The Horn Book

The Honourable Company of Horners,
The American Guild of Horn Workers

Russ Young, Pres. Lee Larkin, Vice President Clay Smith, Secty.
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Mansker's Station Colonial Trade Fair

The Honourable Company of Horners held its first regional mini-meeting on Friday, May 3rd, at Mansker's Station Historic Site, near Goodlettsville, Tennessee. The members present included: Russ Young (Pres.), Lee Larkin (Vice-Pres.), founding members Bruce Horne, Roland Cadle. Other members present were: Joe Mills, Larry Townsend, Tom Dowler, Ron Ehlert, Mike Lea, Gary Birch, Roland Stracener, Willy Frankfort and Craig Fisher. A number of issues were discussed and clarified. Mike Lea presented a packet of information from the Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Ohio, where we are considering holding our 1997 Annual Meeting; those present agreed unanimously that the OHS site should be pursued seriously. Mike has submitted the paper work to OHS and we hope to hear back from them soon. The dates are: Feb. 28th through March 2, 1997. There will be a special rate at the Days Inn, within walking distance, for $40 for up to four!

There were quite a number of horners selling their wares at this Fair, perhaps 15 or so. Attendance by vendors and re-enactors was considerably greater than last year. This has become perhaps *the* major colonial event.

Jim Dresslar premiered his new book, **The Engraved Powder Horn, folk art of early America**, at Mansker's. The copies sold there have an embossment on the fly page "Historic Mansker's Station Commemorative Edition, May 4 & %, 1996." Jim was there autographing madly, and his lovely wife, Carolyn, was handling the finances. Besides being the premier of the book, Jim & Carolyn brought a number of the superb powder horns from their collection along with firearms and tomahawks. Any museum would covet such a fine display. If you weren't there, you missed some of the best horns in existence, laid out on tables with no glass between you and history. Lee Larkin will review Jim's book in the next issue of The Horn Book.

N.M.L.R.A., Friendship, Indiana- Next Mini-meeting

The Company will hold its next regional mini-meeting on the grounds of the National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association range and camp, Friendship, Indiana, during their summer national matches, June 8-16th. Clay Smith, your Company's secretary, will be there the first weekend to demonstrate with George Suitor (both of Colonial Williamsburg) the molding of horn flasks (you'll never see this any where else!) - Roland Cadle will demonstrate turning screw tips, and on Wednesday night, Jim Dresslar will speak- see the chalk board at the Gun Makers' Hall for details. This is an unbelievably fine line up for those interested in horn technology.

Vice-President Lee Larkin will be ensconced in the primitive camp selling horn work and representing us. And your President, Russ Young, expects to be camped in Six-Acres from Saturday through mid-week and can probably be found either house sitting the Gunmakers' Hall or wasting lead & powder on the chunk gun line. If you have problems, questions or ideas regarding The Company, please see us! Watch the Gunmakers' chalk board to find the exact meeting date and place; most likely it will be either Friday or Saturday night. Please come and contribute your thoughts.

First Annual Horn Work Seminar- The Video

To refresh your memory, Rev. Roland Cadle, the organizer of our conference at the Mercer Museum in March, paid out of his own pocket (several thousand dollars!) to have the entire series of talks professionally recorded and edited. They are available as a set of four, two-hour video tapes, for $87.50 (including shipping & handling within the continental U.S.). Order directly from:

Roland Cadle, Route 1, Box 152G, Waynesburg, PA 15370.

Order early to be certain to get one before they sell out.

Mike Lea will be selling them through the week for us in his booth (#31) if you can make it to Friendship... have a check made out to Roland as Mike won't be able to make change...

Personality Profile by Tim Albert

It was a chance meeting. I was strolling through the aisles of a local gun show,

holding up the cow horns I'd just bought to avoid goring any one in the press of the crowd, when an older gentleman appeared in my path. He leaned on his cane... looked at the horns... and motioned me over. I thought he needed my help.. He knew I needed his. He examined the horns, we exchanged phone numbers, and that's how it all began.

Charlie Buyers took his first powder horn from his father's tool chest; his dad used the powder to split stubborn tree stumps, Charlie used it to shoot cracked corn "shot" out of a Civil War musket he'd salvaged from a neighbor's garbage. He and his young friends played with such original "junk" for toys.

That was in the early 1900s. Through the years his interest in muzzle loaders kept growing; he was one of the first to receive the little newsletter "Muzzle Blasts." He could remember sitting in a cow pasture under a tent with Red Ferris, wondering if this sport would ever catch on. And he made horns.

