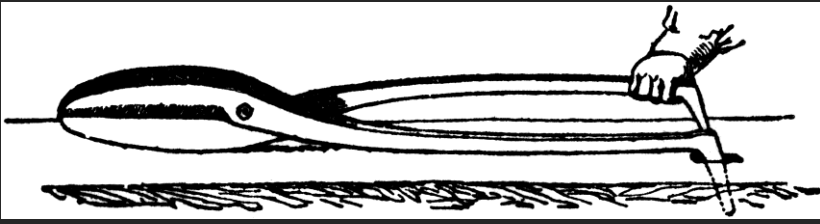


TINSMITH

A Magazine of the Historical Trade

Issue 2 • Fall 2023

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www.tinsmithing.org

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ON OUR COVER: 'Tin Plate Worker' – a colored plate from *The Book of English Trades* (1818). Scanned from an original owned by Karl J. Schmidt.

CONTENT PAGE: A view inside the Sylvester Stoddard tin shop in Historic Nauvoo, Illinois.

A special thanks goes to Helen Pickles, curator of collections at the Highland Folk Museum, Scotland, for allowing the editor to photograph the museum's collection of tin lanterns and other tinware, and for granting permission to use the photographs in this issue.

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TINSMITH

A Magazine of the Historical Trade

FALL 2023

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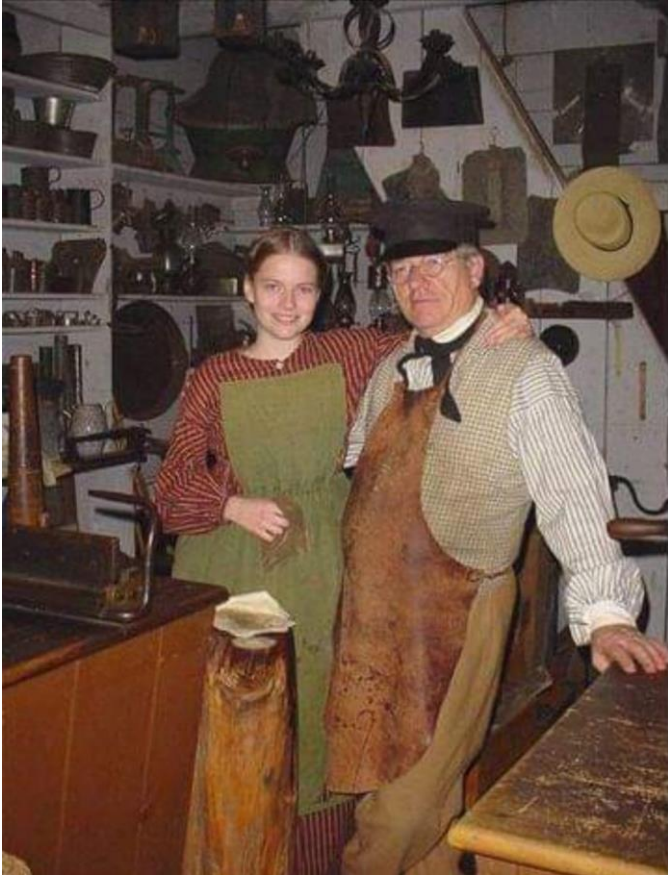
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1 In Memoriam: William McMillen, 1941-2022

By Annie Wickersty, Contributing Editor



Billy and I in the tin shop at Historic Richmond Town, c. 2000. *Photo courtesy Sam Rafferty.*

As many readers undoubtedly know, William McMillen passed away unexpectedly and peacefully on November 9, 2022. He was a Staten Island native, a true master of both tinsmithing and joinery, a renowned expert in the restoration of historic buildings, an avid reenactor, EAIA member, and a natural teacher, among many other things. He lived an extraordinary life, and left behind a world of grieving family, friends, colleagues, and students.

I met Billy about 29 years ago when I was a child. It was the mid-90's and my history buff parents had just become Civil War reenactors and wanted

Richmond Town, the local restoration and living history museum near where we lived. Billy was the Supervisor of Restoration at that time, and his wife Judy was the Director of Education. I soon became one of Billy's tinsmithing apprentices, a privilege I enjoyed every summer and on weekends here and there until adulthood. As an adult, I continued to study with him both at Eastfield Village and whenever Billy and Judy graciously allowed me to come visit. So many happy occasions I spent drinking coffee and reading their books, tinkering around in their garage, or just gawking in awe as this man did things like spontaneously make his own rivets out of strips of scrap or perfect, tiny hammer-and-stake set down seams on cylinders narrower than his own thumb. And so I would have done for decades more if Fate had allowed.

Here is a bit of a personal note: in my "real life" at the time we met, I was something of a pariah, at worst viciously bullied and at best simply ostracized by my peers for reasons I won't get into here. But in the tin shop, I was apparently worth talking to and teaching, apparently capable enough to be given responsibility (even if I burned myself a few times), and intelligent enough to be expected to make progress. Here this expert was showing me how to do it, and seemed to honestly believe that I could do it if I tried and practiced – and so, well, what was there for me to do but to start to believe it, too? Billy made a huge investment; he spent countless hours of his spare time teaching me in the tin shop (and making me make the same thing over and over and over and over and over again until my work might earn the rare approving grunt). He was ever my standard, and hoo, what a high standard! The importance of this experience in my otherwise bleak and painful adolescence and subsequent

. . . continued on next page



Bill supervising a younger me at the Richmond County Fair on Staten Island, early 1990s. *Collection of Historic Richmond Town. Used with permission.*

Awkward teenage years is something I struggle to put into words even now. Every kid needs someone other than their parents who thinks they're worthwhile. Billy was that someone for me.

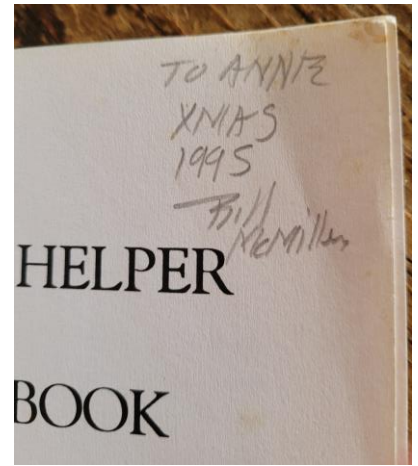
He was also a mentor and guide for my father, and for many, many others, in a variety of contexts. I saw it over and over again. If you were genuinely interested in an area of study, out came all the books --- oh, the books, floor-to-ceiling! Out came all the diagrams, the maps, the files, the postcards, the photos, and often, the relevant artifacts themselves (behind every door a gun, my husband used to joke). And out from Billy himself came the stories. Billy was quite full of illustrative anecdotes and examples, all with clear

sources he somehow remembered, as though his thoughts were neatly organized in drawers or on shelves with ALL CAPS labels in pencil or stamped brass tags like his collections. He was exceedingly generous with his knowledge, and in this way threw open the gates others in his position might have jealously guarded. Improving historical accuracy was always his goal, whatever the discipline, and so Billy freely shared and patiently explained information with those willing to listen and exert effort. It was not about him -- it was about progress. And how many times I saw him and Judy both beaming with pride and admiration to tell of the accomplishments of an Eastfield

. . . . continued on next page



RIGHT:
Traces, traces,
everywhere –
an inscription
in a gift from
Billy.



LEFT: L to R – the late Iowan tinsmith Jim Kimpell, Colton Holovach (along for the ride with his tinsmithing enthusiast parents), myself with my first book box, my husband Jay, and Billy. Taken at the first Tin and Coppersmithing Convergence, at Eastfield Village in 2005.

student, of a historian or the staff at a historic site “doing good research,” to praise someone or other they knew who was at that moment embodying the progress they strove for. It brought them both a lot of joy.

On the other hand, ignorance and sloth really irritated Billy. How I was chastised if I forgot a name or a date (“You should know this stuff!”), or if I did not jump-to adequately when visitors entered the shop (“The public is the reason we are here.”). I have heard him express himself rather bluntly several times over the years, each instance in passionate outrage on behalf of a historic structure – at something willfully destroyed or left to rot that might have been prevented, at the absurdity of using Phillips head screws, at a poor choice of lumber or paint, at plywood, at moss, mold, lichen, and out-of-control weeds, tire-marks in the mud. This sort of thing offended his very soul. He was not impressed by what he viewed as laziness and neglect at historic sites, nor by interpretation that portrays a misleading and imprecise mish-mosh of time periods. The latter was just careless, a wasted educational opportunity that broke his heart. Billy was always after something *specific*. What were

people doing in X place at Y time, *specifically*? How do we know? How can we find out?

He was continuously learning and continuously asking questions (or sitting in silence ruminating over them), and the answers – so he hammered into my impressionable young brain – were, of course, never to be guessed at, but rather to be found or extrapolated as plausibly as possible from the *evidence*. And if you couldn’t find evidence, you weren’t looking hard enough, or weren’t looking in the right places. “Well, just look at what they were recording in the ledger.” “Look at this hole. What could that be for? Well, you have to look at other items like it.” “You know ... *some of those survived!*” “You look at the fragments and look at the sizes of tin we know they had, and from there we can figure out, you know, how they might have laid it out, and so forth.” Look, he exhorted. *Look!* How many times have I seen him transfixed by a tool or some other artifact, turning it over in his hands, searching for marks, trying to understand how it was made, or how it was used, thinking – seeing.

. . . . continued on next page

While he was certainly not one to get mystical or philosophical about any of this, I often did get the sense that Billy could in a way “see” through time, using the lens of his remarkable memory, intuitive understanding of mechanics, and lifetime of research to gather insights from what he was looking at that most other observers (certainly me myself) would miss. Once, as my father tells it, they two were driving around our Island, Billy pointing out clusters of claustrophobic yard-less townhomes or vacant lots that were once, long ago, the site of this or that ancient house or notable farmstead. For each, each time he did this, there was a detailed story: he had been inside, or seen the grand staircase, or salvaged hardware from it, or knew when it was burnt, or knew when it had been rebuilt, or knew how it came to be demolished, or shot a cannon nearby as a teenager, or perhaps played in its meadows as a child. Apparently on this particular drive, he paused at one point at the wheel, as though transported, mid-vision, and remarked simply, “I can see it.”

And now those apparitions and revelations unique to his experience and wisdom are gone with him. The noble old house has been struck down and torn away; we are left only with what we ourselves can salvage – and all the knowledge and help and love he gave us (which is quite a lot). My family and I knew Billy for about 29 years, as I said, and I wish it could have been more. It is shockingly surreal to me, even months later, that I am in the position of having to write this. Of course, this sort of thing will come, as all know. He loved Judy so intensely I should have guessed he would not tarry long after her. Rest easy, Master, and thank you. Thank you for everything.

Billy's initials.



Billy and I on an architecture tour, c. 2011.



LEFT: One of my favorite pictures of Billy (as I often saw him, on his way from one thing to another, stopping by to check on us in the shop at Historic Richmond Town).

