



Blacksmiths of Central Texas

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The Prez says: Recently, I have had the good fortune to peruse some pages of history – the history of Balcones Forge, and its predecessor, Texas Artist-Blacksmith Association (TABA). Thanks to Verl Underwood for donating his collection of newsletters and pictures, I've been able to live vicariously all the way back to 1982. I've learned that Dorothy Stiegler came to Texas

to demonstrate for the first time in 1990. Gee, I wish I had been around in May 1993 when Frances Whitaker came to Georgetown, don't you? Maybe you were.

I've come across many familiar names that helped create this history in the '80s and '90s such as Wendell Broussard, Jerry Achterberg, William Bastas, Ron Castleberry, Rick Dawdy, Gary Fields, Gary Evensen, Neil Hastings, Vince Herod, Gary Hilton, Dave Koenig, Lee Langford, Tom Leining, Roy Bellows and Hollis Wooldridge to name a few. These folks were from Fort Worth, Corpus Christi, Waco, Houston, Odessa, and many other towns near and far.

What a rich history! And what a responsibility we have to continue this heritage! How will you help in creating our history? Have you benefited in any way from your association with Balcones Forge? Do you profit, even just a little, from something you've learned at a workshop? Do you come just for something to do on Saturdays? Either way, you've receive something of value I'm sure. Is it time for you to pay your dues -- not just the annual \$15 dues, but something above and beyond? Volunteers, board members, and officers are always needed. Contact me or any officer or board member to see how you can help write history.

Historically speaking,

Rudy

(Thanks also to our HABA friends, you can also check out our history online at www.habairon.org/History/Forge.html. Enjoy!)

W W W . B A L C O N E S F O R G E . O R G



Here are a few shots of the most interesting anvil I have ever seen on E-bay. Does anyone have even a remote guess about this anvil? If so, please share with the rest of the group!



GREAT TIMES AT PENLAND

By S.W. Smokey Thompson

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Every once in a while the stars come into perfect alignment and things just magically fall into place. Such was the case with my July 22 to August 7, 2 _ week blacksmithing class at Penland School of Crafts in Penland, North Carolina. Penland School of Crafts is a national center for craft education located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Western North Carolina. Penland offers one-, two-, and eight-week workshops in books & paper, clay, drawing, glass, iron, metals, photography, print-making, textiles, and wood. The school also sponsors artists' residencies, educational outreach programs, and a craft gallery.

The instructor for this class was Peter Ross who served as master of the blacksmith shop at Colonial Williamsburg for 22 years, where he studied and rediscovered 18th century blacksmithing methods, skills, and materials. The intent of the class was to contrast the characteristics of historic and contemporary iron work through production of pieces in different styles. The course began by copying examples of 18th century utensils and hardware (winged compass, andirons, latches), emphasizing exact reproduction using basic hand methods and tools. The second week, we moved to design and production of our own versions of the same objects, with the addition of modern processes.

For about the last 2 years I have been interested in fixed joints (rivets, tenons, collars, welds etc) and

developing good hand forging techniques. Lately I have become interested in mechanical/moving joints (eg. box joints), but anything I made looked really bad so I decided I needed help (or more practice, or both). Also, I didn't really understand fullering, every time I looked at an old timey blacksmith book (eg Lillico) and looked at how some complicated objects were made in the old days by clever fullering I was left wondering " how in the heck do you think that way?".. I needed help, so when I saw that Peter Ross was teaching a class at Penland I signed up and off to Penland I went. I had been to John C. Campbell a couple of times and not wanting to drive for about 2 days I opted to fly to Knoxville and rented a car for the 3 hour drive to Penland. Upon arrival we went through the usual safety and intro on the 1st evening and introduced ourselves etc. Several of the folks in my class had been there before and knew each other BUT this was a very inclusive and friendly group and within a few hours we were all up and rolling with forges burning and hammers pounding and good times starting.

