



Officers

President

Jerry Achterberg
treefarm@swbell.net
210/661-3293

Vice-President

Jerry Whitley
jerry.whitley@ymail.com
210/288-3961

Treasurer

Rudy Billings
Rudy@BalconesForge.org
512/461-7375

Secretary

Tim Tellander
ttellander@gtvcc.com
830/980-2903



Editor

Vince Herod
spotteddogforge@yahoo.com
512/253-6045

Balcones Forge Dispatch

President's Corner

July 2015

Greetings!

Welcome to summer! Not the best time of the year to forge, but a blacksmith doesn't need to gripe about the heat anyway.



The June meeting at the Boerne Ag Museum in Boerne exceeded our expectations. There was quite a turnout of the membership as well as several new folks that showed up to watch our demonstrators. Many thanks to Sue Murray, Jerry Whitley, and Ben Rant for demonstrating and helping the folks that got in the fire during the open forge session, and thanks to all who participated in the trade item competition by making a Colonial Spatula. The quality of the work was outstanding. And just in case you didn't know it, Longhorn Café has a new burger joint just across the road with great food and cold beer.

The July meeting should be very interesting. John Crouch will host at his shop on the beautiful Sycamore Creek Ranch where we will have a cross demo from Alan and Jeff Lee and we will crank up a few of the workshop forges for some one-on-one instruction for anyone that needs help. Bring your hammers and tongs. We will also get to try out the new exhaust fans that John and Jim have installed in the workshop area.

There will also be another iron-in-the-hat auction to help our friends at ABANA. Bring money and auction items.

President's message continued on page 2.

Meeting Date is July 25

President's message continued.

This may likely be our last "heated" event until we get that first cold front this fall.

Thanks, and I hope to see ya'll in Marble Falls.

"It's always fun at the ranch!"

Jerry Achterberg



FORGING IN THE ROCKIES

Rocky Mountain Blacksmithing Conference, August 5-9, 2015, Carbondale, Colorado

Demonstrations by Steve Fontanini, Steve Williamson, Dan McNeil and Gordo Stonington.

Complete information at:

www.rockymountainsmiths.org

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TRADE ITEM

See the last page of this edition for the trade item details for July.

Please make a cross and enjoy participating in the trade item.

You gotta make one to take one!

BALCONES FORGE FUTURE

For July, we are set up to have a cross demo at John's. The trade item will be a Friederick's Cross.

August - TBD

September 19th - The Bulverde Jamboree

October or November - Phil Simpson
Any suggestions or requests for the open month?

December - Whitley's

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SECRETARY'S REPORT

The Balcones Forge meeting took place June 27, 2015 at the Boerne Ag Museum in Boerne, Texas. Joe Traveaso presented the group with a verbal history which indicated that the Ag Museum was founded in 1986. The large wooden barn that houses the blacksmith forge was built in the early 1900's. Originally, the machinery was powered by a steam engine and was in full operation until a shut down was imposed due to a lack of certified steam engine operators. All of the equipment on display at the Ag Museum is donated and all events are paid through donations as well. The 5 acre tract has not only the forge on display for the public, but an early pioneer house and another large building with agricultural equipment for public viewing. This historical site is open to the public and viewers of all ages will certainly enjoy the well maintained and interesting pieces on display.

The meeting was called to order by Jerry Achterberg who formally thanked the crowd for attending. I counted about 35 individuals at that time, but more & more kept streaming in. Jerry noted that the next Balcones Forge meeting will be July 25 at Sycamore Creek Ranch. The demo will be held in the near perfect venue thanks to Balcones Forge members and the Texas hospitality offered by John Crouchett.

The traditional Iron in The Hat auction was well received by the crowd. Jerry explained the use of every unique item and there were no hesitations with the bidding. The opportunity to obtain some very useful tools never ceases to amaze me as well as the unselfish donations of these items by Balcones Forge members. The summer 2015 edition of Anvil's Ring was brought to our attention because of the Sugar Skull art on the front cover that was skillfully forged by Balcones Forge member Sue Murray. The hundreds of techniques displayed in this unusual piece of art is mesmerizing and I had to remove it from my workbench because it was so distracting that it was interfering with the work I had to do. Valerie Ostenak, Editor/Designer for Anvil's Ring described the art --a fine showing for a lot of different techniques

-- splitting, riveting, texturing, drawing, tapering, and fine hammer control. Sugar skulls are part of a very old tradition that honors the dead." Sue was present and she demonstrated the hot twist technique and gave very useful tips and advice on how she so skillfully made some of beautiful art work. Jerry Whitley was next up and with the clever techniques he uses in some of his handles, he also wowed the group with his envious talent. The way these two blacksmiths demonstrated basic blacksmith skills makes it look so simple but it still takes practice. True to extending the 'pay it forward' attitude of Balcones Forge members, the open forge was extended after lunch to anyone that wanted some hands-on learning experience.