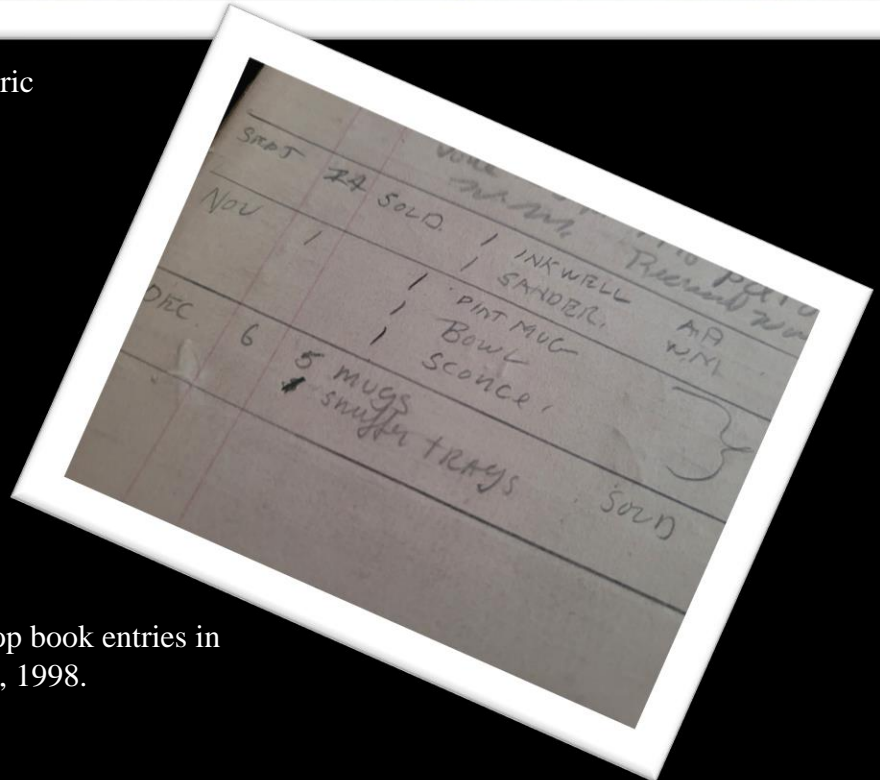


The shop at Historic Richmond Town that Billy set up and put together in the late 70's, still in active use today.





ABOVE: Billy in the tin shop at Historic Richmond Town.



RIGHT: Shop book entries in Billy's hand, 1998.

Billy left his mark
everywhere, both
literally and
figuratively,
including on his
tools and his
tinware.































PRICE LIST OF TINWARE

FROM THE TINSHOP OF
WILLIAM McMILLEN



CROOKED SPOUT COFFEE POT #185

	COFFEE POT . 8" high .65		ROUND SCONCE 8" diam .25
	TEA POT oval 5" high .45		TALL SCONCE 12" diam .30
	SUGAR BOWL . 4" high .40		RECTANGULAR SCONCE 12" .22
	CREAMER . 4" high .25		OVAL BOX . 6" long .50
	MUG. 1 pint12		DEED BOXN.A.
	do 1 quart15		WASH BASIN . 16" diam .55
	OVAL CANISTER 5 1/2" h .30		DUST PAN50
	ROUND CANISTER 8" h .35		COOKIE CUTTERS
	TRAY 1/2 sheet10		MILK PAN 12" dia .30
	do 1 sheet15		BUCKETS 7" dia .25
	do 2 sheet30		SCOOPS
	BUN TRAY . 14" long .30		
	APPLE TRAY 1/2" diam .30		
	SYRUP PITCHER .32		
	PIERCED LANTERN		
	GLASS LANTERN		
	TINDER BOX .35		



ROASTING OVENS with spit 4.50

Other items available upon request
Prices subject to change without notice.
Postage and Packaging extra.

**RICHMONDTOWN, STATEN ISLAND,
NEW YORK 10306**

ABOVE: Billy's tinware price list. This one is from 1988.



LEFT: Billy's old joinery card, here used as a bookplate.

BELOW: Billy's temporary signage at Eastfield's Founders Day some years ago.



RIGHT: Billy enjoying himself and doing amazing work at Historic Eastfield Village.



ABOVE: Billy in his home shop. This is one of my favorite pictures of him ever.



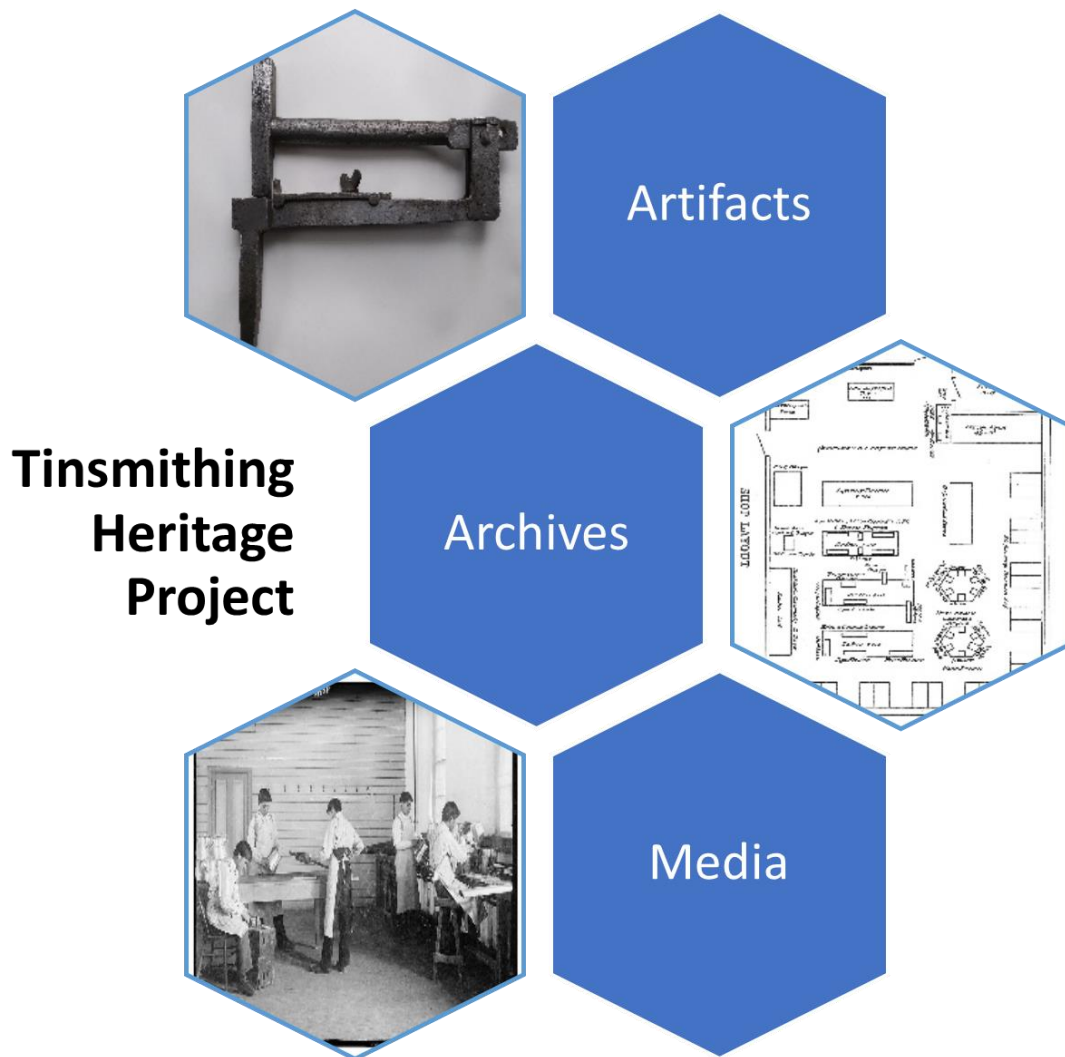
ABOVE: In better times – L to R, Jason (my husband) and I with Billy and Judy.



LEFT: Billy and I (with Karl Schmidt) at Historic Eastfield Village, August 7, 2022.



On the last night we got to spend in his company, Billy (always the teacher) showed my daughter, Abby, how to run the bar at Eastfield.



Founded in 2020, the Tinsmithing Heritage Project is an effort to highlight the history of tinsmithing as a trade, a heritage craft, and a largely forgotten skill. We will tell the history of tinsmithing through images and other visual media, tools, artifacts, and documents.

Visit www.tinsmithing.org

2 | The Stoddard Tin Shop

By Karl J. Schmidt, Editor-in-Chief



Front exterior of the Sylvester B. Stoddard house and tin shop

IN the summer of 2017, my family and I visited Nauvoo, Illinois, a reconstructed city that was once the headquarters of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints in the United States. My main interest in going there was to see the rebuilt Sylvester B. Stoddard house and tin shop. The town that became Nauvoo was first settled by Euro-Americans in the late 1820s, and was later purchased by the Latter Day Saints in 1839, who then renamed it Nauvoo.

The town grew quickly and by 1844, Nauvoo's population numbered nearly 12,000 people. Nauvoo supported multiple tinsmiths, but Sylvester B. Stoddard was one of the most prominent and prosperous.

Born in New York, Stoddard came to Nauvoo with his wife, Charity, in 1841, and built a small brick house with an attached tin shop, from which he made and sold tinware.

By the early 1960s, when Nauvoo Restoration, Inc., was founded to begin the restoration of selected building in this historic town, the original Stoddard house was in ruins. In the 1980s the house and tin shop were rebuilt on-site using archaeological evidence and historical records. The reconstruction includes the attached tin shop, both open to visitors, fitted out and interpreted for the 1840s.

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Unfortunately, none of the tin shop's equipment or furniture is original, but the curators have done a good job in interpreting the shop. Site volunteers give visitors an overview of tinsmithing in the 1840s and a brief history of the Stoddard family.

Because the tin shop space is designed to allow visitors to sit and listen to the presentation of the site volunteers, the layout of the original tin shop would obviously have been different from what it is now. Of note is the workbench, the two wooden conductor stakes (used for shaping tinplate), and the various tinsmith's stakes and machines. Some of the tools and machines are from a period later than the 1840s, but this doesn't overly detract from the experience of seeing the shop.

For historical tinsmiths, the Stoddard home and tin shop are well worth a visit. For those unable to travel, Historic Nauvoo has created a 360° walk-through virtual tour which can be accessed here:

[Stoddard Tin Shop Virtual Tour](#)



Photo copyright © 2017 Karl J. Schmidt

RIGHT and **BELOW:** Views of the workbench.



Photo copyright © 2017 Karl J. Schmidt



ABOVE: Stoddard tin shop workbench, showing some of the tools and machines on display, including a setting down machine (right) and a grooving machine (left). A hatchet stake and a creasing stake can be seen lying down on the workbench, while a square pan swedge can be seen on the far side of the workbench. A raising hammer can be seen at the end of the bench. **BELOW:** Some of the patterns on display in the Stoddard tin shop, hanging on nails against one wall. They include patterns for flared pans, bread bowls, and coffee pots.





Photo copyright © 2017 Karl J. Schmidt

ABOVE: View of the workbench, showing the wooden conductor stake and wooden mandrel, used for shaping tinplate.



