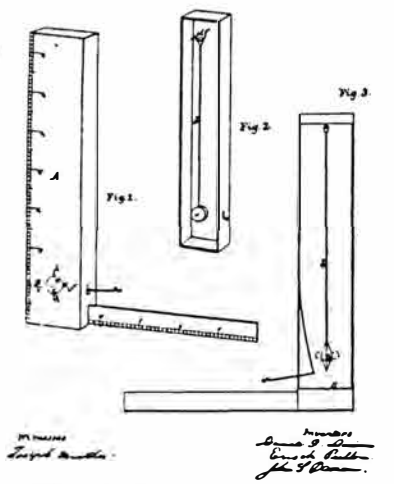
D. G. DAVISON, E. PULLEN & J. S. DAVISON.
PLUMB, LEVEL AND SQUARE.
No. 39,124. Patented July 7, 1863.

Fig. 1 Davison, et al

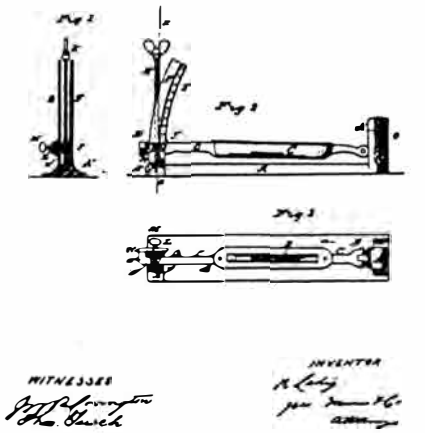
R. LEDIG.
Spirit Level.
No. 52,579. Patented Feb. 13, 1866.

Fig. 2 Ledig

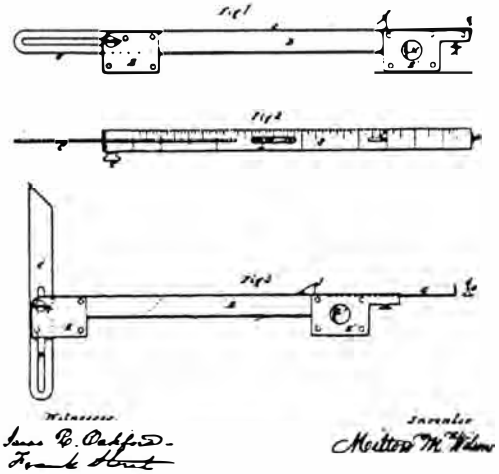
M. M. WILSON.
Improvement in Combined Square, Bevel, Plumb, and Gauge.
No. 114,378. Patented May 2, 1871.

Fig. 3A Wilson

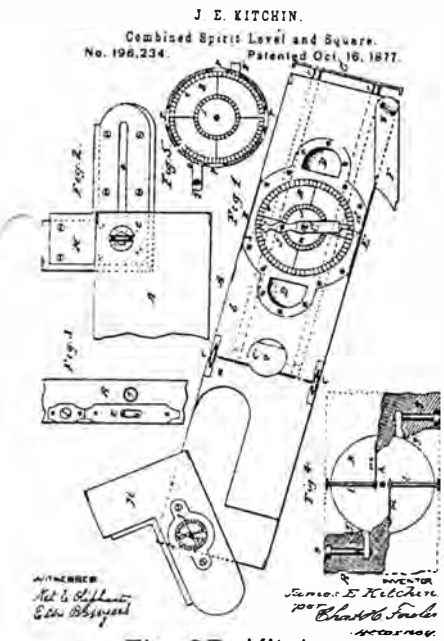
J. E. KITCHIN.
Combined Spirit Level and Square.
No. 196,234. Patented Oct. 16, 1877.

Fig. 3B Kitchen

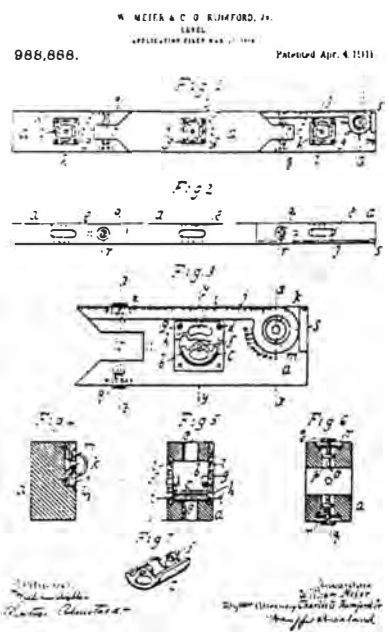
W. MEIER & C. O. RUMFORD, Jr.
LEVEL.
988,888. Patented Apr. 4, 1911.

