

THE FLORIDA ARTIST BLACKSMITH ASSOCIATION

Its first 25 years - a historic overview

Skeeter Prather

An organized association of blacksmiths in Florida grew out of the desire of one man for increased instruction and supervised experience in the craft and art of forming hot iron. That man was Willard Smith of Blountstown. His story and an account of the early days of what would become the "Florida Artist Blacksmith Association" was published in the November 1995 issue of the Clinker Breaker. The reader is referred to the Association's Web Site (<http://www.blacksmithing.org>) for reviewing this fascinating story. (More to come on the "Clinker Breaker" and "Web Site".)

Lest we become overly proud of our great history - an early "Florida Blacksmithing Newsletter" (Jan. 1986) notes that maybe the Florida Seminole Indians merit sizable credit for blacksmithing in our state. The Treaty of Maitrie Creek, 1823, shows that the Indians negotiating with the Federal Government for a Reservation in the Florida Everglades demanded (and got!) \$1000.00 per year for 20 years to support a blacksmith! Note that is 1823 dollars!!

This modern chapter of organized blacksmithing in Florida had its beginning in Madison, Georgia in May 1985. The Southeastern Conference of Blacksmiths was in progress. A number of Florida Blacksmiths and want-a-be blacksmiths were in attendance. Through "pre-arrangements" (by mail) Mr. Smith convened a meeting over lunch of interested persons (his "mailing list" was Florida members of the "Artist Blacksmith Association of North America" (more about that organization later). Thirty-one (31) persons showed-up! There was unanimity among them that a Florida organization of Blacksmiths was desirable; a group of officers was elected, including an Editor for a Newsletter - the group recognized the great need for some sort of "communicating organ". That

publication and distribution of a newsletter would cost money was quickly acknowledged and the group immediately voted upon themselves yearly dues - \$5.00. And some "start up" money - \$5.00! Twenty-seven of the 31 anteed-up the \$10. A Florida blacksmith organization was launched! Following the lead of the national organization, the name "Florida Artist Blacksmith Association" ("FABA") was chosen. (Concomitantly the new President, Mr. Willard Smith, was charged to petition the National Organization for Chapter membership.) A first meeting of the new organization was called for the following month, June 22, 1985, at the Junior Museum of Tallahassee (where there was an operating shop).

Members present at this inaugural "Hammer-in" voted that anyone not a member of the "Madison group" who "signed up" and paid the \$10 before July 31 would be considered and counted as a "Charter Member". Thus in addition to the 27 in Madison, 13 others had "signed-on" by the end of July making a total of 40 Charter Members! (Table 1 and Figure 1 - the group picture).

Of the original forty (40), there are seven who are still active. Though a number of the Charter members are known to be deceased, the whereabouts and status of well-being among the others is not known.

Active membership numbers have waxed and waned over the years. There was rapid rise in the early years reaching maximum membership - 363 - in the year 2004. From that high the numbers by year have fallen sharply through the present time. Indeed, the number at mid-year 2010 is just 150! The Board of Trustees has expressed grave concern about adequacy of funds for surviving the remainder of the year. They, as our governments, are considering ways to "tighten up the belts". Some cuts (the term "economies" is preferred!) have already occurred. Electronic transfer of the Clinker Breaker, for example, is avoiding lots of paper and postage costs! Board meetings by telephone conference is avoiding sizable travel costs. Much Board energy is being devoted to identifying practicable ways for encouraging increased