The shop setup at Penland is excellent with a very large facility complete with separate classroom, nice restrooms, a couple of nice decks for kicking back on and just about every tool you could want or need to forge or fabricate darn near anything. I don't recall the square footage of the shop but it was BIG. Nathan Blank who manages the shop and Elizabeth Brim who is the iron studio coordinator were around on a daily basis to resolve any minor equipment issues, provide supplies, advice etc. The smithy had 12 side-draft coal forges, with plenty of room for each student, good anvils, 2 or 3 gas forges, 3 power hammers, a big hydraulic press, you name it, and the best part is the shop is open for use 24 hours a day 7 days a week (no power hammers between 11pm and 7am). The students in my class were all what I would call "hard core" they were there to do some serious smithing, some learning, and to have a darn good time in the process. They were all very talented,

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very hard working and just plain fun to be around. Peter Ross was one terrific instructor, with a talent for explaining the core concepts behind why he was doing things in a certain sequence. Peter gave 1 or 2 demos every day with plenty of individual tutoring/mentoring from both Peter and his knowledgeable assistant J.R. In addition to replicating some old colonial items Peter brought as smithing exercises, we went on a couple of field trips to the shops of local smiths, Zac Noble, Elizabeth Brim and Hoss Halley, as well as having plenty of visiting blacksmiths drop by such as Scott Langton, Joe Anderson and Bobby Hansson, all did a demo or helped the learning process in some way or another. Lots and lots of chances to practice and learn.

Accommodations at Penland were good. I stayed in a dorm to minimize costs and it worked out great, never really saw anyone from the dorm room much, as everyone in the whole place are in their respective shops most of the day (and night). The food was very good and plenty of it, 3 squares a day as it were. Typical hours in the shop and at the forge were from early morning till somewhere between 10pm and midnight, 7 days a week (if you could handle it) with a couple of hours off at meal times.

I guess one of the really excellent things about Penland for me was the 2 and a half week course duration. This took the pressure off trying to complete a specific item and allowed me more time to work on setups and practice some of the more interesting techniques rather than just pushing to make a specific object. My wife asked me when I got back "what did you learn"? My reply was "I learned many many things in 2.5 weeks, but if I had to boil it down: make a very good scale drawing, lay out in detail all the steps, practice forging the setups, follow it from one end to the other, forge it really hot, make it perfectly square, perfectly octagonal, perfectly round, planish it very carefully, work it once, one section at a time , don't think about anything else, don't be afraid to start over if it isn't right and lastly, be kind to your files". I guess I should have known these things already, I sort of did, but not really, so I

have to say "mission accomplished" : of course I'm still working on making a really good, drop tongs forge welded, 3 leaf, filed, compass..... maybe by Christmas.

One final thought, great classmates, great instructors, great course content, great support from locals, lots of laughs, it sure was fun, give it a try, is my best recommendation.

SEPTEMBER MEETING INFO

For the September meeting, Roy Bellows has arranged for Balcones Forge to be demonstrating at the LBJ State Park.

Here is what it says on the state parks website:

September 29, 2007 — Lyndon B. Johnson SP&HS — Blacksmithing at Sauer-Beckmann Farm — Take a free tour of the 1915 working farm and learn about the lost art of blacksmithing. Watch as blacksmiths heat cold iron to a red-hot glow in a turn-of-the-century forge. Listen to the anvil as the iron is shaped into many useful objects and tools of the times. Door handles, nails, hasps, forks, "java monkeys" and much more will be on display or made throughout the day. Don't miss this opportunity to experience this unique event. 10 a.m.-3 p.m. (830) 644-2252.

Here is the link:

<http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/newsmedia/calendar/?calpage=s0112>

If we handle it like Fredericksburg and folks bring their forge setups, we'll be OK and the public will enjoy the day. If you can bring your forge, please let Rudy know ASAP.

Remember that Balcones Forge is an organization that exists to educate the public. Come on out and help with our mission.

