

Featured Craftsmen

"Share your knowledge; it's a way to achieve immortality" – Jordan Lejuwaan

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 metals 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.



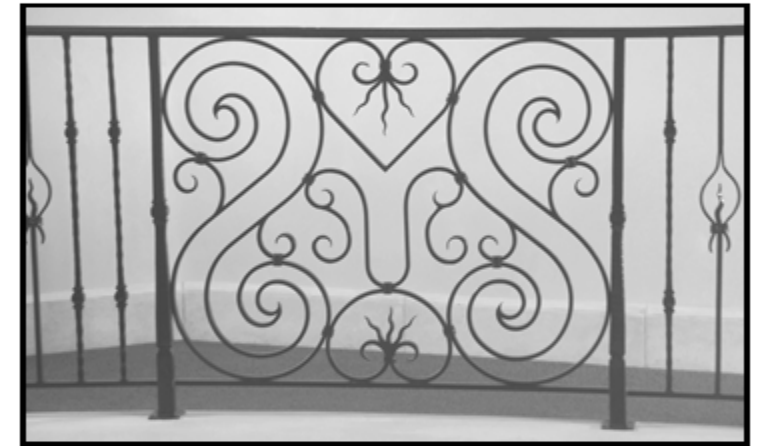
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John McLellan



Doug Swenson

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