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Norman B. Anderson (Dundee) | Walt Anderson (Ormond Beach) | Carl VanArnam (Gainesville) |
| Joe Baker (DeFuniak Springs) | Olaf K. Becker (Sarasota) | Cliff Bristol (Blountstown) |
| Jo Brooks (Everglades City) | Lee Brocks (Everglades City) | Ed Crane* (Tallahassee) |
| Jim Corbet* (FT. McPherson, Ga) | Dave DeLoreto (Sarasota) | Bill Dietzel (Middleburg) |
| Ben Ferguson* (Freeport) | Jerry Grice (Tallahassee) | Tycee Grice (Tallahassee) |
| Alva Hebert (Orange Park) | Robert Huffman (St. Petersburg) | Tom Keen (Winter Garden) |
| Kenneth Kittleson (Tampa) | Robert Labik (Pompano Beach) | Jonas Liste (St. James City) |
| Carl Mosier (Bonifay) | Ray Nager* (Tampa) | Old Dixie Welding (Ft. Lauderdale) |
| Debbie Parramore (Quincy) | Clyde Payton* (Monticello) | Skeeter Prather* (Tallahassee) |
| Jay Reakirt (Albany, Ga.) | Becky Rochon (Ocala) | Doug Rochon (Ocala) |
| Stephen Schwarzer (Palatka) | Vince Scuderi (St. Petersburg) | Ann Senterfitt (Jupiter) |
| Don Senterfitt (Jupiter) | Willard Smith* (Blountstown) | E.W. Spooner (Waycross, Ga) |
| Stan Strickland (Stone Mountain, Ga.) | J.L. Thompson, Jr. (Silvester, Ga) | Ralph Thrower, Jr (Albany, Ga.) |
| Fred Wilder (St. Petersburg) | | * still active in FABA |

Table 1: Our Charter Members



Figure 1: The 31 participants of the first meeting in Madison.

membership and keeping membership! Figure 2 shows the variations in membership numbers over time.

The newsletter / Clinker Breaker has been a sort of glue holding the organization together these 25 years. The importance of some sort of communication device was verbalized the very first day of the Florida blacksmith organization existence. And a first purpose, if not an only purpose, of annual dues (5 dollars that first year!) was to pay costs of printing and distributing a news letter. It should be a monthly publication focusing on blacksmithing news important to the Florida blacksmith including timely announcements of meeting and locations. "How-to's" should be a regular feature. The "Madison group" chose to call it the "Florida Blacksmith News". Walt Anderson volunteered

to be Editor.

Within three months "dissatisfaction" was being voiced about the name of the newsletter. A contest was mounted to come up with an improved name. A Committee was appointed. The "winner" would receive one year's membership. Forty possible names were submitted! Clyde Payton's submission won!! His proposal was "Clinker Breaker". He offered this reasoning:

A 'clinker breaker', as the name implies, breaks up clinkers into small gravel so that they can be easily discharged from the bottom of the fire into the ash dump. This is accomplished simply by rotating the clinker breaker handle clockwise and counterclockwise until the clinker is crushed enough to fall freely to the bottom of the ash dump reservoir. This allows easy removal of clinker without tearing up the fire to get it out.

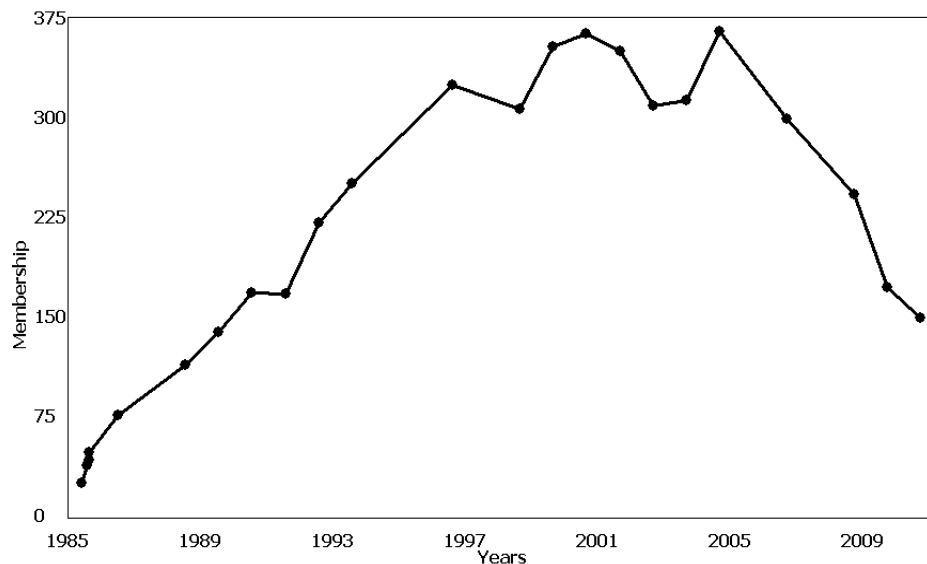


Figure 2: Membership over the years

"Just what is 'CLINKER'? It is a very bothersome conglomerated mass which has been fused by heat into a crystalline composite of various sizes. It is composed of all the trash, dirt, and other impurities which all coal has in various percentages. These impurities will not burn. Therefore, when the temperature in the blacksmith's fire reaches +1600 degrees F these non-

combustibles melt, flow to the bottom of the fire box and solidify – forming ‘clinker’. If it is not dispelled by the clinker breaker it will spoil the fire and the draft, and make forge welds virtually impossible. “It is a popular belief that the name clinker comes from the clink sound which emits when this mass is lightly struck, and when it is thrown into the ash scuttle.

