

Capital District Blacksmiths' Newsletter

July, 2006

Volume 5 Number 2

Events Coordinator

CDBA is currently searching for a member who can serve as an "Events Coordinator". The duties of the Event Coordinator are as follows.

- * Attend Core Group meetings
- * Work with the Core Group and other members to determine what events are of interest to members
- * Schedule Events
- * Coordinate event schedule with webmaster
- * Contact and work with the Event Host and/or Demonstrator to make sure necessary supplies have been procured
- * Send out notification (via BOTH email and regular mail) to members about upcoming events
- * Maintain RSVP list for events
- * Collect materials fees for events

If interested contact either the CDBA President (Sarah Ritchie) or Secretary (Daniel Crowther) at 518-665-8308 or 429-5270.



This Issue's Contents

A Call to Forges	Page 6
Call for Assistance	Page 3
Classes	Page 3
Confessions of a Bladesmith	Page 4
Contact Us	Page 8
Events Calendar	Page 7
Nearby Events	Page 3
Recent Events Report	Cover
Resource Listings	Page 8
Tools & Tips	Page 2

Recent CDBA Event Report

Trammel Hook Demo 02/19/06



CDBA member John Ackner was kind enough to demonstrate the basics of trammel hook making as well as demonstrating more advanced decorating techniques with chisels and punches. He also showed the manufacture of those tools.

The hook, above, was made by John and shows some of the white work and decoration typical of Dutch blacksmiths in the 18th Century.

Padlock Hammer-In 03/19/06



On March 19th, 15 blacksmiths met on a cold but snowless day to build basic padlocks. These locks used a simple design and showed the basics needed to build any padlock.

After a day of forging outdoors, warming up inside and heading out to do more forging, most people were able to leave the Hammer-In with their very own lock.

Mabee Farm Demo 04/30/06



The annual Mabee Farm public demonstration was held on April 30th. Although scantily attended by both CDBA members and the public it was a fun gathering that showed the progression of blacksmithing from 400AD til Today and made the Daily Gazette newspaper.

Age of Iron Demo 06/17&18 2006



Perhaps the weather or the event's date (Father's Day weekend) that conspired to keep visitors away from the Hancock Shaker Village and the 2006 Age of Iron. Regardless, the turnout significantly sub-par.

CDBA's "Green Coal" area saw only 16-20 people trying their hand at blacksmithing; compared to three times that amount last year and over 200 people the year before.

On the other hand the low number of participants could be seen as a blessing, given that temperatures were in the mid 90's

Tools & Tips

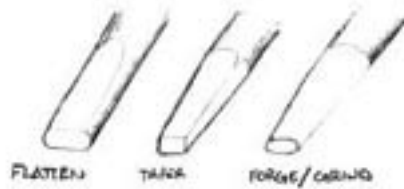
*From the Winter 2000 "Hammer's Blow"
- Reprinted by permission*

If you don't already have a set of punches and drifts for making hammer eyes, go ahead and make them. They're not that hard to make, and you can use them to make pretty much any type of handled tool you want.

There are several different methods for punching eyes, but the first thing you should do is locate a good supply of handles and buy as many as you think you'll need. Then size the tools to fit the handles. You'll get a better fit and spend less time shaping the handles to fit your hammers, fullers, sets, etc.

Start with a punch. The traditional way to do these is to draw down a piece of tool steel into an oval cross section that approximates the shape of your handles. You can use any flavor of tool steel that you like... Frank Turley makes his out of S-7, an airhardening steel. It gives an extremely strong tool, but forging S-7 can be a little tricky; you need to pay close attention to temperature ranges and follow the manufacturer's recommendations closely. An oil or water hardening steel like O2 or W1 would be a good choice for this project.

If you're new to tool steels, you may want to try making the punch out of coil spring... scrap steel is certainly cheap enough. But making tools from scrap has its own set of problems- like the tiny cracks that develop in coil springs after being flexed for twenty years. These usually don't show up until after you've tried to forge a tool, but when they do,



throw the whole spring away. Even if you do find a piece without any cracks, it'll be more likely to break under use, and you don't want your tools disintegrating on you, especially when there are visitors in the shop (and they are wearing their safety glasses, right?)

So for a tool that you plan on using often, it's best to start with new steel. Try a piece of W1- that way when you're using your punch in hot steel, you can dip it in the slack tub without overhardening it. W1 should be forged at around 1950°, which is an orange heat. Start with round stock, then flatten, draw to a square taper, then forge down the corners to bring back the oval shape.

