Rocky Mountain Tool Collectors

Shavings, Sawdust and Splinters

July 2026

Richard Talks at March meeting in Fort Collins

At the March 15th, 2026, meeting of RMTC, Richard Juday gave a talk on how he does his sharpening. He opened with the comment that RMTC already has the largest head start of any group he might address on the topic, and thus the talk should be regarded as relating to his personal practices rather than being authoritative on sharpening in fully general application.

As the editor of this fine publication, I was inclined to edit the write up of his talk. After careful consideration and many hours of lost sleep, I have decided to print Richard's remarks unedited for your enjoyment.

Richard gives an edgy talk

Sharpening

by Richard Juday

Sculpting has two basic forms: subtractive (e.g. chipping away at marble) and additive (e.g. blobbing on more clay). From the Web, now: There is an unlikely tale about the brilliant Renaissance artist Michelangelo. He was asked about the difficulties that he must have encountered in sculpting his masterpiece, David. But he replied with an unassuming and comical description of his creative process: "It is easy. You just chip away the stone that doesn't look like David."

Tool sharpening is decidedly of the subtractive form -- all you do is get rid of the dull parts of the blade. The woodworker assaults the surficial material including the underlying really sharp objective edge. (Richard wrote that, don't blame Steve)

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March 15th Meeting

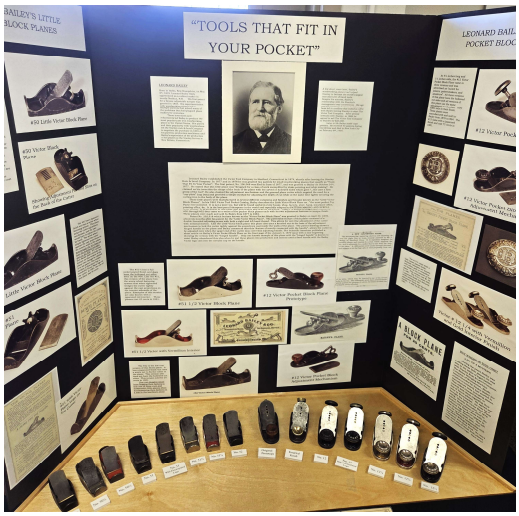
Fort Collins, Colorado

Sunday's meeting in Northern Colorado was held at the Westminster Presbyterian Church of Fort Collins. This was a new meeting location for us and was a great place to have future meetings. Thanks, Taylor and family for lining it up. When I left Denver, the snow was coming down hard and blowing sidewise. By the time I reached Broomfield there was no snow, just sun and wind and boy it was windy. I'm sure the weather kept a few members away from showing up, but we had a great meeting still.

Some Whats it tools

Paul Van Pernis brought a display of" Tools That Fit in Your Pocket". It was a display of Leonard Bailey's Patented Victor block planes.

Fifteen examples of a rare hand plane all in one place. The numbers represented were # 50, #50 ½, #51. #51 ½, #52, #12, #12 ¼, #12 ½, and a #12 prototype. There were duplicate versions with the vermillion japanning. The display was award winning at any local or national tool meeting and probably has won awards. The information and documentation were in creditably detailed and far reaching. It was worth the trip up north.

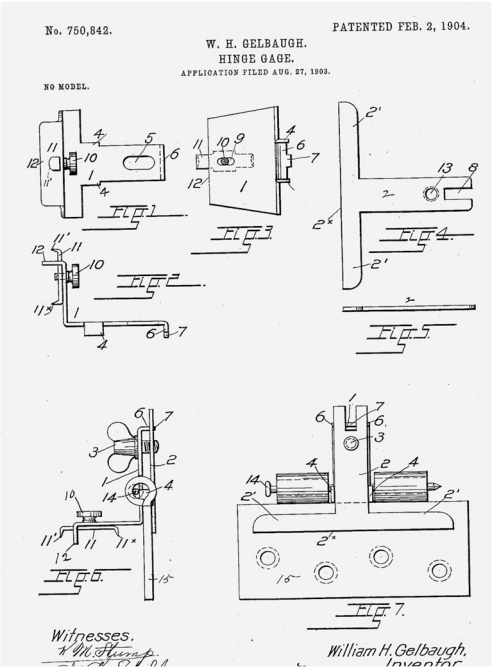


Paul's Display

There were other displays as well, Cliff Fales brought a Bowser patent spiral screwdriver and his geared screwdriver to share with the members.

Rocky Mountain Inventors

William Henry Gelbaugh was born in Ohio in 1861; he moved to Colorado some time before 1894. He received a Patent for this “Hinge Gauge” or Butt Gauge in 1904 while living in Denver, Colorado. He has 3 Patents for Butt gauges or improvements on this gauge. The second Patent was issued to him while living in Tacoma, WA. The third was issued in 1912 with his home listed as Denver again.



Mr. Gelbaugh was a Carpenter by trade as well as an inventor. He also was the grandfather of actress Mary Eleanor Donahue, who played Betty on Father Knows Best TV series.

