



Volume 34, Number 02

December 2021

## ABANA TEXAS!

MAY 11-14 • NORTH TEXAS STATE FAIR GROUNDS • DENTON, TEXAS

In case you haven't heard, **ABANA** (*Artist Blacksmith Association of North America*) is coming to Texas - land of cattle ranches and oil rigs, lush tropical beaches on one side and cactus covered desert on the other.

The North Texas Blacksmith Association invites y'all to Denton, Texas, which is the apex of the golden triangle commonly referred to as DFW (*Dallas/Fort Worth*). We have an amazing place with lots to offer.

Texas, like any western area, has a strong affinity with blacksmiths. No town could live or even start without one, and the blacksmithing traditions live

on through our strong farrier, bladesmithing, and current blacksmithing groups.



We're going to make sure that ABANA's first visit to Texas is memorable, but we need everyone to come and be part of

that. We've pulled in blacksmiths from all around our region, including not only Texas (second largest state in the union), but

also Oklahoma, Louisiana and New Mexico to help us get this done.

We're working hard to corral the best artists available and creating an environment that best showcases and demonstrates their respective talents. Attending the ABANA 2022 Conference will give you an opportunity to rub shoulders and learn from the very best.

Where else, or rather when else are you going to be able to go to one spot at one time

(see ABANA, page \_\_)

# NORTH TEXAS BLACKSMITH ASSOCIATION

www.NTXBA.org

## NTXBA LEADERSHIP

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## NOTES FROM THE

# Editorial Staff

aka Larry Curtis

lbcurtis@verizon.net

The big club news is a report on the 2021 NTXBA convention held recently in Crossroads, Texas at an event venue known as TX-Ture Farm. The venue was exceptional with food, drink, live music, Doo-Da's and trinkets of all kinds.

While quite young, (*at least compared with old farts like me*), Our guest demonstrator, Mark Ling, of College Station, Texas, was talented and insightful. I expect to see Mr. Ling become one of the dominant blacksmiths of his generation.

Hosting the 2022 ABANA convention is rapidly approaching on the NTXBA horizon. NTXBA President, Dan Richardson, is the point man on this event. If you have a hankering to help with planning, talk to Dan at the meeting on December 11th.

In a year marked with world-changing events, there has not been a lot of action on the blacksmith front. With no meetings and limited gatherings this chronicle has been a bit sparse and far between. I am hopeful that 2022 will be a bit better. We will all have to deal with rising costs for raw materials, but I believe that one of the primary traits of a blacksmith is resourcefulness.

Our own Kelly Kring has the story of an archeological dig in Texas of a real working blacksmith shop. You don't want to miss.

Don't forget Elections are overdue, so be thinking of nominations or throw your own hat into the ring.

## HAPPY HAMMERING!

## LOOKING FOR BLACKSMITHING CLASSES IN COLLIN COUNTY?

The Technology Campus of Collin College, located near the intersection of Hwy 121 and Alma Drive, is starting Blacksmithing classes within their Associates Degree in Welding program this spring!

Chris Tinnen is the new instructor.





# DOUGLAS PRYOR WORKSHOP: REPOUSSE AND CHASING

by Fred Cole, NTXBA  
Vice President



The North Texas Blacksmith Association was proud to sponsor the **Douglas Pryor Repousse and Chasing** workshop. It was held at Brookhaven College, on October 22 thru 24th.

Thank you to Kelly Kring for arranging a perfect venue for this class. For those unfamiliar with Brookhaven College, Kelly Kring teaches all levels of blacksmithing at Brookhaven in the Arts facility. Thanks to Kelly, we were able to make use of a classroom which was perfectly equipped and prepared for this event.

I need to also thank Patrick Thaden who worked behind the scenes to make this happen and

made it easy for the students to purchase the supplies needed for this class i.e. the pitch bowls and copper.

Douglas Pryor has already made quite a name for himself in the metal sculpture/art circles, but this was our first experience with him as a teacher. I have to say, he came prepared! He arrived with eight complete sets of tools (plus his own set) including hammers, planishers, embossers, and liners which came on the plane with him from California. Heaven only knows how much all that equipment weighed. He also brought a good set of examples, showing what could be accomplished in both copper and steel.

Douglas set a good pace in his class, never seeming to hurry anyone, yet keeping everyone more or less on task with what needed to be done. His demonstrations and lectures were clear, on-point and relevant to what we were currently doing which made what we were trying to do much more achievable.

Speaking for myself, being in a class with fellow motivated students helped me a great deal. Getting help or opinions was key for me to have the success that I did, and I'm sure that was true for others as well. Many of my fellow students exhibited a lot of talent themselves. I look forward to seeing their work in the future.

