

Rocky Forge News

Volume 9, issue 6 – June, 2010

Next Meeting: Little Anvils (6/19/10)

Hello everyone! Remember our June Rocky Forge meeting will be on the third Saturday, June 19th. Because we still need to work on the little anvils and the weathervane, the meeting will be at Ted's shop. Those of you who will not be working on the little anvils can fire up the forges outside and get your practice for the Illiana Antique Power Association Show, July 16, 17 and 18th.

On that note we will have the July Rocky Forge meeting the Saturday before the Illiana show (July 10) at the show grounds in Rainsville. We can use that time to clean up the shop, set up our work stations, install the iron fence that Davey Hall is restoring, hang flower pots, set up tables and practice forging.

Carol will have the quilt ready for selling raffle tickets at the Illiana show and we can sell miniature anvils there as well. We will need volunteers to sell these items at the show. All of this is to fund our big 30-year IBA party in October.

For the June 19th meeting our favorite cook will be working at Greg's auction so we need to brown bag it for that day. Bring your lunch, metal objects for iron-in-the-hat and your favorite forging tools.

Coffee and doughnuts will be ready by 8:30, see you all on June 19th.

Ted

P.S.: The Amish School auction is on the second Saturday of June, now you know why we will not be here.

Last Meeting: (5/8/10)

The May meeting was spent doing many important miscellaneous things. Gene brought in the copper weathercock he made for the Ladies Building at the show grounds. Several of us helped Gene design the other pieces of the weathercock.

Other members worked on grinding and painting little anvils to sell as part of our fundraising for the big party while others forged their hearts out.



History Day

On May 3 eight blacksmiths participated at the Illiana show grounds in demonstrating activities from the past. Dick Fontaine drove the train. Peter Cooper made wooden barrels. Charlie Terril made wire chain. Rob Durrett told of the Lewis and Clark expedition. Four more smiths demonstrated basic blacksmithing. These included Paul Petosky, Ted Stout, David Childress and Dominick Andrisani. The event was fun or school children and for us.



More photos follow on the last page.

What made America?

Immigrants, Farmers and Blacksmiths!

By *Charlie Terril*

America was always a land of immigrants, but grew slowly for about two hundred years. The Louisiana Purchase created cheap land and with ninety-one percent of the population farmers the western movement became more rapid. Blacksmiths followed. Individuals entered the profession through an apprenticeship of seven years. They received their board and room but no money. To receive money for personal needs they were released to work on farms during harvest.

Blacksmiths were premier craftsmen of their time and they changed history.

The industrial Revolution began in the late 1790's when a Scotch blacksmith, James Watt, invented the steam engine. Saws, textile mills, etc. were no longer limited to waterpower. As a portable engine, steam engines soon gained traction. In 1820 there were steamboats on the Ohio River and in 1830 there was twenty-three miles of operating railroads.

In 1794 Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin ending the time consuming task of hand removal of seeds from lint. In 1797 cast iron plows replaced wooden ones, but were prone to breaking points on rocks. In 1819 the Tremont Nail Company started manufacturing square cut nails by machine. This effectively reduced blacksmith-made nails. The 1820's saw crude threshing machines in use. Run by treadmill, they were soon converted to steam power. In 1850 shakers were added to remove chaff and by 1860 they were threshing three hundred bushels daily.

Wheat has a harvest window of ten days. With a hand sickle one man could harvest one half acre in ten days. In 1831 scythe and cradle cut two acres in that same window. In 1834 Cyrus McCormick invented the reaper. With the reaper and two binders to tie shocks, an incredible ten acres could be harvested in the harvest window. McCormick's blacksmith skill led to one of the world's greatest inventions and the formation of the International Harvester Company.

The threshing machine and binder released enough manpower to effectively fight the Civil War. In World War II enough steel was released to Massey Harris to build five hundred of their new self-powered combines. This produced a like manpower gain for this war.

An equally talented blacksmith, John Deere, invented the steel plow made from a steel saw blade. This was the plow strong enough to break prairie sod because it could be scoured, i.e., it becomes polished bright thereby reducing friction. In contrast, cast iron plows could not be scoured. The steel plow made prairie soil farmable. The John Deere Company exists today.

In 1840 a blacksmith from Norwich N.Y., David Maydole, invented the adze eye carpenter hammer. Not a totally new concept, it was adapted from the adze dating back to Roman times. However, it presented a vast improvement in durability over the round-eyed Roman style hammer and helped enable the construction of "balloon" style homes (frame homes) which had just been invented and required the hammering of many more nails. In 1850 mechanical seed drills placed seed directly into the soil. Seed loss from soil contact, birds, etc. was eliminated.

