

Capital District Blacksmiths' Newsletter

January, 2006

Volume 5 Number 1

Next CDBA Gathering

On February 19th, John Ackner from the Mabee Farm Historic Site will be giving a demonstration on trammel hooks. These advanced "S" hooks have the unique ability to be adjusted to a range of sizes. Thus, they were perfectly suited for assisting cooks for the past 2,600 years.

John will be showing the basics of making a trammel hook. Then he will proceed to 'kick it up a notch', by adding details like those seen on the trammel hooks in the Sorber Collection of colonial wrought iron work.

As is typical of all of our winter gatherings, attendees will then have the option of making their own trammel hook for a nominal materials fee of \$5.00 after the initial demonstration.

The demonstration will be held at:

Oak & Acorn Ancient Metalcrafts
35A State St
Valley Falls, NY 12185

See insert for RSVP & detailed direction in formation.

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CDBA Gathering Updates



Age of Iron 2005 - Held on Father's Day weekend for the first time, AoI once again got off to a rainy start. By the end of the event, however, CDBA had won the "Age of Iron 'Most Educational'" award for their part in AoI 2005.

Age of Iron (June 18&19) - This year Age of Iron was held on Father's Day weekend with mixed results. While Hancock Shaker Village reported that attendance was up for them that day, over all the attendance for an Age of Iron event was significantly less than in past years. Additionally, some AoI participants did not show up, even after they stated they would participate.

For the third year in a row, CDBA hosted the "Green Coal" area. However, for the first time, "Green Coal" had a corporate sponsor. Our local Metal Supermarket, in Albany, NY, was gracious enough to supply all the steel used at the "Green Coal" area this year. Metal Supermarket stepped up to the plate and donated more than 100' of 1/4" and 3/16". While they have long been listed in our "Resources" page (see their ad page 3), this is the first time CDBA has had such a helpful sponsor.

Pad Lock Hammer-In (July 10th)- This hammer-in had the unfortunate honor of being the first hammer-in, ever, to be canceled for

lack of interest! Event notifications went out on time, but for some reason only 2 people ever sent in their RSVP notifications.

If you were interested in this event, but were unable to attend; stay tuned, we plan to give it a second try in 2006.

Merli Mfg Demo (September 11th)- Merli Mfg, was the site one of our first meetings in 2002, and every year since then we've met there. This year Joe Merli continued his expansion of 'Canal Square' completing the refurbishing of additional historic buildings. Also new this year, was the joint participation of Model A & T antique car clubs.

Although CDBA's participation was less than in years past, the members that were able to attend did their best to show the public what we're all about.

Albany Rural Cemetery Demo (October 1st) - CDBA's President, Sarah Ritchie-Crowther, demonstrated blacksmithing during the "Civil War 'Gathering' Continued on Page 4

Tools & Tips

I attended a clinic with Mark Constable, past president of BABA. During the clinic, Mark showed some ways of modifying hammers to make different textures in steel. He challenged us to come up with our own ideas for texturing. I thought I would share with you the process I used to transform hammer heads into texturing hammers.



The first step is to remove the handles from the hammer heads so that they can be reinstalled later. After several missteps I found a painless way to accomplish this. Heat the end of the hammerhead (the part with the wedge) with a torch; the wood shrinks and the head can usually be easily hammered off. When this fails, burn the end of the handle further thereby exposing the metal wedge. That done, you can usually pull the wedge out with a pair of pliers.

Next anneal all of the hammer heads. This step isn't necessary for all of the tools, but it is easy and quickly accomplished. There are several ways to get the texture patterns into the hammer face. You can forge something into the hammer face, cut a pattern into the face or weld



something to the hammer. Mostly I forge the face. This is done in two ways. Either use a stamp or chisel and punch a pattern into the hot face of the hammer or slam the red hot hammer into something that would impart an interesting pattern.

If a number of the hammers are the same size, a pipe handle with a simple keeper to fit the hammer head can be made. Once the 'keeper' has been made swing the hot headed hammer at every unusual hard surface you can find.

The next texturing method is to cut a pattern into the hammer surface with a hacksaw. It is much more accurate than cutting with a 4 inch cutoff blade.

