

Review

Blacksmithing Videos Purchased Online

Eric G. Thing

Over the past 30 years, the PBS series "The Woodwright's Shop", hosted by Roy Underhill, has shown quite a number of segments featuring blacksmithing. Most of these have been filmed at the Colonial Williamsburg blacksmith shop in Williamsburg, Virginia.

I caught a number of these shows in the 80's and 90's when they were first broadcast; I even taped a few on my then cutting-edge VHS recorder. The tapes have deteriorated over the years, and I knew there were many more episodes that I did not record, so I was left sighing for someone to finally put Roy Underhill's series on DVD, or some other accessible media.

Well, it has finally happened. The online store, www.shopwoodworking.com, not only has many past seasons of the series available on DVD, but it also sells new videos by Peter Ross, one of the Williamsburg shop's past masters. Having viewed many of these videos, I thought I might give my own impressions of them.

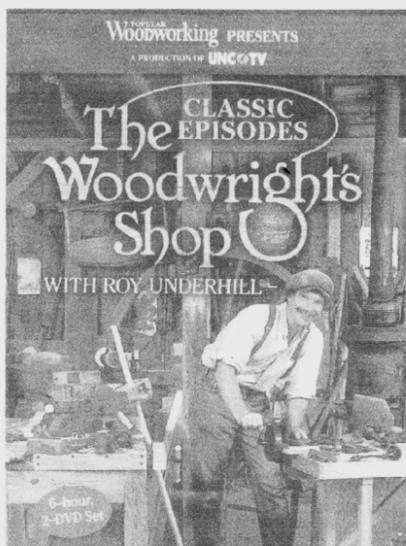
(NOTE! You can view full half-hour episodes of the Woodwright's shop, including some blacksmithing ones, for free on the PBS website. You need a broadband connection that can handle video streaming, of course. The catch: the videos only go back a few seasons, and I don't know how long each season will remain available for viewing. For shows before about 2007, you need to find other media.)

On Shop Woodworking, the Woodwright's shop is available in two media formats: Complete-season DVDs, and 1-episode downloads. Of course, being a commercial operation, everything on this site costs money.

In this article, I will cover the DVDs I've bought. The Woodwright DVDs are two-disk sets, each covering a whole season of the show. This usually means 13-14 episodes, about 7 per disk. They are not dirt cheap; I've paid \$29.99 for each set I've purchased (it's one of those deals where the "list" price is higher, but is always discounted for a special customer like you). The site shows a short description of each episode on a disk, so you know which ones contain metalworking content, and those that don't. The Peter Ross videos are a single hour, covering the making of one item, with only Ross as the host.

Why would I pay \$30 for a whole season, instead of a la carte selection of individual episode downloads? The main reason: I like the show, and the other episodes in a season set almost always have content I am interested in. Heck, I bought one disk with no ironworking at all, because Underhill did three episodes in New Mexico tracing the Hispanic colonial woodworking tradition. To me, 6-7 hours of content is worth \$30, even if most of it is working wood. If my descriptions of the episodes pique your interest, and you don't want to pay for the disks, you could try a download of only one episode, if they have it -- I've never done it, so I don't know how their service works. The downloads are \$4.99 each.

Descriptions of individual disks and sets continue on the next page.



Review (cont.)

The Woodwright's Shop DVDs:

A few overall cautions: One, the video quality is a bit low for our expectations nowadays, especially in the earlier seasons. These shows were videotaped and then transcribed to disk, and none of them are in the high-definition format we are now used to. I don't find it much of a problem. Two, you have to get past Underhill as a host. He's pretty high-energy and loud. I don't mind him. In my opinion, he's a lot better than the shouting, gesticulating "expert" hosts they have on various History Channel segments today. Another: the smithing is all historical re-creation (mostly American Colonial). Underhill's thing is 18th-19th century crafts, so all the smithing is old-timey, with no modern processes such as using gas forges, arc-welding, plasma, etc. Yet another: If you get several episodes, you will notice repeated material: Underhill always asks how the bellows works, what flux is for, etc; he is doing an educational PBS series, so each episode has to stand on its own.

