The Horn Book

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

Russ Young, Pres. Lee Larkin, Vice President Clay Smith, Secty.
Volume 1, Number 1 March, 1996

The Mercer Museum, of Doylestown, Pennsylvania, hosted the first annual Hornsmithing Seminar on March 1 & 2. The affair was generously co-sponsored by the Early American Industries Association. This meeting was the brain child of Reverend Roland Cadle, a horner of long standing from Waynesburg, Pennsylvania; his dedication to our art, trade & mystery along with a lot of ideas and energy brought this meeting into existence. We are deeply in debted to all these folks. We also wish to thank our first corporate supporter, AMT Tools of Royersford, Pennsylvania, who donated a fine wood working lathe; several horners noted that they use this lathe and recommend it highly (see more information later in this issue).

The program lasted all of Saturday and consisted of lectures and demonstrations. Rev. Cadle was the Master of Ceremonies, introduced the speakers, kept things rolling smoothly *and* gave a presentation on turning & threading as well; he was a one man band. Tom Ames gave the first talk (and his lecture notes became the first objects in our archive!). Mark Odle spoke next on "Frontier Horns" accompanied by numerous slides. Dr. Jay Hopkins, collector extraordinaire, loaded us with material on "Regional Characteristics." After lunch, Russ Young did a slide show of powder horns *other than* Golden Age horns. The inimitable Atlee Crouse, our shy guest of honor, spoke with great modesty on his inventions and years as a horner. Erv Tschanz & Rev. Cadle brought lathes and mandrels to demonstrate how screw tips, cups, boxes and the like were turned (this clarified a lot of nagging questions for yours truly....). Bruce Horne, the winner of more ribbons for horns at Dixon's Gun Fair than anyone, demonstrated scrimshanding and made it look like child's play. It is hard to imagine that next year could improve on these speakers. Wow! Thanks to Rev. Cadle's foresight & financing, a video producer was present to record these talks; this series of tapes will be available soon.

After the main meeting had ended, on the evening of March second, a number of interested horners remained to discuss the creation of a guild of horn workers. A draft of a charter was quickly written and briefly discussed. All those present voted unanimously to pass the charter. It reads:

"BE IT RESOLVED THAT WE, THOSE HERE PRESENT, DO WISH TO CREATE

AND EMPOWER THE FORMATION OF THE HONOURABLE COMPANY OF HORNERS. THE COMPANY SHALL ESTABLISH A GUILD SYSTEM FOR THE BENEFIT OF ITS MEMBERS. MEMBERSHIP SHALL BE LIMITED TO HORN WORKERS, ACTIVE AND INACTIVE, AND THOSE PERSONS INTERESTED IN THE HISTORY AND TECHNOLOGY OF HORN WORK."

Those present, now considered charter members, were: Rev. Roland Cadle, Bob Chattin, Bruce Horne, Lee Larkin, James Leach, John Proud, Byron C. Smith, Clay Smith, George Suiter, Erwin Tschanz and Russell Young. Obviously the charter will require a great deal of amendment in the future as our goals become clarified and membership expands.

A slate of candidates for officers were nominated and seconded. They were elected unanimously. President: Russ Young (New Mexico), Vice President: Lee Larkin (Missouri), Secretary: Clay Smith (Virginia).

The first item of business: Lee Larkin proposed to establish a committee to study the structure of current and historic guilds in order to establish guide lines for the Company. John Proud seconded. The vote was unanimous to create the committee. Members shall be: Roland Cadle, George Suiter, Russ Young.

Informally, that is, with a voice vote, members also agreed that:
1. Elections shall be conducted annually at the horn fair.
2. Proceeds of the video, after Rev. Cadle's expenses have been recovered, shall remain in the treasury of the Company. Rev. Cadle completely shouldered the financial burden of having the event video taped for our benefit.
3. The Company's publication shall be entitled "The Horn Book."
4. A library and archive, for the benefit of the members, shall be formed.
5. A public event may be held on the last day of future horn fairs, for the educational benefit of the public and the financial gain of the membership.
6. Perhaps a juried competition, similar to that at Dixon's Gun Fair, will be held each year. [Tom Ames, who has been a driving force behind the fine system at Dixon's, will help us establish guidelines.]
7. Mass purchases of books, tools, chemicals and expendables, may be performed by the Company to save members money and to make small quantities available.

John Proud motioned to adjourn the first meeting of the Company and reconvene at the next horn fair. Erwin Tschanz seconded. The vote was unanimous. Meeting was adjourned.

AMT corporation donated a lathe Model No. 4370, Precision Machine Cast Iron Wood Lathe. It comes without a motor. Currently it is on sale in the AMT catalog for $246, unbelievable cheap for a heavy, well designed lathe. Shipping is extra for the 100 pound

weight. THIS PRICE IS FOR A VERY LIMITED TIME! It was announced that the company would discontinue this model soon, alas. Your president is counting the pennies in the Mason jar to see if there enough; this is far less expensive than any comparable models I've seen... AMT's toll free number is 1-800-435-8665. They have quite a number of tools, manual & power, that would be of great use to the horner.

Your officers are available on the Internet at these addresses:

President: Russ Young ryoung@chicoma.la.unm.edu
Vice President: Lee Larkin Larkinla@SLUVCA.SLU.EDU
Secretary: Clay Smith Kanawha284@aol.com

Unlike physical addresses or telephone numbers, Internet addresses change form time to time. These will be published in each issue.

Your officers are here to serve you! But you must let us know how. Write or call us with your ideas and concerns. This is an amazingly diverse and talented group of people- help us help you and the membership at large and the craft as well.