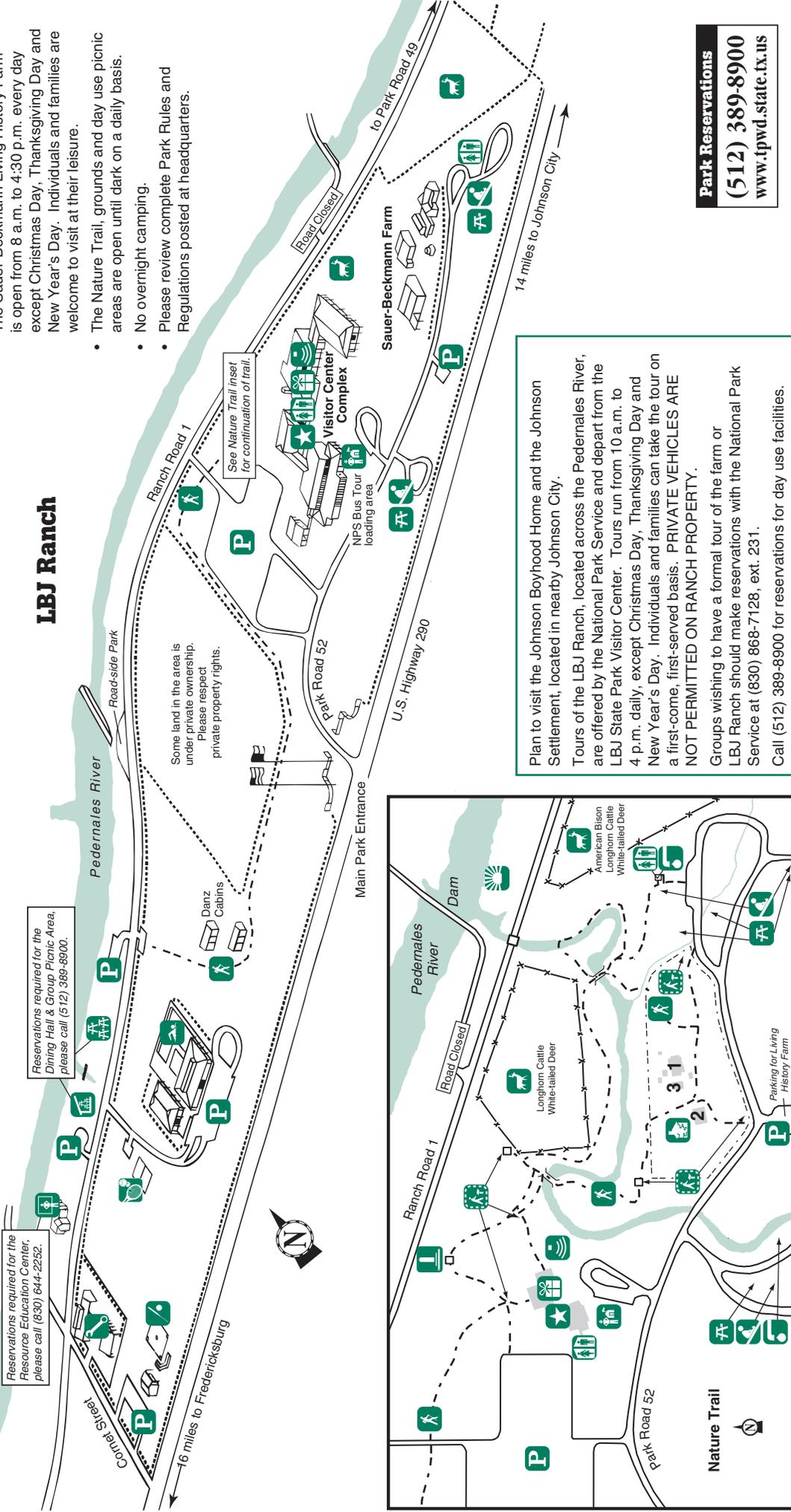
So what is a "java monkey" anyway?

Lyndon B. Johnson State Park and Historic Site

Reservations required for the Resource Education Center, please call (630) 644-2252.