Once the forging is complete, normalize the tool by heating it to a light cherry color... about 1600°... and set it aside to air cool.

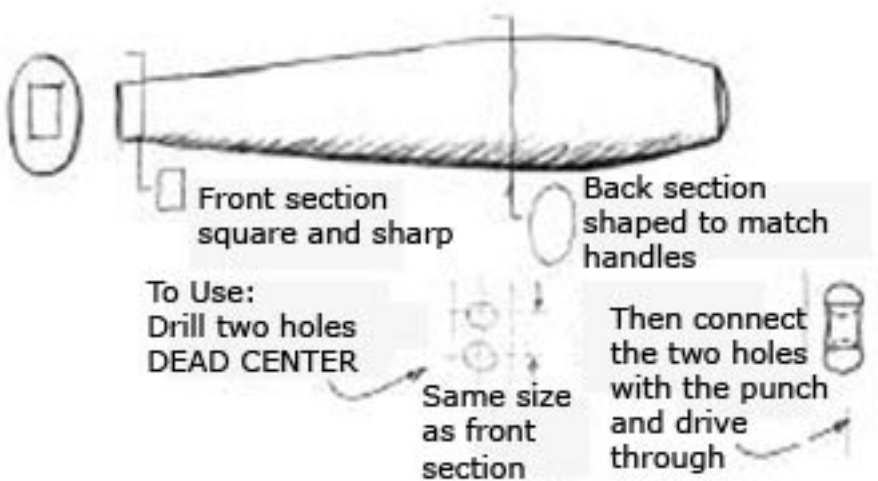
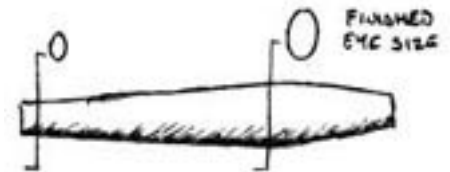
The next step is to anneal the tool. For W1, this means to bring it up to a cherry heat... about 1400°... and place in a can of vermiculite or agricultural lime. Once it's cool enough to hold in your hand, you can do any necessary finish grinding. Smooth the surfaces of the tool- a belt grinder is nice for this. Next, harden and temper.

To harden, heat to a light cherry color... about 1500°. Quench in a brine

solution, and temper. The easiest way to do this is to quench about an inch until the steel goes black, the quickly remove and rub the length of the tool on a brick or old file. Then watch as the colors run down the tool. Quench again when the end turns purple. The last step may not be necessary, since the first time the tool used on hot steel it will reheat & lose its temper anyway... but it's good practice. Be sure the struck end of the tool is not hardened.

A drift is made in the same manner, except that a drift is used to stretch an already punched hole to a specific shape or size. You can make a drift out of mild steel. but remember to put a taper on both ends of the tool. That way, you can drive the drift all the way through the hole. If you make your drifts out of tool steel, they'll last a long time.

A variation on this technique was written about last issue... a combination drift and punch can be made to be used with drilled holes. This makes it easier to keep the eye centered while you drive the punch.



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**

Classes

Hancock Shaker Village

Rte 20 / P.O. Box 927
Pittsfield, MA 01202
(413)443-0188
www.hancockshakervillage.org

Basic Blacksmithing I 7/15 & 16
Basic Blacksmithing II 7/29 & 30
Basic Blacksmithing I 8/12 & 13
Basic Blacksmithing II 9/15 & 16
Shaker Railing Project 9/21 - 9/24
Basic Blacksmithing III 10/14 & 15

New England School of Metalwork

7 Albiston Way
Auburn, Maine 04210
207-777-6211 Toll Free 888-753-7502
www.newenglandschoolofmetalwork.com
(Full classes not listed)

Small Steel Sculpture 8/11 - 8/14
Hinges of All Varieties 8/18 - 8/21
Untitled (Chris Winterstein instructor) 10/6 - 10/10

Peters Valley Craft Education Center

19 Kuhn Rd.
Layton, NJ 07581
(973) 948-5200
www.pvcrafts.org

Bloomery Smelting 7/21 - 7/25
Forging Fundamentals 7/28 - 8/1
Forge Welding Mild Steel 8/4 - 8/8
Hinges of All Varieties 8/11 - 8/15
Joinery 8/18 - 8/22



