

Blacksmith



The building we use as a blacksmith shop was donated to the society in 1999 and moved to the Cedar County Fairgrounds. The original provenance of the building before it went to the farm from which we moved it is unknown. It would seem though, the building probably started of as a shop in a town, possibly Cedar Bluff or Gowers Ferry, as indicated by its false front and interior architecture.

Once at the fairgrounds the building was renovated into a working blacksmith shop. Now demonstrations of the trade can be seen during our Day on the Prairie or large group tours. In December 2009 the blacksmith shop was moved from the fairgrounds to the Prairie Village. The following spring it was placed on the foundation it sits on today. Recently a brick paved ramp has been added to the front of the building thus making it handicap accessible.

The interior of the building holds a couple of replica civil war benches for folks to sit and watch the blacksmith at work, or check out the brick forge, a bellows we hope to soon repair, and a large drill press mounted to one wall.

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Tid Bits

- ◆ Coal forges in a blacksmith's workshop reach temperatures of roughly 1,600 C.
- ◆ Viking blacksmiths would often add bones from ancestors or animals like bears to their iron ore to add carbon content, and to imbue the weapon with mystical properties.
- ◆ The opposite of a blacksmith is a whitesmith, a smith who works with lighter colored metals, particularly tin. There are also "brownsmiths" who work with brass or copper.
- ◆ Humans aren't the only animals on Earth that use objects as anvils. For instance, Chimpanzees often use sticks or rocks as hammers and logs or rocks as anvils in order to crack open nuts.
- ◆ Steel is simply iron that has a small amount of carbon added, usually .2%-2.1% (other materials such as manganese, chromium, tungsten, etc. can also be used). The net effect of adding carbon or the like is that the iron is significantly hardened.
- ◆ While not up to modern standards, the earliest known steel making was done over 4000 years ago in present day Turkey. Steel pieces have also been found in East Africa from over 3400 years ago. The Chinese are known to have begun quenching their steel as recently as about 2000 years ago.
- ◆ Iron is the most common element by mass overall of any other, on Earth, though it is only the fourth most common element in the crust of the Earth.

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