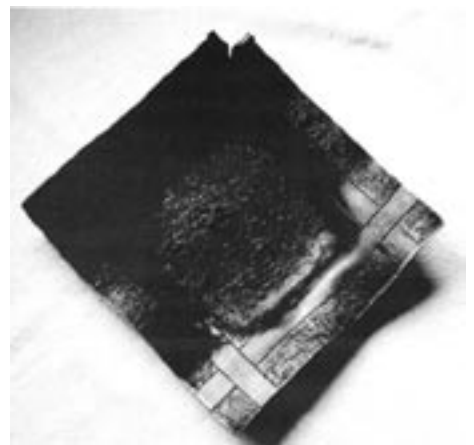
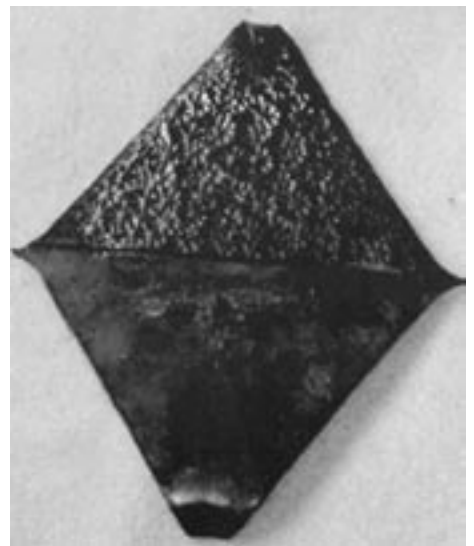
After forming the hammers, head to the belt sander and start grinding any sharp edges. You certainly don't want flying metal projectiles piercing body parts. From here it is back to the forge and an oil quench to toughen the steel. You're not interested in a



hard temper on these hammers. First, there may be some corners on some of the faces and you don't want them to chip (these are usually the hammers that have been cut into). Second, these tools should only be used on hot metal and simply won't need to be very hard.

Now, replace the original handles. This step is amazingly simple. Grind the charred portion of the top of the handle back a bit, saw a vertical slot into the top of the handle, replace the hammer head, add a wood wedge and a steel wedge. Finally, soak the hammers in a bath of boiled linseed

oil.



Letter from the President

I hope everyone has had a wonderful holiday season!

We've got a lot of new events planned for 2006. We've got more Hammer-In's planned than ever before. This year's Hammer-In's include: trammel hooks from the Sorber collection, padlocks, custom tongs, and even smelting our own iron! (See calendar pg 7 for details) Of course we'll be attending the Blacksmithing Timeline at the Mabee Farm and participating in Age of Iron as we always have. And with the resignation of Bill Senseney from Berkshire Blacksmiths and Age of Iron, CDBA stands ready to work closely with them in whatever capacity we can.

One exciting development is that the Albany Rural Cemetery is looking to restore their blacksmith shop to its original purpose. They are also interested in having CDBA be their 'resident blacksmiths', and provide blacksmithing demonstrations at their public events were appropriate. As their 'resident blacksmiths' CDBA would have use of the restored smithy for our own private events.

Discussions about this are still in the *very* preliminary stages, but it should be anticipated that some additional fund raising will be needed. More information will follow as the discussions continue. I look forward to receiving opinions, comments, and suggestions, about any aspect of this prospect, including fund raising at president@cdblacksmiths.org

Finally, as you may have noticed there has been a dramatic decrease in communication over the past few months. Unfortunately, various family illnesses have prevented more participation on my part. However, I look forward to the coming year; I'm sure you'll be seeing more involvement from me, and Dan should be seeing more home cooked meals.

Hammer-On!

Ghost written by Dan Crowther from Sarah's notes

RSVP Forms a must

As a new year of CDBA events draws nearer, we would like to kindly remind everyone that RSVP'ing for events is a crucial step to making certain that they actually happen. RSVP's are our only method of determining interest in the event.

One week before the date of the "Hammer-Ins" and "Workshops", we start taking note of the number of RSVP's received. If there's not enough of them (therefore we presume not enough interest) the event is cancelled.

We're not trying to be strict; but, some of our guest demonstrators would have driven long distances for nothing if we hadn't informed them there wasn't enough interest.

RSVP'ing isn't hard. All it takes is a quick email or phone indicating you think you'll be there. We're not standing at the door checking off who shows and who doesn't. It's just for a general head count.

So, when an event you're interested in comes around. Give us a quick email or call and say "Hey, I'd like to be there.

Email: contact@cdblacksmiths.org
Phone: 518-665-8308

ABANA Conference Fliers and Applications Available!

Interested in going to the next ABANA Conference? Not sure until you see what's in store?

Give us a call, email, or stop by at the next Gathering, Demo, Workshop, or Hammer-In and we'll hook you up with the latest official ABANA Conference information.

