

# TOOLING AROUND

WINTER 2013/2014



## Sawyer Sculpture Pays Homage to McLaughlin



A Spirit of Its Own

The Davistown Museum is excited to announce acquisition of the sculpture “A Spirit of Its Own,” produced through a collaboration with artist and board member Jay Sawyer and the 1916 Foundation and to be displayed at the Portland Jetport under the auspices of the Portland Public Art Committee. The museum received a grant from the 1916 Foundation to support the construction and mounting of the piece, which is an homage to David McLaughlin, deceased artist, Davistown Museum board member, and mentor/friend to Jay.

“A Spirit of Its Own” will be on long-term loan to the jetport, where it will be installed and exhibited next to Jetport Boulevard to greet arriving and departing travelers. The museum, Sawyer, and the 1916 Foundation intend it to pay

tribute to McLaughlin's lasting legacy of art, technical skills, and mentorship. It is part of the museum's permanent collection, on loan to the jetport, and exemplifies the Davistown Museum mission, which includes documenting and exhibiting Maine's industrial history and art and the relationships between them. We hope that “A Spirit of Its Own” will be a beacon to all coming to Portland to be inspired by Maine's culture of resourcefulness.

The materials used to construct the piece are of interest and significance to the museum and to Maine history and art. The sculpture features steel rings called shear rings, which David originally salvaged from the Brunswick Naval Air Station in 1984. David included the shear rings in his work over the years, and, when he met Sawyer, shared his enthusiasm for them. Just prior to his death in 2011, David left a note stating that he wanted Jay to have his remaining shear rings hoping to inspire him to continue artistic exploration of the physical and conceptual aspects of the spherical form.

Since 2011, Jay has used this material in a limited series. “A Spirit Of Its Own” was inspired by his earlier creation “Late Collaboration,” which had a

### What's New?

- **Sawyer Sculpture, p. 1**
- **Red Paint artifacts, p.2**
- **Exhibit: Colonial New England steel- and toolmaking strategies & techniques, p.2**
- **Profiles, p.2 & 3**
- **New/Revised Bks., p.4**

McLaughlin sphere tucked inside one of his own larger spheres. In “A Spirit Of Its Own,” Jay created both the smaller and larger sphere, using some of David's remaining shear rings.

Of David bequeathing him the rings, Jay says, “He felt there was going to be success in my work, and I think that was his way of contributing as a gift to me. And so, in return, I hope to help contribute to his legacy and influence on many, many people in the state.”



Sawyer pounds stake at proposed location of “A Spirit of Its Own” on Jetport Boulevard in Portland.

## Red Paint Artifacts Acquired

The museum has added a collection of Red Paint artifacts, including the mortar pictured below, to its Native American collection. It came with Skip's purchase of tools and other Native American artifacts from Lenny Murphy in Woodville, ME. It was part of a group dug up by local residents at Sandy Point in Stockton Springs, a well-known Red Paint burial site. The Red Paint People were a pre-Columbian culture indigenous to New England and Atlantic Canada named after their burials, which used large quantities of red ochre to cover both the bodies of the dead and grave goods. The mortar is composed of the same material that can be ground into red paint ochre and was later smelted by European colonists to make bog iron tools.



Red paint mortar. Sedimentary limonite (bog iron ore). 5" x 4" x 1 1/2".

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## Artist/Board Member Profile Jay Sawyer



Jay with his "Riding the Rails to Rockland," Rockland's first public art installation along the Harbor Trail.

Jay Sawyer is a valued member of the Davistown Museum Board, talented and prolific artist, marine engineer, and welder. He has lived in Warren, ME, since 1973. After graduating from Maine Maritime Academy with a BS in Marine Engineering, Jay worked as a marine engineer and started his own welding business in 1994. His career move from commercial welder to sculptor/artist has not followed a conventional path.

Jay never pursued formal training; he just started forming pieces that felt right to him. In 2005, he began to make welded art in earnest and place the pieces in the outdoor garden on his property, Stemwinder Sculpture Works & Gardens, which he cites as representing two of his life's passions - creativity and independence. Soon, other artists, gallery owners, and architects began consulting him and commissioning his pieces. He has shared his expertise with numerous sculptors and architects and is considered an expert in metal repair.

Jay's signature pieces are constructed from salvaged materials removed from old mills, demolished buildings, junkyards, and scrap metal yards, mostly in Maine. One of his first welded series used horseshoes, and he eventually moved on to work with other unlikely materials, such as wrenches (See photo.), metal pieces shaped like bow ties, and steel shear rings, used in the construction of the trusses that went over a hangar at the Brunswick Naval Air Station.



Torqued 2011  
 9 3/8" diameter, metal wrenches  
 Maine Artists Guild

The shear rings have emotional resonance for Jay because they were bequeathed to him by his late friend and mentor David McLaughlin, with whom he also worked. He used them in his sculpture "A Spirit of It Own, dedicated to David. (See article & photos, p.1)

You can see Jay's work at his Stemwinder Gardens in Warren and see and read about it on his website

<http://www.stemwindersculpture.com/> and at the Davistown Museum Maine Artists Guild <http://www.davistownmuseum.org/MAG/MAGbioSawyer.html> .

### New Exhibit: Colonial New England Steel- & Toolmaking Strategies & Techniques

The Plymouth, MA, Public Library sponsored curator H. G. Skip Brack's well-attended lecture there and hosted a month-long Davistown Museum exhibit, both of which covered **colonial New England steel- and toolmaking strategies and techniques.**



The exhibit is now **on display in Liberty** as part of the museum's permanent collection. It features early edge tools made in New England and representative tools from early American industries, such those used by coopers and shipwrights.



New exhibit at Davistown Museum: Colonial New England Steel- and Toolmaking Strategies and Techniques

### Staff Profile: Sarah Chapman



Sarah Chapman joined the Davistown Museum and Liberty Tool Company staff in August of 2013 and acts as Community Outreach Coordinator for the Tools Teach program.

She spent her early life in Portland, Maine, where her family still resides. After spending fifteen years in the Pacific Northwest, she returned to Maine in 2010, has lived in various parts of Central Maine, and currently resides in the studio apartment at the museum.

Sarah holds a B.A. in British Literature from the University of Puget Sound and an M.A in Liberal Studies with a focus on literature and history from Reed College. Her career paths have been varied, including experience in technical and grant writing and non-profit volunteer management and training, but teaching has always been a constant, and she currently works as a substitute teacher for both school districts in Waldo county.

She lives with her wee dog, Cora Mae, and spends her free time reading, walking the woods, and making jewelry and mixed media artwork.

Sarah's education, experience, and interests bring invaluable contributions to all aspects of the museum.



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**THANK YOU!**