

New Jersey Blacksmiths Newsletter

Dating Antique Items Made by Blacksmiths

By Gary Scasbrick

Reprinted from Tuyere, Newsletter of the Illinois Valley Blacksmith Association, January / February 2009

Close dating of blacksmith made items, especially some hand tools is impossible without maker's marks or documentation. Some styles of tools have been made the same for 200 years. Some styles or types came into use and went out of use in certain periods. Here are some clues to come up the approximate date of some hand-forged items:

1. Dome Head factory made rivets were common after 1845. Items with factory rivets should date later than 1845.
2. Tools from England were stamped "Made in England" after 1891.
3. Tools stamped with "Cast Steel" were made after 1760.
4. Pritchel Holes in anvils appeared about 1830 in English Anvils.
5. Earliest Factory made hatchet approx. 1845.
6. Double bit axes first became popular around 1850.
7. On any edged tool, steel bit forge welded to iron body, look for a line where the steel was forge welded to the iron body. These steel bits were generally added after approx. 1744 and quit approx.

1870.

8. Pre-Civil War handles for axes were straight, not curved.

9. No Poll on Axes in the 1600's. First hint of a poll about 1715. Fully developed polls by 1750. Round polls continued to be made until about 1800 and square polls are still made.

10. Threads on bolts were hand filed and rounded before 1830 — where sharp and crisp later. (I have English threads lathe cut and rounded, American a sharp V thread after 1830 — Dave.)

11. First practical steel production furnace in America was 1730. Edged tools were scarce before this time.

12. 1840 First adze eye hammer (long or deep eye) same as on modern hammers.

13. Nail pulling slots in bottom edge of blade in shingling hatchets became popular in early 1800's.

14. 1815 First cut nails with a square head were made by a machine, these had flat sides and forge nail had four tapered sides. (I have this date about 25 years earlier — Dave.)

Patina items stamped with a date, items with a maker's mark, and items with original wood handles mean "everything" when trying to put a value on any antique hand forged item!

An Old-time Quench Recipe for Tempering Iron
Reprinted from Appalachian Blacksmiths Association Newsletter; September, 2008

Old Quench Recipe

Use at your own risk, lye can be nasty!

First appeared in the December 2003 issue. You may recall Amasa Kittle from the Dec. 2002 issue. He was the local blacksmith in Philippi when the covered bridge was built in 1852. The article is at the ABA website if you do not have the newsletter.

Jeanne Russell, a descendant of Mr. Kittle, read that article and sent in a most unusual tidbit. It turns out that her grandfather, Holt Swecker, was also a farmer and blacksmith at Huttonsville, WV. Before he died, Holt Swecker wrote down his recipe for a tempering quench and passed it along to

his son, Carroll. And this recipe is what Ms. Russell sent in.

Holt Samuel Swecker was born in 1881 at Valley Head, WV and died in 1974.

Quench Recipe — Tempering

- + 2 spoons Soda
- + 2 Tablespoons full of salt, heaped
- + 2 Tablespoons full of Borax
- 1 Tablespoon of Red Seal Lye
- + Add ingredients to a gallon of water and 1/2 gallon of used motor oil
- + Heat [iron] to light cherry red
- + Air once or twice while cooling

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Forged Arrow Head



Cut off on the hardy leaving about an inch of material to forge into the tip. Make sure that the tip is lined up with the shaft. The tip can be case hardened in casinite powder, which will leave it hard enough to pierce armor.