Photo copyright © 2017 Karl J. Schmidt

LEFT: Some of the reproduction tinware on the shelves of the Stoddard tin shop, including a variety of lanterns, buckets, colanders, a pan, and a document box.



Photo copyright © 2017 Karl J. Schmidt

RIGHT: Additional reproduction tinware on the shelves of the tin shop – lanterns a watering can, a box, a small coffee pot, a sausage stuffer, oil can, document box, candle box, tea pots, a bucket, a bread pan, plates, scoops, and a variety of bowls and pans.



Photo copyright © 2017 Karl J. Schmidt



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LEFT and UPPER LEFT: On display, a variety of reproduction pieces, including lanterns, a tin kitchen, measures, cups, scoops, baking sheets, and pans.

UPPER RIGHT: Some hand tools (pliers, hollow punches, dividers, and seamers) and a charcoal tinner's pot, used for heating soldering coppers.

3

An Interview with Master Tinsmith Ben Clarkson

Interviewed by Karl J. Schmidt,
Editor-in-Chief





Editor's Note: This interview was conducted over the telephone by Karl J. Schmidt on June 23, 2023, as a follow-up to an in-person conversation with Ben Clarkson at his home in Massachusetts in June 2022.

Schmidt: How did you first get started in tinsmithing? Tell me about your training.

Clarkson: Well, I was fresh out of the service and had had a couple of different jobs, not knowing what I really wanted to do, and somebody introduced me to the Director of Crafts at Old Sturbridge Village. I hired on and they trained me in the farm. You had to do a trade also—everybody worked at the farm—and they trained me in the cooper shop. Think barrels and buckets and that sort of thing. And then, a couple of months later, they had an opening in the tin shop and I was kind of intrigued with it, so I applied and got into the tin shop. And was there...I don't know

...a couple of months, learning from Al Lees. The State of Massachusetts Board of Labor had an apprenticeship program and they wanted to close out a number of the apprenticeship programs because they were just outdated, and one of them was tinsmithing. So, what they wanted to do was run one more class of each trade through and then close them down. So, they approached the Village and they approached me and wanted to know if I would like to do an apprenticeship—four years—using pre-1840 tools and I said “sure!” So, what I ended up doing was two years at Old Sturbridge Village and then after that, two years at Greenfield Village. And that's how I got started with the whole thing.

Schmidt: And when was that? When did you get out of the service and get started at Old Sturbridge Village?

Clarkson: I think that was about 1972. I did my two years at Sturbridge and then took a break, and then did the other two years at the Henry Ford Museum.

Schmidt: Tell me a little bit more about the apprenticeship in the State of Massachusetts. How did that work?

Clarkson: Well, I had to do timecards and that sort of thing. I had to work under an established master. But there were none—just people with lots of experience, like Al Lees at Sturbridge, and Bob Jones at the Henry Ford Museum. That was it. The only bump in the road in the whole thing was that Sturbridge did not understand at the time they signed the contract with the State of Massachusetts that they were required to pay me the going apprentice's rate which, in the 1970s, was probably three times what the other interpreters in the museum were making. That became a sore point, that they kind of got caught with that. So, at the end of the two years, they were happy to see me go. [laughs] I was too expensive for them. But that's how I got started.

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ABOVE: Ben in the tin shop during his apprenticeship at Old Sturbridge Village in the 1970s.

Schmidt: I'm somewhat familiar with what 18th century apprenticeships would look like versus sheet metal apprenticeships that exist today, so for the benefit of our readers, what did your work as part of this apprenticeship look like? What did they have you do and make?

Clarkson: Well, obviously you start off with the simple things. I remember like it was yesterday—the first thing I made was an oil can. I think I made 50 of them before they let me go on to the next level. [laughs] I was contracted for 40 hours a week. I had timecards I had to put in. I got evaluated by masters that I worked for, like a report card, and I had to do research into the tinsmithing trade, or aspects of the trade, and publish them in a booklet form—which I did—and that was pretty much it.

Schmidt: Do you still have a copy of a booklet like that? Or is that gone in the mists of time now?

Clarkson: Yeah, I don't even have copies of those now. The only one I have is a copy Billy [McMillen] gave back to me, which is a study of the Filley Family tin shops in Connecticut and Philadelphia.

Schmidt: What attracted you to working with tinsmithing, as opposed to some of the other things you might have done?

Clarkson: Well, I was interested in—at the Village [Old Sturbridge]—pewtering, coopering, blacksmithing. I picked tinsmithing because I thought the up-front collection of tools would be a lot simpler than the other trades. Coopering—it was

. . . . *continued on next page*

nearly impossible to get tools for that. I did a bit of work with pewter, but all of the heat, furnaces, spinning, and all sorts of things... Tinsmithing was pretty basic pre-1840. I think with about 15 tools you could tackle just about anything that came your way. And also I knew the Bicentennial was coming up and there would probably be a big market for handmade tinware, which is exactly what happened. I ended up going from a one-man shop to a small manufacturing shop because of the Bicentennial in '76.

Schmidt: So, you had other people working with you or for you?

Clarkson: Yeah, there were four of us, in Brimfield, Mass. And that's when they were making tinware for me to sell, off my wagon, during the Bicentennial. You had asked about the wagon. The National Park

Service had grant money for Bicentennial exhibits. I had, as part of my research at Sturbridge, found an 1848 diary written by a peddler in the Hudson Valley, New York. It was basically his daybook and personal journal, as he traveled up the Hudson River as far as Poughkeepsie and then back down the other side, selling tinware and doing a lot of repairs. So, I took that and wrote a grant to reproduce that particular trip: day-by-day, town-by-town in 1976. And I got it! As part of that grant, I had to come up with a peddler's wagon [laughs], so I scouted around and—I lived in a pretty rural area—I found a little farm wagon which was pretty close to the dimensions and we rebuilt it and turned it into a peddler's wagon with a repair shop that folded down in the back, so I could do repairs and fabrication

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BELOW: Ben showing a customer soldering techniques from the back of his peddler's wagon.





ABOVE: Some of Ben's tinware for sale on the peddler's wagon.

while I was making the rounds to these Bicentennial exhibits and celebrations. And the guys back in Brimfield were making tinware and then driving it out to me wherever I was and I was selling it, off the wagon, and doing very well, keeping four people employed. A problem arose when I got to Schuylerville and a local guy from the Park Service came over to say hello and he watched me and noticed I was selling tinware, only to find out that per the contract, I was not allowed to sell tinware because I was being paid [through the contract]. It didn't make sense to me to put the other three guys out of work, so my wife at the time came up with the idea that we weren't going to sell it, we were going to give the tinware to people with a 100-year lease, so she made up these 100-year leases. And you couldn't buy it [the tinware] from me, but you could lease it for 100 years. I wish I had one of those leases today because I'd love to frame it and put it up on the wall. But it was fun.

The wagon was quite a draw when I pulled into town and unloaded it off the car trailer and got it all set up. I had quite a lot of fun with it.

Schmidt: So, I've seen some photos you had, with you working at the end of the wagon. How was the wagon set up? Did it have a lot of storage in it? Were there cupboards and cabinets that you could open up that had the tinware stored in them?

Clarkson: Yeah, cupboards and cabinets and drawers. The back folded down, kind of like a chuck wagon. There was a charcoal stove set up. All hand tools—no rotary machines. There's a picture of me reattaching a coffee pot spout for a reenactor, I think it was. It was a good time. I made a curtain that went around the bottom of the wagon and that's where I slept at night, on the ground.

. . . . *continued on next page*

Schmidt: Did you take stakes with you? Did you do demonstrations, too?

Clarkson: Yeah, a basic set. I didn't have anything fancy.

Schmidt: Did you have a stump you put the stakes in?

Clarkson: I had two stumps and the stakes fit in them relatively well. The stumps would store away in the wagon. It was a pretty neat operation. I put everything in the wagon, the wagon got locked up, winched up onto a car trailer, and then off we went to the next town.

Schmidt: So, the trailer was open? People could see the wagon when you were driving around?

Clarkson: Oh, yeah. I would drive on the New York Turnpike with a tin peddler's wagon on the back. [laughs]

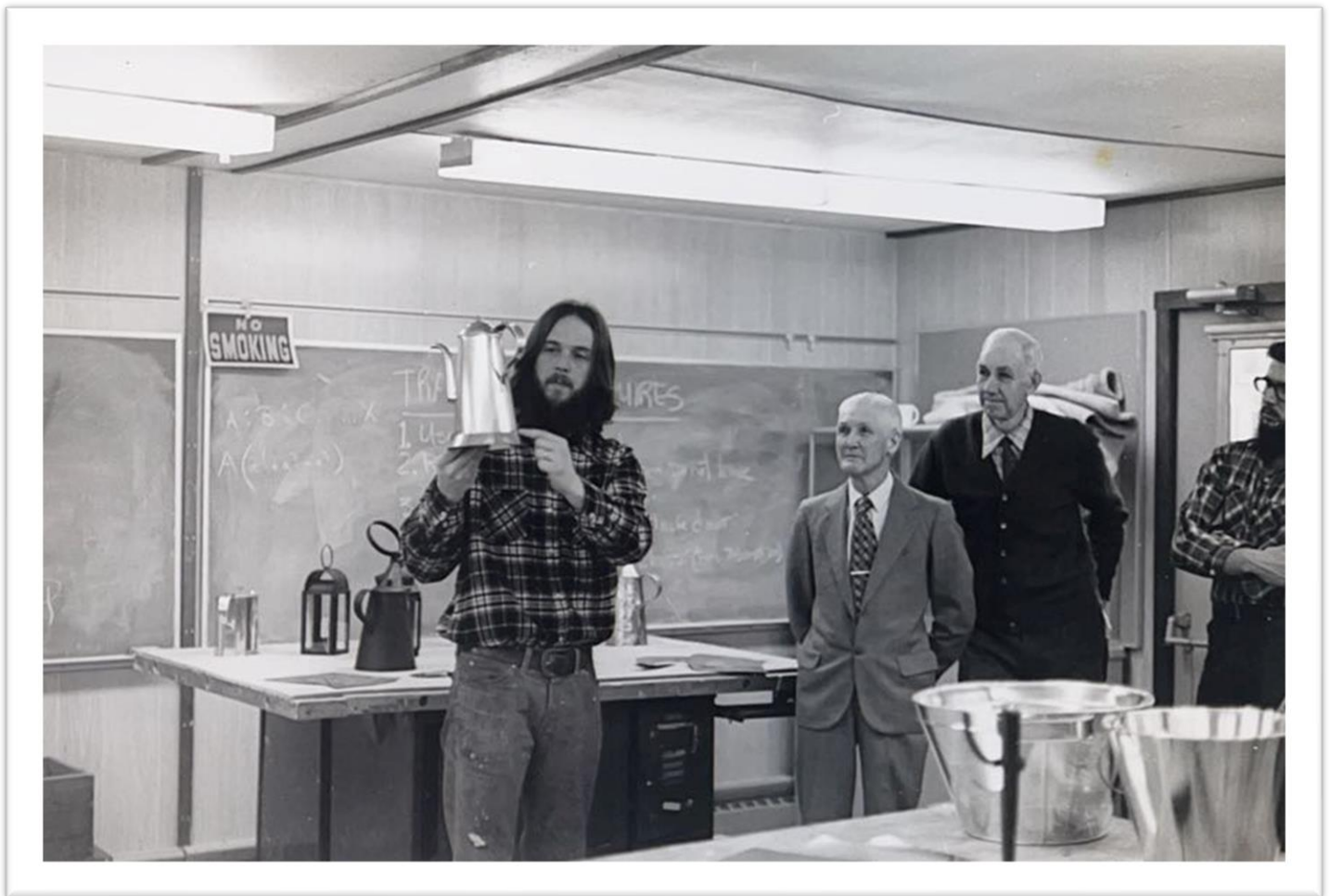
Schmidt: Tell me a little bit about after that. What happened after the Bicentennial? Did you keep the shop open with the guys who were working with you?