Mr. Achterberg also congratulated the Balcones Forge members that participated in the recent Folklife Festival in San Antonio and despite the occasional rain shower, the effort was extremely helpful informing kids and families entertained with traditional blacksmith techniques and tools.

Daniel Harrington reported that the library has a ton of books checked out by members and he is constantly researching for more material to add.

The forged competition item for the meeting today was a colonial spatula and there were certainly a lot of well made colonial spatulas on display. The judges for todays event were Sue Murray, Gary Hilton, and Rick Dowdy. The winner was Smokey Thompson, but as Rick skillfully pointed out, the decision was difficult as each forged piece demonstrated some very difficult techniques that were mastered by the individual craftsman. Thanks to everyone for a great turnout. Your individual participation or as a group inspires other members to participate in events and extend the skills that we all love, and you are doing a great job. Whatever event you plan to attend, I'm sure you will learn something, meet new friends, and enjoy yourself.

Tim Tellander
Balcones Forge Secretary

Oldies, but Goodies

Blacksmithing Books That Are Worth Your Time

by John Crouchett

Blacksmithing in the 1970's and 80's marked the renaissance of iron forging in America. From a dying, almost dead, art, blacksmithing had suddenly returned to become a growing and potent force in American arts and crafts. One of the results of this growth was a number of inspired instructional books on blacksmithing technique.

Two of the best of these instructional books were *Edge of the Anvil* by Jack Andrews, published in 1977, and *Professional Smithing* by Donald Streeter, which came along in 1980. Now, thirty-five years later, these books have stood the test of time.

Edge of the Anvil is now *New Edge of the Anvil, a resource book for the blacksmith*. This is the book I went to years ago for a basic understanding of the many aspects of the craft and it is still the best explanation around if you are a beginning blacksmith, trying to understand the world of forging iron. Unfortunately, it will no longer cost you \$6.95, which is what I paid for my copy, but it will still be well worth the price because this is a book you will buy and keep.

New Edge of the Anvil begins with a fine explanation of the smithy. (For you true beginners, I should explain here that a **smithy** is a building, not a person. The person is a **smith**.) For a blacksmith, there is a certain working relationship between the anvil, the forge, the slack tub, the tool rack, and the other main components of any smithy. These relationships determine where each part must go in order to give an efficient flow of work. To an experienced smith, these things seem intuitive, but to my beginner self, they were a mystery. Jack Andrews did a fine job of explaining the flow of a blacksmith's work and I still use that information today.

Andrews goes on to explain the use of all the various anvil tools and fire tools, right down to the point of getting started. He covers fire

management, forging techniques, and even basic blacksmith metallurgy. All of this is done with many clear line drawings that help the beginner get a firm grasp of what is being discussed.

Following the instructional part of the book is a section of charts, graphs, and explanations on forging and temperature colors, identification of metals, various finishes that can be applied to metal, and a variety of other resource information. *New Edge of the Anvil* ends with an inspiring portfolio of work from Samuel Yellin, probably the finest American blacksmith of all time.

If you were to buy only one blacksmithing book, this is the one I recommend. It is not the fanciest or the newest, but it is still the best.

Once you have made enough mistakes at the forge to become something other than a beginner, you should get yourself a copy of *Professional Smithing* by Donald Streeter. This book does not have much for the beginner, but it is a wealth of information for the professional or advanced smith.

Illustrations in *Professional Smithing* are mostly muddy black and white photos and many of the projects are complex, but there is treasure to be mined for those willing to work their way through this book. Donald Streeter was a maker of the finest quality Colonial style ironwork and an expert on high end iron restoration. The tooling and techniques he used throughout his career will give you a marvelous insight on how such things are done at the masters level.

Beginning with a detailed description of his smithy, Streeter then walks the reader through a series of increasingly complicated forgings. The purpose of these projects is not so much to make each piece as to realize **how** the piece was made. You really do not read this book in order to imitate each of Streeter's jigs and tooling, but to understand why jigs and tooling are made the way they are and even why and how you would use such a tool.

