

# THE TOOL TABLE

The Newsletter of the Richmond Antique Tool Society

VOLUME 14, No. 1

FEBRUARY 2008

## Next meeting Friday February 15 Agenda

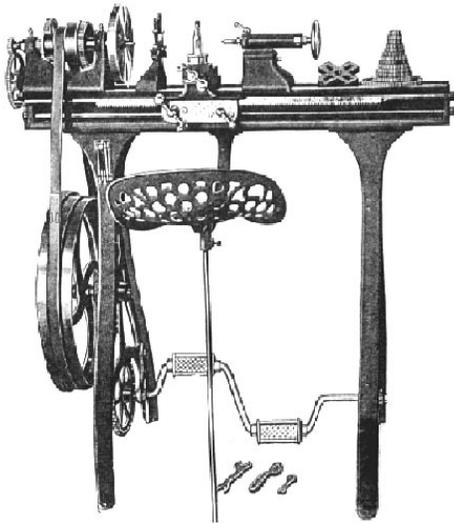
All times are approximate

6:00–7:00 p.m. Tool talk & sales

7:00–7:30 p.m. General meeting

7:30–8:30 p.m. Gunsmithing  
video

9:00 p.m. Tool sales/wrap-  
up



**THE TOOL TABLE is the official publication of the Richmond Antique Tool Society and is published bi-monthly, in January, March, May, June, August and November of each year.**

**Editor & Layout.....Bill Taggart  
wtaggart@comcast.net**

## The President's Plane Talk

Our first RATS meeting of the year will be Friday night, February 15th. Before I talk about that, let me recap the tool-packed events that closed out the tool year 2007:

Our November Donation meeting and presentation on "Smalls" was very well attended and several members presented their small tools and trinkets with great enthusiasm. Our Donation auction raised over \$450. That figure is UNREAL. I would like to personally thank all members who donated items for the auction. It is your generosity that makes this club a true family to me. Thank you again. Bob Zeigler's Christmas ornament celebrating the 400th anniversary of Jamestown raised over \$175. I again would like to thank Bob and Jean Marie for their wonderful efforts.

The December "Gathering" was a tool and food feast as usual. It was the social event of the year for our tool club. The Legion Hall was packed. The auction was larger than usual and we had some very fine tools auctioned. We had an opportunity to meet spouses and trade stories, enjoy great food and buy tools. As always, it is an event that I look forward to each year. A special thanks to Anthony, Marie and their daughter for conducting our auction. We could not do it without you!

We concluded the year with a well-attended Tool Show at the ShowPlace. I spoke with several dealers who said they had a good show selling tools. Mike Jurnigan demonstrated his chair making skills once again and Ryan Long had his pen making skills turning on his mini-lathe. Another great event for the club.

So, the start of a new tool year is ready for your attendance and we have a good one planned. Our February 15th meeting will feature a video from Colonial Williamsburg on Gunsmithing. Narrated by David Brinkley, this vintage video shows a youthful master gunsmith, Wallace Gusler, and his self-taught skills in making period guns. All facets of gunsmithing are shown. Jim Hollins will introduce the video. We also will hear from Bill Taggart on the recent three-day woodworking conference at Colonial Williamsburg. If you have any gunsmithing tools to exhibit, feel free to bring them. Please, for obvious reasons, no guns or rifles are allowed in the school. Any question, please call me (804) 550-1010. This meeting should be of great interest to our members and we should have a large turnout. See you on the 15th!

Plane and Simple,  
Rick Long

The Richmond Antique Tool Society (RATS) is a non-profit organization serving to promote knowledge of and interest in collecting, making and using antique tools. RATS provides a gathering place where members and guests can gain knowledge and understanding about tools and trades from the past and also buy, sell and trade old tools. Regular meetings are held in February, April, June, September, November and December. Memberships are available for \$10.00 annually by mailing to:

Richmond Antique Tool Society  
 c/o Mike Larkin  
 9487 Williamsville Road  
 Mechanicsville, VA 23116

**Officers**

President ..... Rick Long  
 longsbabesball@comcast.net  
 (804) 550-1010  
 Vice President ..... Jim Hollins  
 (757) 874-9573  
 Treasurer ..... Mike Larkin  
 (804) 730-8332  
 Auction  
 Committee ..... Anthony Senunias  
 (804) 746-8310

To receive THE TOOL TABLE  
 and RATS announcements  
 via e-mail, contact:  
 wtaggart@comcast.net

**ANCIENT TOOL FINDINGS**

By Mike Larkin

We all relish the experience of finding a tool to add to our collection that may be unique or so rare it could be considered priceless. However, there are instances that the find cannot be bought or kept, but can add to our knowledge of the history of the user.