Clarkson: Yeah, but slowly as the Bicentennial went away, so did sales. So, we kind of let it go. They went

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ABOVE: A customer peruses Ben's tinware on the wagon.



ABOVE: Ben discussing his crooked-neck coffee pot.

off and did their own things. Ned James was one of the guys who worked for me. He's a renowned blacksmith, making gardening tools. Still doing it. Then we did some shows. We did the National Craft Council show in Baltimore. We did a lot of traveling, a lot of moving around. One thing I didn't do, which is kind of funny given your question about what things did I make. The answer is that I made everything, but I didn't make any military items. I didn't make reenactor stuff. I made one canteen once and that was it. A lot of tinsmiths today – a lot of their bread and butter is based on reenacting. And I never got into that, even during the Bicentennial. I was too into kitchen items. [laughs]

Schmidt: And did you find that people were really interested in all of the kitchen items you made, that that was more interesting to most people than some of the other things, like the reenactor stuff?

Clarkson: Well, I think it was more lighting than kitchen stuff. I can't even count how many lanterns I've made in my life. I started out making pierced tin lanterns, and then moved to glass. My latest ones – maybe I mentioned it to you – I'm doing work for the Boston Gas Company, rebuilding all of their copper gas lights that get knocked off the poles by cars and that sort of stuff. They are four feet high. They're huge copper lanterns and they go to pieces. Every once in a while, they bring me a dozen or so. I've got 15 of those. They're so big, I can get two in the shop and the rest have to sit out in the shed. That's a good gig.

Schmidt: You said those were copper? So, are they soldered or riveted or both?

Clarkson: Soldered. Straighten out the bent pieces, get the old solder off, clean 'em up, reassemble

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them. Now, they are powder-coating them. I told them that that would rule me out for any repairs after that if they've been powder-coated.

Schmidt: I remember talking to you in person about Historic Eastfield Village and that you had started working there and teaching classes.

Clarkson: I think that was '73-'74. I met Don [Carpentier]. He actually found me. The Village had never been opened at that point. There were no classes going on. He asked me to come look at the tin shop he had added and asked me to help him set it up. I did that over a year, year and a half. We got tools, set it up, got it working. And that's how the idea of teaching classes came about. So, my first class was teaching Don how to be a tinsmith, and then we opened it up to the public and started taking in students. I think the first class was four or five or something like that. And I wish I had their names, 'cause I'd like to see if they're still doing it, if they're still around. One of the students who came up was Billy McMillen. And he had met Don also and Don had taught him tinsmithing. He [McMillen] came up to the class and brought a coffee pot [he had made] and wanted to take a class. I looked at the coffee pot and it was perfect! I just said to him: "You don't need this class. You can hang around for the weekend, but you don't need the class. You're already way beyond this." So, that's how Billy and I met.

I did that [teaching] for about two years, maybe a third year, and then somebody else took over. I forget his name. It'll come to me.

Schmidt: So, you've always done a combination of making things, selling things, and teaching.

Clarkson: Yeah, yeah.

Schmidt: Moving on to the next question: have you always worked at historical sites, or has it been sort of a combination?

Clarkson: Yeah, it's been a combination. I worked at Old Sturbridge Village and Greenfield Village [Dearborn, Michigan], but I also taught classes at the Cooperstown post-graduate program. And I

worked in a couple of shops in and around Massachusetts. So, it's real combination of working villages, working my own shop, and teaching.

Schmidt: How easy was it back then to find the tools that you needed?

Clarkson: Very easy. They were everywhere. I remember when I first started looking for tools, particularly rotary machines, that what I was finding was – 9 times out of 10 – they were working machines, but they were inappropriate for what I needed them for. They had ogees or were made to make stove pipe. Real heavy-duty stuff. I bought a whole collection of machines sight unseen, went to pick them up, and found out that they had been using the machines to make these stainless steel ice cream mixers, so all of the dies were custom-made and then put on old machines. You know how hard it is to find old dies for machines.

Schmidt: I sometimes see on Ebay old machines with odd dies on them which were probably made for something custom, but we don't know what they are anymore.

Clarkson: I still have one machine that over the years I still have not been able to figure out what it's use is! [laughs] I put the machine on the wall and stare at it.

Schmidt: So, when you would go to get stakes, was that fairly easy, too? And were they more modern stakes, like Pexto, the kinds of stakes you'd find in high school shops? Or were you able to find a lot of older things, too?

Clarkson: A combination. The best pickings were up in Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire. Mostly by word-of-mouth. Somebody would stop in and say "Oh, I know this old guy up in Montpelier, and he hasn't done anything in 10 years." I bought two complete sets of patterns out of tin shops. I still have them packed away. There are about two or three hundred patterns, all for culinary-type items, and all of which I've reproduced. It's nice to have

.... continued on page 31

the patterns. You don't have to have study pieces. It's mindless. You don't have to think about how the pieces go together.

But that's all changed. I still buy tools, to a certain extent, and then sell them, because people need them. And if I find them, I can pass them on to somebody who can use them. But they're just not there anymore.

Schmidt: Yeah, I've noticed that they [the tools] were a lot easier to get when I first started out than they are now. And as we've talked about before, they are much more expensive.

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For Information Contact-
BEN CLARKSON at
(413)-245-7258

ABOVE: A list of Ben's tinware, early 1970s.

Clarkson: Oh, my gosh, yes.

Schmidt: So, I feel bad for some guys who are just starting out now, because I think it would be really tough to find a complement of tools to use.

Clarkson: Yeah, it's very difficult. I occasionally have a big score. I bought a tin shop down in Providence, Rhode Island. I think I may have told you this story. He was tinsmithing up until 1941 and then enlisted and went to war. He left his shop locked up in the barn. He never came back from the war. I think his grandson or son inherited the property and called me up. Someone gave him my name. So, I went down. I'm packing everything up and the guy points over to some hot-dipped tinsplate—still in the original crates! He just gave them to me. So, these things happen.

Schmidt: I suspect this kind of thing is more common in New England than in other places.

Clarkson: Yeah, I think because New England was sort of the hot-bed of tinsmithing early on, so there were a lot of surviving shops, including the tinwork. When I do my reproductions, I usually do it by getting a study piece. I can then do the reproduction at my leisure, without having to sit in a museum, and take drawing and measurements.

Schmidt: It sounds like you've made a whole range of things over time.

Clarkson: Yeah. Besides study pieces, I've also made a lot of things out of Quantrill's book [], particularly tin kitchens and that sort of stuff. But I don't generally like to make things out of a book. I like to make reproductions from originals, because there's little quirks in there and these are things you can't get from a book.

Schmidt: I think there's a lot of assumed knowledge in Quantrill's book. He's writing for a tinsmithing audience, not somebody who's trying to learn.

Clarkson: Exactly. And sticking with the tin kitchens, the triple beadwork on those is not only

decorative, it's functional, and he doesn't cover that at all.

Schmidt: Were there pieces that you found more challenging than others? Anything that stumped you for a while?

Clarkson: I think bending spouts was a big dilemma. I had someone call me and ask "How do you bend the spout?" And I said "You just keep doing it until you get it." But Rose's metal helps. You fill up the spout with Rose's metal, and then later melt it out. But perfecting that became an obsession. The Historical Society of Early American Decoration used to judge not only decorations on tinware reproductions, but they also back in the '70s and '80s used to judge tinware reproductions, without the decoration. So, I submitted a Filley crooked-neck coffee pot. They know their stuff. I think it was the third submission before they gave me an 'A Award'.

Getting back to tin kitchens – just the sheer size of them, laid out, takes up all of your workspace. And if you're by yourself and you're trying to hold the thing, it's flopping around – it was fun.

Schmidt: I made one of those [a tin kitchen] about three years ago and I did find it really challenging. It was rewarding, too. I just took my time. It was during the pandemic, so I didn't have anything going on at the time. I didn't rush through it. I had to think through all of the phases and how best to bend something. It was an interesting experience.

Clarkson: I ended up making all sorts of jigs out of wood to hold parts in place while I seamed it and soldered it.

Schmidt: I've wondered about that. I mentioned that idea in my article about Thomas Passmore. Since they were using hand tools only – the machines hadn't yet been invented – I wondered if they had other things to help them, things that

. . . . *continued on page 33*

New-Constructed Tinwares

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Benjamin Clarkson,

Tin-plate worker, near the
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All other kinds of Tinware, made
in the best manner.

ABOVE: A handbill advertising of Ben's tinware, early 1970s.

we've forgotten about, like jigs and other things that would help them speed things up a little bit or make it easier to make things.

Clarkson: I'm big into jigs. I've made jigs for everything you can think of my entire life. When you're working by yourself, you have to. You have to come up with some way to hold something in place, suspend it up in the air, while you're heating up the soldering iron.

Schmidt: I think about woodworking. Woodworkers use jigs all the time, so it would stand to reason that other people would do that, too.

Clarkson: I would think so.

Schmidt: But I haven't seen anything in the literature or surviving from shops that suggests that. It could just be that those things got lost, or people didn't know what they were, kind of like the custom dies on some of the machines.

So, in this long career you've had in tinsmithing that spans over many decades, what would you say you're most proud of, whether it's a thing you've made or something you've accomplished? Is there anything that stands out?

Clarkson: Well, like I mentioned, that crooked neck coffee pot A Award from HSEAD felt good. It was good recognition from people who know what they're looking at. And it helped me. I suddenly had all these orders for them to the point where I got tired of making them!

I think my whole career makes me proud. There are so few people who will commit to something. I was concentrating on something no one else would.

I know one of your questions was about the future of tinsmithing – young people coming up, is there any interest in it, do they care? Well, I think that's the job of the museums that have tinsmithing exhibits. It's the only way we're going to bring people up. They're not going to come in off the streets and suddenly get interested. They're going to do it because someone

else shows them how to do it and they get caught, they get hooked, like you and I did.

Schmidt: Yeah, I think about Chris Hagemann, who comes up to the Brookings Summer Arts Festival every year. When we moved to this area that's how I got interested in tinsmithing. I had never met a tinsmith before. I had heard of the word and knew broadly what tinsmiths did, but it was looking at the stuff he made that got me interested. It took a few years to get from the point where I said "Oh, that's cool" to "I'd like to do this myself." But had I not met him, I don't know if I'd be doing this now.