Descriptions, by season:

Season 6:

"Anderson's Forge" -- This may be Underhill's first taped visit to the Anderson shop in Colonial Williamsburg (the date is 1986, so we are approaching 30 years ago). It's a general sort of walkaround; they show nail-making, disassembling a musket and doing some maintenance on the parts; forging and punching a hinge, and talking about Anderson's business back in the day. I enjoyed it, but it was pretty general. (Bonus for the young guy messing up a couple of nails as he gave his rapid-fire narration: they kept bending and locking into his heading tools. He covered well.) **2 stars.**

"Tool Maker's Art" -- Peter Ross and a journeyman show how small hatchets were made. Ross also talks about finer toolmaking, including discussions of benchwork. Shows forging, wrapping, welding and steeling the hatchet blade. (I got the feeling that the journeyman may have been a bit irritated by Underhill, but he soldiered on. Ross and Underhill have made a bunch of shows together, and they seem to get along OK; Underhill zooms around, and Ross is super laid-back. They complement each other well.) **3 stars.**

Season 11:

"Blacksmith of Williamsburg" -- Ross and another journeyman demonstrate making two pieces of window shutter hardware: a hinge (strap-and-pintle type), and a shutter dog, for holding the shutter open. I liked the episode, but I took off a star because they did not show making the hinge pintle, just the leaf. The shutter dog was great, because Ross did all the work, and watching him working on the simplest pieces is a treat. (This is mixed with bitter envy, since he does in one heat what takes me 3 or 4, and the work is 10 times better, of course.) **2 stars.**

Season 14:

"The Williamsburg Blacksmiths" -- Journeyman, with Ross assisting, demonstrates the making of a drawknife. Shows welding steel to iron, lots of shaping. Hardening and tempering a finished blade. Burning on a wooden handle. Only one-half of a drawknife blade is shown being fully forged, due to time constraints, but I found that OK. (Bonus: Journeyman did not quite get the last half-inch of the steel-iron weld to stick, but he had no time to finish it in the 25 minutes he had to work. Sort of comforts me that even the experts can't do everything in one heat all the time.) I like this episode; it was one of the few I managed to tape back in the 90's, and I've watched it many times. **3 stars.**

Review (cont.)

Season 14 (cont.):

"Blacksmiths Forge Ahead" -- Ross doing a Suffolk door latch, solo. (Underhill watches, of course.) One of my favorites. The latch requires many individual operations: forging, punching, drifting, shaping in a swage, a little benchwork. Again, just watching Ross work is cool. **4 stars.**

Season 20:

"In the Blacksmith's Shop" -- It's at this point in the series (year 2000) that Ken Schwartz starts to co-host the blacksmithing segments with Peter Ross. (A few years later, Ross retired from the Anderson shop, and Schwartz became the master.) This episode is all right -- I like them all, really, so I'm biased -- but it is a bit repetitive of material in other segments. Welding up a binding hoop for a wagon wheel hub, steeling, hardening and tempering a chisel blade, talking about the 18th century blacksmithing business. Ross shows a spectacular finished piece: a mechanical spit turner that his shop made, complete with hand-cut gears. **2 stars.**

Season 21:

"Blacksmith's Hinges" -- They do a lot of hinges in the Williamsburg shop. This episode shows Schwartz making a cross-garnet door hinge (what we could call a T-hinge today). Forging, welding, punching. I took a star off, because they don't show the whole process of the hinge being made: Underhill and Ross spend half the episode at the bench showing and discussing hinge styles, and colonial-era locks. Very interesting, but hearing Schwartz pounding away in the background made we want to reach into the TV screen and move the camera to point at him! **2 stars.**

"Flintlock Gunsmith" -- Not blacksmithing per se, but pretty good. Overview of some bench work on 18th-Century firearms. What really nailed me: Wallace Gussler on camera in the episode, 32 years older than he was in the "Gunsmith of Williamsburg" film, produced back in 1969! (You see this a lot in the Williamsburg video canon: the same folks, getting grayer along with you, over the past third of a century. Is historical craft work on this level such a fulfilling profession that people stick to it for their entire lives?) **2 stars.**

Season 22:

"Shutter Dogs from the Blacksmith" -- Ross and Schwartz, doing a shutter dog. Not the super-simple one demonstrated back in Season 11, but a two-piece version that requires an interesting wrap-and-weld. Spoiler alert: How do you punch a two-inch long slot in a narrow bar? You don't. You draw out one end, wrap it and weld it to make a long, narrow eye, then form the eye to a rectangle. Some bench discussions of window hardware. I really like this episode, because it is almost a textbook lesson in making one piece of period hardware: While Schwartz is heating the work, Ross shows a series of test pieces on the bench illustrating every stage of the work to be done. I would call this 4 stars, but I took one off because of defects in the disks. The episode chapter selection does not work on my DVD player, so I have to use the skip button to get to episodes I want to see (this problem is on two of the disks I bought, by the way). Also -- bizarre fact -- the two disks are mislabeled: The "Episode 1-7" disk actually has episodes 8-13, and vice versa. Irritating. **3 stars.**

So, are the Woodwright DVDs for you? I like colonial-era crafts, and didn't mind the price tag, so I have been very pleased with them (despite the video defects on a couple). If you want to give them a try, my advice is to first get Season 14, which has two good blacksmithing episodes.

