

# THE TOOL TABLE

The Newsletter of the Richmond Antique Tool Society

VOLUME 16, No. 1

www.richmondantiquetools.com

FEBRUARY 2010

## Next meeting Friday February 19

### Agenda

All times are approximate

**6:00–7:00 p.m. Tool talk & sales**

**7:00–7:10 p.m. General meeting**

**7:15–7:45 p.m. Levels**

**7:45–8:00 p.m. Auction**

**8:00–9:00 p.m. Video: “Ben’s Mill”**

**9:00–10:00 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 approximately January, March, May, June, August and November of each year.**

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**PLEASE SUBMIT ARTICLES  
OR ARTICLE IDEAS!**

## The President’s Plane Talk

I have obtained some All-Star guest speakers for this year and have a great line-up of activities planned. We have Tom Law of the saw sharpening Hall of Fame coming in June, followed by our wood-graining friend, John Balasa in September and Katherine Wetzel, head photographer at the VA Fine Arts Museum, coming in November to teach us some tricks on photographing our tools. Plus, we have our Saturday adventure to K.T. Burchett’s place in April. Check the calendars, mark the game dates and let’s fill the stands as we watch these speakers hit it out of the park. OK, enough of the baseball clichés. I was just warming up, too. Our next meeting will be a double-header (sorry!).

Our general topic will be LEVELS, followed by a video about an old-fashioned lumber mill from the 1840s still operating in the 1980s. The next meeting is Friday, February 19th at 6-10 p.m. at Pocahontas Middle School in Short Pump. We will have a quick auction, do our LEVEL show-n-tell, and then watch the video. I will have some bags of popcorn, kind of like at the ballgames (oops). Bring a friend, tools to sell or auction, money to buy, levels to display and talk about. This should be a great meeting.

We started off the year in good fashion, with the Tool Show at the Showplace. Most dealers seemed happy with sales and lots of folks came out to shop for tools. I want to thank the dealers for selling. Also, a special thanks to Mike Jurnigan (chairmaking) and Anthony (demo on saw sharpening). I hope RATS members will spread the word about the show – we really need more dealers in order to continue this show. I’ll be working on a club business card for members to pass out when talking “old tools” and hopefully this will draw some new members.

So...double-header on February 19th: LEVELS and a movie, some tool sales, an auction and popcorn. No more SNOW! Listen for school closings. If Henrico County Public Schools close on that Friday, we will meet the next Friday, 2-26-10.

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

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To receive THE TOOL TABLE  
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**ABOUT “BEN’S MILL”**

By Bill Taggart

“Ben’s Mill” is a one-hour documentary video produced in 1981 about Ben Thresher and his lumber mill in rural Vermont. The mill is operated by a water-powered turbine and began operation in the 1840s. Ben Thresher bought the mill in 1947. By the time the video was filmed and produced in 1981, he still was the sole worker at the mill. But the mill still had much of the original machinery, tools and equipment, and still operated from the old water turbine.

The video provides a fascinating look at a simpler time that continued to exist in the U.S. even in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and shows Ben using the 100-year old (or older) flat-belt driven woodworking machinery in the mill to saw, plane, and joint lumber to make a watering tub for cows and a horse-drawn snow sledge for local farmers. Ben also does some simple blacksmithing work and repairs farm implements for neighbors.

The video also shows Ben repairing the wooden penstock that directs the water to the turbine, and maintaining the turbine.

Ben Thresher was killed in the 1990’s. He was hit by a car while crossing the road from the mill to his house. Ben’s Mill is now on the National Historic Register and is owned by a non-profit trust, which is restoring the mill into a working museum for the purpose of educating the public on the operation of water-powered mills.



