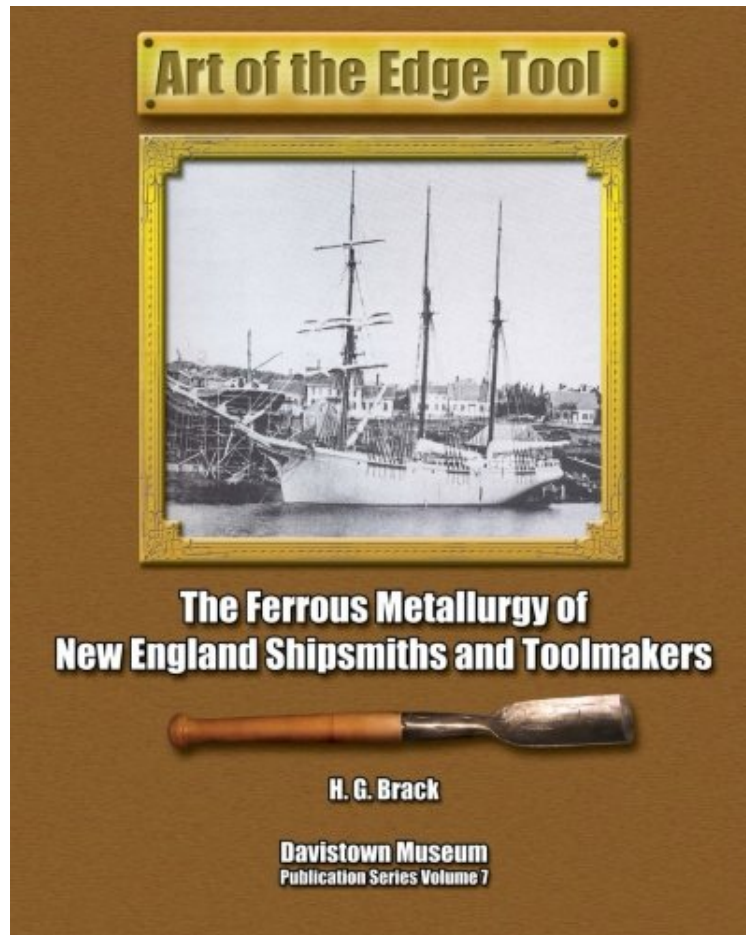


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## Art of the Edge Tool: The Ferrous Metallurgy of New England Shipsmiths and Toolmakers (Davistown Museum Publication Series; Hand Tools in History)

*H. G. Brack*

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#3245459 in Books H B Brack 2008-06-26 2008-06-26 Original language: English PDF # 1 10.00 x .53 x 8.00l, 1.02 #File Name: 0976915359232 pages Art of the Edge Tool The Ferrous Metallurgy of New England Shipsmiths and Toolmakers | File size: 67.Mb

**H. G. Brack : Art of the Edge Tool: The Ferrous Metallurgy of New England Shipsmiths and Toolmakers (Davistown Museum Publication Series; Hand Tools in History)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Art of the Edge Tool: The Ferrous Metallurgy of New England Shipsmiths and Toolmakers (Davistown Museum Publication Series; Hand Tools in History):

In this volume of the Hand Tools in History series, author H. G. Skip Brack explores the stories told by the forge

welded edge tools discovered in New England tool chests and workshops during his 40 years of searching out useful woodworking tools for the Liberty Tool Company in Maine. Also the founder and curator of the Davistown Museum, Brack wrote *The Art of the Edge Tool* to complement the museum collection, tell the story of early American toolmakers and answer the questions of when, how and where New England shipsmiths "ironed" wooden sailing ships and forged edge tools for the shipwrights. He explains the milieu of these toolmakers and links it to New England's maritime trading economy and the late 19th century florescence of American hand tool manufacturing and shipbuilding which followed. History buffs and anyone interested in woodworking tools, their history and the role they played in the evolution of America's maritime and industrial economy are sure to enjoy Brack's work.

Brack--a museum curator, businessman and author--brings an absolute command of the topic to bear. In this edition (one of a series on historical hand tools), he spans 280 years of shipbuilding history, charting both the evolution of steelmaking between 1607 and 1882 and the growth of the economy that relied on it in times of revolution, war and peace. "Only written, painted or etched accounts tell of the existence of these ships prior to the introduction of the camera," Brack relates "But written accounts are selective, if not myth-making, leaving out essential information about the milieu of an era...The tools themselves are important additional primary sources of information about our colonial maritime history." With obvious comprehensive understanding, Brack explores the use of felling axes, augers, drawshaves and mortising gouges, and the ways these then-cutting edge devices were used. Brack has the historian's eye for sweep and connection, The author provides evidence of our earliest, and most ambitious, pursuit of maritime technology. American history buffs and nautical scholars will revel in this professorial ode to shipbuilding's evolution. -- Kirkus Discoveries