Farriers broke away from blacksmiths in 1830. They took up the practice of animal medicine, thus they became the start of Veterinary Medicine. Their trade thrives today due to record horse population.

The Iron Age to World War II was the blacksmith's time. The invention of welders and throwaway plowshares reduced blacksmiths to welders and fabricators. Thus a proud profession that once settled Indian treaties by how many were to be allocated to reservations disappeared.

Today, a dedicated group of amateur blacksmiths work at preservation in the art form.



Tillers International

By Davey Hall

The mission statement for Tillers International is “To preserve, study, and exchange low-capital technologies that increase the sustainability and productivity of people in rural communities.”

They are very sincere in this quest. They work in many third world nations and with local entities including the Indiana National Guard, with classes provided at their facility just east of Kalamazoo, MI. The Guard was there recently for a training exercise in the use animal powered equipment for agriculture and roadwork.

I enrolled in “Blacksmith I and II” classes in March and was very pleased with the experience. The blacksmith leading the class is knowledgeable in the craft and well spoken. The class started with a small hook. John presented in an orderly series steps and everyone practicing that step. He discussed specialized terms and where else the particular task may be used in blacksmithing.

Other projects included a forge welded ring, use of the anvil parts and hardy tools, a cold chisel made from a coil spring, tongs and how to fit them to the need, normalizing, tempering and hardening of metals. There was plenty of time for questions and personal assistance even with a full class of 12. There is extra time built in to each class for making several of the presented items or working on a personal project between scheduled tasks.

The smithy is equipped with 6 forge stations, 6 leg vises, 12 anvils, and plenty of hand tools. The adjoining room to the smithy has grinders, belt sanders, and other tools for cold working of steel.

A great lunch was provided each day, including a desert, and it is a wonderful setting. Tillers is located on a small farm with a creek running through it 100 yards from the smithy. It is ten minutes south of the first exit east of Kalamazoo, MI and is a very peaceful setting, even with 12 amateurs beating on hot steel. Tillers is a work in progress and a working, productive farm. The instructors are good, the facilities are adequate, the cost is very reasonable and I only wish I had more time to get away.

The classes cover a wide range of topics and are too many to list here but include Coopering classes, some of which our own Peter Cooper. For more information, the web site is www.tillersinternational.org. Yes they are a non-profit organization.

Delta Welding Celebration

Delta Welding Supply, Inc. is proudly celebrating 10 years of Serving You! Delta hopes you will join them Thursday, June 24th, to celebrate their 10 years of service. They will be providing lunch, have extreme savings on welders, plasmas, chops saws and more. Representatives from several of the nation's top industrial suppliers will be onsite. Raffles every hour and awesome give-aways.

For more information contact Stephanie Davis at Delta Welding Supply, Inc. 1701 E. US Hwy. 41 Attica, IN 47918 PH: 765.762.9353, Email: deltaweldingsales@comcast.net

Dates to Remember

June 2-5, 2010: **ABANA Conf.**, Memphis, TN.

June 19, 2010: **Rocky Forge** meeting at Ted's to prepare little anvils to sell.

June 25-27, 2010: **IBA Conference**, Tipton.

July 10, 2010: **Rocky Forge** meeting at our shop in Rainsville to prepare for the show.

July 16-18, 2010, 2010: **Illiana Antique Power Association Show**, Rainsville, IN.

August 6-22, 2010: **Indiana State Fair**.

August 9-10, 2010: Rocky Forge demos at **Fair**.

August 14, 2010: **Rocky Forge** meeting of August.

September 24-26, 2010: **SOFA QuadState Conference**, Troy, Ohio.

October 2-3, 2010: **Feast of the Hunter's Moon**, at Historic Fort Ouiatenon Park near West Lafayette.

October 15, 16, 17, 2010: **IBA 30th Anniversary Party** at Ted's.

Interesting Web Sites

Maria Cristalli:

<http://www.mariacristalli.com/ArizonaArtist>

Holly Fisher: <http://www.hollyfisher.com/>

Corrina Sephora Mensoff

<http://corrinasephora.com/>



History Day at Illiana (May 3, 2010)

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Web Site: <http://www.rockyforge.org/> (previous newsletters can be found here).