“Now, just what is the analogous relationship between the clinker breaker and our newsletter? Simply this - Our newsletter likewise gathers up impurities and untruths and dispels them - so that truth and usefulness freely emits. Our CLINKER BREAKER gives forth a CLEAN FIRE --- MAY IT BURN BRIGHTLY, MAY IT BURN FREELY.”

The name “Clinker Breaker” first appeared on the November issue of 1985; and every issue published since then (there have been fewer than half dozen “missed months” over these 25 years of the publication!). There were times when monthly issues were threatened - in times of limited revenues. Bimonthly publishing was seriously considered, but never enacted. Rising costs of the Clinker Breaker largely drove the increasing annual dues: from the \$5.00 of 1985, to \$10 in 1986, then to \$15 and \$20 in 1995, and the \$25 in mid-2004. As our founders ordained, a letter of news continues to go out monthly!!

But cost savings seem ever before the Board. Publication of the Clinker Breaker is the single most costly item of the annual budget. As recently as January 1997, The Board took notice of the fact that the Clinker Breaker was being mailed monthly to a bunch of non-members!! That was stopped, of course. Twice in our 25 years the Board has directed that members delinquent in paying the annual dues be denied the Clinker Breaker. Early the penalty was after 3 “free” issues the subscriber would be deleted. More recently, in April 2010, the penalty was increased to only 1 month free. (Copies do go without charge to other state blacksmith organizations - a practice begun early and continues today. In turn, our Editor receives complimentary copies of their publications.)

A significant cost-avoidance was initiated in 2009 - the Clinker Breaker became available via E-mail! The savings are not as great as they could be because the majority of the recipients continue to prefer the “hard copy” via the U.S.Postal Service. Utilization and capitalization on the “digital age” first surfaced in January 1996 with a proposal for an internet “Home Page”. At its meeting 7/17/99 a “Web Page” was approved. Minutes of 4/10/08 record that a “Web Site” was approved. With all these approvals FABA does have a “Web Page”: <http://www.blacksmithing.org> And it is marvelous! Most everything you ever wanted to know about FABA blacksmithing can be found there!! Including every issue of the Clinker Breaker and Newsletter. And an index of How-To articles! Some have remarked that the “how-to's” are worth “more than the price“. It is a rare issue that does not contain at least one instructional article! (The current Editor, Dr.

Steve Bloom, retired research scientist; Soil & Water Science Dep’t, Univ. of Florida caused the most of this to happen!! Thank you, Doctor Editor!)

It is recognized that the job of Editor is the most demanding of all official functionaries of the organization. Several times over the years the Board has considered motions to pay the editor a salary. In 1987 the proposal was for \$500.00 yearly – through date no dollar remuneration has been passed. Editors continue to serve “for the love of the job” and eternal thanks from us, the beneficiaries. Clearly, the excellence of our Clinker Breaker is due to the high quality of Editors.

| | | | |
|------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|
| Walt Anderson | 1985 - 86 | Jerry Grice | 1987 - 88 |
| Pete Brandenburg | 1989 - 92 | Bob Jacoby | 1993 |
| Ralph Kretzer | 1993 - 94 | Bill Robertson | 1995 - 96 |
| Mike Murphy | 1997 - 98 | Steve Bloom | 1999 - 00 |
| LeRoi Price | 2001 - 02 | Kim Wendt | 2003 - 04 |
| Steve Bloom | 2005 - 10 | Kim Wendt | 2010 |

Table 2: Clinker Breaker Editors

Virtually every Editor has fumed and fussed over the dearth of material from members for publishing. “Clearly”, they chastise, “there’s a lot of good stuff going on out there that members would appreciate reading about”. Cash prizes and more recently Gift Certificates have been offered for article submissions. Half or more of the published “how-to” material comes from the editor’s own shop. Much comes from sister-state publications. Monthly news from the Regions is a highlighted feature of each issue. Most readers depend upon it to keep-up with what’s going on where and when.

