

During a Mercer Museum Tool Day I was fascinated with Ken Hopfel's display of John Veit's tools. There was such a wide variety of types of tools. We agreed then that we would put together a short article presenting many of these tools. I visited Ken this past fall and was able to photograph and discuss the characteristics of Veit's tools in his collection.

One of the first of Veit's tools to catch my attention was a large shoot board plane. What attracted my attention was the very large maker stamp on the fence, base and plane front. It is the largest makers stamp I have ever seen on a plane. The base of the beech shoot board is 19" x 19". The large beech plane is keyed to

ride in a slot on the base and measures 19" long, by 3 1/2" wide by 4 1/2" tall. A unique feature of this shoot board guide is the two pieces of apple wood dovetailed on top of the fence. This allows the cornice molding to be turned

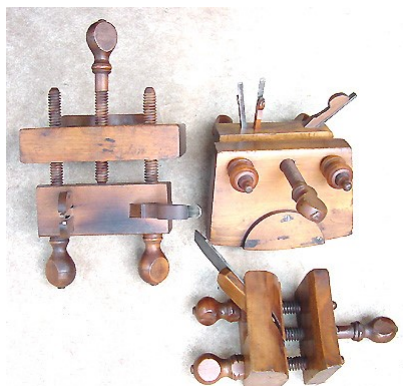


Large shoot board plane above with insert to right of Veit's large mark.



over and aligned to the top bars to cut the supplementary angle. Ken mentions he has never seen two of Veit's shoot board planes that are exactly the same.

Below are a sampling of some of Veit's cooper's tools. The top two are crozes for cutting grooves inside casks. The bottom plane is an applewood pail bottom plane cutting the bevel in the bottom of the plane. The croze at left is beech with applewood arms. Note the variations in nicker placement. On left croze both knickers are side by side, while the top right croze have staggered knickers that are angled to be side by side at the cutting edge. Another peculiarity is the non-functioning nuts on the right croze. The adjusting arms are threaded into the fence, thus there is no need for the locking



John Veit's Cooper's planes.

JOHN VEIT MULTIFACETED TOOL MAKER

By
Ken Hopfel & Bob Garay



Above left is cooper's compass plane and sun plane. Above right is large cooper's compass.

nuts on the extending arms. The small applewood pail bottom plane at bottom right is Ken's first Veit plane purchased at the Crane Auction in New Hampshire. It is a very small plane only 5 1/2" long. Many of Veit's cooper's planes exhibit Austrian design an influence from his early apprenticeship.

Some more cooper's planes are the sun plane and the compass plane above. One of the unique features of many of John Veit's planes are the shape of his wedges. They are made from molding plane stock cut wider. Thus, when you look at the side profile of the bench plane wedge and the molder plane profile they are the same. The beech cooper's compass above right is very large measuring 30" long and opens for a span of 36". It has graceful chamfers and makers mark on both sides of the flat top mortise. Veit seemed to make many specialized cooper's tools as exhibited in the two large cooper jointers below. The top plane is made of heavy maple and weighs 70 pounds. It is 6' long and is 5 3/4" wide. The smaller 5' long cooper's jointer plane has the very large makers mark on top of the plane just in front of the throat, while the larger plane has his smaller mark inside the throat. Go figure!

Above is a beautiful applewood double pistol coach router. It is 17" long and exhibits a good



Above is 6' and 5' long cooper's jointer planes.

amount of iron work along with the wood. While talking to Bob Fridlington this past fall at the CRAFTS picnic he discussed his view of how John Veit incor-



Applewood double pistol coach router.

porated many metal components to his tools with the emergence of the industries metal age. This application of iron can be seen in the large beech and apple wood shaving horse to the below. The photo inserted at the bottom left shows the iron clamping jaw with the Veit mark cast into it.

Below is a large traditionally American style designed panel raiser. What is unique about this plane is the iron which is made by Philadelphia cutlery maker Jenkins & Tongue. As many planemakers of this era used English irons Veit had close associations with the local iron works of Philadelphia.



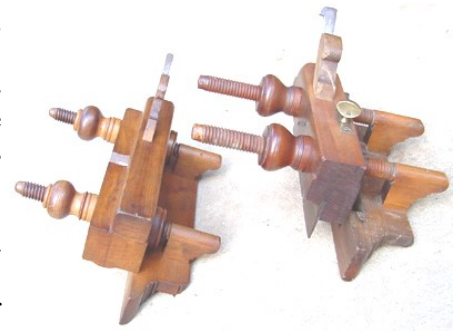
Shaving horse with iron jaw containing makers information.

More of John Veit's associations can be realized in the two fenced planes shown. On the left is a right arm adjustable molder. Made of beech it has a slight curve to the bottom that cuts a concave depression. Maybe a casing plane, it has no spring lines but a single line down the center of the curve. Probably to measure the distance from the center of the depression to the fences edge. The plane to the right is a plow plane



Large panel raiser with Philadelphia made iron.

made by William Goldsmith. Veit and Goldsmith shared the same makers address "CORNEW MARKET & GREEN STREET" for over ten years. In 1868 John Veit succeeded William Gold-



Left is John Veit fenced molding plane. Right is William Goldsmith plow plane.

smith. The nuts from the Goldsmith plow plane shown fit the molding plane to the left, and many other Veit planes. Implicating they possibly shared tools in their plane making shop.

Demonstrating his adaptation to custom work, below are three unique planes. The top plane looks like a very small shoot board plane only 16" long. This plane shows wear marks only on the bottom and not on the side where it should have been rubbing on the shoot board. In the middle picture below is a 22" long raze bench plane with a special cutter adjustment. The iron stamped William Butcher is moved up and down by a cam operated by moving the lever right or left. There is a thumb screw on top of the mechanism to lock the iron in position. The bottom plane is a 22" long panel plane with skewed iron and wedged nicker.

After seeing the wide variety of John Veit tools Ken has in his collection, (Which only a few could be shown here.) I am amazed at the wide skills of this toolmaker. Ken noted that living in the Philadelphia region with its large German population relating to his own background helped his business. I also think that his ability to customize his tool making to such a wide variety of needs and wants also made his business flourish for over fifty years.



Three unique bench planes by John Veit.