Clarkson: He's quite the craftsman. While I'm throwing accolades out, I'd like to mention Bob Gorrell. His lanterns are superb work. I ordered one of his lanterns and he wrote me back and asked "Why do you want one of my lanterns?" And I said "Because it will make me feel good to see a lantern better than mine hanging in the shop." And I did. I bought it and hung it in the shop. He's a good guy.

Schmidt: What are some of your favorite things to make? You've mentioned lanterns, tin kitchens, and coffee pots. Is there something in particular that when you get an order for it, you look forward to making it?

Clarkson: Well, I *thought* I enjoyed making candle moulds. [laughs] Pierced tin lanterns are always satisfying, maybe because that was one of the first things I made. I actually like to make milk pans. I call them 'two sheets'. There's a certain satisfaction with stacking them up on the workbench. That was one of the items I carried on the wagon, because I could get so many in there.

Schmidt: Were they popular? Did people snap them up?

Clarkson: They're easy to make, you can sell 'em for cheap, and people put fruit in them. I sold a lot of them, all different sizes.

. . . . *continued on page 35*



ABOVE: Ben in the tin shop at Old Sturbridge Village, early 1970s.

Schmidt: So, in terms of the most challenging item you've made, would you say that's the spout, or something else? Maybe not in terms of just a part, but a whole, some item you've made.

Clarkson: Probably the most challenging thing I ever made was when I worked at Old Sturbridge Village. They were putting in a new grist mill and getting it up and running. They came down to the tin shop and said they needed a series of chutes. There were lots of twists and turns and changes in diameters. It was very challenging, but worked perfectly. The funny thing was, at that point in my career, I had no idea what I was doing! [laughs]

Schmidt: You mentioned earlier that you use study pieces. Is there any kind of research that you do when you're trying to figure out how to make something?

Clarkson: Well, I did the museum route for a long, long time. That was in the pre-internet days. I still do it pretty regularly, except for different subjects. But I did a rather extensive study of the Filley's to get a feel for what that pre-1810 tin shop was like in Connecticut. I visited all of the historical sites throughout Connecticut and measured and photographed all of the items that definitely came from that shop. We got to the point that we could recognize tinware made in at Filley's in Connecticut and tinware made at Filley's in Pennsylvania. They were practically identical. When they set up the shop in Philadelphia, they made a copy of all of the patterns from the shop in Connecticut. They didn't need to reinvent the wheel. There were subtle differences, though. One example is when they put in the triangular gore of the coffee pot, there are subtle differences in the curvature of the gore. The height of the spout, the curvature of the spout, where it's mounted, the size of the domed lid, the finial on top of the cap, the height of the handle – you can tell the differences between the two, basically because two different people made them from the same pattern. So, the curator of mechanical arts at the time [at OSV] and myself spent a lot of time measuring.

Schmidt: I wonder sometimes what these guys would think of us recreating these things they produced,

thinking of them as museum pieces, even though at the time they were seen as commonplace household items.

Clarkson: Yeah, disposable. I wonder what they would think of this, too.

Schmidt: You touched on this earlier, but do you see a strong future for historical tinsmithing in the United States? If so, where do you see things headed? I recently visited Greenfield Village and it looks like they've closed the tin shop there permanently. And this is happening elsewhere, too. Are people just losing interest in tinsmithing? Judging by the people I interact with on the Historical Tinsmithing page on Facebook, people seem interested, but does that translate into a 'future' for the craft?

Clarkson: Well, you as a former history professor, did you see a decline in the interest in history during your career?

Schmidt: Yeah, I did. Even here at my former university, I saw a rapid decline in interest. When I started there in 2003, we had something like 150 majors and a few years later, we had like 40. As the economy tightens I don't know if people are looking for something more lucrative, or if it's just a general lack of interest in history.

Clarkson: I think it's a lack of awareness. In my case, in my career, the thing that was pivotal was 1976, the Bicentennial. There was so much interest in the Bicentennial. It was everywhere. You couldn't escape it; therefore, people had to be a part of it. They had to go to the events. It was big. Without that, we're right back to where we started: there's no interest. How do we recreate that in some form?

When I was at the Henry Ford Museum, we used to talk about the coming Bicentennial. We had so much interest in the trades we actually put up a temporary tent, and it was nothing but a tinsmithing exhibit. We had four tinsmiths, in four

. . . . *continued on page 37*



ABOVE: Holding one of his creations, early 1970s.

different corners, doing different things from different periods. We had a mob scene every day! It was crazy. And it was just because of the Bicentennial. But there was an immediate drop-off after the hoopla was over.

Schmidt: I realize that it's a bit of a Catch-22 when you have a museum with a tin shop and interest starts to drop off. With funds always tight, you start making decisions about what to keep open. If you close the tin shop, though, then no one gets any exposure to it. We went to the Henry Ford last summer, specifically because they told me on the phone that it was open, but when we got there, it wasn't open. We talked to some of the people in the gift shop and they said they thought it was closed permanently. And that's a big place. You'd think they'd have more interest.

Clarkson: I think it has a lot to do with the difference in museum culture at the Henry Ford versus what you find at Old Sturbridge Village.

Schmidt: They have been expanding the glass-making at Greenfield Village.

Clarkson: That's what sells.

Schmidt: Any final thoughts you'd like to share with our readers?

Clarkson: Keep it authentic. There are lots of people out there making tin items that probably didn't exist, with tinplate that didn't exist, and that's not my training. There's probably more of a market for what they do than what I do. And that's my final thought.

Schmidt: Many thanks, Ben. I appreciate you taking the time to talk with me about your life and work.




ABOVE: Ben posing for a modern tintype, early 1970s.

BELOW: A close-up of Ben's business sign, 2023.



First Person Voice: A 19th Century Tinsmith at Old Sturbridge Village

By Richard Eckert, Master Tinsmith,
Old Sturbridge Village

A man with a mustache, wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt, a black vest with gold buttons, and tan trousers, stands in a workshop. He is leaning on a workbench. The workshop is filled with various tinware items, including pots, pans, and a large metal container, hanging from the wooden beams. There are also tools and a wooden frame on the workbench. A window in the background shows a building outside.

I graduated from Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School in Palmer, Massachusetts, in 2007, after taking the collision repair course. I had plans and dreams of one day working in a classic car restoration business. If you had told me then that I'd instead be working in a living history museum as the master tinsmith and traveling to other museums and collections researching original tinware and related items, I'd probably have called you crazy.

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My whole life, I grew up around history, from my parents visiting historical locations with education in mind, to going to my great aunt's house that had been in the family since 1910, to watching the History Channel. But I never once thought of making a living from it.

When I came to Old Sturbridge Village in February of 2011, I had come from a collision repair background, working in various auto body shops that would hire me for a few months—until business slowed as a result of the 2008 recession. By 2011, I couldn't find any shop within a 50-mile radius that would hire me, so reluctantly I started looking for work anywhere, even outside my field of automotive work.

I stumbled upon Old Sturbridge Village's job fair ad on a website. After thinking about it, I said "Why not? I love history, and would rather be doing something physical than sitting at a computer all day." So, I went down, filled out an application, and handed in my resume. Fifteen minutes later, I was about halfway home when I got a phone call asking if I'd like to come in for an interview. After the interview, I got hired on the spot. I started off as a costumed interpreter on the farm along with the mills.

After a couple of months, the museum asked each of us if we would like to be trained in one of the trade shops. After seeing each of them for me it boiled down to the tin shop, the blacksmith's shop, or the cooper's shop. I was also interested in the printing office, but they didn't have that as an option. So, shortly after that, in June 2011, I started working in the tin shop. At first, I'd get scheduled for the tin shop maybe



Talking to visitors about 19th century tinware and the role and work of the tin shop in New England life.

Photo ©2022 Karl Schmidt



A view of the tin shop. Note the japanned ware on the shelf to the right, and the 'tin kitchen' on the floor.

Photo ©2022 Karl Schmidt

once or sometimes twice a week. As time went on, I found how much I enjoyed the tin shop more than any other location I worked. Eventually, I was trained in blacksmithing and coopering, but none of those compared to the tin shop. I enjoyed being able to make multiple items from start to finish that were usable in one day. And the fact that there was so much history to learn and expand on was an added bonus.

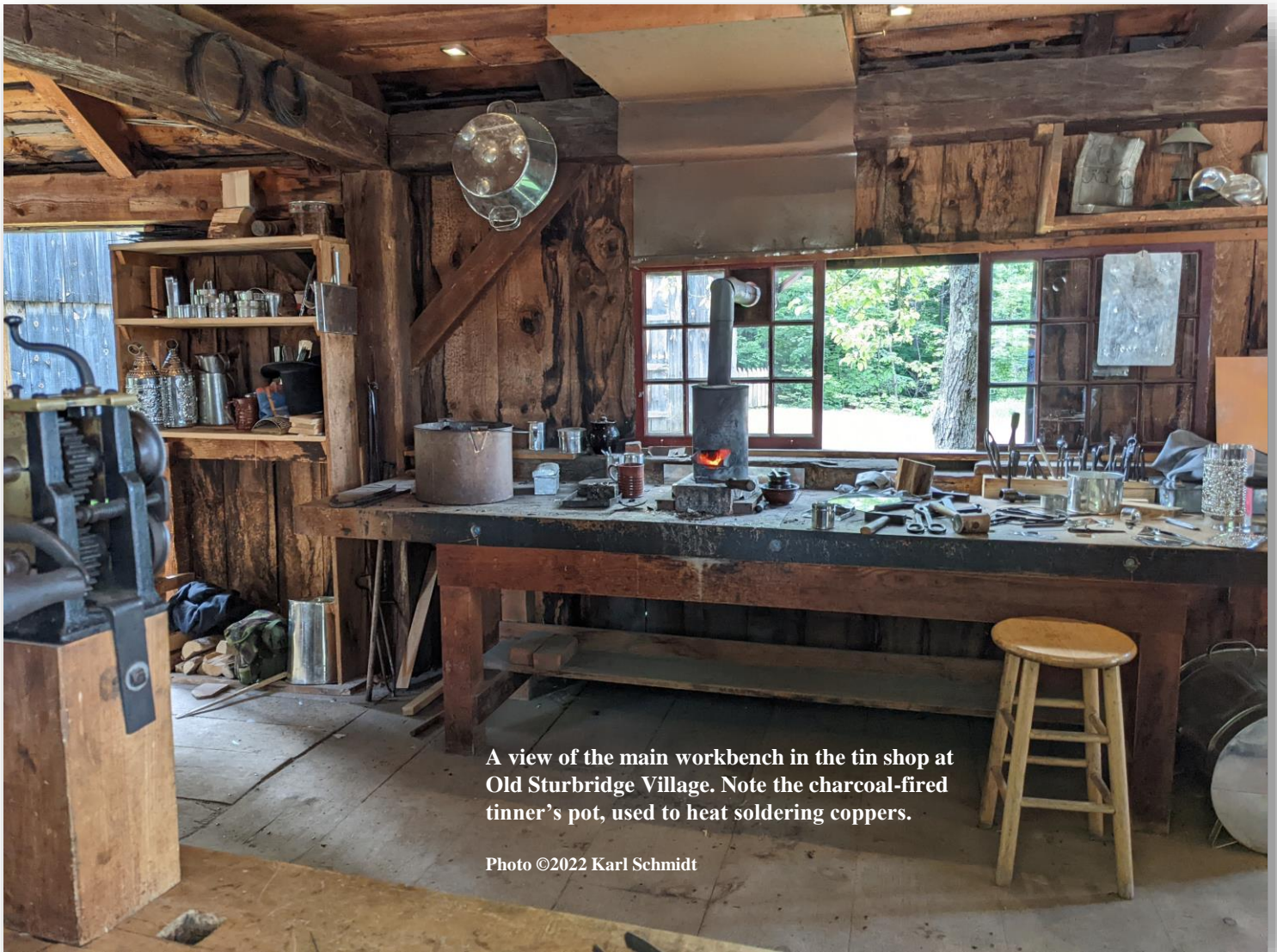
In 2014, I was offered the Lead of Tin Shop position under Master Tinsmith Phil Eckert (although we share the same last name, we aren't related). Phil and I grew an amazing bond working together. I found my biggest interest was doing research on every aspect of the trade – from what the shops were like in the past and how they functioned, to the items they produced. When researching the items themselves, we found, as many others had before us, that by looking at later catalogs with pictures and names of items as a start, we were sometimes able to backdate an item to our period being the 1830s. One such item was the 'comb case'. For many years, there was an argument about what they looked like in the period, until I looked through the Dover Stamping Company's book of 1869 and found one. To others' surprise they had been calling it a matchbox. Now, years later, we still get people calling it that, which for us is a great opening to a discussion.