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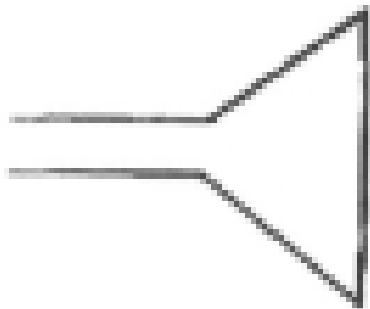
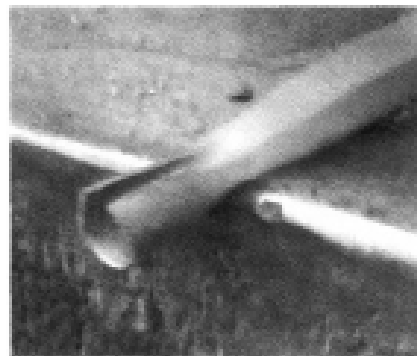
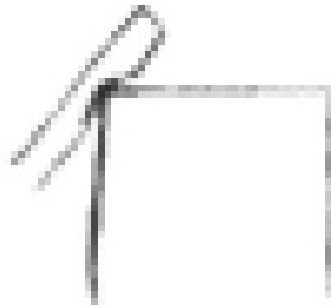
John Murray demo Making a Bodkin arrow head (armor piercing)

By Bob Ehrenberger

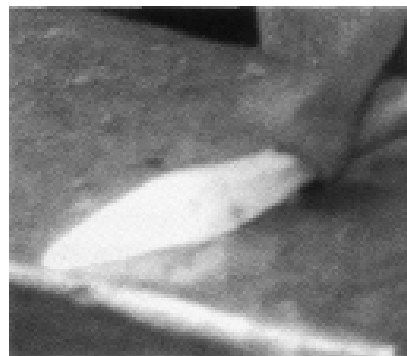
Starting with 1/2" sq. stock, section off about an inch of material using the near edge of the anvil.

Spread with a cross pein hammer. You can't get it too thin, push it as far as you can.

Trim into a fan shape with the shear. You could also cut with chisel, file, or grind to get the shape.



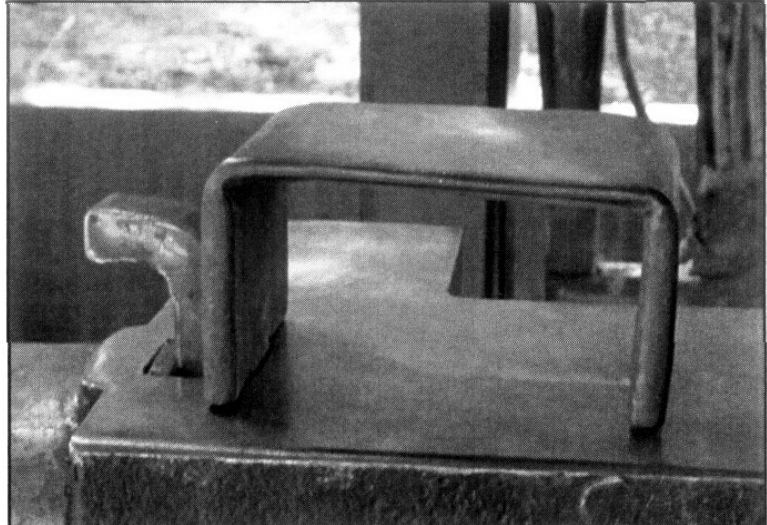
Start the socket on the step of the anvil, finish over a tapered mandrel the size of the arrow shaft.



Anvil Bridge

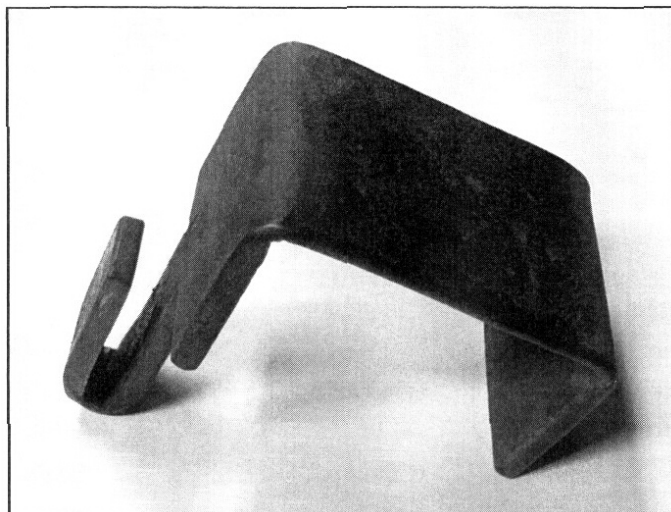
By Mario Baggiolini, Sonora, CA

This anvil bridge is a tool for making forks or working on split or forge welded branches. I got the idea from an article I read on an old antique anvil bridge — I can't remember where, in a magazine or on the Internet. It sounded good, so I decided to make one. In the article they said it was made from 4" x 1/2" thick leaf spring, way too heavy to work. But, having a piece of leaf spring 3" x 5/16", I was off to the forge. Other bridges I've