Although he has collected only a few originals, Charlie has made dozens of fine, serviceable horns, scraped smooth and plugged with fruit woods. They're all done to authentic guidelines because he thought that' the way to do them. They weren't made to be sold but just to keep the craft alive.

Early on he politely criticized my botched attempts, then began lending me reference material by the pile. After a while, he gave me two raw horns, two walnut plug blanks, two walnut pegs, and a handful of locust thorns. He explained what to do, told me that one was for him and the other for me, and sent me home to study and work. I'd do well on the first one, then even better on the next, giving him the best and hiding the other. And so we went through quite a few pairs of horns over the years.

Charlie doesn't make horns much these days. And I've just finished pressing the very last pair he had held back for flat horns. From Charlie I learned to make them plain or fancy, flat or round, and picked up a lot more along the way. For the inspiration, the time, the teaching... I truly thank you, Charlie Buyers.

[Tim is a horner from Illinois prairies who is currently learning the Tansel styles]

Catalogue Pick
submitted by Erwin Tschantz

WoodFinishing Enterprises, 1729 North 68th Street, Wauwatosa, WI 53213
orders: (414) 774-1724 Fax: (414) 774-2107

This is a plain descriptive price list, no fancy color pictures or wasted space. They are a small business, begun in 1980 to supply professional wood workers and

musical instrument makers. They have no minimum orders! The ten densely packed pages include coloring agents such as fustic extract, dragon's blood and ferrous sulfate; shellac components like Baltic amber and sandarac resin; finishes for French polish and burnishing clays. They carry water soluble, alcohol soluble and oil soluble wood stain powders in a large variety of colors as well as natural pigments.

If you are looking for the correct period materials to stain, dye and color wood and the proper finishes, this is THE PLACE. Quantities can be as small as an ounce which is enough to inexpensively purchase on a lark and experiment. If you're crazy about the results, buy the five pound quantity!

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Book Review: Discovering Horn by Paula Hardwick

Lutterworth Press. Guilford, Surrey, England, copyright 1981
hardbound, 8 x 10 inches. 192 pages, with over 200 B &W photos and 18 color photos. ISBN 0 7188-2520-9

There is only one book that I know of in the English language which provides a good overview of the history and world of horn work- this is it. Mrs. Hardwick has spent her life as an antique dealer specializing in horn items and is thus well qualified to write this ground breaking text. She reviews the morphology, technology and history of horn quite well and brings it up to the three current companies in England doing horn work.

Many types of horn item are included, from Viking drinking horns to fans and snuff mulls. There is not a great deal of depth on any one topic but each is an excellent introduction. There are brief chapters on staining, dyeing & polishing; restoration and care; the history of the Horners' Company of England. She has done her home work well. The expert and those with years of experience in working horn will find small errors or differences of opinion but they do not devalue the importance of this book.

As an aside, I have spoken to the author by telephone and heard a most interesting story from her. There was a U.S. distributor lined up. About half of the entire print run was sent in one container to the distributor. The English printer never heard any thing from them and later heard that they had become insolvent. Thus, Mrs. Hardwick never received *any* royalties for half of the books printed. The copies that were sold within the U.S. must have somehow come from the inventory of the failed U.S. distributor, and neither the author or the printer ever received any form of compensation for them. Pretty sad. (Review by Russ Young)

Next issue's review will be Jim Dresslar's new book!

Dixon's Gun Fair- our July mini-meeting

This is THE premier event for the contemporary powder horn maker, held July 27 & 28 at Dixon's Muzzleloading Shop, Kempton, Penn., 19529, (610) 756-6271. We expect that quite a number of members will be present and it is a great time for learning, not only by examining the contemporary items on display but also by attending the full schedule of classes. Anticipate fine fellowship from all... Your President and Vice-President both intend to be there.

The Company Archives

Tom Ames has contributed the first donation to the Company's archives. As you remember, Tom was one of the speakers at the Mercer conference... and he has given us the slides and lecture text from his speech. Thank you, Tom!

If you have *any materials relating to The Company or horn work* and wish to donate them to the archive where all may use them at will, contact any of your officers. With persistence and generosity, we will leave behind a well documented legacy of the trade for all to admire in posterity.

Company Logo

Thus far, only Bob Chattin and Tom Ames have submitted logo ideas. Both were viewed and enjoyed by the members at Mansker's Station. Our members are a bottomless pool of graphic talents- let's get some more ideas going!