



Rutherford County Blacksmiths Association

February 2015

RCBA Inc. rcblacksmith@comcast.net

President: Buzz Busbee - 615 962-9140

February Meeting

Nontraditional Technique



Ron Nichols is an experienced blacksmith! Do not try this yourself! We all like to use this front forge, and it is a perfect spot for demonstrating to the public and for members at RCBA meetings. However, space can get tight. There is not as much space to maneuver around when working on larger or awkward shaped pieces. Ron came up with his own solution. This only works when you are surrounded by competent assistants.

We were all impressed with Ron's agility!



So, why was Ron climbing onto the forge in the first place? He was demonstrating how to forge a traditional corner and a Clay Spencer style flared curve. These are two parts of the sample piece which will be made in a future workshop Ron plans to host for newly graduated Green Coal students and other interested members as space allows.



Changes in the Shop

Have you ever tried to find the handful of differences in two seemingly identical pictures? You may feel as if you are doing that very thing every time you walk into the shop. Check out the back storage room where Jeff Haselden and Billy McCullough have repositioned the metal stock racks. Look up and you will see that all the things being stored in the rafters have been moved. They are peppered all over the shop and displayed attractively and safely. Clutter under the counter area has been moved, and there is a new slack tub by the back forge. And, the shop is just looking cleaner in general. Thanks to Jeff, Billy, Gabby, and Buzz and all others members who have given their time to keep the shop clean and safe.

New Forge

There is a new (to RCBA) forge in the shop. This forge has an electric blower and is mobile. It can be used inside the shop or moved outdoors for demonstrations or when needed on busy Green Coal nights. This forge will give all of us an opportunity to learn how to control a fire with an electric blower.

New Bandsaw

As you know, the old band saw is falling apart and needs to be replaced. If you use it, please be careful, as it is very wobbly. Ron and Buzz have been on the hunt for a new one. It is likely that a Jet brand band saw will be purchased soon.

AACB 50th Anniversary

The AACB 50th Anniversary celebration will take place April 17 and 18 at Fiddler's Grove. Each AACB member forge will be expected to provide some type of demonstration. Bob Gillen shared his idea for making a set of tongs on a power hammer using some of the tools that were made a couple of years ago in the Clay Spencer power hammer tool class. This sounds like a wonderful idea. Several RCBA members expressed an interest in being a part of this demonstration. Practice times need to be discussed and decided at the next meeting.

Project of the Month - Heart

There were several entries for Project of the Month. Our winner was Johnny Woolsey. Thank you to all who participated. From left to right, projects were created by: Joshua Liddell(heart), Jerry Shouse (heart hook, ladle), Paul McIntyre (ladle), and Johnny



Woolsey. Project of the Month for March is a bottle opener. We still need to come to a decision about changes to POM policies and procedures. The main goal is to encourage participation from as many members as possible no matter how experienced.

Dates

March 7 – Work day at the shop. We'll start around 9:00. Coffee will be provided. Treats are a possibility.

March 9 – Monthly RCBA Meeting – Bring something for Iron in the Hat and your Project of the Month entry. POM is a bottle opener. And, most important, bring yourself. Smitty will talk about an RCBA project idea as well as his experiences at John C. Campbell. There will also be a forging demonstration.

Possible Project Idea

At our March meeting, Ralph Smith – AKA 'Smitty' - will present an idea he has come up with for a group RCBA project. In an effort to raise some money for RCBA as well as give Green Coal students (and other members) more forging experience, Smitty has suggested getting together at least one Sunday a month to make items to sell whenever the shop is open to the public, especially special event days. We'll pass around pictures of possible projects. Sounds like a good idea!

Also from Smitty

Smitty had the good fortune to be able to spend a week at the John C. Campbell Folk School. He was able to work on several Green Coal projects while under the direction of Jack Wheeler from Choo-Choo Forge. He was kind enough to do a write up of his experience.

A Week In The Life of A Green Coal Student

February 2015

By Ralph "Smitty" Smith

Starting out as a green coal student this past September, I had no real idea as to what to expect. I'm not especially handy or mechanical, but I'd been interested in blacksmithing for a while, so when I meandered into the forge during Uncle Dave Macon Days last July and got ~~cornered~~ by talking with Buzz - the *premier* RCBA promoter - well, that was all she wrote and I signed the dotted line.

After some months, with the help and encouragement of great RCBA teachers like Buzz, Ron Nichols, John Couch and John Woolsey to name a few, I've begun to assimilate some smithing basics and am putting a dent in the Green Coal project list, which I'm now getting closer to the end of than the beginning, which seems hard to believe. I guess time *does* fly when you're having a ball!

During our January AACB meeting at Cannonsburgh, which was a great success, one of our attendees - the great blacksmith Jack Wheeler from the Choo Choo forge in Chattanooga - announced that he would be teaching blacksmithing February 1st through the 6th at the John C. Campbell Folk School in Brasstown, North Carolina, and that he was willing to share what is called a "resource" or what amounts to a tuition credit given to him for teaching, but which could be shared with an interested student. I knew about the Folk School and its 90-year tradition of education and preservation of folk arts, so my hand shot up like a kindergartener with a restroom emergency.

I got together with Jack and come February 1st. I was at the Folk School and checked into my room at the Mill House next to the world-class Francis Whitaker/Clay Spencer Blacksmith Shop. Trying to describe the quality of the forge there simply won't do it justice, so I won't try. I will say this - after spending a week at their forge, you leave feeling kind of spoiled for other forges. Once you've driven a Ferrari, your old Monte Carlo just doesn't seem quite the same anymore.

Jack put us to work the first night we were there, and the 5 students - all of varying skill levels - never wanted for things to do. Jack was a consummate instructor and a fun fella to be around throughout the week. I really admire Jack because he was encouraging and positive, even when you weren't hammering out the prettiest piece of steel. He was also skilled at lifting your spirits if you were struggling with a project. Jack Wheeler is a mighty fine man with a heart as big as a house and bottomless generosity.

We also had the good fortune of receiving a lot of help from our own Ron Nichols, who was there while his wife Sandra took a water coloring class. Ask to see a picture of the lamp he is making for the Folk School. It is stunning. Maybe stupefying. Just pick an adjective. We are very, very fortunate to have Ron and other gifted AACB members in our midst.

Developing good fire management techniques, hammering, forge welding, making tenons, setting rivets, using power hammers, welders, cutting torch, drills and grinders were all part of our day's work, which started right after breakfast and often ran past 10 p.m. All in all, it was a fine week. I learned a lot and experienced firsthand what a fantastic resource we have in the John C. Campbell Folk School, which is an easy drive from our area. They also feed you really, really well to boot.

We capped off a great week with a show-and-tell session on the Friday morning before we left. Here, other students shared examples of their works in such diverse areas as bird carving, dulcimer making, water coloring, kaleidoscope making, beading and enameling, to name a few. Oh, and blacksmithing.

Hammering aside, the most important things I walked away with were the friendships forged. I don't know what it is about blacksmithing, but it seems to attract good folks who kind of march to a different drummer - and I for one really like being a part of the blacksmithing community. Friendly, creative, hardworking people deeply committed to carrying the blacksmithing tradition on into the 21st century and beyond. Hammer on. ~ Smitty

Here are some pictures Smitty took of JCC. Full size photos will be at the shop.





RCBA
C/O
Julia Harris
3701 Gazebo Park Dr.
Murfreesboro, TN 37129