

Book Review

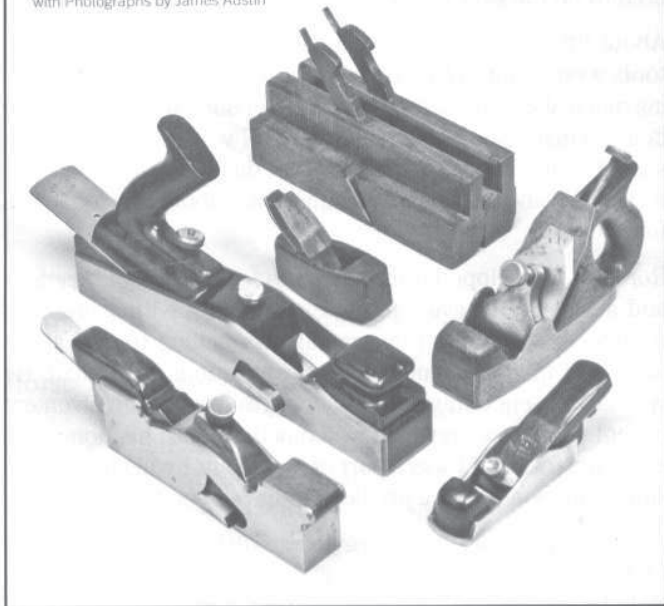
by John G. Wells

Antique Woodworking Tools

Their Craftsmanship from the Earliest Times to the Twentieth Century

David R. Russell

with Photographs by James Austin



Antique Woodworking Tools: Their Craftsmanship from the Earliest Times to the Twentieth Century by David R. Russell, with photography by James Austin is a superb book. It was published by John Adamson, 90 Hertford Street, Cambridge CB4 3AQ, England, 2010. It is available from the publisher for £90 plus shipping and packing from Astragal Press, David Stanley Auctions, and from Jim Bode. ISBN 978-1-898565-05-5.

The book has 528 pages and measures 10 ¼ x 13 ¾ inches. It is hardbound with cloth covered covers, and has a dust jacket. It is printed in full color on heavy paper. It contains 935 illustrations showing 1556 tools plus 575 illustrations of marks on tools, and it has an appendix with 269 plane iron marks. Each item is fully described and the provenance is provided when available. The research is stunning; in many cases presenting newly discovered or recently translated material.

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the worlds greatest collections of antique woodworking tools. A close examination immediately reveals that the tools in the collection were selected by an individual who was extremely knowledgeable in the fields he chose to collect; the collection also shows a deep commitment and emotional attachment to the intrinsic beauty of tools. The early 17th century German handled auger, item number 1388 on page 457, is one of the most beautiful tools I have ever seen.

Antique Woodworking Tools begins with the earliest tools known: those predating written history to those of the Roman era. It moves on to explore beautiful anvils, axes, and saws. It adds a delightful excursion into the fascinating world of measuring and marking devices. Then it embarks on the major theme: Wooden and metallic planes of the 16th through the 20th centuries, made in central Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

Of particular interest to me were the decorated, hand made, 17th and 18th century continental wooden planes found on pages 96 through 133. I was also fascinated by the central European metallic planes made of wrought iron plates beginning with a very rare German smoothing plane on page 272. It was made in the 1570s, which has its sides decorated by acid etching. It is similar to the two planes made in Nuremburg that are in the Dresden Collection. The next several pages contain beautiful central European metallic miter and chariot planes of the 17th and 18th centuries made of iron plates joined by brazing or dovetailing. They were often decorated with fanciful scallops and cusps cut into the top edges of their sides or into the edges of the upturned front palm rest. The very significant contribution to the development of ornamental lathes and tools made by John Jacob Holtzapffel during the late part of the 18th and early 19th centuries is celebrated on pages 362 through 371.

David Russell began his collection with a Norris smooth plane that he greatly coveted as a young woodworker. So it is not surprising that his book devotes over 50 pages to the absolutely marvelous infill planes made by Norris. The book concludes with a generous treatment of boring tools including an extensive selection of very attractive plated and framed braces, followed by beautifully decorated screwdrivers.

David Russell's book, *Antique Woodworking Tools* will delight all tool collectors and woodworkers as well as everyone having any interest in how things were made in the past, and the

tools that made it all possible. This book belongs in every serious collector's library.