

THE ROUND-UP ANNEX

squared circle study group newsletter

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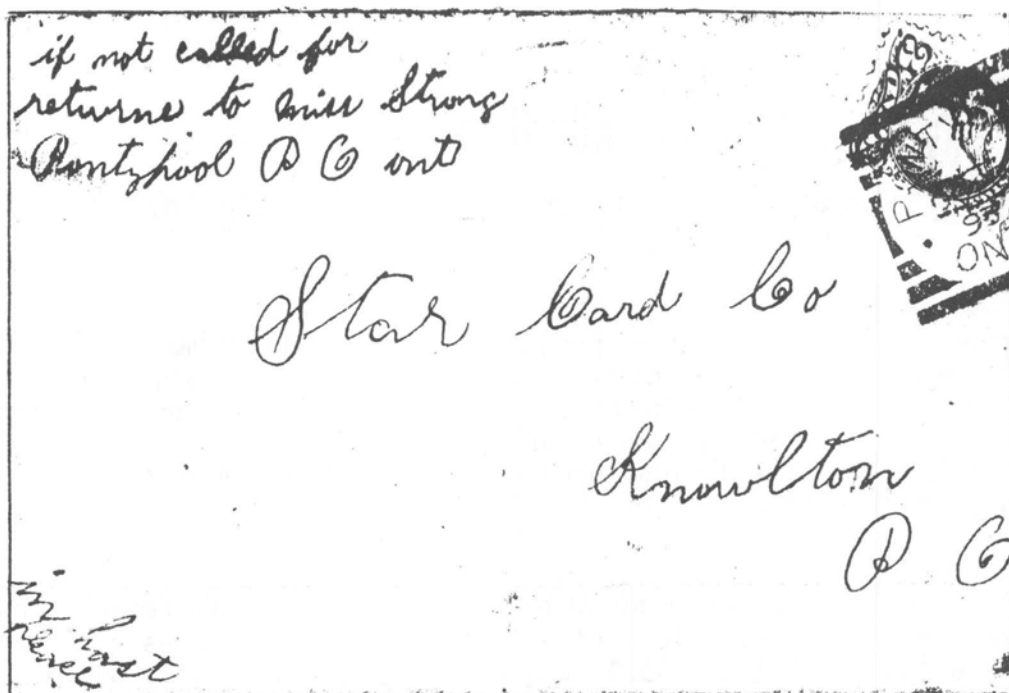
Study group members should find this issue of Annex most informative and interesting as it includes the oft promised discussions on the squared circle hammer construction as well as news of an important squared circle find recently reported in the Detroit area. Before launching into these topics, however, there's the matter of membership renewals to take of.

As of this writing, only seventeen (17) members have renewed and/or joined the Study Group for 1983 (see listing below). As a reminder, dues are \$4.00 (US) and \$5.00 (CANADIAN). Also, this will be the last issue of Annex sent to those who have not paid the 1983 dues.

Gary D. Arnold, 5509 E. St. Joe Hwy., Grand Ledge, MI 48837
Robert Asselstine, 1313 Maitland Ave., Ottawa, ONT K2C 2C4
Charles F. Boubelik, P.O. Box 1737, Boulder, CO 80302
Gerald C. Carr, 9243 Warwick Ave, Detroit, MI 48228
Alexander Csucs, 2379 Lakeshore Rd. RR#4, Brights Grove, ONT NON 1C0
Wayne R. Curtis, P.O. Box 74, Station A, Toronto, ONT M5W 1A2
Harry F. Dingenthal, 2309 Northumberland, Garland, TX 75041
James Felton, P.O. Box 52494, Sam Houston Station, Houston, TX 77052
John S. Gordon, 2364 Gallant Fox Court, Reston, VA 22090
Theodor Kerzner, 44 Charles St. West, Apt. 3604, Toronto, ONT M4Y 1R8
Robert A. Lee, P.O. Box 937, Vernon, B.C. V1T 6M8
William J. Meakin, 26 School Rd., Hucknall, Nottingham, ENGLAND NG15 6SN
G. Palmer Moffat, 4542 E. Camino De Oro, Tucson, AZ 85718
William G. Robinson, 5830 Cartier Street, Vancouver, B.C. V6M 3A7
Thomas W. Southey, 34456 Ascott Ave., Abbotsford, B.C. V2S 4V5
Alexander Unwin, P.O. Box 1686, Bellevue, WA 98008
William G. Wegman, 10 Hilltop Drive, Manotick, ONT KOA 2N0

