

'The Forum'

Supplemental June 2021



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2021 TGoM Fall Conference Announcement

Letter from the TGoM President:

Hello Members,

It is extremely hard to believe that it is June already. There are things going on... but probably the biggest announcement we have heard is the end of the Covid-19 pandemic emergency protocols. This means that we can once again get together as a group to see each other, share a meal, talk about the last 15 months, and get on with our mission of keeping our craft alive.

This past year plus has raised problems in the world. Unfortunately, as restrictions loosen, the pandemic will still affect us in ways we cannot yet know or understand. One way it will affect us is that the backlog of canceled and postponed events will impact the venues we use for our membership meetings.

As you all may be aware, our board and committees have shifted into the major planning time for the Fall Conference, aka the "Madness". It is my unpleasant duty to inform the membership that because of the backlog of weddings, the Little Log House Show Grounds is not available to host our event this year. I personally have been working with owner Steve Bauer since early April. Their facility had 50 weddings postponed during the pandemic and will be hosting multiple weddings every weekend this year. That includes Friday, multiples on Saturday, and even Sundays. This has made us scramble a little so planning may continue.

This September we will be holding our Madness at the Pierce County Fairgrounds in Ellsworth Wisconsin. The board toured the facility and found that the amenities offered gives the conference everything needed and more. There is a building with ventilation, concrete floors, and bathrooms to hold registration, meals, and the auction. Other buildings nearby can hold the demonstrations and there is ample parking all around. Camping is available on site with or without hookups. We feel this location will provide us an excellent venue for comparable costs to what we are accustomed to. For more information about the Fall Conference, see this issue, future issues of The Forum, and the forthcoming Fall Conference brochure.

The other news that I will share here is that in my discussions with Mr. Bauer we were informed there will not be an existing building available to us any longer at the Little Log House Show Grounds. This fact has rekindled talks of finding a relationship with a permanent facility that we could become partners with, and in the future possibly find that home of our own where we could set up shop.

The board has authorized the forming of a Partnership Committee to research available locations and begin a dialog as to what is out there and what is being offered. Presently we have a list of possible locations we will be working through, including having conversations with the Little Log House and others. If you have any interest in serving on this committee, please contact any board member for further info.

That is all for now. Hope to see many of you very soon.

— Larry Wasmund, President of TGoM

TGoM Spring Hammer-In June 18, 19, 20

TGoM hosts our new spring hammer-in at the Nowthen Blacksmith Shop at the Nowthen Threshing Show grounds in Anoka MN. See the June 2021 Forum for details.

Volunteer Opportunity Available

The Education Committee is sponsoring the Rich Herman Memorial Blacksmithing Classes for The Scouts (ages 11-17). Contact Gordon Barr at agbarr@aol.com

Are you looking for Volunteer Opportunities?

Are you looking for volunteer opportunities and not sure whom to talk to? Contact: Kim Maas, Volunteer Coordinator at: tgom.volunteer@gmail.com or call 651-328-7219.

2021 Fall Conference Demonstrators

John McLellan

John got started in blacksmithing at the age of 8 when he inherited a forge and anvil from his grandfather. John read all the old books he could find on the subject and built his fires with small pieces of oak since he didn't have access to coal. The high school John attended offered a course in horseshoeing which he took his junior and senior years. This was the first time he got to use a coal fire. Since he already had years of experience in the forge the course was pretty easy for him, and he helped teach it during his senior year.

After John graduated, he continued to teach the Farrier class while he was attending the local Junior College. His major was in agriculture, but the college had a great metal shop, so he took most of the metal classes also.

In 1978 he joined the California Blacksmith Association. This was a real boost to his development. For the first time, he could talk to others that were doing the same things and having the same problems. The first conferences he went to were overwhelming. There was so much to see and learn. Working with the professionals in the group he quickly picked up many advanced techniques.

From 1984 through 1986 John attended CSU Chico to finish his B.S. He drove back to Sacramento every weekend to shoe horses and do any jobs that had come into the shop. The horseshoeing was his major source of income throughout this period as the market for good ironwork in Northern California was nonexistent. It really helps to have a trade that can provide a reliable cash flow.

After John graduated from Chico he worked at Meirs and Company in Basalt, Colorado for a short time and then went back to Sacramento to see if he could create a market for forged ironwork.

During the summer John started doing an educational exhibit at the State Fair. This proved to be a great way to inform the public that forged metalwork was still being done and was available. Between the fairs, some articles in the local newspapers, and a TV story on the news, orders started coming in for everything from nice fireplace sets to large gates and railings. And most of the orders specified forged designs instead of tubing and castings.

John still does almost anything that comes through the doors, but the horseshoeing is down to a few old customers, demonstrator and lecturer at the Northern Arizona University and the Arizona State University metals departments.

Doug Swenson

Doug Swenson began experimenting at a young age with an 1890s forge and anvil while growing up on a northwestern Minnesota farm. This early experience developed into a life long passion that he continues to cultivate today through ongoing research into the tools and techniques of traditional blacksmithing. Doug does his primary work out of a shop that attempts to recreate the rural village shop of the time period from 1890 to 1910. His work is significantly influenced by early Scandinavian work with a special interest in the Viking age.



John McLellan



Doug Swenson

Map to Pierce County Fairgrounds 364 North Maple St., Ellsworth, WI 54011