Fig. 3C Meier Rumford

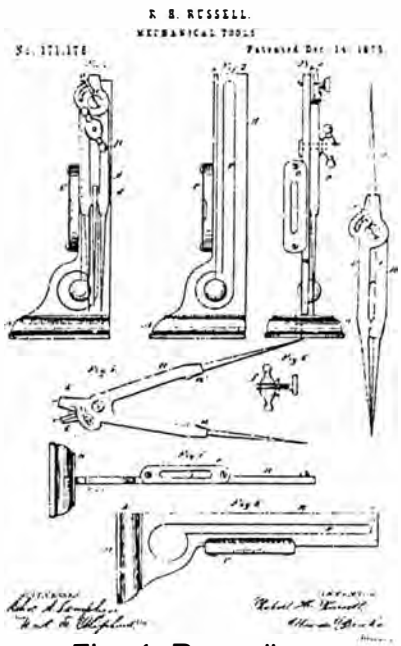
R. B. RUSSELL.
MECHANICAL TOOLS.
No. 171,176. Patented Dec. 14, 1875.

Fig. 4 Russell

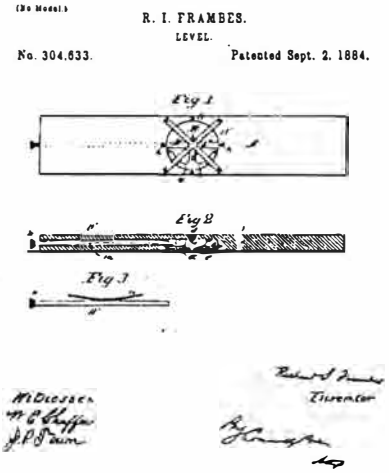
(No Model.)
R. I. FRAMBES.
LEVEL.
No. 304,633. Patented Sept. 2, 1884.

Fig. 5A Frambes

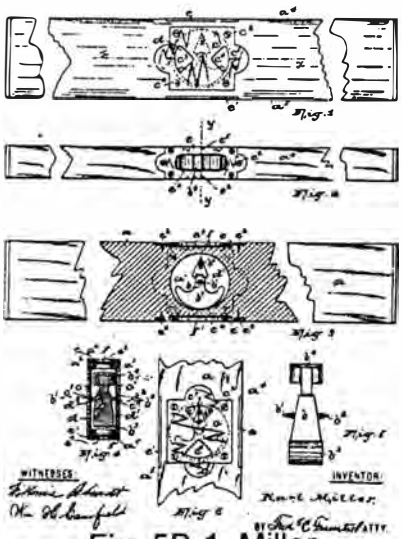
K. MILLER.
PLUMB LEVEL.
No. 441,772. Patented Dec. 2, 1890.

Fig. 5B-1 Miller

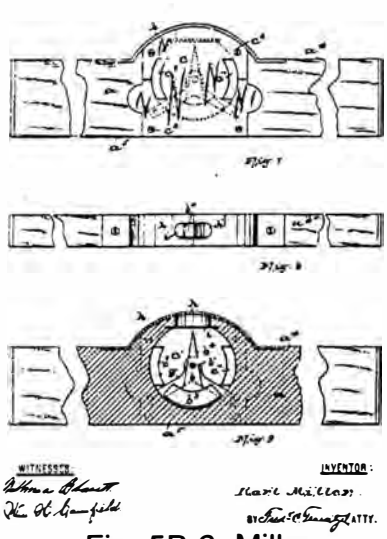
K. MILLER.
PLUMB LEVEL.
No. 441,772. Patented Dec. 2, 1890.