Review (cont.)

Peter Ross' Video Series:

Peter Ross retired from Colonial Williamsburg a few years back, but he has a shop in North Carolina, and he is still doing video segments, both for Underhill's show and for single DVDs that he publishes himself. I have two of Ross' DVDs.

"Forging a Compass" -- Running time 60 min, \$24.99. Ross makes a compass (we would now call them dividers) from 3/8" square bar stock. He goes through the whole process, forging and benchwork. Although the tool he makes is a repro of an 18th century version, his shop and tools are all modern: cast iron hearth with electric blower, London pattern anvil, even a short session with a Little Giant. Again, the best part of the piece is watching Ross work. He is very relaxed, unhurried, low key. He spends half the video on the benchwork, cleaning up the compass for precise fit and surface finish. **4 stars.**

"Forging a Custom Hinge" -- Running time 60 min (I think it is shorter than the jacket claims, but I haven't timed it), \$17.99. Ross in his new shop, forging a small leaf hinge for suitable colonial restoration work. Less meat to the subject matter than the compass video, but I'm still glad I got it. I especially liked his demonstration of forge welding 16 gauge sheet metal to make the hinge leaves; I seldom see forge welding of thin stock nowadays. **3 stars.**

He has recently done a third DVD, "Forging a Strking Knife", which I may get in future; but I am not in a hurry. I hope others will follow.

Notice....problems with viewing SCABA conference DVDs..

It has recently come to our attention that some of the DVD's that have been available from the SCABA video library would not play or would stop completely. We think we have found the problem. Those DVD's were finished up with a paper label attached to them. For whatever reason the DVD's we used, while were supposed to be compatible with paper labels, don't want to work because of them. Solution...carefully remove the label with mild dishwashing soap, dry and see if they do not work fine. Board member, Mandell Greteman found this to work for the DVD's he was having problems with.

We hope to have all future DVD's labeled using the lite-scribe method which prints the information directly onto the DVD.

2014 Salt Fork Conference Tool Box

Item	Donor
Box (25 1/2" x 7" I.D.)	Charles McDevitt
Hardware for toolbox	Charles McDevitt
1 1/2 lb. cross peen hammer	
2 1/2 lb. cross peen hammer	
Rounding hammer	
Handled hot cut	
File flat bastard cut	
File, half-round bastard cut	
Farrier's Rasp	
Hacksaw	
Rivet backing tool for 1/4"	
Rivet setting tool for 1/4"	
Rivet backing tool for 5/16"	
Rivet setting tool for 5/16"	
Rivet backing tool for 3/8"	
Rivet setting tool for 3/8"	
Scribe	
Center Punch	
Center Finder	
Dividers	
Tongs	
1/4 V-bit	
3/8 V-bit	
1/2 V-bit	
Scroll pliers	
Soapstone and holder	
Abrasive block, small piece of grinding wheel	
Angle Transfer	
Chisel, Large	
Chisel, small	
Metal folding ruller 24" or 72"	
Ball tool (round blunt nose punch)	
Hand held spring swage for tenons	
Hand held swage for necking down	
Set of monkey tools (1/8", 3/16", 1/4")	
Adjustable square	
Bending forks	
Flux spoon	
Flux	
Twisting Wrench	
Hot cut hardy	
Hot slit chisel	
Bolster plate	
Finish wax	
Fire Tools	Diana Davis
Shovel	
Rake	
Poker	



Something a little different...

Our SCABA Conference is coming up the first of November and we thought we would do something a little different. We would like to have some center pieces made for the tables. Something big enough to hold approximately 1.5-2 cups of after dinner mints. It can be anything as long as it is hand made. We are going to be setting up at least 20 tables and would like to have one per table. You can use your imagination of what to make. It can be a water can, candle holder, large spoon, bowl, even an anvil. The Choice is yours.

The centerpieces will belong to the club and some of them will be auctioned off and some will be kept for use in the future. If we get enough people to participate this will be a fun thing and it will raise money at the auction and make our dinner festive and interesting.

We would like to have them turned in by the 18th of October so we know how many we have available.