I don't remember when I enjoyed a class as much as this one and can't wait to do more! The good news is that we'll get a chance to see Douglas here in North Texas again relatively quickly as he has committed to demonstrating at the ABANA conference coming to North Texas in May of 2022. And I'm sure you'll hear more about that coming up.

## KEEP HAMMERING!

## ABANA

*Continued from page 1*

and see the talent we are concentrating here in Texas.

We're working on showcasing the world's top metal working talents with names like:

- Mark Aspery  
(and his teaching crew)  
*California*
- Ellen Durkan  
*Delaware*
- Zeevik Gottlieb  
*Israel*
- Suraiya Howerter  
*Texas*
- Douglas Pryor  
*California*
- Lyle Wynn  
*Mississippi*
- Anton Yakushev  
*Russia*

### And many others

**T**here'll be demonstrations, lectures, competitions, other crafts, vendors of all sorts, culminating with an auction and a great meal to wind things up on Saturday.

We'll have a gallery, showcasing pieces by our amazing artists.

There'll be a teaching tent. An area devoted to our veterans. Tours to interesting places

**More details to come...**

**SEE Y'ALL  
THERE!!**

# UNEARTHING A TRULY HISTORIC BLACKSMITH SHOP IN NORTH TEXAS

By Kelly Kring

## A MAZING HISTORY WAS RECENTLY DUG UP IN NORTH TEXAS!

On the corner of FM 455 and FM 2450 in the small town of Bolivar, Texas, the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDOT) was planning to expand FM 455 from a two-lane to a four-lane road. In the preliminary survey, a historic site was discovered in the southeast corner. (This was one of three sites in the area that would be affected by the expansion.)

Researching the location, it was found that that this was the site

of two historic businesses in the nineteenth century. The location was originally a Store House before becoming the location for a blacksmith shop. What makes this site particularly interesting and significant is who the last owner of the blacksmith shop was and what his background was.

**I**n or around 1840, Thomas Cook, Sr. was born into slavery. He lived in enslavement in South Carolina, but was brought to Tarrant County in Texas by 1857. He was probably still there when freedom

*(see Historic Shop, page 7)*



*Above: Site of the archeological excavation in Bolivar, Texas*



# ANNUAL NTXBA HAMMER-IN CONFERENCE

Report courtesy of Fred Coles

## FRED'S SCORECARD

Weather .....	Perfect!
People .....	Perfect!
Venue .....	Perfect!
Demonstrator .....	Perfect!
Raffle .....	Perfect!
Auction .....	Perfect!
Competition .....	I could have done better (and yes Nonette beat me -as did a few others. Crap!)
Alpaca's .....	Perfect! (Cute as all get out)
Bands .....	Perfect!
Food Trucks .....	Perfect!
Chuck Wagon .....	Fantastic!
Axe Throwing .....	Meh...
.....	(Not so good. Gotta work on that.)
Outcome .....	Perfect!

FOLKS, I THINK OVERALL WE REALLY HIT THIS ONE OUT OF THE PARK. THERE WAS SOME DRAMA (THERE ALWAYS IS), BUT OVERALL THIS HAS TO BE A 12 OUT OF 10.

I'd like to start with a shout-out about the venue provided by TX-Ture Farm in Crossroads, Texas. Our hosts, Annemiek and Russel, provided the location and customized their venue to host our annual Hammer-In Conference as part of their Forging Texas Festival, planned to introduce the art of blacksmithing to north Texas families.

Everybody I approached (and I actively sought opinions from as many people I could talk to), were all very impressed by all aspects of the event!

Annemiek, Russel, and their family did a tremendous amount of work to create an environment that centered on our Hammer-In but would also include a variety of other activities to see, listen to, do, and buy, making the overall experience awesome. In this case 1+1 equaled 10! Thank you to all for an outstanding event!

Classes took place from Wednesday, November 10 through Friday, November 12, led by Brian Brazeal and Mark Ling. The weather was perfect, starting out a bit chilly but warming up quickly. I think everyone learned something. For many, myself, included, this was their first experience using a striking anvil, and it was impressive. Many finished their daily projects, but not all. (Note: If you didn't finish something but would like to, there will be open forges and folks to help at our

next meeting, details on page 9. If you can't get to the next meeting please send a note to us and we'll work out something.)

The demonstration on Saturday was conducted by Mark Ling and his striker Russel (not Russel-the-host). Mark did a wonderful job of creating and explaining in detail as he went; first a coal rake for the forge and after lunch

(see Hammer-In, page 6)



## HAMMER-IN

*Continued from page 5*

*Above: Mark Ling during his demo*

break, a beautiful trivet with scrolls and lots of collars. Both of the demo items were donated to the auction.