Fig. 5B-2 Miller

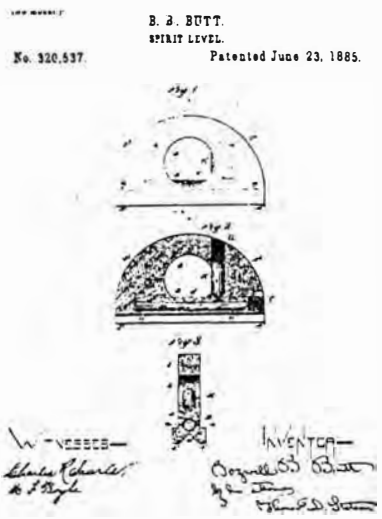
B. B. BUTT.
SPIRIT LEVEL.
No. 320,537. Patented June 23, 1885.

Fig. 7A Butt

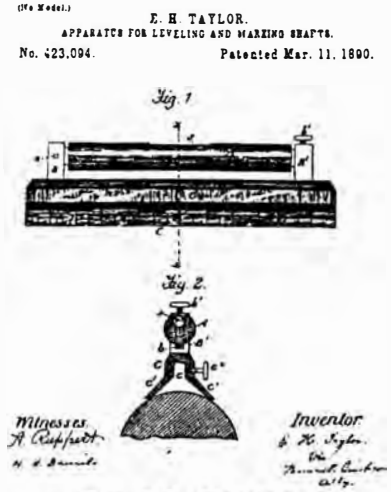
E. H. TAYLOR.
APPARATUS FOR LEVELING AND MARKING SHAFTS.
No. 423,094. Patented Mar. 11, 1890.

Fig. 7B Taylor

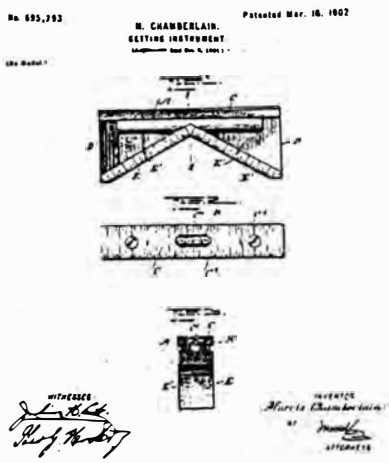
No. 695,793 Patented Mar. 18, 1902
M. CHAMBERLAIN.
SIGHTING INSTRUMENT.

Fig. 7C Chamberlain

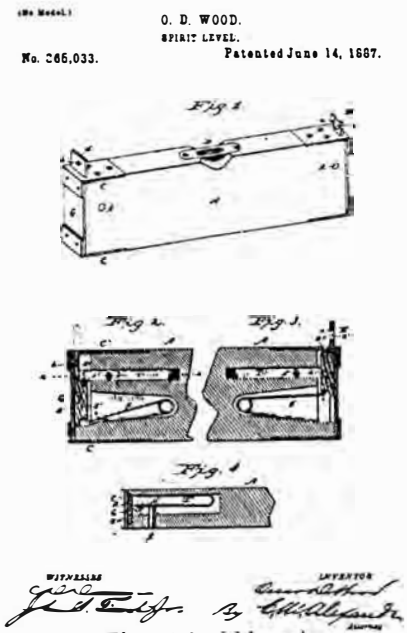
O. D. WOOD.
SPIRIT LEVEL.
No. 365,033. Patented June 14, 1887.

Fig. 8A Wood

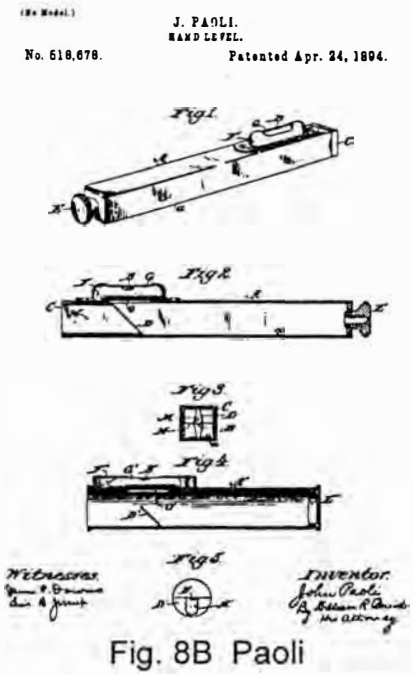
J. PAOLI.
HAND LEVEL.
No. 518,678. Patented Apr. 24, 1894.

