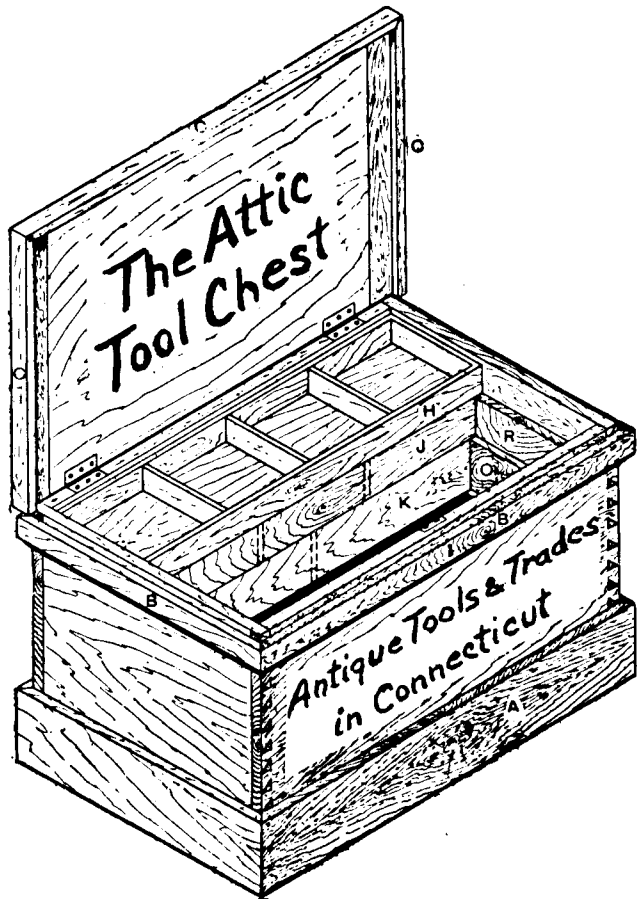


ATTIC DUSTApril Meeting

Eighty members and one guest participated in our April meeting at Ledyard. The program went as planned. Rain prevented eating out-of-doors at lunch time, but it was not heavy at any time, fortunately. The up and down saw did its job, but slowly — nowhere near as fast as a circular saw. A month later this sawmill was used to saw a pine log of 40 inches diameter that the owner could not saw with his own circular saw, demonstrating at least one advantage of the Ledyard sawmill. The first cut took almost 45 minutes instead of the usual ten. The 40 inch log had 167 to 170 annual rings, and was expected to produce 5000 board feet of lumber. The owner hoped to sell the wide 2½ inch planks at \$100.00 each.

The response to the invitation to bring logging tools was very good — extra tables had to be set up to hold all of them. The table with recent publications also drew a lot of attention. Two of our author members were present, Alex Farnham and Ken Roberts, and they

were identified for the benefit of members who didn't already know them.

After the meeting four members utilized the invitation to see Al Staebner's collection in Franklin, and four saw Bill Downes' collection in Mystic.

EAIA Meeting at Sturbridge

Some 46 ATTIC members (including wives) attended the Early American Industries meeting at Old Sturbridge Village. We helped out in several ways. Al Staebner gave the featured talk at the Friday night dinner, "The Farmer Turns Tool Collector". He did a great job, judging from the enthusiastic comments heard afterwards.

Some of us participated in the show-and-tell session. Verne Ward and Lee Murray were on the panel that explained the problems of finding and selling tools. Verne made some good points about appraisals. For instance, in deciding on how much to insure tools for, they would be valued at what it would cost to buy replacements. On the other hand, for arriving at the inheritance tax on a collection left to someone, the value would be what a dealer would pay for the collection.

On Saturday some of us demonstrated how to use various tools; Frank Bawden, Bob Carlson, Bill Downes, and Joe Link did their best at this task.

Auction of Archie Keillor's Tools

Archie Keillor's famous collection is to be auctioned at Wading River, Long Island, September 14-18; coopering tools on the 15th; blacksmith tools on the 16th; hammers, planes, carpenter tools on the 17th; and farm tools on the 18th. A listing may be obtained from O. Rundle Gilbert, Garrison, N.Y. 10524 (catalog for any particular day: \$1.00).