FABA became an “Official” Association on March 14, 1986 when the Florida Department of State accepted and approved its Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. Article III of those Articles sets forth the Organization’s purpose:

“The purposes for which this corporation is organized are: This is a non-profit educational institute - a corporation whose purposes are to teach, promote, and preserve the Art of Blacksmithing.....The purposes for which the corporation is organized are exclusively religious, charitable, scientific, literary, and educational within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 or the corresponding provision of any future.....”

The ultimate in “official” recognition was the organization’s official recognition in 1991 by the U.S. Department of Internal Revenue as a Tax-exempt organization!!

Bylaws to guide and govern the day to day affairs of the organization received attention in the earliest days. Originally included as a unit within the Articles of Incorporation, the bylaws were separated out by amendment on September 4, 1990 into a freestanding set. Inclusion with the Articles of Incorporation on file with the State made for great clumsiness

in amending the Bylaws to reflect the current practice. The first set of freestanding and amended bylaws was adopted on April 8, 1995. Among other things it provided that membership would include the entire family (Family Member shall be any person along with his or her family who is interested in the art of blacksmithing. "Family" was broadly defined to include all members of a household, plus other close relatives). They provided also that board meetings would be held four times each year -January, April, July and October - with meetings to be held in alternating regions of the state.

Amendments in 1996 separated the position of Secretary/Treasurer into two separate positions/functions, a Secretary and a Treasurer, in recognition of the voluminous responsibilities of the position. The number of board members was kept at eleven by reducing the number of trustees to 4 instead of 5. The schedule of elections was changed to provide that elections would be conducted earlier in the year (ballots must be received no later than September 15) in order that newly elected members of the Board could be introduced to the membership at the Annual Conference in October. Also, a member of the Board who ran for another position was required to resign their position effective the beginning date of the position sought..

Amendments in 2001 provided that the "Membership Year" would be from March to April (previously membership dues were due the month of joining). Too, the Board approved reimbursing (up to \$90.00) regional coordinators, committee chairs and board members for travel to meetings. Also this year, the Board memorialized the Committee structure that had evolved: Awards and Honors Committee, Ph.D. Award Committee, Audit Committee, Election Committee; and established a new committee, the Membership Committee. While "Webmaster" and "Historian" positions had existed for a while (the latter since 1995), both were defined and codified into the Bylaws.

Also a new section on "Regional Programming" was added. It recognized that the Program Chairperson, an officer, focuses primarily on the Annual Conference; most meeting planning and execution happened at the regional/local level. The position of "Regional Coordinator" was described and method of appointment set (appointed by the President at beginning of calendar year). Added to the Bylaws were previously approved funding parameters for regionally hosted statewide meetings: \$150 per day honorarium plus expenses, not to exceed \$650 total.

In 2005, the bylaws were amended to provide that each trustee position on the Board would be elected by the FABA members of a specific region. Previously the trustees had been elected at-large by the membership. The change ensured that each region had a representative on the Board of Trustees.

In 2008 the membership of the Standing Committee for the Ph.D. award was amended to add past presidents and the last recipient of the award - who could decline to participate. In light of the expanded membership, a provision was added requiring a two-thirds affirmative vote for awarding.

(Ms. Patty Draper, FABA's Attorney of Record, Past President and former Secretary of the organization provided this synopsis of our "Legal Posture". Thanks Patty.)

The great success and fine accomplishments of FABA over these 25 years is due in large part to the high quality of its officers. It's President's are listed in Table 3. Our Officers and Trustees are listed in Tables 4 & 5. In 1996 the Board divided the duties of Secretary / Treasurer into two offices and elected to have one Trustee from each Region

| | | |
|-----------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1985 - 89 | Willard Smith | Blountstown |
| 1990 - 91 | Lewis Riggleman | San Antonio |
| 1992 - 95 | Tico Rubio | Barberville |
| 1996 - 97 | Ray Roberts | Monticello |
| 1998 - 99 | Clyde Payton | Monticello |
| 2000 - 01 | Patty Draper | Tallahassee |
| 2002 - 03 | Bob Jacoby | Jacksonville |
| 2004 - 07 | Bill Robertson | Tallahassee |
| 2008 - 09 | Rex Anderson | Monticello |
| 2010 - | Jerry Wolfe | Sarasota |