- ◆ 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

Tongs & Hand Tools 8/25 - 8/29
Beginning Blacksmithing 9/2 - 9/4

Creative Art Time Studio

135 Adams Street
Delmar, NY 12054
(518)475-9472
www.catsartstudio.com

Weekly and monthly evening blacksmithing classes available

Heldeberg Workshop

PO Box 323
Voorheesville, NY 12186
(518) 765-2777
www.heldebergworkshop.org

Teen Courses:

Beginning Blacksmithing
Blacksmithing I
19th Century Advanced Blacksmithing

Adult Courses:

Blacksmithing I

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

John Ackner

in conjunction with the Mabee Farm
1080 Main Street, Route 5S
Rotterdam Junction, New York 12150
518-887-5073

Beginner's Class 9/23 - 9/24
Intermediate Class 10/21 - 10/22



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

Nearby Events

Oct - Fitchburg "Forge-In"

Oct 7&8 - Northeast Blacksmiths Association Fall Hammer-In.
Additional details forthcoming.

July 22 Early American Industries Assoc. meeting. Topics to cover early Dutch hardware, broom corn industries and blacksmithing. Registration is \$10.00 For more info call Win Bigelow at 518-399-4742.

Meeting location:
Mabee Farm 1080 Main Street, Route 5S Rotterdam Junction, New York 12150



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

Confessions of a Bladesmith: 'Secrets' Revealed! - Part 4

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.

The next day I go out and retrieve the blade from the kilns that have now cooled down to 850F. and then shut themselves off. The first thing that I do is to clean all of that black nasty scale off the outside with my 4.5" angle grinder. Grinding disks are cheap compared to belts and remove metal much faster. The black oxide bark is tougher than Hades and will eat up belts at a frightening rate.

When all is clean I hold my breath and examine the entire surface carefully to make sure there are no flaws or defects. Then I step into the finishing side of my shop and do any quick straightening of distortion that may have occurred during the annealing heat. Then I grind flats down either side for reference and squaring things up. Using a 36X belt I true up the profile and try to make the sword look as close to the finished outline as possible. It is very important to establish your profile first since all of the edge bevels will have to be changed if the profile is altered later. This profile cleanup also helps remove all of the decarb from the very edges. Now I will spend some time just making sure that everything is as straight as possible.

Now I cover the future edges with layout dye and lay the sword on a flat surface and scribe center marks at intervals down the length of it. I then turn the blade over and do them down the same edge all over again, in order to get a good "average" centerline. Then the same is done down the edge of the other side. (Figure 1)



Figure 1 - Scribing the center line of the edges. The line then becomes a target to grind to.

Yes the edge area is very thick in this image, but remember that this is the ricasso area that I did no bevel forging on in order to get the thickness I desire for the guard shoulders. I will bring the bevels up to where I want them with the grinder instead. I have a sying in my shop "hammers and micrometers don't get along" so



Figure 2 - Mr. Cashen's grinders. Both are wired in such a manner that the air handling system for the shop must be on in order for them to work. This helps keep grind particulate to a minimum

when I want something done precise I leave it for the grinder. You cannot see clearly in this photo how the edges are forged down farther along the blade.

Pictured are my own home built grinder and my "Hardcore" grinder. (Figure 2) They are both wired into the bench, which has a 220V power source that is fed through a main switch that also runs an industrial air system incorporated into the bench. In order to have power to the bench the air system must be turned on. I use my own grinder for almost all of my heavy shaping and much of the polishing and use the hardcore for lots of edge rolling with the slack belt and handle shaping.

I start all of my grinding with a 36X Zirconia belt that in an unusual green color that I get from a local company that has serviced me very well for years now. The belts I run the most on my machine are 2x48", although my machine can also run 72" and any size in between.

The first grind that I do is a very obtuse edge bevel down either side until I have an edge established in the center that is around 3/32" thick. Next I grind in the main flats of the bevels until they meet in the center and approach my initial sharp edge bevels.