Salaman's Dictionary of Tools

For those who are understandably cautious about paying \$30. for a book, when they could buy some tools with the same money, we'll have the Dictionary of Tools available for examination at our September meeting. When you

see the book you'll agree that it's invaluable. It ranks with Mercer's Ancient Carpenters Tools as a must book for collectors. EAIA is now accepting orders from ATTIC members for this \$47.50 book at the discounted price of \$30.00 p.p. Send orders to Judy Kebabian, 11 Scotsdale Road, So. Burlington, Vt. 05401. Include an address label for mailing the book to you.

### Auction Meeting

Tom Elliott has arranged for our next meeting to be at the old town hall in Chester, Ct. on September 26. Jack Kebabian has consented to repeat his fine performance as auctioneer. As a result of a general discussion at our April meeting, the guidelines limiting the auction in any way will be easy to live with, and will be given in the next issue of the Attic Tool Chest. We've got only a few weeks to drag out those things to take to the auction, so let's get at it. Incidentally, while you're going through those boxes, set aside tools in need of repair parts and, also, those parts for which you don't have the tool. We'll try to arrange a swap session on parts, perhaps in conjunction with the auction, or at a later date.

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TULAREMIA INFANTA  
or  
Words for Beginners

Harold Corbin  
Falls Village, Conn.

Too little attention, it seems to me, has been paid in tool collectors' literature to the beginner. As each veteran remembers, the early months (shall we say of the disease?) are critical. Bad advice, no advice, sharp traders, unwise decisions, ignorance general and specific await the neophyte. Having made many of the familiar errors, and some exotic ones, I sympathize with one who has just experienced the first delectable dizziness which marks the onset of that permanent disability called toolaemia, formerly carried only by rabbit planes, but now communicated through a wide range of tools and implements, on contact. Uncontaminated, beware!

Assuming I have the ear of at least one recently infected gatherer, let me take the questions out of his mouth, as it were, and arrange them in some kind of order.

What, O Wise One, should I do first? I am happy to see by your deference that you have a measure of humility. You will need it, especially at the What'sit Sessions and in various budgetary encounters with your bride. Now then, since your chief and lifelong enemy is likely to be ignorance, begin now (before you begin to buy) an on-going program of study. Seek experienced collectors. Join at least two associations, one local, one national. Read. Talk. Ask. Visit personal collections. Visit museums, Shelburne, Mercer, The Farmer's Museum, Sloan-Stanley, ad infinitum. Feel, handle (except at the museums!). Keep an informal journal, into which you can later incorporate your inventory list, and begin your own reference library, going from the general to the specific — but get advice on what books to buy. Some of the least worthwhile are the most expensive. Remember, you will probably be studying the rest of your life. Go to meetings. Observe. Listen.

These initial phases of research have one primary objective —

And what is that? Just this: to help you to decide what not to collect. Do I make the point? Your exploratory activity so far has been eclectic. You have seen great steam driven threshing machines - dental implements - grist mills and watchmakers' calipers - farriers' anvils and dog treadles - pig stickers and coachmakers' planes - broadaxes, lathes, snow-knockers - plumb bobs and astrolabes and flensing irons and swage blocks, coopers' adzes and rope walks - slicks, awls, betty lamps.

Your head is reeling. You want one of everything. But cool it —

I think you may be suggesting that I narrow the field? Good boy. Don't splatter, at least not at first. Zero in on a reasonably limited area until you learn the ropes. You have probably already seen some trade or type of implement that turns you on. Go after it. Be strong in resisting other areas. The choice is wide and confusing. Some collect a trade. Some a specific tool, a specific manufacturer, a region, a city, a period. You will find that a narrow objective will be challenging, rewarding, and a lot more complex than you think. If you are too broad, chances are you will buy too much and without discrimination. A barn full of door-stops, scrap iron and cordwood generates only a flat pocketbook, frustration, and an eventual tag sale. Stay with quality, be patient, look hard, save your nickels but don't be afraid to reach for that real prize when it turns up — and you never know when that will happen. Be prepared, but don't splatter.