**W**hen the demonstrations concluded, we held the toolbox raffle. The toolbox was well appointed with a fairly complete set of tools and resulted in a very active raffle. It was won by a new member Dylan. The winning number was pulled (slowwwwwly) by our ABANA President Leigh Morell. Thank you to those that donated tools: 2 Bastards, Kelly Kring, The Cole Bin, Chip Pratt, and Khanh Khong.

After everyone got over their disgust at not holding the winning toolbox ticket, Stringbean started the auction. We had a lot of items and a lot of bidders. Items of note included a small German vise donated by Kelly Kring, a pair of tongs made by Hofi and donated by

Dan Richman, several hammers donated by Matt Marti, and many others. Thanks to all who donated and supported the club! Stringbean did his usual great job of keeping things moving and keeping the bidding as lively as possible, however, for 2022, we really need to get a better looking runner to “model” the items up for bid... Dan!

Sunday was competition day for us, with Kelly Kring presiding. The contest was to take a two-inch section of 5/8” square bar, draw it down and drop it in a 3/8” hole or 1/8” x one-inch slot. We started at 10 am, with Dan and I asked to lead things off. I’m guessing Kelly wanted to keep the bar as low as possible. Other club members followed. The upshot was that our ABANA visitors from up in snow country kicked our collective butts, with Bob Valentine taking honors and Leigh Morrell following close

behind (ouch!). Kaleb was right in-between and held up our club honor, but it was bit of a stretch to the rest of the pack. There’s only one question remaining that needs to be answered: Is Monte finished yet?

Special recognition goes to Jeffery Hanson and Kelly Kring for keeping the anvils ringing in the main area and keeping the crowd at large involved on Saturday and Sunday.

**I**n conclusion, I encourage anybody interested in experiencing a family farm offering a variety of special events and experiences ranging from soap-making and candle-making to yoga, and alpaca encounters to check out [www.tx-ture.farm](http://www.tx-ture.farm). They are first rate folks with a beautiful facility and lots to do.



*Above: Auction Items on Display*



# HISTORIC SHOP

*Continued from page 4*

rang out across the lands in 1865, when news of the Emancipation Proclamation arrived in Texas. The proclamation freed all slaves, allowing them to not only be free, but to make their own ways in a new life with paid occupations.



*Above: More artifacts discovered on site*



*Above: A tray of artifacts unearthed during the excavation.*

According to the 1870 census, Thomas Cook was still in Tarrant County, but by 1872 he was living in Denton County, presumably in Bolivar. In 1882, Cook had his wife Lethia (Lettie) Perry Cook and eight children living with him in Bolivar. Sometime soon after coming to Texas, Thomas Cook probably gained employment working for a local blacksmith, perhaps in Tarrant County and more likely in Bolivar. In 1882, he was able to buy the shop from an Englishman named James Barwise, a former blacksmith and likely his employer. For the next 16 years, Cook owned and operated his own blacksmithing business on this location in Bolivar.

Thomas Cook passed away on January 5, 1898. As of the writing of this article, there have been few records discovered about the work and business related to Thomas Cook and his blacksmith shop.

Archaeologist Doug Boyd with Cox-McClain Environmental Consulting, Inc. and his team were hired by TxDOT to excavate the site beginning in November of 2020. The team included one student from the University of North Texas (UNT) and volunteers from the North Texas Archeological Society. They all came to assist in the archeological investigation. The excavation lasted (including a 10 day extension) until early February 2021.

Thousands of objects were uncovered. Some were domestic items like buttons and combs, others were blacksmithing-related objects like a hammer, sets of tongs, and structural pieces like planks of wood with nails, stone foundations and walls. All of these artifacts help tell the story of Thomas Cook's time in the shop with his family and customers.

Many of the blacksmithing items were related to farrier work such

*(see Historic Shop, page 8)*

## HISTORIC SHOP

*Continued from page 7)*

as nails, shoes, and even farrier tools like a “Clinch” bar, rasps, and tongs. Other blacksmithing-related objects were from Cook’s wagon-repairing efforts, such as a feed box hinge, carriage bolts, and iron wagon reinforcements used in the joinery of wagon building, etc. There were lots of “drops” from bar stock, repairs, and various bits and pieces of agricultural equipment. It was obvious that the hot cut hardy was one of the most used tools in the shop! All these things show the wide variety of skills that Thomas Cook employed while working on a variety of different tasks in the shop.