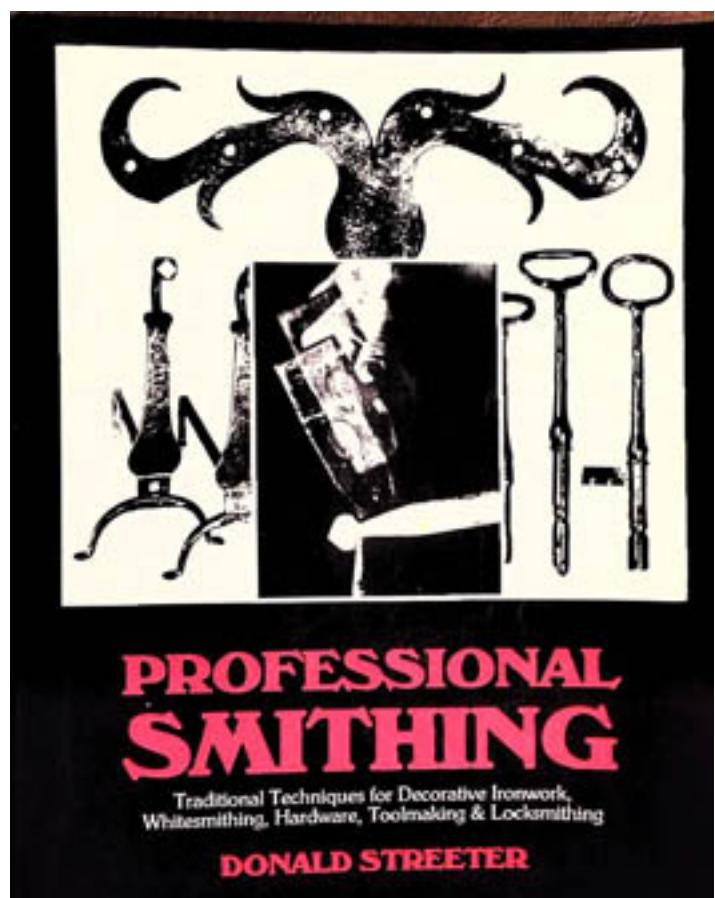
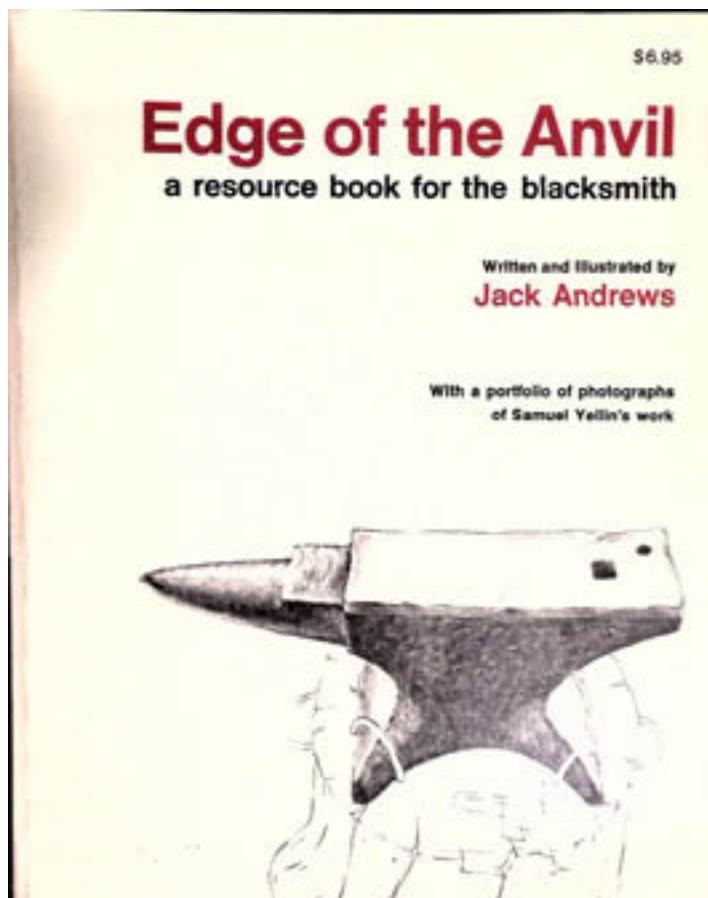
There are fine discussions here of topics seldom touched on in the usual "how-to" books. Streeter introduces us to whitesmithing techniques, complex lockwork, and about twenty different traditional hardware projects.

