Blacksmith, Jim Wallace

History of the Forge

In 1979 Jim Wallace opened his blacksmith shop in Benmiller, Ontario. He called it Sharp's Creek Forge, named after a small creek that runs nearby. He began by doing repair work of all kinds for local clients, and still does that today. But from the beginning he pursued commissions that offered a chance to combine artistry with function.

Jim and his team now work all over Southwestern Ontario. Over the years, they have produced structures and artifacts for local governments, museums, universities, civic groups, hotels, restaurants and private residences.

Jim was introduced to wrought iron work at an early age, and had a passion for it from the start. His father played an important role and shared his interest in the craft of blacksmithing. He encouraged Jim's exploration of wrought iron as a medium for creative expression.

Despite this early interest, it took awhile for Jim to accept the fact of that he really did have a vocation as an artisan blacksmith. He received an Honours BA in Sociology and English from Queens University in Kingston Ontario in 1974, and spent a few years working as a social worker. A chance meeting with the blacksmith and historian, Tom Reidel, rekindled his interest in the historic nature of wrought iron work and the importance of strong design. This meeting opened his mind to the call of wrought iron, and the rest, as they say, is history.

In addition to his work in the shop, he has been an active member of the blacksmithing community. He attended his first ABANA (Artist-Blacksmith Association of North America) conference in New York in 1978. There he met the Ontario blacksmiths Lloyd Johnston and David Norrie. With their assistance, Jim brought together twelve Ontario blacksmiths to form the OABA (Ontario Artist-Blacksmith Association).

OABA was formed in the spring of 1983 and they registered as a Chapter of ABANA soon after. Jim served as vice-president and president of OABA over the next four years and has been an active and eager supporter since the beginning.

Blacksmithing Today

Under a spreading chestnut tree, the village smithy stands.
That's the picture many people have when they think of blacksmiths. However, the practice of blacksmithing has changed a great deal since Longfellow wrote that poem. This is a craft with a long past, sure, but also one with a bright future.

The Forge was founded in 1979 by Jim Wallace. Over the years it has been Jim's pleasure to train, and learn from, a group of men and women who share his passion for metal.

Jim welcome's inquiries. He is eager to share his knowledge, and his skill.
The Forge is located about seven kilometers southeast of Goderich on Highway 8. We are located on the north side of the highway at the junction of Why's Line.

Hours: 8:00 am. to 5:00 p.m., Monday to Friday (or by appointment)
For more information, visit: sharpscreekforge.ca
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