First Patented gauge

Mr. Gelbaugh moved back to Tacoma around 1918 and patented a triple action sash hinge in 1929 while living there. He died February 4, 1944. The first and second gauge are not common; the final or third patented gauge was produced in larger numbers.

Second gauge, courtesy of Cliff Fales

Third gauge, courtesy of James Fox

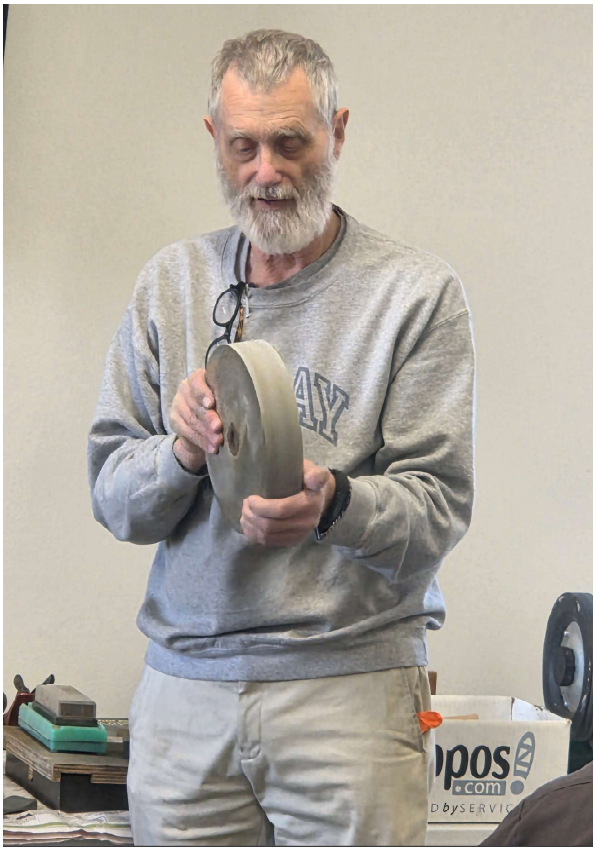
Richard's Talk Continued

Richard displayed The Complete Guide to Sharpening, a book by Leonard Lee, the founder of Lee Valley Tools. Publication date is 1995, and Leonard died in 2016, but this is the finest and most complete sharpening book in Richard's collection. The variable structure of wood itself, illustrative electron microscope photography, and more give great insight into what you are trying to achieve.

Richard has been professionally active in optics, and he brought in some optics tech that could apply to sharpening. Opticers and woodworkers both want flat reference sources, though requiring vastly differing precisions. A woodworker is happy with a flat that is within thousandths of an inch overall, whereas the optics guys want a reference to be flat within a micron, or 0.00004 of an inch. Woodworkers will acquire a diamond flat to re-shape their stones, relying on the diamond flat makers to themselves be flat. But here you are, in your shop, with a bunch of stones, no diamond flat at hand, and you want all your stones to be flat. Here's how you do it. Suppose you have three stones, A, B, and C.

Grind A and B together until they are in intimate contact, knowing that the surface will be spherically curved. Next, do the same with B and C; just as with the AB contact there is still a spherical nature to the BC surface, but it is closer to flat. Now grind A and C together until they are in intimate contact, and you are closer yet. Go around again, until intimate contact is immediately achieved on each grinding. Only flat surfaces will have that character, and Bob's your uncle.

Jigs are fine, and necessary, particularly if a set of chisels (for example) all need to be done the same, or you want to do minimal material removal from a previous sharpening, or you are just touching up the micro bevel. Otherwise, with experience you will be happy with eyeballing and hand-held operation on your rough utility anywhere-in-the-shop glue-scraping chisel. Use a marker pen on the ground surface to show where you are working, since one recent shiny patch looks just like another, and you want a shiny patch that extends exactly to the cutting edge. It is useful to remember that only the 1/32 or 1/16 inch at the edge is necessarily to be polished to a mirror finish, since that's the part actively involved in severing chips from the base wood.



Suppose you have a fine new expensive 9x12 inch granite surface plate that is truly flat from the woodworker's perspective. And now you want to flatten the sole of a plane or a waterstone. You could, of course, abrade directly against the granite, but you will promptly cause it not to be flat anymore. Instead, wet the plate and set down a sheet of wet-or-dry silicon carbide paper (rough side up!) of the right progressively finer grit, and you will greatly extend the utility of your surface plate

Richard's Talk Continued

Richard talked about the 600-grit CBN (cubic boron nitride) wheel recently mounted on his Tormek-8 in comparison with the Tormek's original aluminum oxide 200-grit wheel that is supposedly gradable to 1000. CBN wheels are a new addition to woodworking. They act faster and run cooler than a vitrified stone, though they are probably not so absolutely immune to overheating an edge as is a water stone. In fact, though the CBN wheels can be exposed to water for cleaning, leaving them in water is damaging to them. Of common materials, CBN is the closest to diamond in hardness. Thus, CBN wheels reputedly will never wear out in sharpening steel blades, lifetime warranties being evidence of that claim. The CBN wheels generally permit flattening on their sides in case the mild hollow-ground nature from a wheel is objectionable; don't do that with vitrified wheels. As yet (a couple months) Richard is pleased with the new wheel, and he showed an example of a knife that was made really *too* sharp for kitchen use in a matter of three or four minutes using the CBN wheel and stropping on the paste-charged leather wheel on the other end of the Tormek's axle.