Email: contact@cdblacksmiths.org
Phone: 518-665-8308



Water Street Books

26 Water St
Williamstown, MA 01267-2846
Phone: (413)458-8072
Fax: (413)-458-0249
Ask for: Richard Simpson
Richard.D.Simpson@williams.edu

Your Blacksmith Reference Source

'Gathering' Continued from Cover
Heritage Day".

Not far away from the Cemetery's original smithy, Sarah demonstrated blacksmithing techniques common to those employed by the smiths of the Cemetery as they built and maintained the numerous hinges, gates, and fences once ubiquitous in the Cemetery.

Copake Ironworks Demo (October 9th) - This yearly event, held jointly in cooperation with NYS Park Service, had to be cancelled because of heavy rains that washed out some nearby roads.

This venue is keen to have us repeat our demonstrations and teach their Park Rangers additional details about the original ironworks and blacksmithing that is now part of the Teconic State Park.



88 Railroad Ave.
Albany, NY 12205
Phone: (518) 435-0024
Fax: (518) 435-0265
metalstore@msn.com

Classes

Oak & Acorn Ancient Metalcrafts

35A State Street
Valley Falls, NY 12185
518-665-8308

smiths@oakandacorn.com

Blacksmithing classes are offered in a tutored format, allowing the student to progress over a variety of projects set to their own pace and schedule. Similar classes in silver wire jewelry, and mail armour are also available. Rate: \$30/hr

Peters Valley Craft Education Center

19 Kuhn Rd.

Layton, NJ 07581

(973) 948-5200

www.pvcrafts.org

Call for current offerings

New England School of Metalwork

7 Albiston Way

Auburn, Maine 04210

207-777-6211 Toll Free 888-753-7502

www.newenglandschoolofmetalwork.com

2006

- Jan 6-9 Tool Forging
- Jan 27-29 The Coal Forge; Build It & Use It.
- Feb 10-13 Botanical Forms
- Mar 10-13 Vessels & Sculpture
- April 7-10 Traditional Joinery



- ◆ Computer controlled plasma cutting
- ◆ Hand forging
- ◆ Light fabrication
- ◆ Welding
- ◆ Railing and gate repair
- ◆ Custom design services

Andrew VanSchoick
Serving VT, NY & MA
802-375-9031 Voice
518-466-0040 Voice

andrewv@evolutionironworks.com

Letter from ABANA

A big "THANK YOU" is in order for all who have contributed to the ABANA Relief fund!!

Reaching out to help fellow metalworkers / smiths devastated by Katrina type disasters demonstrates the openness and sharing that nurtured the renaissance of artistic blacksmithing as we know it. There is limited time to participate, as the fund wraps up its work this spring. No better way to feel good about helping a fellow artist than writing a check to a fund contributing 100% of donations to those most affected!

ABANA has gradually accumulated funds through the years for the ABANA Educational Endowment Trust. The "Trust" became a reality in the fall of 2005. Your board voted to transfer \$150,000.00 seed money from the ABANA general budget to the trust. The trust is administered by three trustees, its charter is; " --- purpose of this trust is to provide a consistent , stable and permanent source of funding for grants, scholarships or fellowships to individuals and groups for the purpose of nurturing , preserving and furthering blacksmithing through education and cultivating public interest"-[Blacksmithing being defined as the craft of artistic metalsmithing]. The trust will grow as your contributions are received, but the annual income is restricted to funding the grants, scholarships, etc. as contained in its "purpose".

A major part of the Fall ABANA board meeting was devoted to reviewing goals and ways to accomplish the best service to our members. A review of committees meant dropping those that could be replaced to give you more bang for your buck! Teaching programs and Professional / Academic Outreach are typical of the committee assignments receiving monies to match the

enthusiasm of the commitment of its members! For details, see the 14 pages of board meeting minutes on the website. Visit <http://abana.org/business/index.shtml>

I am sure every ABANA member has noticed the continuing improvements in your publications. I enjoy viewing blacksmithing publications from around the world, and can proudly say the publications The Anvils Ring and Hammer's Blow take a back seat to none!! But there is a piper to pay. The board struggled, but after holding the line the last few years, a revised dues schedule could not be ignored. Beginning January 1, 2006, the Student / Library rate is \$45.00; the Senior rate is \$50.00 and Regular Membership is \$55.00. Two thirds of this pays for the quality of these world class publications to keep you informed, enthused and inspired!