All of this is done in the context of American Colonial ironwork, but the information applies as well to any style of forging.

Many of the dies, punches, and jigs are intricate work, as are the iron pieces they are used to produce. *Professional Smithing* reminds us clearly of the blacksmith's persistent attention to detail, back in the day when labor was cheap and iron was dear.

Both *New Edge of the Anvil* and *Professional Smithing* are available from Skipjack Press.

Happy forging.



While flipping through the TV channels this Father's Day morning, I came across the Reverend Goff with the first service after the shooting of nine of its members at a prayer services. On his vestments, there is a Cross adorned with an anvil. I needed to find out, why the anvil?



Here is what I found.

<http://www.stpaulamemorgantown.org/Home/meaning-of-ame-symbols>

The Cross & The Anvil

The meaning of the Cross is obvious to anyone with faith in God and a knowledge of the Holy Bible and the Christian Church: the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the power of Salvation through Him, and the immeasurable grace of God that covers the sins of the world and empowers His people to be more than conquerors through Jesus Christ who strengthens us.

The Anvil, on the other hand, has a symbolic and a historical meaning which must be noted by all who call themselves African Methodist. OUR beginnings emerged from the depths of racism and bigotry and when our founding fathers chose to stay with Methodism they purchased a blacksmith's shop and converted it into their house of worship; they called it BETHEL, meaning "House of God." In the blacksmith's shop was an anvil used to pound and shape metal ores into a usable and functioning object. And, as any blacksmith will tell you, hammers may wear down, and many a man may lose his life to the exhaustion from the hard work of being a blacksmith, but the Anvil never fails. A man only need to purchase one in his or her entire lifetime, and it continues to last through MANY lifetimes. So it is with God; He cannot be beaten down and He is Eternal. The Anvil represents our beginning and the lasting Strength of our Lord and Savior that never ceases.

The Cross and the Anvil: Our Salvation and our Strength. Our beginnings in a blacksmith shop and our eternal ending in God's heavenly realm.

Jerry Whitley

6/21/2015



photo from the June 2015 meeting by Jerry Achterberg

DRIVING DIRECTIONS FOR JULY MEETING

The July 2015 meeting is at John & Carolyn Crouch's Sycamore Creek Ranch, outside Marble Falls. Lost? Need directions? Call John's cell phone at 830-798-3710.

From Austin, Take Hwy 71 and go north and west. You will pass through Bee Caves, over the Pedernales River, through Spicewood, over Double Horn Creek, and eventually come to the turnoff to the right to Marble Falls at Hwy 281. Depending on where you start from, it'll be about 60 miles. If you start from Vince's place in Bastrop, it'll be twice that!

From San Antonio, Take Hwy 281 North all the way to Marble Falls.

When you cross the Colorado River into Marble Falls, begin counting stoplights. The fifth stoplight you come to will be Ranch Road 1431. This is the biggest intersection in town. Turn right (east) onto Ranch Road 1431. (Check your odometer. You will go 5.6 more miles to our gate.) As you head out of Marble Falls on 1431, you will notice that you are on a winding, two lane blacktop road with no shoulders. At the top of a long, winding hill, the road changes and suddenly has shoulders. Go fifty yards further and turn left into our driveway between the red reflectors. (Look for the "Anvil" signs.)

At our gate, you will see a large oak tree to the left and a small sign to the right that says, "Sycamore Creek Ranch, 5828 East Ranch Road 1431". If the gate is open, just drive on in. If the gate is closed, then there are cattle in this pasture, so please close the gate behind yourself once you enter.

Continue on down our driveway for one mile. You will cross four (count 'em...FOUR) cattleguards before you see the big metal shop on your left.

Okay, for you folks who want to come in from somewhere up north: Just take Hwy 29 from Georgetown (or wherever you get on it) and head to Burnet. At Burnet, take Hwy 281 south to Marble Falls. In the middle of Marble, turn left (east) onto Ranch Road 1431 and head for our gate.

See you there!