Some chisel and plane blade jigs by Lee Valley Veritas were displayed that included indexing for repetitively positioning a chisel or plane blade against the wheel. Additionally, the jigs have rollers on eccentric axles so that after initial grind, a blade can be ever-so-slightly raised so that after grinding, polishing can be confined to just the very edge of the cutter. The plane-blade jig's roller is slightly convex, so that a very slight curvature is imparted on the blade. This prevents an exactly square blade from leaving dig marks at the corners, a useful feature when surfacing a large area.

A severely hollowed small dual-grit silicon carbide stone he has used for almost seven decades made its appearance. It is more a relic than a generally useful tool, but what the heck, look around at our display tables. And at the guys tending them.

* Richard wrote this article for me to use in this issue; hence he refers to himself in the third person, I take no credit for his words and his knowledge.

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From the 1931 Yankee Tools Catalog

President's message

Thanks to Steve Gosselin for getting this newsletter together and prodding us to do our part. I am writing this note one week before the 4th of July, which also happens to be the 250th anniversary of our country. The last 50th anniversary that I was alive for was the 200th in 1976 and being two years old I was not very conscious of its significance. I wanted to express my thanks for this country and its freedoms, hopes and aspirations that come from it and for the men and women who protect and serve our country in many ways to preserve these freedoms and to push us to greater attainment if its good aspirations.

Unfortunately, I will not be able to make the meeting at Al Nelson's on July 12 due to family commitments but I hope everyone that can make it does and for those who have not been to Al's you have to go to see all of his tools, especially the pedal driven metal lathes. I had to go up near Allenspark a few times in the last few weeks shuttling daughters to camp and each time I got to drive by Al's place. My daughters can point out his place before I do because I remark on it every time we go by as I tell them how cool it is. Thanks, Al, for hosting meetings at your place.

I have had a dearth of independent "finds" recently and was kicking myself for forgetting to bid on an auction last week that had some good saws that ended up going for very little. I hope you have better success in tool hunting and a better memory! I hope to see everyone at the annual meeting on August 29 at the Boulder County Fairgrounds.

Taylor Maxwell

Mystery Solved

By Steve Gosselin

Recently on a snowy December day when there wasn't much going on, I went through my box of tool projects. It's a box of incomplete, unloved, and sometime interesting tools. Some of the tools end up there on Sunday evening after a meeting because I don't have time to mess around with them up. That day I pulled out a wooden ship builders bevel, user made, out of Mahogany, I think. What interested me in the first place was the tool was signed in two places with the name, Alpheus H. Brooks Elliot. It was in ink done with neat cursive writing. Who was so proud of this tool he had to sign it twice?

I typed the name into the computer and pressed enter. I was greeted with several Brooks Elliot's as well as the" Elliot "Scottish web site. Elliot is a big clan, I guess. No mention of an Alpheus though. I tried Alpheus by itself, no luck. Finally, after many combinations I tried Alpheus H. Brooks and was rewarded for my efforts. I was able to find an 'Alpheus H. Brooks', born in 1810, and he was listed in the 1850 census as a carpenter living in Eliot, Maine, married with two children. I contacted the Eliot historic society and found out that in the early years many people spelled the town name Elliot as well as Eliot (the correct spelling). I also learned the 1860 census listed Alpheus as a ships carpenter. Eliot is across the river from Portsmouth, New Hampshire and at that time was a busy ship building center.

By the 1870 census, Alpheus had remarried, having lost his first wife, and he and his son, Alpheus B. Brooks were both listed as ships carpenters. Alpheus H. lived till 1897; he is buried in Eliot with his second wife and two of his children. As late as the 1880 census, he was still listed as carpenter, at age 70. I never found out what the H., his middle initial stood for, oh, well.

Am I sure that Alpheus made the 100 plus year-old bevel I now own? No, only he knows but I think he made it, and if it wasn't him, some other Alpheus H. Brooks took the time to sign his name, twice. I will never know for sure, but I had a great time trying to find out.

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Colorado Meetings (also MWTCA Area L)

July 12th Al Nelson's
Longmont, CO

August 29th, 2026,
Annual Meeting,
Boulder County Fairgrounds
Longmont, CO

November 1st, The Ranch,
Estes Park/Timnath/Laport Meeting Room
Loveland, CO.

New Mexico Meetings (also MWTCA Area L)

August 29th, 2026,
Annual Meeting,
Boulder County Fairgrounds
Longmont, CO

August – TBD

October 18th – Jason Fink

Dec – Eddie Bell – date to be determined

Wanted:

Any information that you can share with this newsletter. Can be written, photos, ideas for future issues. Any help is greatly appreciated.

Steve Gosselin

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