About the Author H. G. "Skip" Brack is the founder and curator of the Davistown Museum and proprietor of and buyer for the Jonesport Wood Company, which deals in antique and used tools and includes the famed Liberty Tool Company in Liberty, Maine. Artifacts and information that Brack encountered on his tool buying expeditions in the attics, cellars, and workshops of coastal New England piqued his curiosity, raising questions about its early inhabitants and the tools they used. When he discovered that the information he sought to answer his questions was sketchy, inaccurate, or undocumented, Brack sought and scoured primary and secondary sources on the history of early coastal New England, focusing on the origins and composition of tools used by early New Englanders and New England First Nation communities. His publications include the Davistown Museum six volume *Hand Tools in History* series, *Norumbega Reconsidered: Mawooshen and the Wawenoc Diaspora*, and much of the text on the information-rich museum website [www.davistownmuseum.org](http://www.davistownmuseum.org). Brack holds a B.A. from the University of Massachusetts and M.A. from the University of Colorado. His knowledge of early tools and Maine/New England maritime history makes him a sought after lecturer and consultant. Brack, the museum, and his tool stores have been featured in *Yankee*, *Downeast*, and *Bangor Metro* magazines, the *Boston Globe*, an Associated Press article that appeared world-wide, Maine Public Broadcasting Network's *Maine Experience*, and the *Martha Stewart* television show. He lives and works in Bar Harbor and Liberty, Maine, with his wife, Judith Bradshaw Brown.

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Introduction This volume of the *Hand Tools in History* series explores the stories told by the forge welded edge tools discovered in New England tool chests and workshops during the author's 40 years of searching out useful woodworking tools for the Jonesport Wood Company. *Art of the Edge Tool* examines early American toolmakers' remarkable ability to forge edge tools. It explains the milieu of these toolmakers and links it to New England's maritime trading economy and the late 19th century florescence of American hand tool manufacturing that followed. Many of the tools recovered during the author's tool-buying expeditions were signed by their makers, who sometimes included the location of their manufacture. Often used by the shipbuilders of New England's wooden age, a majority of the larger edge tools recovered from New England workshops and collections appear to be American-made, rather than forged at Sheffield, Birmingham, or other English toolmaking centers, as many others posited. The author's observation that a robust indigenous colonial and early American edge toolmaking community clearly existed in New England, but had been poorly documented, led him to research and write this survey of the roots and evolution of New England's bloomsmiths, shipsmiths, and edge toolmakers. A special focus of this volume is a review of the steel- and toolmaking strategies and techniques so essential to understanding the accomplishments of the forgotten shipsmiths and toolmakers who were responsible for the success of New England's maritime economy. It discusses and attempts to answer the previously unanswered questions of when, how, and where New England shipsmiths "ironed" wooden sailing ships built in New England, forged edge tools for the shipwrights who built the ships, and where they obtained their iron and steel. Many of the small quantity of hand tools used by shipwrights and other artisans that survive from the colonial era and almost all the heavy duty shipbuilding tools used in America after the American Revolution appear to be domestically produced, not imported, edge tools. Their presence raises the following questions about the work of early shipsmiths and edge toolmakers: When did shipsmiths and edge toolmakers begin making edge tools instead of using those brought from England and elsewhere? When they began forging edge tools for colonial shipwrights, where did they obtain their steel? When did shipsmiths and edge toolmakers begin using steel made in the colonies or the early Republic instead of imported English and German steel to make edge tools? The search for answers to these questions, admittedly an impossible task, forms the context for

our exploration of the art of forging edge tools and the ferrous metallurgy of New England's shipsmiths and edge toolmakers. *Art of the Edge Tool: The Ferrous Metallurgy of New England Shipsmiths and Toolmakers* begins with the Popham Expedition of 1607 and its attempt to build a settlement at the mouth of the Kennebec River. The construction of the pinnace *Virginia* at this location is a historic moment in New England's maritime history and an iconic event that links later colonial steel- and toolmaking strategies with earlier English and continental traditions. Colonial New England's first known shipsmith worked at this location. A description of the edge tools used by the shipwright is followed by commentary on the forgotten role of the shipsmith in colonial New England's vigorous shipbuilding industry and the historical significance of Boston as America's early colonial center of trade. The second section of this survey reviews and summarizes steel- and toolmaking strategies and techniques from the 15th to the 19th century used by English, then American, forge masters, blacksmiths, and shipsmiths from the centuries before the settlement of North America until the era of bulk steel production (1870). These strategies and techniques were the basis for the success of New England's shipsmiths and edge toolmakers in the critical years between 1650 and 1850. The third section of the *Art of the Edge Tool* explores the growth of shipbuilding and trading in colonial New England and the roots of the American iron industry in the bog iron deposits and forges of southeastern Massachusetts. The fourth and last component comments on the great florescence of shipbuilding on Massachusetts Bay and then in Maine in the 19th century and summarizes the impact of rapidly changing technologies on Maine and New England shipbuilders and shipsmiths. An exploration of a few obscure chapters in downeast Maine history of particular familiarity and interest to the author is followed by final comments on the need to retrieve and re-narrate lost chapters in the labyrinths of our metallurgical and maritime history.