

Antique tool

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Minnesota State Capitol Woodworkers Toolbox Historical Society. "**Antique tool is generally defined as a tool over 100 years old**"

The use of tools is one of the primary means by which humans are distinguished from other animals. Tools are the parents of all other antiques. Most manmade objects were made and great effort goes into the creation of newer and better tools to solve the production problems of today. The study of antique tools provides a glimpse of human development and cultural preferences history.

The creation of a tool often makes possible the creation of more advanced tools. Advanced tools made possible the manufacture of internal-combustion engines, automobiles, and computers. Among those who like to collect, some may do so as part of a rigorous study program - they want to catalog all types of a specific tool, for example. Some collectors may wish to preserve some of the past for future generations.

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Tool Collecting Categories

Categories of tools range from the broad - planes, rules, braces, hammers, etc. to the specific - planes made by the Gage Company of Vineland, New Jersey for example. People who are new to the hobby, should know that there are many good modern reference books that will guide you in your search, as well as many reprints of the catalogs in which these tools were originally offered. Often tools will exhibit differences contrasting the different locations of their makers, or different features contrasting different time periods.

The following are some ways people collect tools:

- Tools of a specific company or maker - for example, L. Bailey Victor tools, Seneca Falls Tool Company tools, Miller's Falls tools, Disston Saws, Chelcor planes, etc.
- Tools of a specific type - hammers, braces, axes, saws, patented planes, transitional planes, treadle-powered machines, etc.
- Tools of a specific period - tools from 1850–1900, post World War II era tools, etc.
- Tools from a specific place - Scottish tools, tools from Massachusetts makers, etc.
- Tools of a specific occupation - cooper's tools, machinist tools, watchmaker's tools, garden tools.
- A combination of one or more of the above categories—for example, one each of a specific type of Stanley tool, i.e. all Stanley saws, all Stanley marking gauges, all Stanley planes, etc.
- A "type study" of one specific model, for example, a type study of Stanley #6 jointer planes or Norris A5 smooth planes.

- Tools that show how a specific idea progressed over time, for example tools tracing the development of the plane's adjusting mechanisms, or tools showing how an early patent was bought out and developed by another company.
- Tool advertising and catalogs.

Sickles and Scythes

The American history of hay cutting tools begins with the reaping hook. Its slender, ultra sharp, half circle blade was employed in cutting grass for hay and it took some skill to use successfully. By the late 1800s the less artful sickle became the hay cutting tool of choice. The blade of the sickle was serrated and less circular than the reaping hook. The employment of this tool took less finesse and more of a slashing technique. It was used in conjunction with a wooden grass crook with which one held the standing grass steady, while swinging the sickle blade through the shank. Sickles found today will seem to have smooth blades to the modern viewer, as the serrations are usually worn away over time.

Scythes are grass cutting tools with long handles for mowing large amounts of hay. The graceful shape of the scythes of the late 18th and early 19th centuries hinted at the grace and art required for using the tool properly. The blade was straighter than the sickle's, with an almost straight blade side and a gently curved blunt side. The handle, called a *snath*, would ordinarily be of a hardwood indigenous to the area of manufacture with small handholds, strategically placed, termed *nibs*. The earliest scythes had no nibs. Later scythes had two nibs. Used by an experienced hand, the scythe was an efficient tool, slicing through acres of green hay with methodic precision. Scythes were the prized possession of early Americans and, carefully protected from abuse and weather, they could last for centuries.

List of manufacturers

- Holtzapffel, English producer of lathes as well as edge and boring tools
- Alexander Mathieson & Sons, Scottish manufacturer of edge tools
- T. Norris & Son, English maker of fine planes
- Edward Preston & Sons, English maker of wooden and steel woodworking tools, 1825 to 1932
- Record, English producer of tools
- Stanley, American producer of tools

Further reading

- Russell, David R. with photography by James Austin and foreword by David Linley (2010). *Antique Woodworking Tools: Their Craftsmanship from the Earliest Times to the Twentieth Century* Cambridge: John Adamson ISBN 978-1-898565-05-5 OCLC 727125586 (<https://www.worldcat.org/oclc/727125586>)
- Salaman, R.A. (1996). *Dictionary of Leather-working Tools, c. 1700–1950, and the Tools of Allied Trades* Mendham, NJ: Astragal Press ISBN 978-1-879335-72-1
- Salaman, R.A. (1997 ed. revised by Philip Walker) *Dictionary of Woodworking Tools c. 1700–1970 and Tools of Allied Trades*. Mendham: Astragal Press ISBN 978-1-879335-79-0
- Sloane, Eric (1974 ed.). *A Museum of Early American Tools*. New York: Ballantine Books (1974 ed.) ISBN 978-0-345-23571-8

External links

- Catalogue of American Patented Antique Tools (<http://www.finetools.com>). A pictorial collection of interesting hand tools.
- Tony Murland's antique tool auction house (<http://www.antiquetools.co.uk>). Based in England. Catalogues emphasize artistic aspects of tools.
- David Stanley Auctions (<http://www.davidstanley.com/>), Osgathorpe, Leicestershire, England
- Union Hill Antique Tools (<http://www.tooltimer.com>). A site with introductory articles for tool collectors, and antique tools for sale.

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