Fig. 8B Paoli

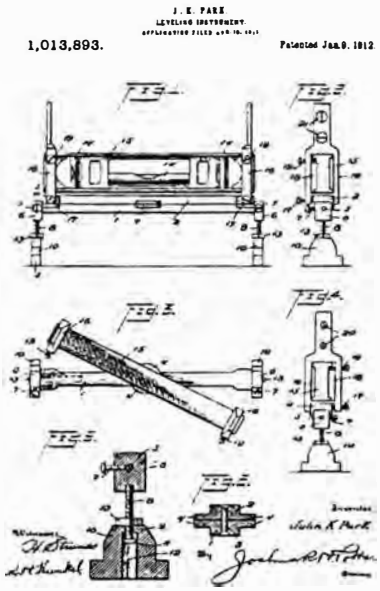
J. E. PARK.
LEVELING INSTRUMENT.
1,013,893. Patented Jan. 9, 1912.

Fig. 8C Park

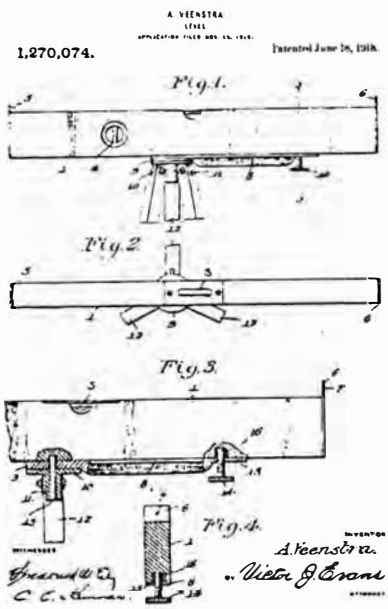
A. VEENSTRA.
LEVEL.
1,270,074. Patented June 18, 1918.

Fig. 8D Veenstra

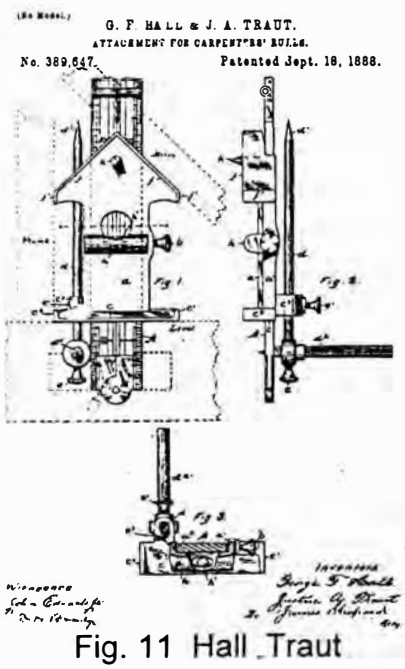
G. F. HALL & J. A. TRAUT.
ATTACHMENT FOR CARPENTERS' RULES.
No. 389,647. Patented Sept. 18, 1888.

Fig. 11 Hall Traut

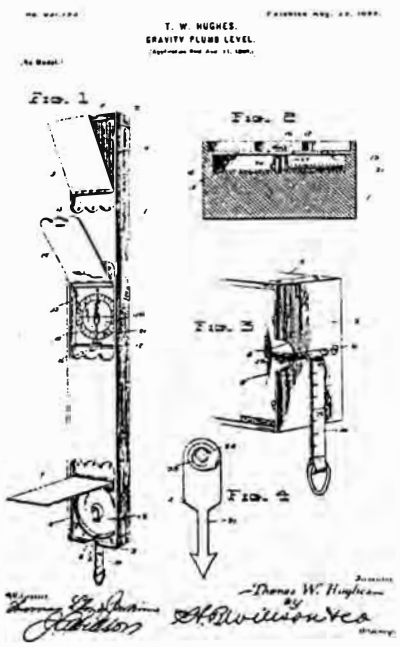
T. W. HUGHES.
GRAVITY PLUMB LEVEL.

Fig. 12 Hughes