The 2006 ABANA Conference in Seattle, Washington is just around the corner, and again is "an opportunity NOT to be missed"! Demonstrators from around the Pacific Rim and the world will bring new ideas and techniques. There will be old and new friends to meet, galleries to spark ideas and vendors to help enable ideas to be achieved----- SEE YOU THERE!

Don Kemper - ABANA President



- Stainless Steel Burner Flares** for: Reil, Side arm, Mongo & T-Rex
- Propane** - Hoses, Regulators, & Fittings
- Durablanket** - Ceramic blankets
- Plistx 900F** - Refractory cement

Zoeller Forge
4312 Lahna Dr
Louisville, KY 40216
502-361-0706
zman59@earthlink.net
www.geocities.com/zoellerforge

Confessions of a Bladesmith: 'Secrets' Revealed! - Part 3

by Kevin R. Cashen



This article originally appeared January, 2003 as a 'thread' on Sword Forum International.

Attention Newsletter Exchange Editors: Please contact Kevin R. Cashen c/o Sword Forum International (<http://www.swordforum.com>) for permission before reprinting this series.

Series Recap - Mr. Cashen had just discovered some flaws with the pattern weld seams and was uncertain whether it was a forge welding problem or a structural defect in the steel stock. We resume with details of the problem he uncovered.

It is hard to capture the real ugliness of it with a camera, but here I have cut the tip off from the sword and brought it into the house for a photo session. I polished it up and etched it out and it really didn't show as bad as expected (as in a really big white line in across the pattern) but you can see it in the way the pattern layers misalign at one point. **(Figure 1)** It looks like a road and a fence that crosses a fault line.

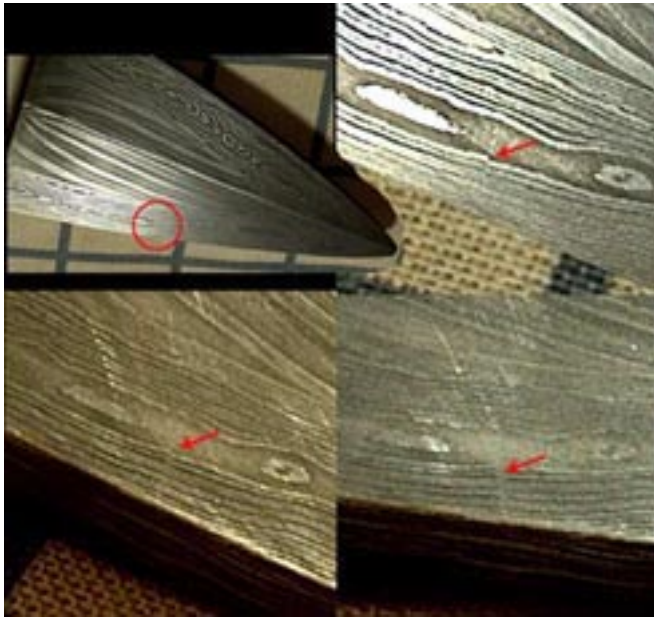


Figure 1 - Detail photos of a misalignment in the pattern weld, cause either by a faulty weld or imperfections in the original steel stock.

Now if it could be welded back together why not just cut it out and reweld the tip? Because when I cut the tip I am in control and I know why it has a seam. How much faith can I place in the steel if it makes its own seams?

Now I am testing all of my steel separately at various temperatures and forgings. If the O1 passes the muster and I am convinced that it was me messing up in the proper sequence of cooling techniques, the unaffected part may be salvageable one day. But if it showed any signs of peculiar behavior the next time I heated it with care, it would go into the dumpster! In the meantime I have a waiting list of other customers and Dennis has waited long enough for this sword, so I will not waste any more time on a failed piece for now. Instead I will go with fresh materials and try to pull my act together.

If it had been a welding flaw (inclusion, cold shut or the like) at the tang end, and I could leave it in the form of grinder dust on

my floor and the rest of it may have had an incarnation as a smaller piece. But on these type of swords anything out on the blade is death. And anything that I cannot chalk up to one stupid moment on my part is untrustable.

For the kind of money that people pay for this type of pattern welding there is no excuse for knowingly "fudging it". I feel this pile of scrap steel was already included in the price of the finished sword if, I can't get it right the first time. I never have, and never will ask for more money than the original agreed upon price, but I can almost guarantee that I will have to ask for more time

After receiving a new batch of steel and doing some research, I am back on track. I have gotten to the root of some of the problems and have reformed the blade using a 1095/L6 core with a Carpenter O1/L6 edge. Since Tim Zowada has been playing with the Carpenter's steels for some time now, I packed up my stuff and trekked to the cold desolate wastes of northern Michigan to the lair of the elusive flying bladesmith. We had a good time playing in the forge, and I have to be honest, using Tim's 680 lb steam hammer "Thumper" got the steel fused and forged with a whole lot less effort. I cannot claim complete sole authorship on this sword, since Tim had to play and do a couple of the folds himself. He said that he wouldn't tell anybody, but this way if anything more goes wrong I can fall back on the old "it's Tim's fault".

