

TOOLING AROUND

WINTER 2014/2015



Tools Teach Outreach Program Expands

The Davistown Museum Tools Teach Outreach Program continued to expand in 2014 with well-received displays and lectures. For the month of November, the museum set up a public display of tools at Key Bank in Belfast. In August, Curator H. G. Skip Brack gave a lecture sponsored by the Lincolnville Historical Society about bog iron and its use in that area. He also gave a lecture and presented a display of tools used in rural Maine at the Norlands Washburn Living History Museum October Fall Fest in Livermore, ME. The 17th and 18th century tools displayed in 2013 at the Plymouth Public Library continue to be on display in the museum's main hall for visitors to enjoy. Tools for the lectures and displays are drawn from that collection and from those that remain in the climate controlled first floor study area.

Lincolnville Historical Society Bog Iron Presentation

Liberty Tool customers Randy and Jill Harvey recently discovered specimens of quarrying tools on their property in Lincolnville and brought them to the museum to learn more about them. Curator H.G. Skip Brack determined that they were made of bog iron, and together they researched the tools and their history

That led to an invitation for Skip to speak about the topic and bring tools to display at the Lincolnville Historical Society in August.



bog iron stone-splitting tool recently discovered in Lincolnville, ME

Randy Harvey's discovery of bog iron tools and his later finding of a fragment of smelted bog iron on his property were the first indications that the many quarries in the Lincolnville area were also bog iron smelting and tool manufacturing sites. We have not yet been able to identify the toolmakers who made these tools.

Bog iron was the only domestic source of iron available in the colonies before 1730. It is created by the precipitation of iron in upwelling waters, especially in bogs and swamps after contact with bacteria. The brown scum on the water's surface that indicates this process is underway results in the precipitation of hydrated limonite and/or goethite formed from iron in the water to the bottom of the pond where it accumulates. Bog iron is so-named because it was frequently mined in southeastern Massachusetts in locations which are now often used as cranberry bogs. It appears throughout terrestrial environments but not in

the concentrations found in southeastern MA or the pine barrens of New Jersey.

The bog iron tools that Randy and Jill discovered in Lincolnville (see photos) had highly visible slag inclusions characteristic of bog iron, which suggests that these tools may have been forged locally. In October, Randy discovered a large fragment of smelted bog iron (~10 pounds) near the Lincolnville quarry, confirming his suspicion that these tools probably were smelted in the Lincolnville area circa 1790 to 1840.



bog iron quarrying wedges also found in Lincolnville, ME

After 1730, and especially after the Revolutionary War, iron derived from rock ores in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Connecticut came to dominate domestic tool production, which was always supplemented by imported steel and malleable iron from England, Germany, Sweden, and elsewhere.

Norlands Washburn Living History Museum Presentation

Skip used a slightly different array of tools from the Tools Teach Program to illustrate the local history of the Washburn family of Livermore, Maine, in the context of the history of the Androscoggin River bioregion and the rapid growth of the mercantile economy that allowed the Washburns to become one of Maine's most famous families.



A fire at Norlands in 2008 destroyed their historic barn and its many tools, and the Fall Fest was part of an ongoing fundraising campaign to rebuild it. The Davistown Museum has agreed to loan tools from the Tools Teach inventory for a display there when the barn is rebuilt.



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Museum Intern Program

The Davistown Museum is currently seeking an intern to work and study at the museum while living onsite in the cabin in the side yard (available January 1, 2015). Intern study periods are flexible (either two or three per year) as are possible areas of study utilizing the museum's many resources. Possible topics of study include steel and toolmaking strategies and techniques, a specialty of the museum and its collections, as well as New England maritime history and the tools that were its prime mover. Other topics of study could cover the classic period of American toolmaking and the factory system of tool manufacturing after 1840. Subjects covered by the museum's Department of Environmental History are also a possible area for intern study. Interns working at the museum have the option of part-time work at Liberty Tool Co. from March through December. Inquiries may be made to Laure Day at the Liberty Tool Co. (laureday@rocketmail.com /207 610-9067), and she can provide a tour of the museum's Liberty facilities upon request.

New Librarian Creates Database of Museum Books

We are happy to announce that Philip Harjung has joined the museum staff as our first librarian. Philip has worked each Saturday since spring, doing a great job of reorganizing the books in the four library areas that constitute the Eliot Sayward Memorial Library and constructing a database to make access for visitors easier. We will post the library catalog on the museum website soon.

Sawyer Sculpture Installed at Portland Jetport

Be sure to look for Jay Sawyer's sculpture "A Spirit of Its Own" the next time you are at the Portland International Jetport. In April, Jay installed his sphere sculpture at the Jetport Access Road near the South Portland entrance, where it is on long-term loan from the Davistown Museum.

The sculpture is made of shear rings that were salvaged from the Brunswick Naval Air Station and left to Jay by David McLaughlin, his friend and mentor.

"A Spirit of Its Own" consists of two spheres, with an the outer ring that measure 55 inches in diameter and a smaller sphere (32 inches in diameter) that hangs inside it and swings in the wind. Jay estimates that he used 600-700 rings, and he worked on it for two years. The spheres are open, allowing passersby to see the sky through them. They are mounted on six tapered steel legs that reach almost ten feet in the air, and the legs are mounted on a cement base so that the piece stands about 15 feet tall.

"Airport Director Paul Bradbury appreciates the piece because it was made from materials used in Maine aviation." He also "... sees the sphere as representing "a globe, which symbolizes the spirit of exploration and adventure." He finds "its placement alongside the runway" ... "perfect. 'You can see through it to the tarmac and the sky above,' he said." (Bob Keyes, "Maine artist's sculpture lands on jetport road," *Portland Press Herald*, [April 25, 2014]. If you can't make it to the Jetport, you can see and read more about it at http://www.pressherald.com/2014/04/25/at_the_jetport_a_spirit_of_its_own_embodies_sky_tarmac_and_tribute/