THE DETROIT FIND

Jerry Carr of Detroit recently purchased a lot of forty or so fronts, each with a squared circle strike. Not expecting anything out of the ordinary, he was amazed to find strikes of PONTYPOOL (-/OC 28/93) and BYNG INLET NORTH (-/NO 22/93), both of which had not been previously reported on cover. Other items in the lot included BUTTERNUT RIDGE, ROSSEAU, ANGUS, UNION, POINTE ST. CHARLES, SOURIS, CUMBERLAND, FREEPORT as well as other more common towns. The PONTYPOOL strike is shown on the opposite page. You'll have to agree that this is a most fortunate find and gives hope to the rest of us " less fortunate " that material is still lurking out there somewhere.



The unique PONTYPOOL cover, dated -/OC 28/93

A STUDY OF THE POSTAL MUSEUM'S SQUARED CIRCLE HAMMERS

HAMMER CONSTRUCTION

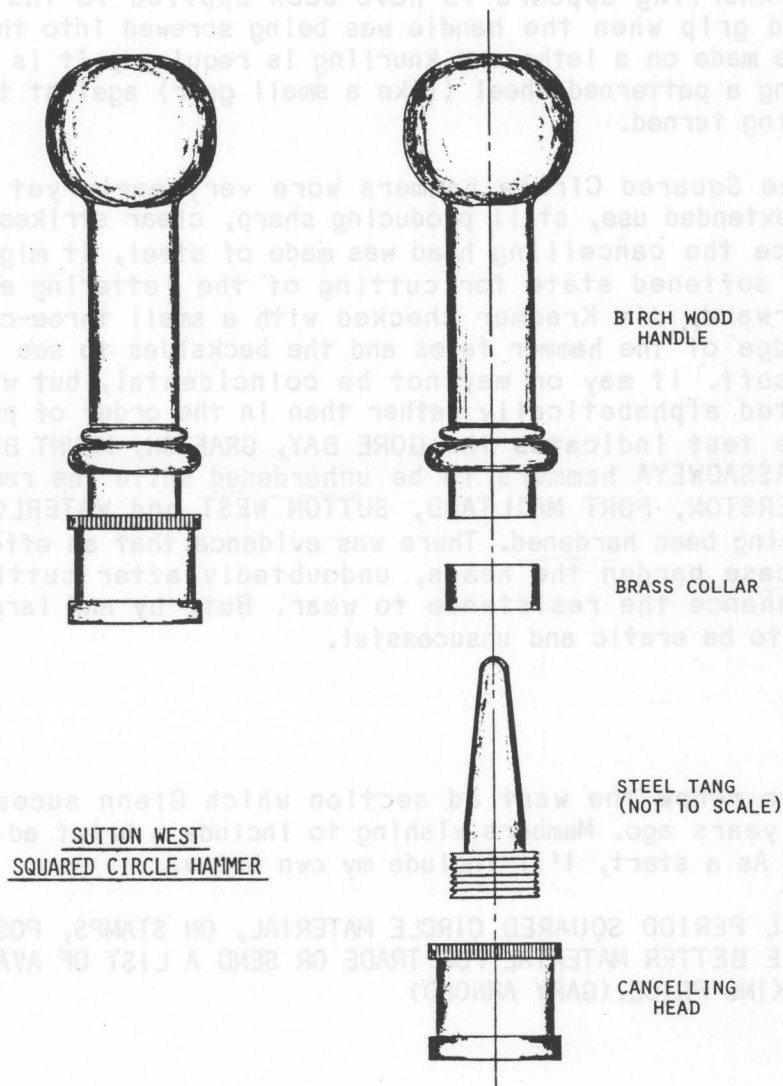
The following is the second and last of a series of articles dealing with the squared circle hammers; the initial article (in the September, 1982 ANNEX) dealt with the numbers on the hammers and the handles. This article presents discussions on the construction of the squared circle hammers, taken from the presentation by Bill Moffatt at BNAPEX ' 81.

As noted in the previous article, the photograph of the PORT MAITLAND hammer in the Third Edition Handbook was unclear in several respects. The original photograph had evidently lost a lot in reproduction and an attempt to make a pen-and-ink drawing brought out some inconsistencies in the description of the hammer. The discussions below point out the inconsistencies and provide some interesting new information on the construction of the squared circle hammers.