I brought the two new core bars and edge strip home and took one good long day to weld them into a new blank and then forge the blade out in one session. I have no good photos of the forging process since I was working like a dog.

I usually start at the tip and hammer the thing out, being careful to hit evenly on all sides since there are two edges. But leaf blades are more of a challenge due to the curvy changes in profile. I start hot and get cooler and cooler as I go when I forge so that by the time I am done, and simply straightening, things are slightly below critical. These are only light straightening blows though. I never move metal below a proper forging temperature. When all done, I normalize several cycles and then heat to sub critical before quitting.

I often leave my pattern-welded swords quite thick from the forging and this one is no exception since it has that crazy curvaceous design so I will need some elbowroom in the grinding. Here is the final forged blade: **(Figure 2)**



Figure 2 - Note the 'leaf' profile (the way the blade widens as it nears the tip). These changes in width affect grind angle which in turn necessitates leaving more material over all as a 'safety'.

One thing that I forgot to mention on the forging is the creation of a good template. With regular, straight tapering swords it is not always necessary. But, with a different shape, like the leaf, I always try to plan out what the thing should look like and transfer it to a template. I can then hold the hot steel up to this pattern while I work in order to stay on track with the original concept. I find this very important with curves. Curves can add grace and beauty to a blade like nothing else, if done correctly. Or they can just look awful and silly if not done in the right proportions. I do not exaggerate here, I will spend hours sometimes drawing and redrawing the correct curve ratios until I find one that is a balance of accent and flow. I must be honest, I have seen many curvaceous blades that I



Figure 3 - Above is the final shape of the sword before grinding. Below is the template. Note the differences in the tang region that were necessary.

just thought were ugly as sin because the maker didn't take the time to get the right proportions.

So, I design and print out a pattern and then transfer it to a sheet metal template that I could lay next to my forge. This does help but it also points out some of the compromises that one must make in the process. My original concept had the shoulders of the blade below the guard almost as wide as the wider leaf portion, but a certain amount of side compression is necessary to fuse the bars solid in the welding and this can limit how wide things can then get in the forging out. This was not a problem in the flair near the tip since that portion was going to be hammered out thinner and wider for the distal taper and the edges. But near the guard is where I will be ending the edges and thickening into a ricasso area before entering the guard. So it has to stay thick and this limits my widening ability. So you can see here is a compromise from the original concept. **(Figure 3)**

To even out the internal structure of the steel from all of the abuse I have just layed on it, I normalize it as well as cycle it through the 'Ac1' metalurgical phase to get the grain size down where I want it. Now, it is time for the anneal.

As I mentioned I got my grain size where I want it so I will not be messing with traditional lamellar annealing since it involves temperatures above the Ac1 phase (and is a real shot in the dark with the deep hardening alloys that I work with). Instead I spheroidize my blades, which will yield a much softer blade without messing with the grain size since it stays closer to Ac1.

So the blade goes into the kilns: **(Figure 4)**



Figure 4 - Lowering the blade into the kiln point first to help reduce distortion.

I always suspend the blades from the tang within the kilns to avoid distortion. The controllers are set for 1375F.

When the blade comes up to temp it is soaked a little while to get the carbon in motion and then the controller is set to run a predetermined ramping program that will drop the kiln temperature at a rate of around 50F./hour until the steel is below 900F., all while I have a good nights sleep. **(Figure 5)**

I recently installed a controller with an alarm feature so that I can start the process and set the alarm for 1375 and go to the house and relax. When the kilns reach temperature they will set off my security alarm buzzer in my kitchen, which I patched the controller into, and I know it is time to go out and tend to the kilns. This is more than just convenience since it is very easy to forget and cook blades to death.



Figure 5 - Setting the controls on the kiln to 'soak' at 1375°F then cycle down to 900°F at -50°F/hr

What this spheroidal anneal does is cause the cementite (carbon) in the steel to gather together into an evenly dispersed collection of spheroidal globs. In this state the carbon is not interacting with the iron to give me any grief from stress or hardness and the metal will be very easy to machine, grind or shape.