If you have any questions please contact Charles McDevitt (580-439-8931) or Diana Davis at (580-549-6824) or Diana.copperrose@gmail.com

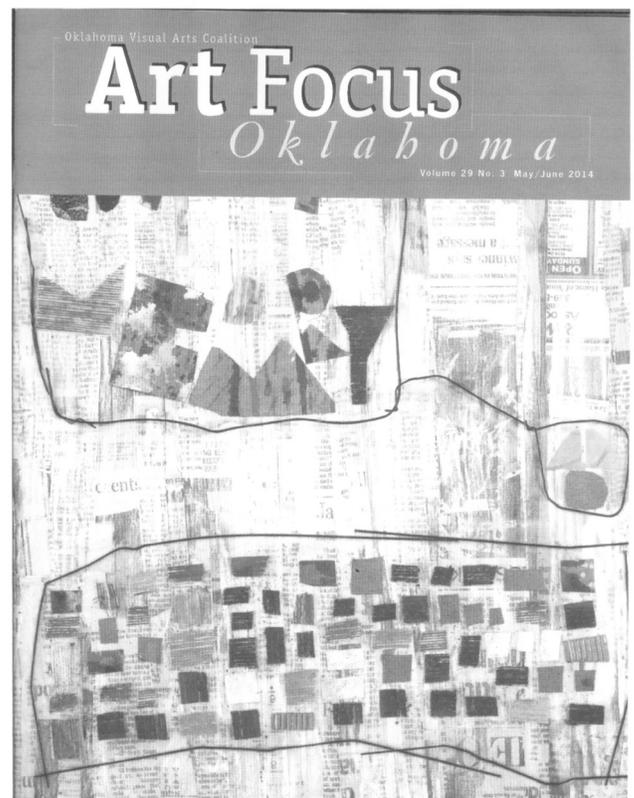
Thank You...Charles McDevitt

In the SpotLight...

An article featuring Ron Lehenbauer is in the May-June 2014 Art Focus Magazine on page 22.

<http://ovac-ok.org/art-focus-magazine/>

According to the computer, copies of the magazine are available in Enid at the Gaslight theater and Scribner's Gallery.



KGA Shop Tour

The Spring Shop tour of the KGA was a huge success. Anytime you have long range planning and the weather is great, it has to be a huge success.

I want to Thank our demonstrators for their contribution to making the day a memorable one. Charles Conner, scrimshaw artist, Dave Anders, damascus patterns, and Jim McGuinn, grinder design and jigs. I also did a demo on my favorite knife design, the integral.

I also want to thank all the ladies that helped out in preparing and serving the food and making the noon meal an enjoyable one.

Our next shop tour will be held at Bill Kennedy's home in Yukon, OK around the first of October. The date hasn't been finalized yet nor the demo's that will be done. If any one has a suggestion, please let Bill or me know what it is.

Also, if you know of a member or friend that isn't getting the emails, let me know. It may be their email setting or I may not have current email address. Also, feel free to forward this email to any one that may be interested in knives or how they are made. We want to educate as many people as we can on what goes into making a knife or materials needed to make a knife.

Bill Lyons had donated a very nice knife forged from 5160 with curly maple handles and inlaid with an oval of heart wood. It was won by Lalian Morton of Muldrow, OK. The drawing was from all the tickets that were bought for an item in the Iron in the Hat. We put all the tickets into one big container and then draw one ticket for the grand prize.

A lot of the pictures will be on Facebook and if you happen to be a friend of some one that has an account, you can share the post and all your friends can enjoy the pics as well.

Calvin Harkins and his Brother Harry, took a video of the demos and will have a CD made for me and then I can have some DVD's made of it. Calvin has been doing this for the past several years and I still have some available. They are \$10.00 ea and that includes the mailing. The club doesn't really make much from them but allow others to see what we do. If you would like one, let me know.

That about wraps up the latest news and if some one has something that needs forwarding, let me know.



Ray Kirk..



SCABA Shop and Swap

For Sale:

6" round nosed pliers (great for putting scrolls on small items) \$5.00 each.

Brooms tied, \$20.00 on your handle Please contact me for help with handle length.

Contact Diana Davis at Diana.copperrose@gmail.com

For Sale:

24"(wide) x 1"(thick) Ceramic fiber blanket (similar to Kao-wool) \$1.00 per inch of length. Twisted solid cable 1/2" diameter \$2.00 per ft.