One of the main features at the site was a dugout structure with rock-lined walls. It may have been the original Store House on the property. Unfortunately, this

structure was heavily disturbed, and the building was probably intentionally destroyed during a prior road construction episode. This structure was probably abandoned for some time before it was destroyed, but this act also sealed in lots of nineteenth-century artifacts.

The archeologists also found one large area where “hammerscale” or “fire scale” was concentrated. They used small hand magnets to detect the hammerscale particles in the soil, and the concentrations tell them where the shop once stood (probably a wooden frame building). When they extract the hammerscale from the soil samples back in their lab and study it, this may reveal more about how the shop was laid out and where the anvil sat.

It is also believed that the main

areas for farrier work to shod (shoe) the horses was on the north and east sides of the building. The horseshoe nails and some shoes were found in this area are a distinct difference from the rest of the site. No coal deposits were found before the end of the dig. Coal pieces were found, so it’s sure to be believed that coal was used, but it may not have been the only fuel source. All the main blacksmithing tools—such as the anvil, post vice, whet stone, or drill—were not found; believing them to have been either sold or lost to the family members and time.

**D**uring the researching prior to the excavation, a descendant of Thomas Cook was located in the area. A retired Denton County Sheriff’s officer named Howard Clark is the great-great-grandson of Thomas Cook. He was excited to have the opportunity to come and volunteer during the months of the dig. He proudly helped to find many objects while screening the soil the archeologists dug out of the ground.

Interestingly, Howard Clark was already involved in the hobby of blacksmithing and knife making before he was even contacted by archeology team. He had no idea that he was unknowingly walking in the footsteps of his ancestor.

Towards the end of the excavation, Clark, assisted by the

*(see Historic Shop, page 9)*



*Above: Cook descendant, retired Denton County Sheriff officer, Howard Clark, assists with sifting through the excavation for artifacts*



## HISTORIC SHOP

*Continued from page 8*

archeologist leading the dig, helped identify the location where Thomas Cook, Sr. was buried. It was in a small and poorly marked cemetery, now located on private property north of Bolivar. Howard Clark, along with his oldest daughter, Doug Boyd, Kelly Kring and the land owner, literally found the grave, hidden in the weeds and woods of North Texas.

An online resource, [www.findagrave.com](http://www.findagrave.com), had a photograph of the tombstone, that was used to verify the gravesite when Boyd and Clark uncovered it. This was the first time in many decades that a family member of Thomas Clark had come to see his grave. While an obviously joyous occasion, the experience was also very

humbling.

The artifacts found at the Thomas Cook's Blacksmith Shop are currently all in Austin, at the labs of Cox-McLain Environmental Consulting, Inc. They are being studied and some items will undergo conservation to restore them and stop the decay and rusting after more than a century underground. Eventually the artifacts will go to a repository for permanent safe keeping, perhaps to the Denton County Museum.

In the meantime, it is the hope to have many of these artifacts will be on public display in a county museum for everyone to enjoy. The site will have a new historical plaque dedicated to the history of the site, the life of Thomas Cook as freedman business owner in the trade of Blacksmithing.



*Howard Clark, Great-great grandson of Thomas Cook, with his eldest daughter at Cooks gravesite*



## NTXBA MEETING & OPEN FORGE

**WHEN:** Saturday, December 11, 2021 @ 10 a.m.

**WHERE:** The Cole Bin (Fred Cole's Shop)  
715 Pony Express Trail · McKinney, TX

### ON THE MEETING AGENDA

- **Finish the September Challenge** - knife, fork & spoon suitable for the table (paying attention, Mike L.?)
- **Annual "Hammer-In"** - How did we do?
- **Elections** President, Secretary + two Board positions are open for election
- **ABANA** - Where are we, what's happening

### THEN, BUSINESS COMPLETED, FORGING!

Bring out the forges to finish class projects and have a hammerin' good time.

**THERE WILL BE DOUGHNUTS!** And maybe some hot coffee too.



*In  
Memory:*

**JAMES  
COX**



# ABANA

**O**n page 1, you read about the ABANA Conference coming to Texas in May. ABANA is the acronym for the Artist Blacksmith Association of North America. For only \$65/year, you can become a member and broaden your blacksmithing knowledge!

#### MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES:

- Four quarterly issues of the Anvil's Ring
- Four quarterly issues of the Hammer's Blow
- Digital access to the past five years of archives for the above publications
- Educational videos and materials
- Complimentary listing (optional) in the "Find a Blacksmith" directory
- Digital access to the ABANA membership directory

#### YOU CAN JOIN ONLINE VIA THIS LINK:

<https://abana.org/membership/membership-levels/#join>