In a short time after becoming the Lead of Tin Shop I found my passion for the trade so strong I was starting to do research at home and to the surprise of some folks started collecting tools of my own.

I found my first tools – a pair of small and large turning machines—at the Brimfield Flea Market. These are used to roll the top edge of pans, coffee pots, cups, and other items. Although those two machines ended up being slightly damaged beyond use, they started my path to having my own shop at home.

Researching the tool manufacturers, I found myself gravitating toward the lesser known or not as popular manufacturers from the 19th century which included J. Wilcox for stakes made in East Greenwich, Connecticut, A.W. Whitney Machines from Woodstock, Vermont, and C. Brombacher for various tools from Tarrytown, New York. But I wasn't just a collector. The tools would mean nothing if I couldn't use them to manufacture tinware. Along with researching tools, I began searching records of tin shops in operation between 1800 to 1840, the main years interpreted at Old Sturbridge Village. In the beginning, I had only a few books that were written decades ago including Shirley DeVoe's *Tinsmiths of Connecticut*, which helped me begin by listing the account books of various tin shops in that state including Oliver Filley's shop of Bloomfield, Connecticut.

This single tin shop would fascinate me for years to come, as it was in operation from around 1800 to the early 1840s. But what surprised me the most was learning the extent of the business Filley had. Using the collections of letters and account books of the Filley Family Held in the Connecticut Historical Society and the Connecticut State Library, I learned that Filley's operation stretched from Connecticut to New York and Pennsylvania. I



A view of the main workbench in the tin shop at Old Sturbridge Village. Note the charcoal-fired tinner's pot, used to heat soldering coppers.

Photo ©2022 Karl Schmidt



Explaining some of the hand tools to visitors. Note the pierced tin lantern on the workbench to the right.

Photo ©2022 Karl Schmidt

learned how this family not only produced tinware for the kitchen in the form of pans and measuring cups, but also the more desired Japanware, tinware that would be painted in bright decorations from waiters and trunks, to crook spout coffee pots and sugar boxes.

The more I worked with Phil, the more he encouraged me to keep pushing myself not only with research, but also to improve my tin-making abilities, improving on every step no matter the item. He also encouraged me to go into the collections storage to look at artifacts, and develop new patterns to produce either new items, or one-offs for the public. To this day, the one item that still holds a special place in my heart is a square lantern with three glass panes, and strips across the glass to protect it. While many in the trade don't look at it as anything special, what sets it apart from all others for me was the date. I had finished one in our production shop (which is closed to the public), but that day I was showing it off, Phil looked it over and said, "how about we make those for the gift shop." From that moment, I felt I had finally reached a level I never thought I would. That year we sent a couple of dozen lanterns to the gift shop. After that, Phil continued to push me more and more, and passing on as much knowledge and skill as he could that I would absorb.

Finally, during the 2020 COVID pandemic, Phil announced he would be retiring—after roughly 40 years of working at Old Sturbridge Village. The day after he announced his retirement, we were talking about

the future of the shop. I was worried about what would happen to the shop. One comment he made helped calm me down. “I’m so glad you’ve taken to the history firstly versus the trade.” Others in the museum would quietly tell me how Phil knew I was the right person to pass the torch to.

Today I continue working at Old Sturbridge Village as Master Tinsmith, though today I work with my own apprentice, Alden, who to my amazement has taken up japanning. He really has taken this work to heart, along with what I worked on, and continuing the legacy of researching the trade of tinsmithing. Each year, we get visited by hundreds of visitors of all ages and from all over the world. I enjoy being able to teach them about the trade and how it impacted the modern world from standardized shapes and sizes to mass production, because of the hand-operated machines being introduced. While most will never get into the trade, in the 12 years I’ve worked for the museum, we have had a couple come back and say how they’ve found our talks so interesting they ended up in fields that all started with the tinsmith trade of early America.



The early 19th century tin shop at Old Sturbridge Village.

Photo ©2022 Karl Schmidt

Editor’s Note: Old Sturbridge Village is a living history museum in Sturbridge, Massachusetts, in the United States, about 60 miles southwest of Boston. It is interpreted as a recreated 1830s New England village, sitting on approximately 200 acres. The Village includes 40 historical buildings representing rural life and work in 19th century New England.

Teaching Tinsmithing in the United Kingdom

By Karl J. Schmidt, Dakota Tinworks

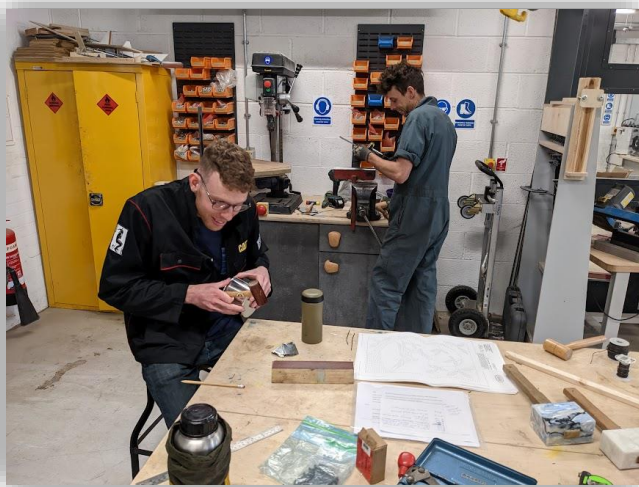
For two weeks in September 2022, at the invitation of the UK Heritage Crafts Association, I taught two, week-long classes in tinsmithing at the Museum of Making in Derby, England. There were seven students in each workshop. Students learned traditional

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TOP: The Museum of Making, Derby. LEFT and RIGHT: Students in the Week I course.



ABOVE and RIGHT: Students in the Week II course.

Continued from the previous page

tinsmithing techniques, using primarily hand tools and tinsmith's stakes.

According to the Heritage Crafts Association, which tracks the status of traditional crafts in the UK through its *Red List of Endangered Crafts*, tinsmithing is considered 'critically-endangered', meaning that tinsmithing is "at serious risk of no longer being practised in the UK." Crafts in this category typically include those "with a shrinking base of craftspeople, crafts with limited training opportunities, crafts with low financial viability, or crafts where there is no mechanism to pass on the skills and knowledge." The purpose of me teaching tinsmithing in the UK was to create a small base of people trained in traditional tinsmithing in the hope that one or more of them would pursue the craft after the workshop ended.

The two courses were partially underwritten by grants from the Heritage Crafts Association and The Worshipful Company of Tin Plate Workers alias Wire Workers in London.

One of the students has already incorporated tinsmithing into his repertoire of metalwares, alongside copper, brass, and iron work. John Wills, or "The Copper Elf" as he is known in the trade, sourced tinplate in the UK on his own and has been making and selling select items of tinware to the living history and re-enactor crowd. In May 2023 I returned to the UK and visited him in his new workshop in Wellingborough, where, with additional financial support from the Heritage Crafts Association, he has added a dedicated workspace to be used for tinsmithing.



Visiting John Wills at his workshop in Wellingborough, England, May 14, 2023.



C Investigating Collections

By Karl J. Schmidt, Tinsmithing Heritage Project



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A Visit to the Highland Folk Museum

On May 23, 2023, I visited the Highland Folk Museum in Newtonmore, Scotland, taking the train down from Inverness. I had written to the museum in advance, asking to view their tinware collections, noting that they had a large number of lanterns, particularly pierced ones. Helen Pickles, the museum's curator of collections, kindly invited me to visit the museum to view and photograph the tinware collections at the Am Fasgadh, or Shelter, the museum's large building for collection stores.

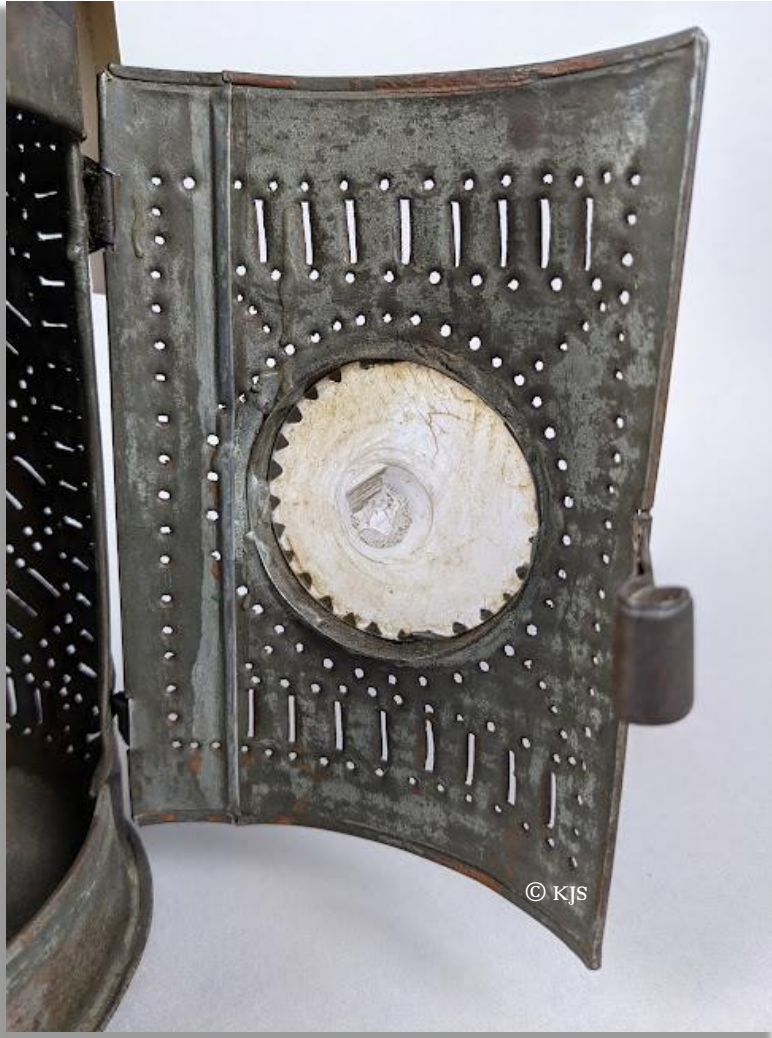
Most of the lanterns were collected for the museum by Dr. Isabel F. Grant (1887-1983), who was the museum's founder and director until her retirement in 1954. The lanterns were of the type made and sold by the Traveller community, many of whom were known to be skilled tinsmiths.