Sounds reasonable so far. There must be other admonitions for the beginner — Indeed there are. Have you talked to your wife yet about exhibition and/or storage space? You'd better learn early on this one: anticipate, prepare, indoctrinate, educate. Be smart in advance. Family room, converted basement or attic space? Better, a convertible barn or outbuilding or loft thereof? Much of course depends on what you collect, but remember one of the greatest rewards is to show and tell, lording it over your competitors — so plan your display space and techniques in advance, including the increasingly vital factor of security.

I have passed up several interesting tools because they were missing a part or in bad condition. Any comment? Yes. Generally speaking, the degree of required restoration can be viewed in proportion to the rarity or desirability of the tool. i.e., the more desirable, the more restoration, well done, is permissible. Most tools, as found, need cleaning for both cosmetic and preservation reasons. Go right ahead — but do not sand blast or lean on the abrasives. Good craftsmen had good tools — and use and loving care kept them clean and bright. Yours should be that way too, but do not remove the evidence of venerable age and wear. In general, each tool or implement should be dusted and fed (cheap cold cream for the iron, a mixture of 1/3 each of boiled linseed oil, turps, and white vinegar for the wood) once a year. Some collectors keep an eye out for parts of important tools, hoping to match them up — odd plow plane irons, bow drill bits, etc.

Now that I know all about tools, how do I go about finding those I want to collect? You look anywhere and everywhere. Never pass an open second-hand, junk, re-sale, or antique shop without dropping in. When you find one that stocks tools, return frequently, but vary your disguise lest the proprietor detect your interest in tools and jack up the prices. Get to know several established antiques dealers and tool dealers who cover the back country, ascertain their dependability, discuss your desires with them and ask them to look for your specialty and notify you by collect phone when oil is struck. As your tool collecting circle of friends widens, you will find some who like to trade (I prefer to trade greenbacks, unless I know I know more than my opponent!) Read your auction, tag sale, and classified ad notices, Advertise in your local paper (give phone only) for old tools and implements. When away on business or vacation, spend some moments snooping in likely sources as above and record productive spots in your journal for return visits. Ask rural or other real estate dealers or local oldsters if they know where there are boarded-up blacksmith, tinsmith, wheelright or other shops, or an old hardware or general store long closed. Run down the owners and dicker for the contents (think of the trading stock!).

Withal, remember that you are venturing into a fairly new and increasingly "hot" collecting field where collectors, dealers, traders, and

consequently prices are increasing at a breathtaking clip. All the study, assiduity, discrimination, ingenuity and budget you can manage will pay off in personal satisfaction, unending personal education, and the building of a unique monetary investment most worthy of passing along to your heirs.

I am grateful for your advice. Do you have any parting words?

I was hoping you'd ask that. If I were to begin over, I would collect from one point of view, one criterion only — esthetic value. And I commend this to you.

I have two artistic principles in mind: "Form follows function", and "In utility there is beauty". Rupert Brooke, a British poet who died at 28 in 1915, spoke in a poem called The Great Lover of "the keen unpassioned beauty of a great machine". The tranquil purity of line in a great anvil, the geometric harmony of a pair of shipwright's dividers, the grace of certain double calipers — these provide an esthetic experience of exceptional power to me. I have a narrow swage block which Picasso would have loved; on end it resembles nothing so much as one of his owls. A half-dozen early jack planes in mellow tiger maple grace an 1840 tiger maple shipwright's workbench in our dining room, and the upstairs hall is hung with a geometry of measuring devices. The best example of any well made tool or implement, embellished or not, has to have some degree of esthetic value. It is to this kind of tool, regardless of the trade, craftsman, region, era, or function which gave it birth, that I wish I had directed my whole attention from the beginning. A craftsman almost by definition is an artist. The tools which he made, or had made, were unwitting expressions of that artistic gift. They should be recognized as that, the functional sculpture of man's glorious, abiding adventure into creativity. A case in point: a plumb bob is just about the most uncomplicated gadget ever conceived by man. I have over the last eighteen months awakened to their appeal. Buying everyone I saw at random — brass, steel, wood and combinations thereof — I have so far gathered almost seventy of them, which hang like Damoclean missiles among the exposed beams of our kitchen ceiling. They are beautiful. And, believe it or not, there is not a duplicate among them. That has to say something about creativity!

So go your way, Beginner. Study hard, look hard, trade hard. You are into a great thing. Cultivate the artist in you. And hurry — while a few fabulous tools are still to be found.