

## Preface

### Davistown Museum *Hand Tools in History*

One of the primary missions of the Davistown Museum is the recovery, preservation, interpretation, and display of the hand tools of the maritime culture of Maine and New England (1607-1900). The *Hand Tools in History* series, sponsored by the museum's Center for the Study of Early Tools, plays a vital role in achieving the museum mission by documenting and interpreting the history, science, and art of toolmaking. The Davistown Museum combines the *Hand Tools in History* publication series, its exhibition of hand tools, and bibliographic, library, and website resources to construct an historical overview of steel- and toolmaking strategies and techniques used by the edge toolmakers of New England's wooden age. Included in this overview are the roots of these strategies and techniques in the early Iron Age, their relationship with modern steelmaking technologies, and their culmination in the florescence of American hand tool manufacturing in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

#### Background

During 39 years of searching for New England's old woodworking tools for his Jonesport Wood Company stores, curator and series author H. G. Skip Brack collected a wide variety of different tool forms with numerous variations in metallurgical composition, many signed by their makers. The recurrent discovery of forge welded tools made in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries provided the impetus for founding the museum and then researching and writing the *Hand Tools in History* publications. In studying the tools in the museum collection, Brack found that, in many cases, the tools seemed to contradict the popularly held belief that all shipwrights' tools and other edge tools used before the Civil War originated from Sheffield and other English tool-producing centers. In many cases, the tools that he recovered from New England tool chests and collections dating from before 1860 appeared to be American-made rather than imported from English tool-producing centers. Brack's observations and the questions that arose from them led him to research the topic and then to share his findings in the *Hand Tools in History* series.

#### *Hand Tools in History* Publications

- Volume 6: *Steel- and Toolmaking Strategies and Techniques before 1870* explores ancient and early modern steel- and toolmaking strategies and techniques, including those of early Iron Age, Roman, medieval, and Renaissance metallurgists and toolmakers. Also reviewed are the technological innovations of the Industrial Revolution, the contributions of the English industrial revolutionaries to the evolution of the factory system of mass production with interchangeable parts, and the

development of bulk steelmaking processes and alloy steel technologies in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many of these technologies play a role in the florescence of American ironmongers and toolmakers in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. Author H. G. Skip Brack cites archaeometallurgists such as Barraclough, Tylecote, Tweedle, Smith, Wertime, Wayman, and many others as useful guides for a journey through the pyrotechnics of ancient and modern metallurgy. Volume 6 includes an extensive bibliography of resources pertaining to steel- and toolmaking techniques from the early Bronze Age to the beginning of bulk-processed steel production after 1870.

- *Volume 7: Art of the Edge Tool: The Ferrous Metallurgy of New England Shipsmiths and Toolmakers* explores the evolution of tool- and steelmaking techniques by New England's shipsmiths and edge toolmakers from 1607-1882. This volume uses the construction of Maine's first ship, the pinnacle *Virginia*, at Fort St. George on the Kennebec River in Maine (1607-1608), as the iconic beginning of a critically important component of colonial and early American history. While there were hundreds of small shallops and pinnaces built in North and South America by French, English, Spanish, and other explorers before 1607, the construction of the *Virginia* symbolizes the very beginning of New England's three centuries of wooden shipbuilding. This volume explores the links between the construction of the *Virginia* and the later flowering of the colonial iron industry; the relationship of 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> century edge toolmaking techniques to the steelmaking strategies of the Renaissance; and the roots of America's indigenous iron industry in the bog iron deposits of southeastern Massachusetts and the many forges and furnaces that were built there in the early colonial period. It explores and explains this milieu, which forms the context for the productivity of New England's many shipsmiths and edge toolmakers, including the final flowering of shipbuilding in Maine in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Also included is a bibliography of sources cited in the text.
- *Volume 8: The Classic Period of American Toolmaking 1827-1930* considers the wide variety of toolmaking industries that arose after the colonial period and its robust tradition of edge toolmaking. It discusses the origins of the florescence of American toolmaking not only in English and continental traditions, which produced gorgeous hand tools in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but also in the poorly documented and often unacknowledged work of New England shipsmiths, blacksmiths, and toolmakers. This volume explicates the success of the innovative American factory system, illustrated by an ever-expanding repertoire of iron- and steelmaking strategies and the widening variety of tools produced by this factory system. It traces the vigorous growth of an American hand toolmaking industry that was based on a rapidly expanding economy, the rich natural resources of North America, and continuous westward expansion until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. It also includes a company by company synopsis of America's

most important edge toolmakers working before 1900, an extensive bibliography of sources that deal with the Industrial Revolution in America, special topic bibliographies on a variety of trades, and a timeline of the most important developments in this toolmaking florescence.

- Volume 9: *An Archaeology of Tools* contains the ever-expanding list of tools in the Davistown Museum collection, which includes important tools from many sources. The tools in the museum exhibition and school loan program that are listed in Volume 9 serve as a primary resource for information about the diversity of tool- and steelmaking strategies and techniques and the locations of manufacturers of the tools used by American artisans from the colonial period until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Volume 10: *Registry of Maine Toolmakers* fulfills an important part of the mission of the Center for the Study of Early Tools, i.e. the documentation of the Maine toolmakers and planemakers working in Maine. It includes an introductory essay on the history and social context of toolmaking in Maine; an annotated list of Maine toolmakers; a bibliography of sources of information on Maine toolmakers; and appendices on shipbuilding in Maine, the metallurgy of edge tools in the museum collection, woodworking tools of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and a listing of important New England and Canadian edge toolmakers working outside of Maine. This registry is available on the Davistown Museum website and can be accessed by those wishing to research the history of Maine tools in their possession. The author greatly appreciates receiving information about as yet undocumented Maine toolmakers working before 1900.
- Volume 11: *Handbook for Ironmongers: A Glossary of Ferrous Metallurgy Terms* provides definitions pertinent to the survey of the history of ferrous metallurgy in the preceding five volumes of the *Hand Tools in History* series. The glossary defines terminology relevant to the origins and history of ferrous metallurgy, ranging from ancient metallurgical techniques to the later developments in iron and steel production in America. It also contains definitions of modern steelmaking techniques and recent research on topics such as powdered metallurgy, high resolution electron microscopy, and superplasticity. It also defines terms pertaining to the growth and uncontrolled emissions of a pyrotechnic society that manufactured the hand tools that built the machines that now produce biomass-derived consumer products and their toxic chemical byproducts. It is followed by relevant appendices, a bibliography listing sources used to compile this glossary, and a general bibliography on metallurgy. The author also acknowledges and discusses issues of language and the interpretation of terminology used by ironworkers over a period of centuries. A compilation of the many definitions related to iron and steel and their changing meanings is an important

component of our survey of the history of the steel- and toolmaking strategies and techniques and the relationship of these traditions to the accomplishments of New England shipsmiths and their offspring, the edge toolmakers who made shipbuilding tools.

The *Hand Tools in History* series is an ongoing project; new information, citations, and definitions are constantly being added as they are discovered or brought to the author's attention. These updates are posted weekly on the museum website and will appear in future editions. All volumes in the *Hand Tools in History* series are available as bound soft cover editions for sale at the Davistown Museum, Liberty Tool Co., local bookstores and museums, or by order from [www.davistownmuseum.org/publications.html](http://www.davistownmuseum.org/publications.html), [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com), [www.BookSurge.com](http://www.BookSurge.com), [www.Abebooks.com](http://www.Abebooks.com), and [www.Albris.com](http://www.Albris.com).