You will notice that the blade is going in all scaled up from the forging. One of the reasons that I leave my forgings thicker and the reason that I leave the forging scale on, at this point, is the fact that this long anneal time is a very decarburizing operation. When all done there will be a fully decarburized skin on the blade that I will have to grind off. So, if I am going to cook the carbon out of something why not let it be that nasty black scale that I will be grinding off anyhow?

To Be Continued
Next Installment - Layout and Grinding

<u>January</u>							<u>February</u>						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7				1	2	3	4
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
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29	30	31					26	27	28				
<u>March</u>							<u>April</u>						
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5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
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<u>May</u>							<u>June</u>						
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	1	2	3	4	5	6				1	2	3	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
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<u>July</u>							<u>August</u>						
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9	10	11	12	13	14	15	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30	31		
30	31												
<u>September</u>							<u>October</u>						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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3	4	5	6	7	8	9	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
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17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29	30	31				
<u>November</u>							<u>December</u>						
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5	6	7	8	9	10	11	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30			24	25	26	27	28	29	30
							31						

February 19th - Finalized

Trammel Hook Hammer-In by John Ackner
Valley Falls, NY

March 19th - Pending

Padlock Hammer-In
Valley Falls, NY

April 30th - Finalized

Mabee Farm Public demonstration
Rotterdam Junction, NY

June 17 & 18 (Age of Iron) - Finalized

Green Coal
Hancock Shaker Village, Hancock, MA

September 17th - Pending

Merli Mfg. public demonstration
Duanesburg, NY

October 22nd - Pending

Iron Smelting demonstration w/Mike McCarthy
Valley Falls, NY

November 19th - Pending

Tong Making Hammer-In
Valley Falls, NY

Local Resources

Coal

Garnsey Coal & Trucking
952 Route 4 South
Schuylerville, NY 12871
518-695-3346.

Greene County Horseshoe Supply
Route 32 P.O. Box 176
Greenville, NY 12083
1-866-966-5549
gchs@mail.albany.net

Morrell Metalsmiths
C. Leigh Morrell
207 Greenfield Rd
Colrain, MA 01340
1-800-371-1146
<http://www.morrellmetalsmiths.com>

Safety Products

North River Supply
John Earl
412 Cedar Lane
Greenville, NY 12083
jwkearl@cs.com

Steel

Albany Steel
566 Broadway
Menands, NY 12204
518-436-4851

Kivort Steel
380 Hudson River Rd.
Waterford, NY 12188
518-590-7233
<http://www.kivortsteel.com>

Metal Supermarket
88 Railroad Ave
Albany, NY 12205
518-435-0024
<http://www.lebanonvalley.com/03Press/metal%20supermarket.htm>

Welding & Abrasives

Black Magic Forge Welding Flux
Canal Forge
496 Towpath
High Falls, NY 12440

845-687-7130
jonned@hvc.rr.com

Northeast Gas Technologies
84 Karner Rd
Albany, NY 12205
1-800-248-1215
<http://www.newelders.com/>

Local Shaklee Distributer

Rooney Health Associates
Clifton Park, NY 12065
518-371-6453
(Source of "Basic-I" used in "Super Quench")

Other Publications

ANVIL Magazine

Rob Edwards
P.O. Box 1810
Georgetown CA 95634
<http://www.anvilmag.com>

Anvil's Ring & Hammer's Blow

ABANA CENTRAL OFFICE
PO Box 816
Farmington, GA 30638-0816
<http://www.abana.org>

Blacksmith's Gazette

P. O. Box 2168
Snohomish, WA 98291-2168
<http://www.fholder.com/blacksmithing/default.htm>

Blacksmith's Journal

PO Box 1699
Washington, MO 63090 USA
<http://www.blacksmithsjournal.com>

Irony

Stephen McGehee
PO Box 925
Corydon IN 47112
irony@epowerc.net

The Traditional Metalsmith

George Dixon
1229 Bee Tree Lake Road
Swannanoa NC 28778
<http://www.artist-blacksmith.org>

Like Minds - Other Organizations of Interest

ABANA - Artist-Blacksmith's Association of North America

ABANA CENTRAL OFFICE
PO Box 816
Farmington, GA 30638-0816
<http://www.abana.org>

New York State Designer- Blacksmiths

Pres: Bill Banker
P.O. Box 174
Almond, NY 14804-0174
607-276-6956
<http://www.nysdb.abana-chapter.com/>

Northeast Blacksmiths Association

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