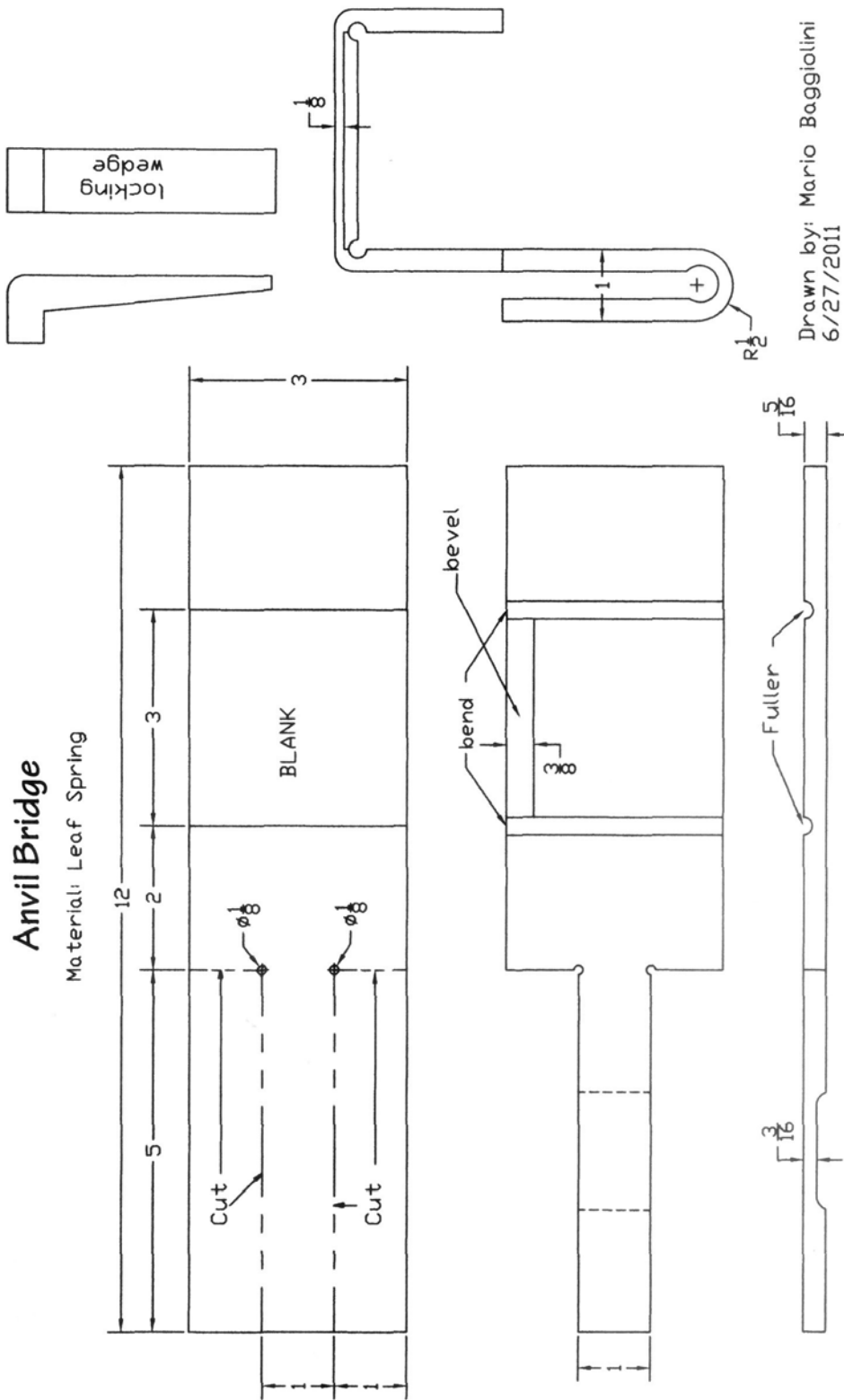


made with square tubing just get beat up because they are soft and don't hold up to pounding. I began by laying out the cut lines. Then I drilled two 1/8" diameter holes at the intersections of the cut lines to prevent stress cracks. With a helper striking, we hot cut away the scrap. Then I fullered in two places where the bends would go about 3/16" wide and 1/16" deep; it makes bending easy. I also fullered and drew out an area at the middle of the tang which goes into my hardy hole, to give it a bit of spring. I then folded up everything and fitted it to my anvil and made a wedge to drive in to lock it in place. I also ground a bevel on one side so that a fork can be driven all the way in. The dimensions can be altered to fit anyone's anvil. Mine has a 1" square hardy hole. Lastly, I annealed the whole thing — important. The spring steel is tough enough without heat-treating, and by annealing it, it won't crack.

California Blacksmith Nov-Dec 2011



New Jersey Blacksmiths Newsletter



Drawn by: Mario Baggolini
6/27/2011

TEAR THIS PAGE OFF!!!

NJBA Board of Directors

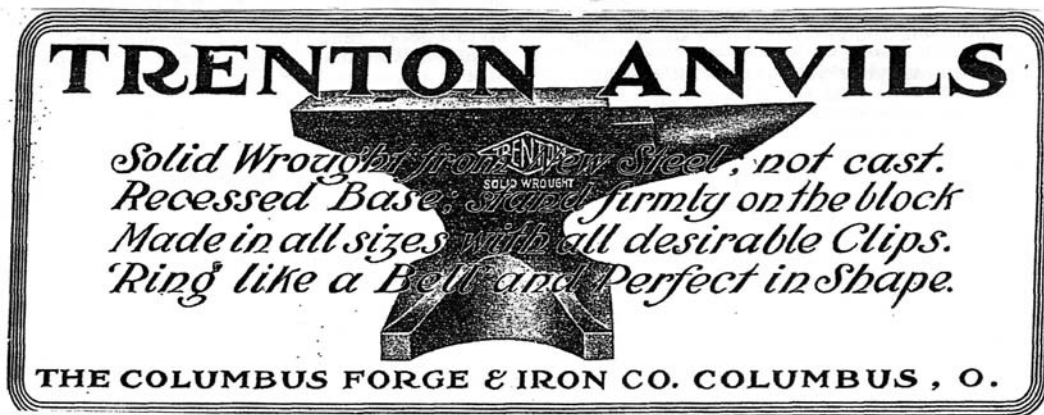
Election and Membership Renewal Page

The NJBA bylaws were recently amended to provide for a mail-in ballot for electing NJBA directors. On the other side of this page, you will find your ballot and renewal notice. Please fill out your ballot and return it with your 2013-2014 membership dues. (Note that NJBA elections are not, nor ever have been, by secret vote. Your name is on your ballot so the board can confirm you are a member in good standing and that your vote should be counted – which you can insure by returning your ballot with your dues.) Ballots will be counted 30 days after this newsletter is mailed, so please be prompt in your response.

The NJBA Renewal and Board of Directors Ballot is on the next page. Please fill this out and send in as soon as you can.

The date of your last renewal is on the mailing label!!!

If your date is **2012** or older this is your last newsletter!!!



NJBA Ballot and Renewal

Renewal

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip

Phone Number (s)

Home _____ Cell _____

Email address _____

My check is enclosed for **\$20** (membership) or **\$40** (business membership).

Ballot

Please check a box for each nominee.

You should vote on all nominees.

Nominee	Nominee		Nominee	Nominee	
	For	Against		For	Against
Marshall					
Bienstock	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	David Macauley	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Larry Brown	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tom Majewski	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Eric Cuper	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mark Morrow	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dave Ennis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Dan O'Sullivan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bruce Freeman	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bruce Ringier	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bruce Hay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Eric Von Arx	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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