

The Early Blacksmith, A Man In Great Demand

Nothing in the early American industrial setting and development is more typical than the local blacksmith. Every town, hamlet, and in frequent cases, mere crossroad locations, had at least one practicing ferrier (blacksmith) serving the needs of farms, mills, factories and mines. This was especially true in Colonial days before manufacturers became numerous.

Of course, there were other craftsmen supplying other needs; coopers made barrels for apples, liquor and a wide variety of commodities that were transported in this type of container. The tinsmith made utensils for the kitchen, dairies, and oh yes, stills. Sheet metal had to be produced in rolling mills, and since England prohibited the building of rolling mills in the Colonies, all sheet metal be it iron, tin, copper, or zinc, had to be imported. (We must note here that one Paul Revere, in defiance of England's prohibition set up and operated a bootleg mill to roll copper sheet.) Foundries, especially those in Pennsylvania, were able to obtain "bog iron" (so named because of its ore being from swampy bogs) rather easily, and which was poured into a great variety of castings.

Machine shops were unknown other than along the Eastern Seaboard, and while a blacksmith could laboriously drill or bore a hole through a piece of iron, he was far more apt to heat the piece of iron in his forge and punch the desired holes. Bolts were hand made and tediously threaded with a crudely made die. The nuts were heated in the forge, pounded square on the anvil, a hole punched through and then threaded with a tap that was also crudely handmade. It was indeed a great day when nut and bolt sizes were standardized (more or less) and a blacksmith could buy factory-made threading tools. And of course, as more and more items became available as factory-made, the blacksmith's clientele dwindled almost to the point of non-existence.

Nails were handmade, and expensive! Many a farmer, using crude nail-headers, spent his winter evenings making nails from the heat of his kitchen fireplace.

Every new village that sprang up in the farming communities of Ohio, Indiana, Kentucky, Illinois and other states, needed

one or more blacksmiths to make or repair farm equipment. Broken chains required new links, plow shares wore out requiring new edges to be welded on the points, saws, axes, hoes, digging bars and mattocks soon became dull and had to be constantly resharpened. Iron wagon tires loosened on the wheel felloes and this required cutting, fitting and resetting. All barn doors needed hinges as did gates; water wheels, although made basically of wood, had to have shafts of iron to transmit their power, and nuts and bolts to hold the wheel assembly together. There were literally hundreds, maybe thousands, of items that the blacksmith had to know about; how to repair them or even make new for replacements. Eventually, most blacksmiths found themselves doing the work of the ferrier and shoeing oxen and horses.

You can readily understand why many villages offered free land to a blacksmith if he would settle there and set up his shop in the village area. The town was especially fortunate if the new blacksmith also proved to be intelligent, industrious, honest, even-tempered and sober!

There has always been a fascination in watching a blacksmith at work, the brightly glowing metal, the shower of shooting sparks, the ring of the anvil from the rhythmic ring of the blows of the hammer and the steaming sizzle of quenching cherry red iron in the slack tubs. Even the smell (aroma?) of the blacksmith shop became so much a part of the scene.

In Volume I of "The Studebaker Family in America, 1736-1976," we are told about the STUTTENBECKER men being registered blacksmiths. They worked as blacksmiths and bladmakers in Solingen, Germany, prior to emigrating to America. They knew the trade so well it was only to be expected that they followed their trade upon arrival. Thus they were wagonmakers before the days of the famed Conestoga wagons, although we can find no record of their being listed among the well known wagonmakers of those days.

Here at the Studebaker Frontier Homestead there is a working blacksmith shop. The craft of blacksmithing has become activated throughout this country with the organization of..... Artists Blacksmith Association of North America (ABANA) and i

(continued on page 9)



Ohio Cousins Hold Cemetery Meeting

The trustees of the Studebaker Cemetery, located on the Studebaker Road, near Tipp City, OH, met November 20, 1986 at the home of James W Studebaker, and furthered plans to meet the increased interest by members of the family in the use of the cemetery.

The Constitution, written in 1907, will be updated by James R Hobbs, with Bylaws added.

At present there are over 200 graves, with room for more burials when needed.

Considered at this meeting was the possibility of adding more acreage.

The present board of trustees are:

James W Studebaker, President

Sam Studebaker, Treasurer

Michael McIntosh, Secretary

James R Hobbs Gene Studebaker

Mark Erisman Clyde Hershberger

Barbara Bailey

The annual meeting will be held January 22, 1987 at the home of Jim Studebaker, 6815 State Route 202, Tipp City, OH at 7:30 P. M. (513) 667-3986. Local cousins are urged and invited to attend.

During the reunion last July, many cousins visited the cemetery on the Studebaker Tour.



They Celebrated Their 90th

CORA (STUDYBAKER) GREEN, Elk Creek, CA, C124-43, celebrated her 90th birthday August 2, 1986 with over one hundred family and friends gathering at the Stony Gorge Reservoir for a pot-luck picnic.

LENA (KARNS) FISH, North Manchester, IN, P984-146, celebrated her 90th birthday October 7, 1986.

Our belated, but sincere, best wishes to these two lovely ladies on being able to celebrate this milestone in their lives.



The Early Blacksmith

(continued from page 8)

foreign countries as well. In the United States almost every state has local chapters with memberships in the hundreds. Locally there is the Southern Ohio Forge and Anvil (SOFA) and Emmert Studebaker is one of the founders of this chapter. In appreciation for what he has done for blacksmithing, the local group of dedicated men (and personal friends too) designed and built a most magnificent gate for the entrance to the homestead and made it here in Emmert's shop.

Recently the group got together and "gave Emmert the gate." Actually they presented the gate to Emmert and had quite a celebration.

The many cousins who attended the reunion in July saw this gate, so for those who did not attend, we picture here the beautiful gate made by the SOFA group of blacksmiths. They are truly, artists!



Late News

MYRTLE LOUELLA (STUDABAKER) ALBRIGHT 90, Greenville, OH, P594-412, died December 3, 1986 at the Brethren Home, Greenville, OH.

Survived by her children, Robert Elmer, Columbus, OH; Mrs Carl (Dorothy) Netzley, Greenville, OH and Mrs Robert (Barbara) Trethewey, El Centro, CA, 4 grandchildren, and 1 great grandchild.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Henderson Morris Albright.