

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Woodworking Tool Exhibit**

There is an interesting, amusing and educational exhibit going on at the present time at the Charles M. Bowers Memorial Museum in Santa Ana, California. The curator of this fine museum is Merton Henshaw former curator of the Pacific Grove Museum of Natural History. The exhibit continues to June 30, 1961.

"Woodworking Tools" is the informative title of the exhibit and the leaflet sent by Mr. Henshaw tells the tale of the history of tools and woodworking. This title reminds us once again of the day when everything in America was made by hand. Here, among others, are the tools for wheel construction as well as house building. The collection on exhibit are on loan from Mr. Lyle D. Guipre of Orange, California.

Although a large part of our woodworking tools were made right here in America, they were not invented here. They represent types brought to these shores by early settlers. Furthermore, it has been said that in California adobe houses were limited to one story until Yankee carpenters and tools arrived in the 1830's.

Of course, subtle American changes were woven into tools by use and improvement. As America improved her tools, so America grew in productivity and stature. These tools have been used for centuries by man and most of his hand tools have retained their general pattern since Roman times, so the Encyclopedia tells us.

The carpenter was the sole craftsman in wooden building construction until the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Certain other individuals developed special skills in building chests, and others developed skills with interior trims. Thus, cabinet makers and joiners were added to the list of woodworkers. Then came chair makers and carvers with their own special tools. The wood-trimmer is one of the oldest craftsmen. The woodcarver embellished the work of all woodworkers. Wheelwrights came with the advancement of the cart and wagon and were followed by the coachmaker and wagon maker.

The axe was perhaps the earliest used by the American pioneer, it was used for felling trees, chopping the felled logs, making the joints in early log cabins, homes, and barns, for making legs for stools and benches and household uses. Under the normal classification of

woodworking tools, the axe was not considered a construction tool, but rather a felling tool.

We know that before the invention of the "balloon" type house, Mr. Henshaw writes, construction in the 1800's, frameworks were of timbers hewn, by hand and held together by pegged mortise and tenon joints. The broad axe was for fine beams and rafter hewing. The auger with crossbar was used in boring all the holes for pins which held the framing timbers together. Beetles and mauls drove in the pins.

The wood saw is one of man's earliest cutting tools perhaps as old as the knife with a ragged edge. The principle is to rasp or cut away the wood. One special saw was called a trencher and was used to cut the sides of the grooves for stair treads.

The wooden plane antedates the metal plane of 400 A. D., so its origin is lost in time. A recent type of smoothing planer with a horn not unlike that on a saddle, has a double iron to set near the cutting edge and break the shavings. Planes have been made for all sorts of tasks: smoothing, rabbeting, molding, joining, and roughing. Boxwood, applewood, rosewood, and ebony are common woods used, sometimes embellished with ivory inlays, according to Mr. Henshaw's research into woodworking.

The factory-made metal bit stocks came out about 1850, but pride of ownership prevented a rapid changeover. The spoke shave is a special tool of the wheelwright. It might be classed as a double handled plane. Calipers are generally classified as metal working tools; they are also used by wood turners, pattern makers and sculptors in wood for measuring thickness. They are made of both metal and wood.

Merton Henshaw explains at the end of the gift folder announcing the exhibit, that this exhibit is intended as an introduction to woodworking tools. How many of us have forgotten these early tools and how many children have never even seen them, so we are sure the showing will be well attended and appreciated.