

Genuine Forgery: The Real Thing

On June 1, SNEC visited Ray Larsen's blacksmithing operation, Genuine Forgery in Hanover, Massachusetts. After giving us an introductory talk on his personal transformation from steel industry journalist to hammer-swinging blacksmith, Ray led us to his workshop for a comprehensive demonstration of his skills, knowledge and business practices. From common 2.5" square stock, Ray made four tools before our eyes, then allowed us an opportunity to heat and hammer some metal ourselves.

Contrary to what one might expect, Ray doesn't concentrate on custom or decorative work, but has found a sustainable business niche manufacturing specialty tools for chair makers, boat builders and advanced woodworkers. For greater efficiency, Ray operates two 25-ton mechanical power hammers; a third air hammer, rescued from the US military, awaits restoration.

After the demo, Ray led us to a creek behind his shop where colonial-era iron processing was suspected to have taken place. Indeed, members found slag in the mud, and Jim Johnston identified a crusty, slag and iron rich nugget as "skull" or "mosser," the remains of iron making in a bloomery furnace. Some participants believed the site may contain bog ore, and there was discussion about a potential future SNEC exploration of the creek.

By Jonathan Kranz
with help from Jim Johnston