The pierced tin lanterns represent a variety of designs. One, designed like a bull's eye lantern (see photo right), is unique in that it uses the bottom of



Photograph © 2023 by Karl J. Schmidt, used with the permission of the Highland Folk Museum, High Life Highland.

a wine glass, severed from the stem, as the glass bull's eye. Another interesting feature of this lantern, which also adds to its folk-design quality, is the fact that the door has been widened through use of a splice on the right-hand side (the seam is visible in the photograph below).



The pierced design of this lantern is a simple one, featuring a border of approximately 3/8" (9.525 mm) straight piercings with a X-shape in the corners. The in-fill consists of double diagonal lines pierced by a circular chisel with a cheese grater point. The space between the lines is made up of straight piercings approximately 3/8" (9.525 mm) long.

The cone of the lantern is similarly pierced, but only with single lines. On one side of the cone, aligned with the door, is a candle socket. The original carry ring may have been replaced by a simple wire ring at the apex of the cone.



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In the collections at the Highland Folk Museum is this three-paneled lantern. Its design is similar to many of this type, with openings in the sides formed from slitting the body, bending the two sides outwards, and then fitting top and bottom pieces in slits in the body to form frames for the glass panes. The door is built in a similar fashion and wired on all four sides for strength.

Some atypical features of this lantern include the use of crescent moon-shaped chisels for the in-fill design on the body and conical top, as well as the decorative cylinder mounted between the top of the cone and the lantern's handle. The photograph at left shows a close-up of the cylinder's design, which includes teeth that flare out from the bottom of the cylinder. The top of the cylinder appears to have a similar toothed design, but only a few of the teeth remain, perhaps a result of rusting off over time.



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The lantern on this page and the next page from the Highland Folk Museum collection has a sunburst pierced design made using a cheese grater chisel and an approximately 3/8" (9.525 mm) straight chisel. The door of the lantern includes two sunbursts, punched vertically, while the back of the lantern, framed by a simple line of pierced holes, has four sunbursts, one on each side of the frame.

The top, which has become separated from the body, has a straight-forward line-and-slit piercing pattern. The cone includes a candle socket and a handle of unusual design, which is mounted through slits in the cone.



The photo at upper left shows the design on the back of the lantern shown on the previous page. The photo at upper right shows the remainder of the back design, along with the hinges for the door. The top door hinge is bent, so the door no longer closes flush.

The photo at bottom left shows the inside of the conical top, with a clear view of how the handle is mounted inside, affixed with wire. The wire is galvanized and appears to be a new addition, perhaps because the original wire holding the handle in place rusted away.

Another three-pane lantern in the collection. This one includes one pane in red glass, which may be a later addition. The piercing design is clean, simple, and straight-forward.



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Pierced tin lantern with glassed door.

BELOW: The handle has come detached and now rests inside the lantern.



ABOVE: The lantern latches on the right, which is easier for a left-handed person to open.

ABOVE: There are no visible tabs inside the door holding the glass in place, so it appears to be a friction fit.



BELOW: Side view showing the mounting of the door hinges.

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LEFT: The pierced design on the back of the lantern is a simple one – a frame of double rows of pierced holes, diagonals of pierced holes, with an in-fill of approx. 3/8" (9.525 mm) slits.





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Pierced Tin Lantern with Horn Pane in Door.

A fine example of this type of lantern. The horn pane has been shaped to fit into the curvature of the lantern door. One small hole in the horn pane. Charring around the hole edges suggests a candle burn. The door is assembled in a way similar to the style of ship's lanterns that have horn panes all the way around the circumference.



ABOVE: Side view of lantern with horn pane in door, showing the clasp and latch.

RIGHT: View of lantern showing the design of the back, which is similar to two other lanterns in the collection – a frame of double rows of pierced holes, with the same arrangement at a diagonal in the rest of the body, along with approx. 3/8" (9.525 mm) slits.





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Lantern with Three Glass Panes.

This lantern is notable for two aspects – first, one of the glass panes is protected by a bar made from folded tinfoil (see photo above right), and second, having experienced some damage in its lifetime (it was apparently dropped at one point and the

... continued on next page

second, full pane and part of its frame were damaged and are no longer part of the lantern).

While unfortunate, the damage to the window frame does allow us an opportunity to see an important part of how lanterns of this type were made.

The sides of the glassed portion are cut from the body and bent outward. The top and bottom of the window opening are made from separate pieces which are friction-fitted into top and bottom slits created when the sides were cut and folded outward.

The piercing design on this lantern is simple, but of

note is the X-shaped piercings on the back of the lantern between the two window openings.



BELOW: Group photo of some of the lanterns in the collection at the Highland Folk Museum, Newtonmore, Scotland.



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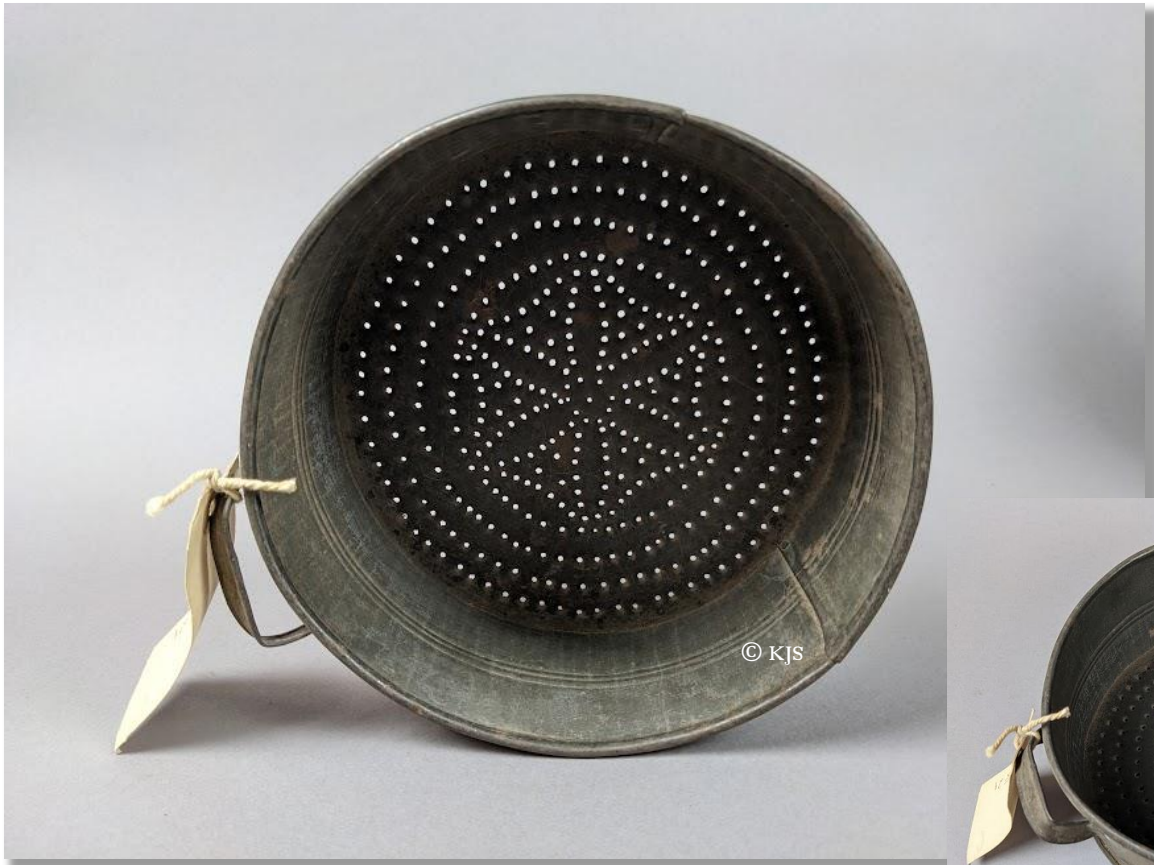


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Six-Sided Lantern with Removable Top. The removable top of this lantern allows for replacing the panes of glass if one or more get broken.





LEFT: Tinplate colander in the Highland Folk Museum collection.



BELOW: Interior of colander.

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RIGHT: Underside of tinplate colander, showing the pierced design.



BELOW: Side view of colander.





CLOCKWISE, from upper left photo: miscellaneous candle moulds, a chocolate pot, a set of tinsmith's tools, a variety of lighting devices, two more candle moulds, and two tin cups.