Contact Larry Roderick at 940-237-2814

Wanted:

Advertising Coal Hammers, Contact Mike George at 1-580-327-5235 or o Mike-Marideth@sbcglobal.net

Club Coal

Saltfork Craftsmen has coal for sale. Coal is in 1-2" size pieces The coal is \$140.00/ton or .07 /pound to members .**No sales to non-members.**

NW Region coal pile is located in Douglas, OK. If you make arrangements well in advance, Tom Nelson can load your truck or trailer with his skid steer loader for a fee of \$10 to be paid directly to Tom. Tom has moved his skid steer and must now haul the loader to the coal pile to load you out, hence the \$10 charge. You may opt to load your own coal without using Tom's loader. The coal can be weighed out at the Douglas Coop Elevator scales. Contact Tom Nelson (580-862-7691) to make arrangements to pick up a load. Do not call Tom after 9 PM!! Bring your own containers and shovels. Payment for the coal (\$.07 per pound) should be made directly to the Saltfork Treasurer.

NE Region coal location: Charlie McGee has coal to sell. He lives in the Skiatook, Oklahoma area. His contact information is:

littleironworks@gmail.com or (home) 918-245-7279 or (cell) 918-639-8779

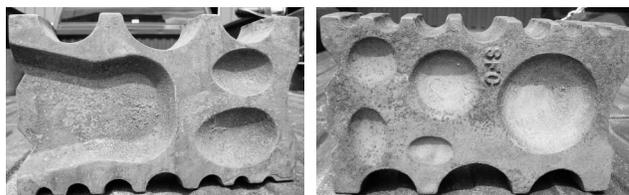
S/C region coal location: Club coal is now available at Norman at Byron Donor place. Call Byron to make arrangements to come by and get coal.

SCABA swage blocks

\$100.00 plus shipping to members. (1st block)

\$120.00 plus shipping to non-members

Contact Bill Kendall for more information



SCABA Floor Cones are now available from Bill Kendall, Byron Donor and Gerald Franklin. The price is \$200 plus shipping and handling.



Show your pride in SCABA

License plates for \$5.00 each.

We have coffee cups for \$9.00 with two images on them and We have a new shipment of caps for \$10.00. There will be caps at the SC meetings and- Dan Cowart has cups and caps .

We have some 2013 SCABA conference t-shirts available if you didn't get to get one. Contact Dan Cowart or Diana Davis for sizes available. The t-shirts cost \$15.00

I also have the insulated cups marked down. You can get one for \$6.00 each or 2 for \$10.00. see me at a meeting..Diana

SCABA Membership Application

January 1, 2014 to March 31, 2015

New Member _____
Membership Renewal _____

Please accept my application

Date: _____

First Name _____ Last Name _____

Married? Yes No Spouses Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone (_____) _____ Work Phone (_____) _____

E-mail _____ ABANA Member? Yes No

I have enclosed \$20.00 for dues for the period ending March 31, 2015

Signed: _____

Return to: Saltfork Craftsmen, 23966 N.E, Wolf Road, Fletcher, OK 73541

 ABANA	NEW & RENEWAL MEMBERSHIPS
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Name : _____ Membership ID # _____
(For renewals. Optional)

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City : _____ State/Prov : _____

Zip/PC : _____ Country : _____

Phone : _____ Fax : _____

E-mail : _____ Website : _____

Membership Type: New Renewal

Regular (US, Mexico, Canada)	One Year - <input type="checkbox"/> \$55	Two Years - <input type="checkbox"/> \$105
Senior (65+, US, Mexico, Canada,)	One Year - <input type="checkbox"/> \$50	Two Years - <input type="checkbox"/> \$95
Full-time Student (US, Mexico, Canada)	One Year - <input type="checkbox"/> \$45	Two Years - <input type="checkbox"/> \$85
Foreign	One Year - <input type="checkbox"/> \$65	Two Years - <input type="checkbox"/> \$125
Public Library (US, Mexico, Canada)	One Year - <input type="checkbox"/> \$45	Two Years - <input type="checkbox"/> \$85
Youth (18 years & younger) non-voting Hammer's Blow only	One Year - <input type="checkbox"/> \$20	Two Years - <input type="checkbox"/> \$40 (No discount)
Educational Institutions	One Year - <input type="checkbox"/> \$250	
Contributory Membership (amounts above \$55 / year may be tax deductible)	One Year - <input type="checkbox"/> \$150 and up \$ _____	

Additional contributions to ABANA's special funds:

Exhibition Fund	\$ _____
Metal Museum Library Fund	\$ _____
Next Conference Seed Money Fund	\$ _____

Total: \$ _____

Credit card orders can be faxed, be sure to sign this form. Fax: 423-913-1023

Card Number		Expiration Date		CVS
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Mail to: ABANA, 259 Muddy Fork Rd, Jonesborough, TN 37659 USA
 (Please pay by Check, U.S. Money Order or Credit Card)
 Phone: 423-913-1022 or join online at www.abana.org

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