**RATS Calendar 2009**

February 19th	RATS Meeting	Pocahontas Middle School, 12000 Three Chopt Rd.
March 13th	PATINA Auction	Damascus, MD
April 10th	RATS Picnic & Auction	K.T. Burchett’s place – 12810 River Road, Chesterfield, VA
June 11th	RATS Meeting	Pocahontas Middle School, 12000 Three Chopt Rd.
September 10th	RATS Meeting	Pocahontas Middle School, 12000 Three Chopt Rd.
November 12th	RATS Meeting	Pocahontas Middle School, 12000 Three Chopt Rd.
December 8th	RATS Gathering	American Legion Hall, Indale Road, Glen Allen, VA

A TRUCKLOAD OF BLACKSMITHING TOOLS, OR  
HOW I STARTED OFF MY NEW YEAR  
By Bill Taggart

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It all started in mid 2009, when my buddy (and fellow RATS member) Michael told me he had a line on what could be a significant cache of old tools, in Roanoke.

Turns out the gentleman had died earlier that year at the age of 96, and had spent decades accumulating and tinkering with blacksmithing tools in a small two-car garage behind his modest home in the Roanoke suburbs. Michael wanted my assistance in coming up with a price to offer the man's daughters. They just wanted all of dad's junk gone so they could clean out the house and put it on the market. So in December, Michael and I drove out to take a good look at just what the old man had.

We spent the day digging through everything in the garage and compiling a list. Wow, he had accumulated a lot of stuff in his lifetime. And just when we thought we had seen most of it, his son-in-law let us know there was more in the attic of the garage, in the shed behind the garage and in the basement of the house!

We jotted down some notes and went back home to do some cipherin' and come up with our offer. We intended from the start to keep a few items for ourselves and sell everything else. The man's daughters and their husbands are extremely nice, gracious people who were just glad to see two guys so excited about dad's old junk (yeah, Michael and I were a little giddy about the quantity). They were also glad we were not only going to take it all away for them, but we were actually going to give them money for it!

Fortunately, they accepted our offer and everyone was very happy with the transaction. Now Michael and I had to figure out how to get all that stuff back to the Richmond area and where to store it all.

I rented a 24-foot box truck from Budget, and on Saturday, January 9, Michael met me at my house at 5:30 a.m., and we drove to Roanoke. It was a very cold day! We arrived at the garage at about 9:00 a.m. and spent until about 8:00 p.m. boxing up and loading tools, workbenches, materials and supplies. We checked into a Holiday Inn a few miles away, dirty, tired, and cold, but happy. A steak and an adult beverage rarely tasted so good!

On Sunday we drove back to the house and finished loading and packing, then drove back to Richmond and unloaded.

So, what did we get? Well we mostly filled the 24-foot truck. We filled about 50 "banker's" boxes, which are cardboard cartons 12" x 12" x 18". We also filled about a dozen cartons that are 12" x 12" x 36". Too much to list, but the haul included:

- Three forges
- Three anvils
- Five post drills
- Six leg vises
- About four dozen handsaws (every single one razor sharp and ready to use)
- Dozens and dozens of farrier's nippers and other farrier's tools
- Dozens of blacksmith's tongs
- Lots of handled smithing tools, including hammers, flatters, fullers, swages, and punches
- Tool boxes full of wrenches, punches, hammers, etc.
- Several hand planes
- A tool box full of various chisels
- A box full of drawknives
- A box full of spokeshaves and scrapers
- Several axes, hatchets, adzes
- Four sandstone grinding wheels; three in stands and fully usable
- Four or five machinist bench vises
- Several breast drills and "eggbeater"-style hand drills
- Two platform scales
- Several nice H.K. Porter bolt cutters (from a cute 11" long pair up to a 36" long pair!)
- Lots and lots of miscellaneous small items
- A pile of steel bar stock, coil springs, leaf springs, and various other bits of steel for forging
- A bunch of new old stock tool handles (axe handles, sledge hammer handles, hammer handles, plow handles, etc.)
- Boxes and boxes (and boxes) of nuts, bolts, nails, washers, cotter pins, clips, rivets, you name it.

This man threw away nothing!

We will be selling this stuff off, so look for it at RATS meets and on the Richmond Craig's list!

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