Recently I had the pleasure of participating in an archeology dig on the James River, directly across the river from Jamestown. Reportedly, the area was inhabited by a tribe called the Quiyoughcohanock (H. Rountree, *Three Indian Lives Changed by Jamestown*). In as much as it is known that many of the rivers in our area had sites of Native American towns, their activities as agrarians and hunter/gatherers left artifacts that tell us about them when properly interpreted by experts.

A few days into our work at the site, we discovered what is called a Yadkin projectile point.



Described as a point from the Woodland Period, it is named for a North Carolina river where evidently the design originated. The Woodland Period is the time from 0 AD to 1600 AD. As a tool collector you can visualize the experience having unearthed what is not a rarity, but knowing how it was made and when, opens up a lot of room for conjecture. If it originated near the Yadkin River in North Carolina, why was it in Virginia? Did it travel with a visitor from that area or did a Virginian copy the design when he visited relatives in North Carolina? And so on.

With the Yadkin point a number of other items were found, and what probably was a post hole from one of the Native American's houses.

**RATS Calendar 2007**

February 15th	RATS Meeting	Pocahontas Middle School, 12000 Three Chopt Rd.
March 15	PATINA Tool Show & Auction	Damascus, MD
April 25	RATS Meeting	Pocahontas Middle School, 12000 Three Chopt Rd.
June 13	RATS Meeting	Pocahontas Middle School, 12000 Three Chopt Rd.
July 26	M-WTCA Event	Ed Hobbs, Raleigh, NC

# BENJAMIN SEATON'S TOOL CHEST

By Bill Taggart



In January, I attended a conference in Colonial Williamsburg titled “Working Wood in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century: Tools, Tool Chests and Workbenches.” The star of the three-day conference was an infamous tool chest owned by Mr. Benjamin Seaton of Chatham, England. What is remarkable about Benjamin Seaton’s tool chest is how extremely complete and well-preserved it is. Although it is now 210 years old, it and the tools in it look barely used. What is also unusual is that so much is known about the tool chest and its maker.

Benjamin was born in 1775. His father was a cabinetmaker by trade. When young Benjamin turned 21, his father bought him a very expensive, complete set of fine woodworking tools. Apparently dear ol’ dad was hoping to set Benjamin up in the trade.

Benjamin began building his tool chest on January 1, 1797. He finished it on April 15 of that year. Fortunately for tool historians, about three

months after completing the tool chest, he made an inventory of the tools in the chest. So we know what originally was in the chest and therefore what is missing – which is amazingly little. Perhaps the most remarkable thing about Benjamin’s tools is that it appears he barely used them, if at all.

The tool chest and its contents, including Benjamin’s records and the original inventory of the chest’s contents, are on display at the Guildhall Museum in Rochester, England. The tool chest had remained in Benjamin’s family, intact, until 1910, when they gave it to the museum.

