

TOOLING AROUND

WINTER 2010



Davistown Museum Cited for Bringing New England Industrial History Alive

The Davistown Museum is featured in the September-October 2010 edition of Harvard Magazine in the article “Factory Fans: Innovative museums highlight New England’s industrial past.” Author Nell Porter Brown profiles 4 museums that provide “examples of how historians and curators have succeeded in bringing New England’s industrial history alive.” The other museums discussed are the Slater Mill Museum in Pawtucket, RI, Lowell National Historical Park in Lowell, MA, and the American Precision Museum in Windsor, VT. The entire article is available on the Davistown Museum website. Following is the text of the Davistown Museum section:

For 40 years, H.G. “Skip” Brack has searched New England’s cellars, factories, and boat shops for woodworking tools for use by customers of his Liberty Tool Company. “We process about two tons of materials every week,” he says, “and hidden among those are the history of toolmaking in New England.” Brack, who’s also a scholar of early American industry, has housed many of his most unusual historic finds in an eclectic institution that marries his interests in handmade tools, history, and contemporary art: his Davistown Museum.

Among the thousands of items on display—hammers, axes, planes,

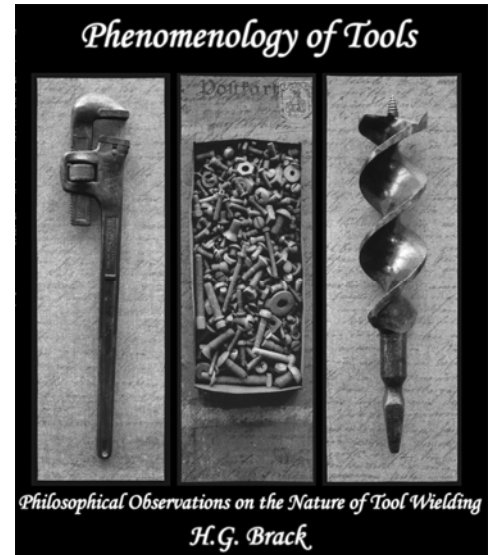
chisels, carving tools—are Native American tools of stone and wood exhibited alongside those forged by the earliest colonial artisans—blacksmiths and coopers—as well as specialized tools used in New England’s once-vibrant maritime industries. Artwork about or made from tools is also exhibited, and more than a hundred other works by Maine artists.

“What I like are the stories tools tell us about seventeenth- and eighteenth-century America,” says Brack. Try to visit the museum on a Saturday when he is there to highlight this regional history in person; he and his staff have written some 20 books, including a six-volume set on the history of toolmaking in America. (These are for sale, but researchers can also use his extensive library.) Some objects on display require explanation: few visitors will recognize the wantage rule used to measure quantities of beer in a keg, for example. “It’s the oldest tool of its kind in the United States, hand-signed and dated by Robert Merchant of Berwick, Maine, in 1720,” Brack reports.

He can also tell you all about tools made from “bog iron” (dug out of what are now the cranberry bogs of southeastern Massachusetts). “There were seven blast furnaces in Carver alone after 1720,” he says. “They shipped cannon balls down to George Washington along the Wareham River.”

(See “Harvard Magazine,” Page 4)

What’s New?



- New edition of *Phenomenology of Tools* with photos and essay from 2005 *What Needs to Be Retrieved*
- Tools Teach Program Expanded (see below)
- Climate-controlled storage workspace near completion (page 2)
- DTM Searsport History Information Center opens (page 3)
- Center for Biological Monitoring revived (page 4)
- *Tools in History* series available on Kindle

Tools Teach Expanded

The Davistown Museum staff is expanding the Tools Teach program in order to help teachers and students better utilize museum resources to explore the history of toolmaking and New England’s maritime and industrial history.

(continued on page 2)



At the Fall 2010 DTM Board of Directors meeting, directors admire Adriaan Gerber's lochaber axe. L-R: Roger Majorowicz, new members Joe Benney and Alison Chambers, John Sundberg, Adriaan Gerber, Donna Wilkie, George O'Connor, and Curator H. G. Skip Brack.

New Board Members

The Davistown Museum Board welcomes two new directors. Alison Chambers is Advancement Associate for Membership and Development at the Island Institute in Rockland, ME. Joe Benney is a contractor whose work has been featured in Architectural Digest and whose interests include history and the environment.