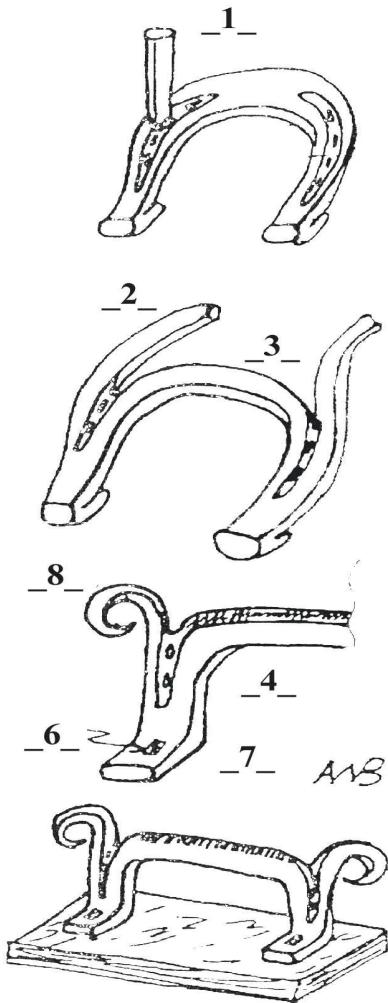
Horseshoe Boot Scraper

Charles Arbuckle & Alan Brown

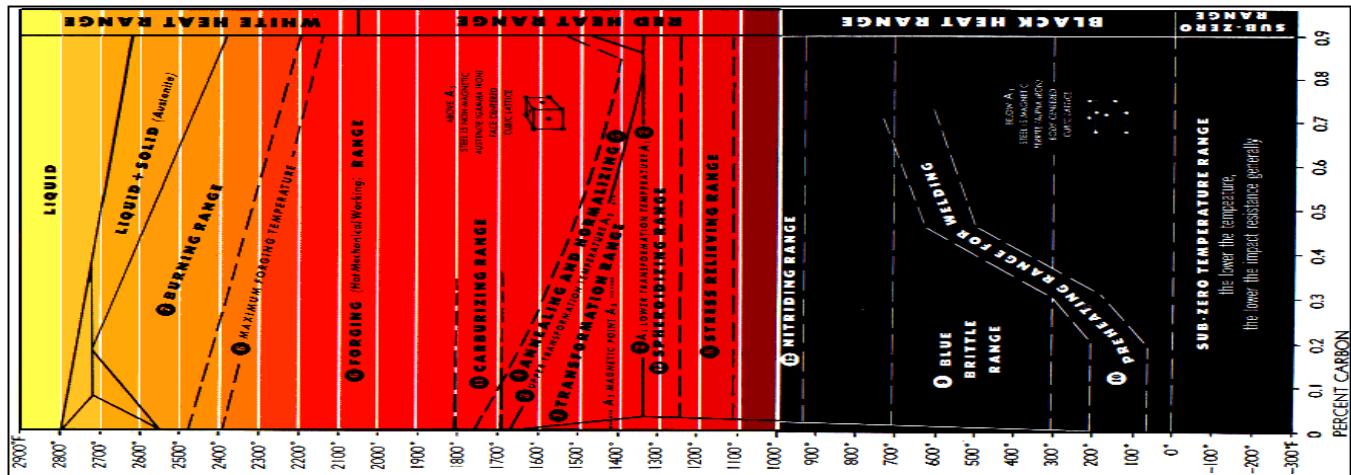
from *The Traditionalist*

Stock: One thrown horseshoe, 3/8" x 7/8",
cross-section above the caulks.

1. Heat and hot cut the shoe, following the nail crease.
Start at the third nail hole from the caulk on one side of the shoe
and cut around to the corresponding hole on the other side.
2. Hot cut separated section at the center and fold back
3. Heat center section and draw out to form the scraper section.
4. Make a 90 degree flat bend at the end of the scraper section.
5. Straighten out caulks or draw out if they were welded.
6. Punch a hole in the ends to fasten boot scraper onto the
porch floor, concrete block, log, etc.
7. Make a 90 degree bend in the feet.
8. Draw out split off section and form into a scroll.
9. Remember to wipe your boots when you've been
in the mud!



Handy Temperature Guide



PUMPING UP THE PIGGY BANK

Iron In The Hat and Other Considerations

by John Crouchett

This is a very good time to think about raising money for Balcones Forge. Not because we are broke. Far from it. The Balcones bank account now has roughly twice as much cash as we were used to running on for many years. Financially, 2015 has been a very good year for us. In fact, it is far and away the best year we have ever had.