Reservations required for the Dining Hall & Group Picnic Area, please call (512) 389-8900.

LBJ Ranch



Please Note:

- Park buildings are open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day except Christmas Day, Thanksgiving Day and New Year's Day.
- The Sauer-Beckmann Living History Farm is open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. every day except Christmas Day, Thanksgiving Day and New Year's Day. Individuals and families are welcome to visit at their leisure.
- The Nature Trail, grounds and day use picnic areas are open until dark on a daily basis.
- No overnight camping.
- Please review complete Park Rules and Regulations posted at headquarters.

Plan to visit the Johnson Boyhood Home and the Johnson Settlement, located in nearby Johnson City. Tours of the LBJ Ranch, located across the Pedernales River, are offered by the National Park Service and depart from the LBJ State Park Visitor Center. Tours run from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily, except Christmas Day, Thanksgiving Day and New Year's Day. Individuals and families can take the tour on a first-come, first-served basis. PRIVATE VEHICLES ARE NOT PERMITTED ON RANCH PROPERTY. Groups wishing to have a formal tour of the farm or LBJ Ranch should make reservations with the National Park Service at (830) 868-7128, ext. 231. Call (512) 389-8900 for reservations for day use facilities.

Park Reservations
(512) 389-8900
www.tpwd.state.tx.us

A GUIDE TO ANVILS

Submitted by Hollis Wooldrige

This is some interesting info I pulled off the ABANA forums. It was posted in the public section by Ken Scharabok. Might be of some use to folks shopping for anvils.

Hollis

This is just intended as a rough guide for identifying anvils which are not clearly marked. For more detail information see Anvil's in America by Richard Postman (and More on Anvils when it is published):

- If there is an oval depression in the bottom it may be either a Trenton, Arm & Hammer or Swedish. If there is a clear line/seam showing a top plate it would likely be a Trenton or Arm & Hammer. If the area under the heel is rough worked, it would likely be a Arm & Hammer. No seam, then I would suspect a one-piece cast Swedish.

- If there is an hourglass shaped depression on the bottom it is likely a Hay-Budden (with the exception of some manufacturer put out 50 pounders with a hourglass depression also).

- If you see a series of numbers (serial number) on the front foot, it is almost certainly to be a Trenton, Hay-Budden or Arm & Hammer. If it starts with an A, it would be an H-B. Arm & Hammers do not go over about 52,000.

- If it meets the other criteria for one of the above, and it has no serial number, it may be one of their rejects sold on the secondary market. Usually, but not always, it was due to an incomplete weld between the anvil and top plate. When they tested it, they didn't get the 'ring' all over the plate they wanted.

- If you see numbers at the waist such as 1 1 20, it is a British made anvil. This is their stone weight system to where the first number represents multiples of 112 (1/20th a long ton), second represents multiples of 28 and third is remaining pounds. Thus

this would be 160 pounds (112 plus 28 times two plus 20). Usually off from scale weight a tad.

- If you see punch marks between the numbers, such as 1 . 1 . 20, it is likely a Mousehole. Sometimes all which remains are the two punch marks.

- If there are small, flat steps on top of the front and back feet it is almost certain to be an English Peter Wright.

- If it has five handling holes, with two on the front and back feet, it is almost certain to be an English Peter Wright.

- If it is the London pattern (what you would typically consider an anvil to look like) and there is no seam between the body and top plate, it may be Swedish one-piece cast steel. (However, anvil makers were sometimes very, very good at working in the seam.)

- American British and Continental Europe manufacturers made double-horned anvils, and specialty anvils, such as saw maker, carriage or plowshare anvils, so these are of little help by themselves.

- If you see what looks to be an Eagle on the side, it is almost certain to be a Fisher Norris. Eagle is usually holding an anchor, perhaps because Fisher made many of the big ship and shipyard anvils for the U.S. Navy. Largest anvil every known to have been made (1,400 pounds) is a Fisher.