Tools Teach Expanded

The updated program coordinates with the *Tools in History* series, which had not been completed when Education Director Judith Bradshaw Brown put together the first edition of Tools Teach. Curator and author of the *Tools in History* series Skip Brack is putting together collections of tools that complement and illustrate the information in each volume. Using the new first floor work and storage area, Skip will be able to organize and store collections for the program. Tools will be available for study by teachers and students at all levels in the new facility and via the tool loan program. A new

online component will offer photos of the tools in the Davistown Museum and other collections. Staff will photograph tools not currently documented, and Skip will be soliciting and gathering photos from members of the Early American Industries Association and other collectors. He also plans to develop Power Point presentations for lectures. The topics covered will include:

- History of toolmaking/ferrous metallurgy
- New England Toolmakers and Shipsmiths
- History of New England Shipbuilding
- Coopers and Their Role in New England Maritime History
- New England 19th Century Industrial History

New Space Near Completion

Thom McKee reports near completion of the space for which the Davistown Museum received a Historical Facilities grant under Maine's New Century Community Program. The grant helped fund construction of a permanent, climate-controlled storage facility for historically significant tools and other artifacts. As well as

storage, the new facility includes a work and study area for analyzing the metallurgy of the stored tools. An adjacent room offers space for inspecting, identifying, and studying stored tools; book shelving; and paper document storage. A third ventilated room will be used for cleaning and restoring tools.

Thom prepared the first floor space by tearing out old walls, shelves, flooring, and oil tanks. He poured a new cement floor, installed lighting, heating, and humidity control systems, and constructed walls and cabinets.

Once the facility is complete, museum staff will begin examining, evaluating, sorting, documenting, and storing a backlog of artifacts. The drawers will serve to store and sort tools into categories such as their metallurgy (e.g. steel, which would include forge-welded natural, malleable, welded, cast, German, drop forged, etc.), presently unlisted American toolmakers, and particular trades for lectures and the Tools Teach program. There will be a work table for analyzing and photographing the microstructure of edge tools in the collection. The area outside the climate-controlled room will house shelves for Elliot Sayward Memorial Library books, the small tool cleaning and grinding room, and a sleeping area for visiting scholars.

Tooling Around Winter 2010

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Davistown Museum Repatriates Native American Artifacts to Wampanoag Tribe

Curator Skip Brack recently met with representatives of the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe to repatriate artifacts from the museum collection. Ramona Peters, the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe's NAGPRA Director, contacted the museum regarding the museum's Wapanucket 8 Hoard, since she believed that possession of the collection might put the museum out of compliance with NAGPRA, the 1990 Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. The collection originated in Middleboro, MA, and consisted of funerary objects that originated in the culturally affiliated territory of the Wampanoag Confederation. NAGPRA is a federal law requiring federal agencies and institutions that receive federal funding to return Native American cultural items and human remains to their respective peoples. Although the museum does not receive federal funding, museum staff felt it important to cooperate so that the artifacts would be returned to their true and rightful home. On October 23, Ms. Peters and repatriation officers John Peters, Jr., Kenneth Alves, and Teresa Andrews visited the museum and reclaimed approximately 60 artifacts. The Wampanoags are most famous for greeting and befriending the Pilgrims in 1620, bringing them food to help them through the difficult winter, starting the Thanksgiving tradition. As more British

tradition. As more British colonists arrived in Massachusetts, they displaced Wampanoag from their traditional lands, particularly by plying men with alcohol and obtaining their signatures on land sale documents. Wampanoag leader Metacomet, known as "King Philip" to the English, tried to get this practice outlawed, and, when the British refused, a war ensued. The British won decisively, sold many of the Wampanoag survivors into slavery, drove the rest into hiding, and forbade the use of the Massachusetts language and Wampanoag tribal names. In 1928, the Wampanoag people were able to reclaim their tribal identity. The 2000 or so surviving Wampanoag descendants still live in Plymouth County.