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Focus on Tools 1



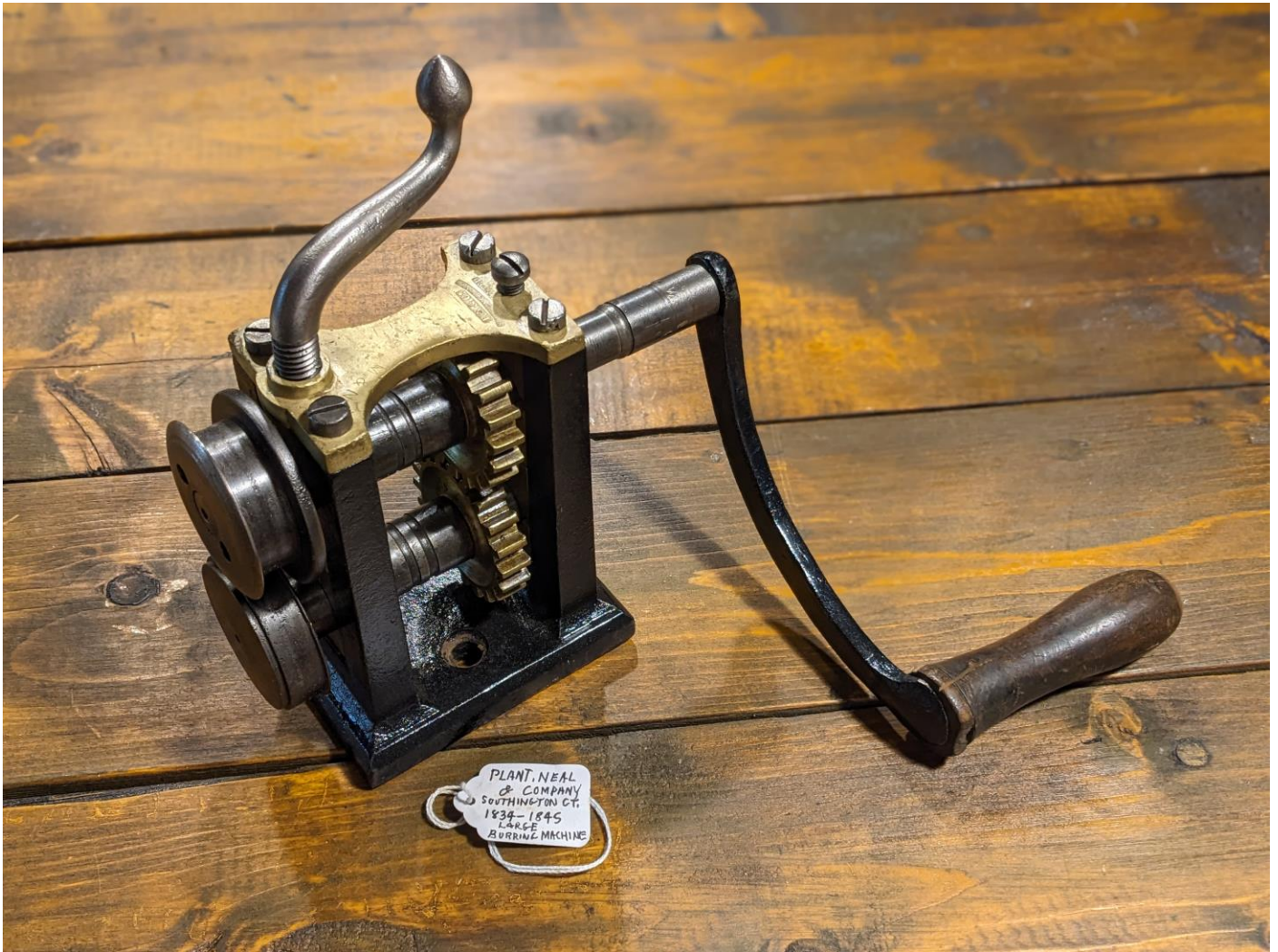
TYPE: LARGE TURNING MACHINE.

MAKER: SETH PECK (UNMARKED), 1816-1832

MACHINE RESTORED AND IDENTIFIED BY MASTER
TINSMITH WILLIAM MCMILLEN, 2022.

CURRENT OWNER: KARL J. SCHMIDT

Focus on Tools 2



TYPE: LARGE BURRING MACHINE.

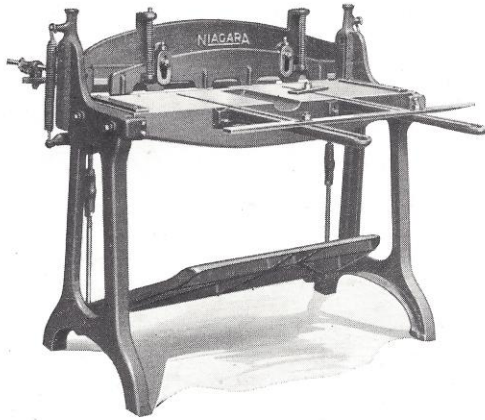
MAKER: PLANT, NEAL & COMPANY, 1834-1845

MACHINE RESTORED AND IDENTIFIED BY MASTER
TINSMITH WILLIAM MCMILLEN, 2022.

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NIAGARA MACHINES *for* SHEET METAL WORKING

FLOOR MACHINES



No. 938—36" Queen City Foot Shear



Niagara Hexo-Bench

STAKES



Blowhorn



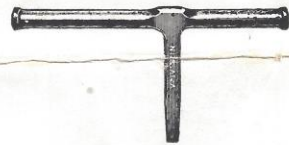
Common Square



Hatchet



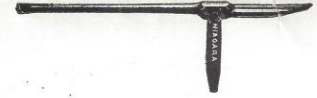
Beakhorn



Double Seaming



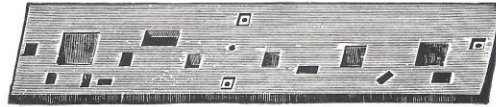
Hollow Mandrel



Candlemould



Conductor

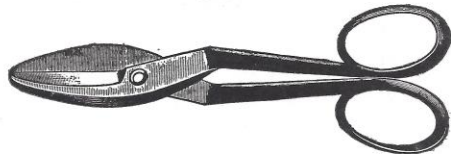


Bench Plate

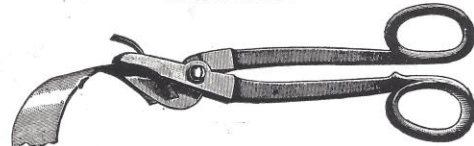


Needle Case

HAND TOOLS



Niagara Snips



Double Cutting Shears



Bench Shears



Rivet Set



Grooving Tool



Hollow Punch



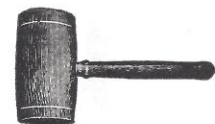
Solid Punch



Riveting Hammer



Setting Hammer



Hickory Mallet

For complete description see Catalog No. 56-5—Free Copy furnished on request.

NIAGARA MACHINES *for* SHEET METAL WORKING

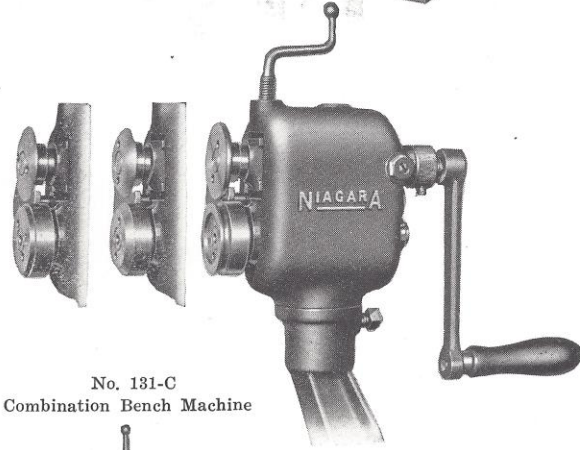
BENCH MACHINES



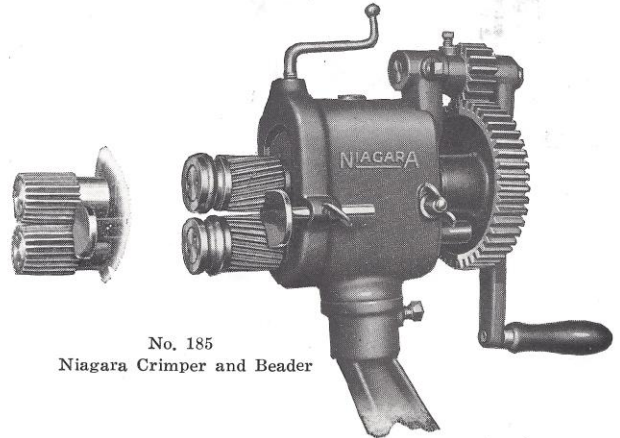
No. 330—Niagara Slip Roll Former



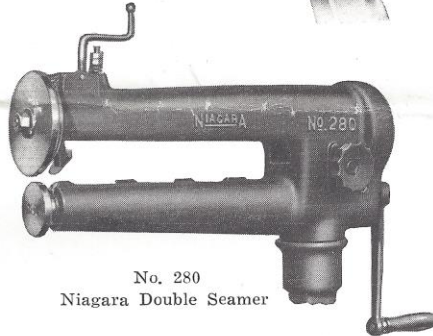
No. 3—Niagara Adjustable Bar Folder



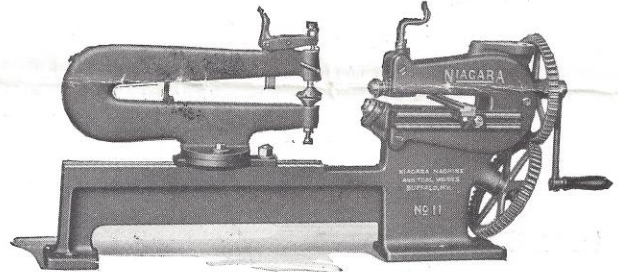
No. 131-C
Combination Bench Machine



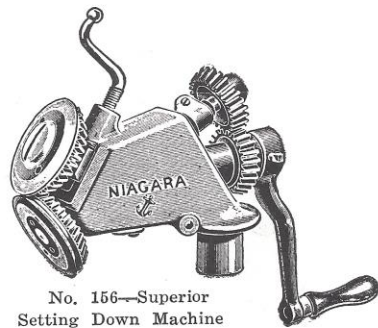
No. 185
Niagara Crimper and Bearer



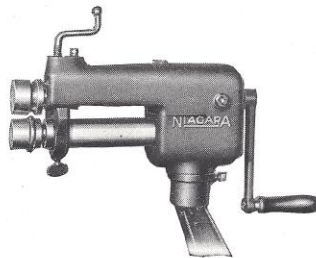
No. 280
Niagara Double Seamer



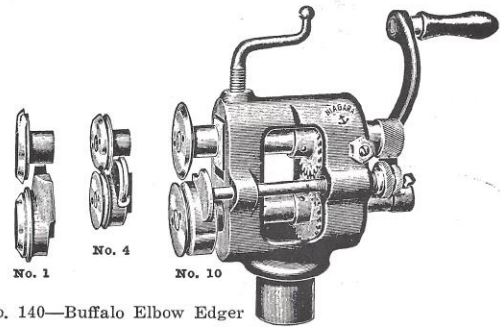
No. 914—Niagara Ring and Circle Shear



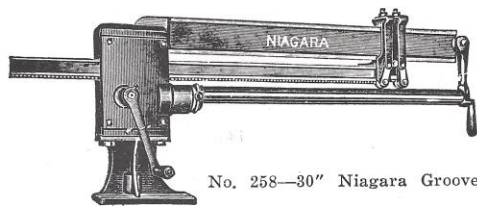
No. 156—Superior
Setting Down Machine



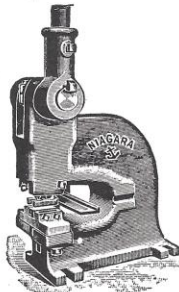
No. 194—Niagara Bearer



No. 140—Buffalo Elbow Edger



No. 258—30" Niagara Groover



No. 972—Niagara Lever Punch



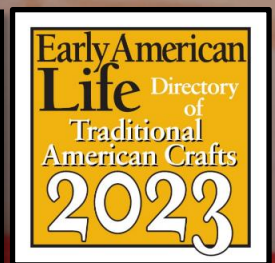
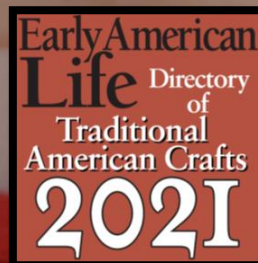
No. 854—30" Niagara Adjustable Gutter Bearer

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