That makes this a good time to look over our finances. Everyone knows not to put all your eggs in one basket. For many years, we have relied on income from our annual Bluebonnet Demo for our yearly budget. Luckily for us, we have gotten skilled at putting on that demo, and we have always been blessed with fine weather and good fortune.

Any good accountant would look at that, however, and tell us that we need some “diversification in our portfolio.” Getting the bulk of our money from one place is always a risky plan.

Many groups like ours get a lot of their income from members dues. We don’t do that. Balcones Forge decided years ago to keep dues very low so that we can include everyone who wants to be a member, regardless of income. We are proud of that, and it has worked well for us.

The other significant income source for us has been Iron In The Hat. This little blacksmith auction is an old tradition at each meeting, and it raises considerable money while making tools and equipment available for anyone who brought some extra cash and needs some more tools. (We always need more tools!) Just for an idea of what Iron In The Hat is worth to us, Balcones Forge took in several hundred dollars over the May and June meetings.

What can you do to help out with Iron In The Hat? It’s easy! Just keep us in mind each month. Put a reminder on your cell phone to hammer out a little something to put in the auction or just cruise through your shop with an eye out for tools or equipment you don’t use or need anymore. In a normal shop, there are always a few things that could be donated! Even if your contribution only brings a couple of bucks, that is still good money, and somebody gets to go home with a new tool or a new hook, or maybe a new blacksmithing book.

Finally, let’s start thinking about a third source of income. We now have a nice set of anvils, coal forges, and leg vises. Our first forge master, William Bastas, has offered to teach a couple of classes for us late this fall on proper care and feeding of a coal forge and on making the tools for operating a coal forge.

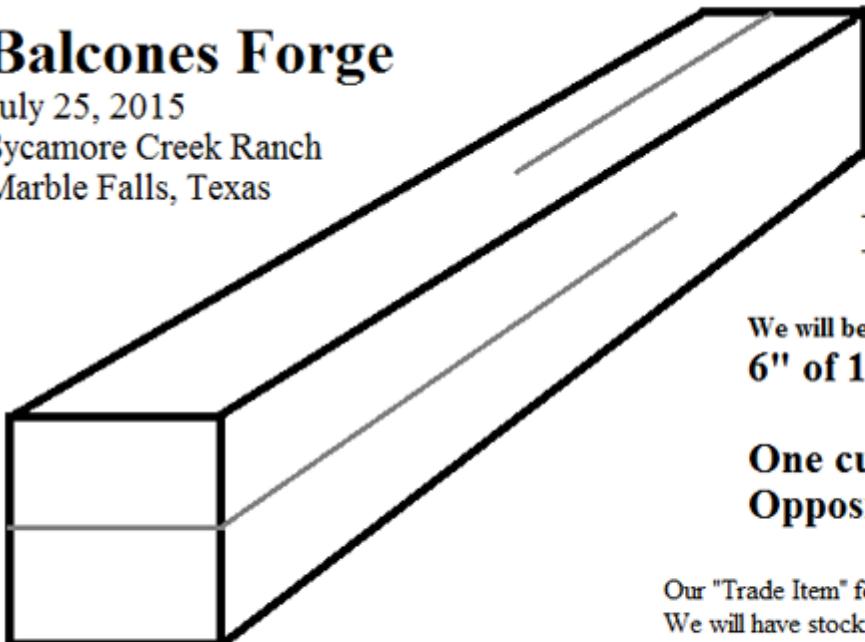
If these classes are set up like previous classes, we will have ten students per day and the price of the class will be \$125.00 per student. Balcones Forge would make a good bit of money from these classes. (We usually also provide scholarships for those who need them.) Watching classes is always free for everyone.

By hosting a few more classes like this each year, we could add a solid third stream of income. It is certainly something to think about. Now let’s go back to just enjoying the fact that right now we have more money than ever!

Balcones Forge

July 25, 2015

Sycamore Creek Ranch
Marble Falls, Texas



Friederick's Cross

We will be using
6" of 1/2" Square Barstock

One cut is 4 1/4"
Opposing cut is 2 1/2"

Our "Trade Item" for the July meeting is a Friederick's Cross.
We will have stock cut for the soldiers cut to the above dimensions.
If we all start with stock cut to these dimensions and modify and
finish from there, we can show them what is possible with their
stock.