Stone plummets used as fishing weights reclaimed by Wampanoags

The Wapanucket 8 Hoard (WAP 8) consisted of a large number of projectile points and other artifacts recovered by the archaeologist John Davis at the Middleborough site known as Wapanucket. Davis worked under archaeologist Maurice Robbins. The Wapanucket recovery effort took place over a period of at least 30 years, and Robbins published "Wapanucket: An Archaeological Report," a complete description of his work. This is one of the more important archaeological

sites in New England and may be the largest Native American crematory in the United States and the only one documented in New England. Skip purchased the artifacts for the Davistown Museum about 8 years ago from a collector who came into possession of the collection shortly after the Massachusetts Archaeology Museum in Taunton closed, and artifacts not destined for the new Middleboro museum were dispersed.

New History Information Center

The Davistown Museum recently opened its new History Information Center at Captain Tinkham's Emporium, a Jonesport Wood Company store in Searsport. It includes an extensive library, comfortable reading room, and paper files of articles on environmental issues. There is a computer with Internet access available to visitors.

The History Information Center offers texts related to Davistown Museum Pennywheel Press publications. This section is divided into 4 categories of books that relate to museum titles as follows:

- Native American history – Norumbega Reconsidered
- Maine history, with an emphasis on Maine toolmakers and shipbuilders - Art of the Edge Tool
- 19th century industrial history - Classic Period of American Toolmaking
- Environment – chemical fallout and the impact of industrial society on the environment - Biocatastrophe

Harvard Magazine

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“The colonists made many of their own tools simply from necessity: it took eight or nine months to obtain an ax from England, which supplied most of the steel for the region until resourceful local artisans started producing it in small quantities from homegrown recipes.

Davistown (the area was once part of the ‘Davistown Plantation’) also illustrates the transition from hand-forged tools to those made by machines, a process that began as early as 1830 and intensified with the Civil War. ‘By the 1870s, steam power and the band saws and table saws were doing most of the work that people had done by hand before 1840,’ Brack says. Although he points out that the well-regarded hand-tool maker, Lie-Nielsen Toolworks Inc., still operates in Warren, Maine, he admits, ‘I’m not a sentimental person, but I’m certainly saddened when you look at the whole history and the demise of the American tool industry. We’re not the world’s toolmaker anymore—China is.’

*To see large-scale artwork made from tools and other salvaged materials, visit Brack’s unique, two-acre **Sculpture Garden** in Hull’s Cove, near the entrance to Acadia National Park (www.davistownmuseum.org/art.html). And fodder for creating your own tool-themed garden displays can be found by the ton crammed into one of his stores, including the three-story Liberty Tool Company (<http://www.jonesport-wood.com/libertytool.html>), right across from the museum.”*



Staff Profile: Laure Day

The Davistown Museum community welcomes Laure Day, who has gamely donned numerous hats in the museum and Jonesport Wood Company stores. She tends the museum, Liberty Tool Company, and Captain Tinkham’s Emporium, works on museum fundraising, and jumps in to help with many other museum projects. Laure lives in the studio apartment in the second floor of the Liberty complex. She brings a unique combination of interests, experience, skills, and enthusiasm that match and enhance museum missions.

Laure grew up in Vermont and New Jersey in a family of artists. She studied commercial art and art history at Southeastern Massachusetts University. She married and had two children in the early 1980’s, living first in the Pacific Northwest and then Cape Cod, where she began her career as a graphic designer and illustrator. When she moved to Florida, she became involved

with beauty salon marketing and freelance illustration and design for Miami magazine and local restaurants. She then served as Cultural Affairs Director for the City of Oldsmar, where she produced City Hall art exhibits, symphony concerts, drama troupes, coffeehouses, author book-signings, historical society displays and oversaw the creation of the city’s first Arts Centre.

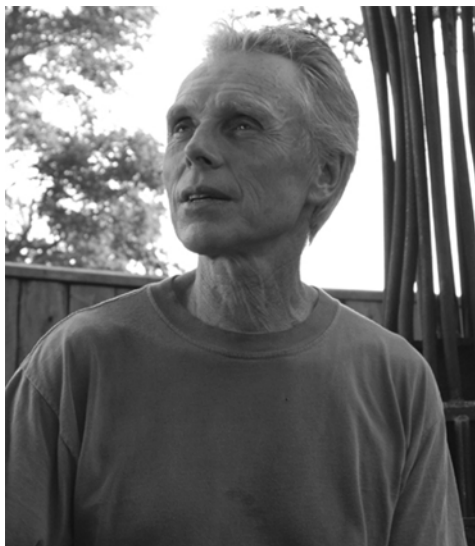
When her family moved to Maine in 2001, Laure started her own art gallery called Impressions in Rockland, which featured fine art and craft from New England. After she divorced and her children were grown, Laure traveled and worked on the West Coast and Mexico and then returned to midcoast Maine, where she is now excited to pursue her own art and support and promote other artists in her job with the Davistown Museum. Long a fan of Liberty Tool Company and the museum, Laure reports that she feels grateful to be part of the team and inspired by her surroundings.