Now it is time to address the issues that are peculiar to this blade shape. This is not an easy blade to grind properly and I have seen many mediocre grinds on leaf blades. The problem comes from the change in profile. (Figure 3) Whenever you have a portion of the blade that extends beyond another in a curving fashion, you cannot simply cut a flat straight grind line from beginning to end. Think about it, the angle of edges in the narrow section will be much more obtuse then in the wider section. If one continues this

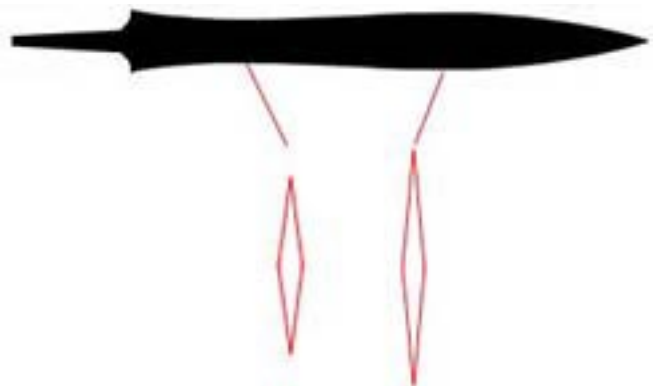


Figure 3 - Shows the difference in cross section because of width changes. These changes must be carefully transitioned by hand while grinding

angle into the wide area you will grind your edges off and eat away your curve.

This also poses a problem for the centerline. I believe a big no-no for distal taper is to ever have the blade get thicker at any spot as you go to the point. If one is not careful while grinding these compound bevels you can very easily lose control of the distal taper.

To add to all of this is the difficulty in sighting down the blade to see if things are straight and true. With straight edges one can just hole the thing up to light source and eyeball it quite well. With curved edges or, worse yet, re-curved edges you lose your reference planes and can't just eyeball down the edge. I still do a lot of eyeballing but it is done in different ways.

I have seen leaf blades that had an interesting corkscrew thing going on in the bevels and I realized that the maker either lost it in forging or what happened was the one bevel was ground in straight and level from top to tip and then in order to save the blade when the others were ground, the wider section had to be off center and then all of the other bevels followed suit creating a corkscrew out of the blade. These blades must be sculpted not just ground. The differing bevels must be blended smoothly together with the mid ridge still remaining crisp and straight. Next time you see leaf blade



Figure 4 - The complex sweeping curves near the ricasso needed to be 'sculpted' by hand with files and stones.

think of these things and check out if the maker was careful about it.

I had to actually do a bit of hand sculpting with files and stones away from the grinder on this blade to get the exact effect that I wanted as the edges terminated in reducing curves near the ricasso. **(Figure 4)** I think I will charge more for leaf blades in the future.

Now that the bevel flats are established, it will probably be necessary to adjust the distal taper. So now I take measurements down the blade and mark off any areas that may need shaving down. **(Figure 5)** I like to see a continuous rate of reduction from ricasso to tip and if there is a change in this rate I like to bring it back into line.

I do this by grinding with a slight bit more pressure toward the mid ridge. This will cause the center ridge to take a wave at that point so that when I grind from the other side it will straighten the center line back out but more importantly, it will reduce the height of that center line in the cross section.

I must admit that it takes A LOT of practice to get the feel for what you are doing on a grinder in order to adjust these angles in a minute and accurate way. I always advise would be knife makers to



Figure 5 - Checking the distal taper (the rate of thinning from ricasso to tip) with a micrometer.

learn how to grind a knife to shape first before going on to forging. Shaping hot steel with a hammer is a piece of cake when compared to laying a perfectly straight grind line right where it has to be, time after time. I hear some folks tell me how many hours they spend polishing, normally I look down their blades and see how many dips and waves there are in the grind. If you keep the grind planes as smooth as glass, polishing is not a very long process at all. Scratches polish out very quickly, dips, ripples and waves are what people spend hours or days trying to get rid of.

I always grind edge up and do it a little differently than most others. I have an awful time teaching others how to grind because of this. Most folks grind at belly level with both arms locked in at their sides. I grind at chest level with my hands in front of me guiding the process. **(Figure 6)** When doing delicate work I use a push stick like a pen to finesse things along. One of the reasons that I have never been able to warm up to a Bader grinder is that they are locked in at 90 degrees at belly level. 90 degrees (platen straight up and down) is incredibly awkward for me. I have worked on the same homemade grinder my entire career and it is at a more pleasant ergonomic angle for me. 90 degrees hurts my wrist and is impossible for me to control. I must say that I am an extremely



Figure 6 - Mr. Cashen shows his unique and 'non-standard' grinding stance (left). The grinder is tilted and much higher than the 'standard' grinding stance (right)

small minority in this. You may have noticed by now that I am just different all the way around.