- If you see what looks to be an arm holding a hammer on the side it could be either Vulcan or Arm & Hammer. Vulcans were raised while Arm & hammer's were stamped in. Vulcans tended to be short and blocky while A&Hs were more sleek looking.

- If the anvil has no 'ring' when struck, it is likely a cast iron body with steel plate on top. (These were sometimes called 'city anvils'.) Likely either Vulcan or Fisher. Vulcans tended to be more blocky while Fisher's were more typically of the sleeker London pattern. Older Fishers had a handling hole under the horn and heel also, while Vulcan's didn't, and

newer Fishers (after the late 1800s) usually had the mold pattern date under the heel.

If you see what looks to be II&B on the front foot it would be a Vulcan (Illinois Iron and Bolt Co). Some people incorrectly think this is H&B for Hay-Budden.

- If you see what looks to be a relief of a Badger within an oval, it would be a Badger (American Skein and Foundry Co. of Racine, WI). If for sale snatch it up at almost any reasonable price as this would be a very, very rare anvil. The other American anvil considered to be rare is the Samson. After the manufacturing of Trentons moved to Cleveland, OH, one of the former owners continued to make anvils in Trenton, NJ calling them Samsons.

- If the anvil has a very narrow waist and an 'oversized' horn, likely it is one of the newer farrier anvils. These are all one piece cast steel to my knowledge.

- On aging, steps came into common use on American and British anvils about 1780. Pritchel (punching) holes about 1830. (However, some older anvils had pritchels later drilled into them.)

Any anvil with letters, numbers or logos raised, would have been at least partially cast. In the latter years of manufacturing the American wrought iron anvil makers used cast bases rather than forging them out. Sometimes the base doesn't match the top, such as a 140 pound base used for a 160 pound top.

Raised weight markings were pretty well only on cast anvils (or cast bases) and usually had the last digit left off, such as 8 representing 80 pounds or 16 representing 160 pounds.

Anvils were usually marked on the side with the horn to the right, under the horn and on the front foot. Wirebrush using soap and water to base metal. Let thoroughly dry. Lay on side and dust with flour. Brush off, leaving flour in depressions. Do same with front foot with anvil resting on heel.

Sometimes lettering or numbers just jump out at you.

If you see a 'painted lady' (a painted anvil) and it meets some of the above criteria, you might take a chance on it. However, be aware a coat of paint can hide a multitude of sins and it can still turn out to be a 'prostitute', rather than a 'good woman'. Many of the new imported anvils are painted. Personally I would not be interested in an anvil with a painted top plate as there may well be body putty under it.

If you can make out any markings you can contact me at my e-mail address as I may be able to help you identify it. A good photograph (with flour in depressions) goes a long way. It has been pointed out to me some early Trentons also had the hour-glass depression on the bottom. These also had flat top front and back feet, but wide ones, not a small ledge as with P-W.

Trenton, Hay-Budden and Arm & Hammer (as well as the British firms) made anvils using the buyer's logo. For example, Acme (Sears) and Lakeside (Montgomery Ward) anvils were made by both Trenton and Hay-Budden. If it has a serial number on the front foot the anvil was almost certainly made by one of these three. You then have to look at secondary characteristics.

SMI TOUR

For a great report on last month's tour of SMI (now called CMC) please go to our website and check out the article put together by our webmaster, Scott Little.

Be sure and say thanks to Jerry Achterburgh for arranging the tour.

TRADE ITEM

The trade item for September is.....

A vessel!

Jerry Achterberg, our host for August, suggested the trade item be a vessel since we had such a fantastic demonstration by Dave Koenig at our Summer Workshop. So, make anything that will hold water -- a bowl, a vase, a barrel.

Since Tom Lupton was the only one of us to attempt a vessel in August, September will provide another chance. Tom has his done; do you?

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Balcones Forge Meeting Schedule for 2007

Sept - Blacksmithing at Sauer-Beckmann Farm,
LBJ State Park & Historical Site

Oct - Bob Pheil

Nov - Pioneer Farms, Austin

Dec - Open

Return Service Requested

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