Center for Biological Monitoring Revived

The Davistown Museum environmental history department announces revival of the Center for Biological Monitoring, an entity that preceded the museum’s founding and has not been revisited for 10 years.

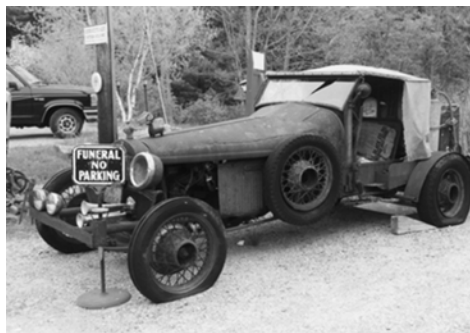
(See “Center” on page 5)

Missing David McLaughlin



The Davistown Museum community mourns the loss of David McLaughlin. David was a Board member and strong supporter of the museum since its inception, as well as one of the most important artists in its collections. He died unexpectedly in May, but his spirit and work remain a major presence in all museum locations. David's "Funeral, No Parking" was the first work exhibited in the Hulls Cove Sculpture Garden, where visitors continue to be met and intrigued by it as they enter and then to encounter and enjoy his many other unique sculptures throughout the garden. In the Liberty complex, David's sculptures, large and small, inside and out, exemplify the museum's mission of marrying tools, art, and history. David never missed an opportunity to offer his support and enthusiasm to all Davistown Museum projects, including the Maine Artists Guild and Saturday potluck dinners. He was a friend in all senses of the word, and we

miss him daily. Friends celebrated his life at Waterfall Arts in late May, 2010, and the Davistown Museum features his work in the recent publication Phenomenology of Tools.



"David McLaughlin's sculptures have the weight of heavy metal, the detail of precision engineering, and the playfulness of children's toys." June Fitzpatrick Gallery website

"David was known for years as the Rigger. He could move, fix or weld anything and was known far and wide for his capacity to perform any technical feat, the more challenging the better. His technical expertise regarding buildings, design and construction was actually legendary. He was like an encyclopedia of knowledge, aesthetics and good sense when it came to understanding the process of making anything, from solid lasting foundations to simple and exquisite details of finish.

He regularly and steadily expressed a deep love of poetry, rust, many beauties of limitless varieties, workable and unworkable tools of all kinds and ages, joinery in all media, technologies ancient and modern, hard work, ingenuity, tool placement and other mindful work practices, every job supremely conceived and thoroughly carried out, high drama and low desires, mischief, risking and winning, elegant fits

and impossible feats, the flowers of youth, careful organization and clear vision, pleasure, parties, good food, friends and laughter, the ocean, islands and architectures of Maine.

He was a generous resource for so many people on so many levels, from welding broken snowplows and axles to fixing the spillway of Lake St. George for the Town of Liberty to co-designing, with Svea Tullberg, the tower gate at the new Bucksport Bridge. His art is a wonderful combination of superior craftsmanship and quirky vision where every technical and aesthetic move is evidence of consideration, choice and effect. He understood how materials, particularly ancient steel, could be the carrier of many harmonics: time and age as well as presage of the future.

—Alan Crichton MAINE ART SCENE <http://www.maineartscene.com/Maine-Art-Headlines/A-Friend-Will-Be-Missed.html>

Center

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Its current focus is environmental chemicals in two pathways to human consumption, i.e. marine pathways, including phytoplankton-fish-fry-fish; and terrestrial, including grass/corn-cow-food products. Another focus is environmental chemicals derived from these and other pathways in human breast milk and maternal cord blood. The Center will coordinate with the Island Institute and other Maine environmental organizations to track environmental chemicals and their impact on Maine fisheries.