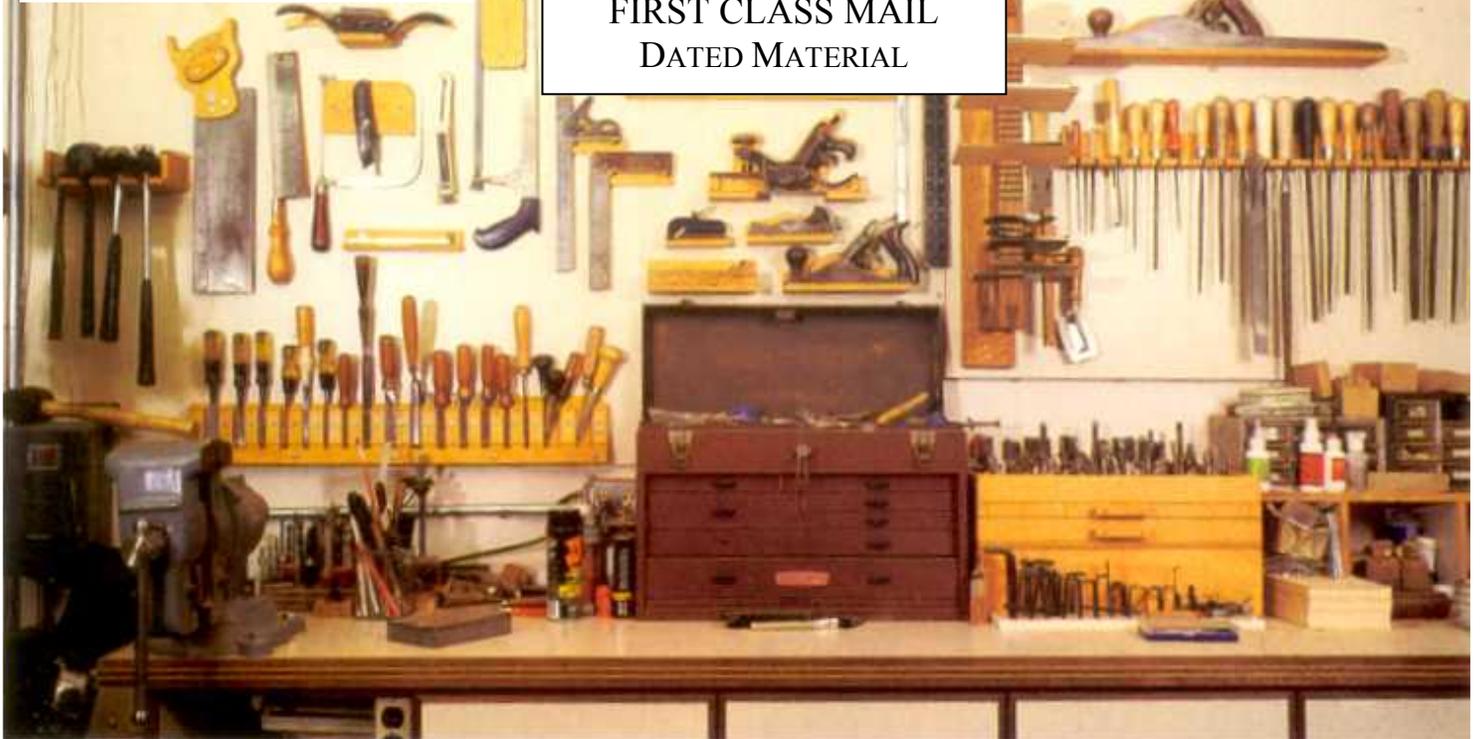
With the permission of the museum, one of the journeyman cabinetmakers at Colonial Williamsburg has been painstakingly constructing an extremely faithful replica of Benjamin’s tool chest, using nothing but period-correct hand tools and construction techniques. He demonstrated some of his joinery techniques at the conference in January and also showed off his in progress copy of the tool chest. The carcass was made of a single 26” wide poplar board. All corners were hand-cut, wide through dovetails. It was a masterwork and a thing of beauty. They handed out detailed, dimensioned drawings of the tool chest, and I have a suspicion that lots of the woodworkers in attendance were inspired to try their hand at making their own version.

Well-known tool collector and historian Jane Rees of England wrote a book titled “The Tool Chest of Benjamin Seaton,” which was published in 1994. Unfortunately, it’s out of print and hard to find. If you come across a copy, grab it for me!



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c/o Mike Larkin  
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Mechanicsville, VA 23116

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Disston, the Name so Well Known to Tool Collectors and Users  
is Credited with Accomplishments Other than Saws  
By Mike Larkin

The following is an excerpt from the book "The Swamp" by Michael Grunwald: "A Gilded Age industrialist named Hamilton Disston was the first visionary to try to drain the swamp, namely The Everglades."

Chapter 6 of the book, with the heading "The Reclamation of a Kingly Domain" is devoted in its entirety to the efforts of Hamilton Disston in creating the state of Florida. It is fascinating reading because we often use and or collect tools and do not know much about the inventor or engineer responsible for the tool, or his or her progeny that may have taken the road less traveled.

I recommend the book to the membership. It reports to us once again how important the industrial revolution was to our nation and how we use the tools created by our forefathers. Plus it is also somewhat of a primer on how ecological problems have and can occur by making poor decisions about our surroundings.

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