It is at this point that I start to also adjust for overall weight and balance points. I keep a scale in the shop that continually see where I am going with the weight of the blade and I have a little triangular block that I balance the blade on to see where that weight should, or should not, be. More importantly after every pass across the grinder I heft the blade and see how it feels. I guess I should mention that I have smoothed down the tang so that I can get a good

feel for the sword without hurting my hands. All of my swords are lifeless pieces of steel when they come off from the anvil. It is not until I get on the grinder that the blade starts to really feel right. The scales and the balance point will tell me how many ounces I need to



Figure 7 - The scale provides key information about overall weight, balance, and which areas need further refinement.

lose yet and where I have to lose them. (Figure 7)

I think it can be a mistake to rely upon hilt and pommel to balance a sword out. To me these are final minor adjustments. By making the bare blade alone feel right and then putting the hilt work on with care I have not been disappointed yet.

Once I have the taper in and the whole thing going in the right direction, I then start blending the edge into the blade. I have around 1/8 " of edge left now so as opposed to the heavy angled chisel edges that most sword shaped objects have, I will roll my edge into the blade so that after polishing you will not notice any change in angle. This creates a smooth yet strong convex edge that begins its curve about 1/2" from the edge and comes down to sharp. I do all of this on the un-backed portion of the belt called the slack belt. (Figure 8)



Figure 8 - Working with a 'slack belt' assists the transition from edge to blade face.

When working on the slack belt the edge going into the cut will be soft and the one coming out of the cut will be sharply defined. The harder you push into the belt the more radius the cut will have the less pressure the more flat it will be. By using these principles in various combinations you can control many aspects of how, and where, the metal is removed. I like to lay the entire flat against the belt and let it cut near the mid ridge as well as the edge. This gives an overall convex to the blade as well acts to straighten out any waves in the lines. Tip: it is really great for straightening the sides of fullers that are not quite perfect yet! The other nice thing about it is that slack belts don't make facets, dips or ripples, they just make scratches, and so they are very easy to polish after.

A drawback of the slack belt is where you are doing your work. You must stay focused because the work will be thrown

directly into you if you happen to slip. Another bothersome thing about it, and it is worse in cool dry weather, is that there is not metal backing to ground you out. Now your grinder has been transformed into a makeshift Vande Graff generator. It will be most unpleasant the next time you touch anything that is grounded. I normally just touch the tang to the drill press that sets beside my grinder after every pass to dissipate the charge. This always makes the coolest little blue lightening bolt that can get as long as 2" at times. When this phenomenon is really bad I will take a small chain and throw it over my drill press and tuck the other end in my waistband, but this looks really strange and is kind of chilly.

Once the edge is down to .025 or so things are just about there (this is good for me, those heat treating in ovens or forges will need more thickness). It is very important to get all of your shaping done while grinding. Even though polishing is done with much of the same equipment it is not the same process. Trying to grind with a polishing belt just wastes time and belts as well as over heat things.

Next I thread the tang in order to get the accurate weight and feel of things before continuing. (Figure 9)



Figure 9 - With the edge and other blade sections ground to within .025" the tang is threaded to a receive the pommel. This will enable further and even more precise weighing.

Next installment "Polishing"

'A Call to Forges'

As mentioned in the last issue of this newsletter, the Albany Rural Cemetery is interested in working with us to help restore the original smithy on the cemetery grounds and have CDBA provide a public demonstration in exchange for a CDBA gathering place.

On September 23rd, the forges usually used at CDBA public events (those belonging to the President and Secretary) will be in use elsewhere, and those officers will NOT be able to attend the ARC public event.

With that in mind we are putting out a 'call to forges'. Would CDBA members with a forge and the time please step forward to help with this public demonstration.

Civil War Heritage Day
Albany Rural Cemetery, Menands, New York
Saturday, September 23, 2006, 9 am - 5 pm

Those able to do so please contact the CDBA President or Secretary at 665-8308 or 429-5270

<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
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15	16	17	18	19	20	21	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
29	30	31					26	27	28				
<u>March</u>							<u>April</u>						
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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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14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28	29	30	
<u>July</u>							<u>August</u>						
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<u>September</u>							<u>October</u>						
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<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 - Finalized

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 23rd - Pending Member Volunteers

Albany Rural Cemetary, public demonstration
Loundonville, 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

Pres: Jonathan Nedbor
496 Tow Path
High Falls, NY 12440
845-687-7130
jonned@hvc.rr.com

Berkshire Blacksmiths Association

William Senseney
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Contact Us

You can get in touch with us for submissions, requests and information by a variety of means:

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