In sketching the general outlines of the hammers, the thread spacing as reported in the Third Edition Handbook, 12 threads per inch was laid out. However, the proportions didn't look quite right; there was evidently some problem with the information about the PORT MAITLAND hammer. By scaling the photograph, there appears to be at least 16 threads per inch; consequently, the "12" on the head and handle cannot refer to the thread size. A check of the nine hammers at the Museum found, that in each case, the thread spacing was 20 threads per inch.

The squared circle hammer consists of three separate components, the cancelling head, the handle and the indicia type. The handle consists of a hardwood handle, a threaded rod and the brass ferrule (see sketch below). The threads were cut on one end of a steel rod and a tang on the other end. The tang is probably similar to a tang on a knife blade, which inserts into a handle, but this is only a guess. The ferrule is a thin-walled brass tube, slipped over the end of the handle before the tang is driven in, to prevent splitting the wood handle.

The NANAIMO and WATERLOO, ONTARIO hammers do not have the originally issued handles. The NANAIMO handle is a standard wand type still in use today. The WATERLOO handle was probably locally made. Evidently, the threaded steel end was removed from the wood handle and the tang inserted through a hole in the end of a long wooden wand and secured. There is a problem with the description of this modification of the WATERLOO hammer. The cancelling head is held to the wand by a threaded rod, one quarter inch in diameter, passing through the wand and secured by a nut. Since the size or shape of the tang is not known, the tang may have been simply turned to one quarter inch diameter and threaded or, if the tang was too small for that some other modification was made.



The NASSAGWEYA hammer is the only hammer handle of the group which has a center hole in the threaded end. The threaded ends of all the other handles appear to have been made by putting a long rod through a collet on a lathe and cutting the threads (possibly machining the tang), cutting the part free of the rod stock, sliding the rod through the collet to repeat the operation. But the NASSAGWEYA threaded end appears to have been machined between a chuck and tailstock on a lathe. Why this should have been any different than the others is a mystery.

When the hammers were examined at the Museum, a magnet was used to determine if the brass collar extends out over the steel. The brass collar fits over the end of the wooden handle and the tang which has been inserted in the wood handle, is sufficiently far away (through the brass and wood) that there was no reaction to the magnet.

Although it isn't very clear in the Third Edition Handbook photograph, on the back side of the hammer head, there is a ring at the point where the handle screws into the head. It appeared that there was knurling on this ring; however, it was not possible to determine whether the knurling was straight or diamond pattern. Upon inspection of the nine hammers at the Museum, it was noted that every hammer head has the knurled ring on the back side and, in every case, it was the straight pattern. The knurling appears to have been applied to the rim to provide a good grip when the handle was being screwed into the head. When parts are made on a lathe and knurling is required, it is usually done by pressing a patterned wheel (like a small gear) against the part while it is being turned.

Certain of the Squared Circle hammers wore very early yet others survived very extended use, still producing sharp, clear strikes to the very end. Since the cancelling head was made of steel, it might have been put in a softened state for cutting of the lettering and then hardened afterward. Jim Kraemer checked with a small three-cornered file on the edge of the hammer faces and the backsides to see if they were hard or soft. It may or may not be coincidental, but when the towns are listed alphabetically rather than in the order of proofing date, the file test indicates the GORE BAY, GRAFTON, MOUNT BRYDGES, NANAIMO and NASSAGWEYA hammers to be unhardened while the remaining towns of PALMERSTON, PORT MAITLAND, SUTTON WEST and WATERLOO give evidence of having been hardened. There was evidence that an effort had been made to case harden the heads, undoubtedly after cutting the letters, to enhance the resistance to wear. But, by and large, the results seemed to be erratic and unsuccessful.

WANT ADS REBORN

I would like to renew the want ad section which Glenn successfully started a few years ago. Members wishing to include a brief ad should drop me a line. As a start, I'll include my own below.

WANTED: ADMIRAL PERIOD SQUARED CIRCLE MATERIAL, ON STAMPS, POSTCARDS AND COVER. HAVE BETTER MATERIAL FOR TRADE OR SEND A LIST OF AVAILABLE MATERIAL AND ASKING PRICE.(GARY ARNOLD)