Your Company needs a LOGO badly. There probably should be one on each page of The Horn Book, on stationery, return address envelopes and perhaps on members' business cards as a right of guild membership. The members are nearly all talented artists- how about some submissions? Keep in mind that we are horners, in a general sense, not just powder horn makers, even though most of our current members make primarily powder horns. I'm open to ANY ideas!

Musings... I would like your active participation in the ground work of our guild. Should we consider a category of "collectors" as separate from "those interested in the history and technology?" Almost certainly we need an institutional membership category for the museums, archives and libraries which may wish to simply subscribe to The Horn Book.

At this point, we have no dues. That's fine for now but as our numbers grow, cash outlays for mailing, printing, etc., will grow beyond the President's pocket book. First the categories of membership need to be decided and then a dues structure. Keeping it minimal seems like a good plan. Any input?

The charter of nearly all historic guilds includes some wording similar to " the art, trade and mystery..." Let's think hard on this- the art and craft should probably be published for all to read in this journal and for posterity to recall. However, in most guilds, the key term was

"mystery," that is, those secrets kept among the members which prevented just any bright individual from usurping the fine points of the guild's trade. I think this is still important for at least one reason: we should not give the talented counterfeiters of today any extra assistance in deceiving museums and collectors. Toward this end, here are two thoughts:

1. Any such trade secrets would NOT be printed in the regular portion of The Horn Book but would be inserted as extra pages into the copies going to active horn workers. Institutional & collector subscribers would not receive it.

2. Those horn workers would sign a WRITTEN pledge to not divulge these "mysteries" to others, perhaps as a step toward becoming fully vested guild members.

3. ALL members will sign a code of ethics when they apply for membership; this would preclude counterfeiting, falsely altering a horn to increase it's value, assisting others who would do so, etc.

WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS? I need to know before the next issue if possible about this; these "mysteries" and their sharing amongst the members of the guild are perhaps THE most important benefits of membership. This does not exclude in any manner helping novices learn our trade; in time, they too, would be privy to this valuable information. In the interval, our hard earned techniques should not be appropriated by outsiders. A novice horn worker who has learned a sophisticated method of antiquing a horn will still produce only a clumsy horn that has a good patina.

Since The Company is still going through the pains of birth, The Horn Book will not be published on a regular schedule- yet. Probably every other month will be adequate for now, or as developments warrant. Stay tuned. At this point, there are no dues, either! You have received this issue because you were at the Mercer conference or Russ Young or another founder believes you are interested in horn technology & history. Please let us know if you DO NOT want to receive future issues.

One of the premier re-enactments and period trade fairs is coming up- Mansker's Station, just north of Nashville, Tennessee, the first weekend in May. Company President, Russ Young, and Company Vice President, Lee Larkin will be there. So will members Rev. Roland Cadle and Bruce Horne. Mark Odle will also be there. If you want some fellowship and good conversation, join us there.

A very important special event (for horners) will occur at this year's fair. Powder horn collector par excellance Jim Dresslar will bring many of his superb Golden Age horns for an exhibit. If all is on schedule, he will also be signing copies of his new book on the 100 finest horns. Folks, this book isn't cheap at $95 but if you make powder horns, you'll never forgive yourself for missing the opportunity to own a copy. Expect a thorough review of this book in the next issue of The Horn Book.

Future issues will include several regular features. Two columns that will be important to active horners will be the **FINDINGS** and **DESIRES**. Findings will be offerings that may be of value for other horners. For instance, Russ Young has a steady source for annatto seeds, a colonial period dye that was perhaps used on horn, and that would be listed in Findings. Desires would include those things you need but are unable to locate- surely nothing has escaped the attention of all of us (one of the strengths of a guild).

As circumstances warrant, a **BOOK REVIEW** will often grace the issue. Jim Dresslar's book will be the first. After that, members who know of either good or bad books in the field are invited to send reviews to the President for publication. Let me know if you wish to with hold your name.

Another irregular column will be **CATALOGS**. When you see a catalog with tools, books, materials, that might be of use to horners, let's publish it. Send the relevant information: Company name, address, phone number, cost and what items (include item numbers & cost) would be of interest. This will begin with our next issue.

It is also hoped that a **PERSONALITY PROFILE** will be in each issue. We are a very spread out group and many of us will never meet face-to-face. This will help to develop a sense of fraternity between members and important influences on our trade. The profile will *not* be a promotional piece but hopefully will give insight into the motivation, education and thinking of this individual. Perhaps 250-400 words would be a good start. How about submitting a profile for the person who most influenced you in your approach to the trade?

Gunmaker's Fair at Dixon's is scheduled for July 26, 27, 28. Held at Chuck Dixon's Muzzleloading Shop near Kempton, Pennsylvania, this is the only event of its kind in the country. This is Chuck & volunteers' fourteenth year of presenting this Fair for us. There is a category for "Master Class in Accouter-ments" this year, which of course, includes powder horns. Besides the awards & critiques, there are also classes, exhibits and original pieces to study. A number of our members take part in this, both as entrants and as volunteers (they never have too many in the latter category).

For more information, call or write: Chuck Dixon, Dixon's Muzzleloading Shop, Inc., RD 1, Box 175, Kempton, PA 19529 or call: (610) 756-6271. It is an understatement to say that Chuck doesn't make any money for this; please do what you can to keep his expenses minimal (ie, include a SASE). Probably no other single event in the U.S. has been as important to the development & refinement of period arts. For fourteen years, this non-profit event has encouraged the improvement of skills and learning in gun making and accouterments. Whether you have personally taken advantage of the Fair or not, all of us have profited directly or indirectly from it.