Table 3: Our Presidents

Periodic gatherings at member shops has highlighted history of FABA. In the first year these gatherings were called "state wide" meetings and occurred monthly. Demonstrations (by the host or invited guests) at the forge and anvil were the focus. The corporate wisdom saw advantage in dividing the state into four "regions" and encouraging monthly gatherings in each region - then a "state wide" meeting quarterly, one in each region. Even at the second meeting June of '85 the idea was advanced to have an annual "Big Meeting", a multi-day affair, in addition to the "state wide meetings" of the several regions. The first "Big Meeting", now called the "Annual Meeting", was held in Tallahassee Sept. 25-27, 1987. A local motel, the Capital Inn, loaned its parking lot and surrounds for the purpose! "Big Name" demonstrators were Jud Nelson, Nol Putnam, Jim Batson, Jerry Grice, John Dittmeir, Charles Ochs and Steve Schwarzer. Even a year earlier in the fall of 1986, Alex Klahm had opened his shop in Ocala for a two day affair; but it was "advertised" simply as a "state wide" meeting. Yet, the demonstrators were impressive: Steve Schwarzer, J. C. Hawkins, John Dittmeir, Stan Strickland (then President of ABANA), Fred Caylor, Alex Klahm, Jim Batson.

The Clinker Breaker advertised a "Third Annual Conference" for Oct. 7 & 8, 1988 at Ray Nagar's shop in Tampa. (His place was notable for the anvil shaped swimming pool in front of his house!). Good crowd showed up. Demonstrators were

| | President | Vice-President | Treasurer | Secretary | Program Chair |
|------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| 1985 | Willard Smith | Ray Nager | Tycee Grice | Tycee Grice | Clyde Payton |
| 1986 | Willard Smith | Ray Nager | Tycee Grice | Tycee Grice | Clyde Payton |
| 1987 | Willard Smith | Doug Rouchon | Clyde Payton | Tycee Grice | Clyde Payton |
| 1988 | Willard Smith | Doug Rouchon | Carl Austin | Tycee Grice | Alex Klahm |
| 1989 | Willard Smith | Jerry Grice | Clyde Payton | Tycee Grice | Vacant |
| 1990 | Lewis Riggleman | Jerry Grice | Carl Austin | Norma Austin | Steve Kalb |
| 1991 | Lewis Riggleman | J.C.Hawkins | Carl Austin | Norma Austin | Steve Kalb |
| 1992 | Tico Rubio | J.C.Hawkins | Roger Stuart | Carol Stuart | Bill Roberts |
| 1993 | Tico Rubio | J.C.Hawkins | Roger Stuart | Carol Stuart | Bill Roberts |
| 1994 | Tico Rubio | J.C.Hawkins | Patty Draper | Patty Draper | Steve Bloom |
| 1995 | Tico Rubio | Pete Brandenburg | Patty Draper | Patty Draper | Steve Bloom |
| 1996 | Ray Roberts | Pete Brandenburg | Patty Draper | Patty Draper | Vacant |
| 1997 | Ray Roberts | Pete Brandenburg | Anne Reynolds | Connie Knapp | Gilbert Knapp |
| 1998 | Clyde Payton | Bill Roberts | Anne Reynolds | Connie Knapp | Ray Roberts |
| 1999 | Clyde Payton | Bill Roberts | Lydia Burns | Karen Wheeler | Ray Roberts |
| 2000 | Patty Draper | Bob Jacoby | Lydia Burns | Karen Wheeler | Jeff Mohr |
| 2001 | Patty Draper | Bob Jacoby | Deana Baggett | Karen Wheeler | Jeff Mohr |
| 2002 | Bob Jacoby | Bill Robertson | Deana Baggett | Karen Wheeler | Dot Butler |
| 2003 | Bob Jacoby | Bill Robertson | Juan Holbrook | Karen Wheeler | Dot Butler |
| 2004 | Bill Robertson | Jeff Mohr | Juan Holbrook | Anne Reynolds | Vacant |
| 2005 | Bill Robertson | Jeff Mohr | Juan Holbrook | Anne Reynolds | Vacant |
| 2006 | Bill Robertson | Jeff Mohr | Juan Holbrook | Anne Reynolds | Clyde Payton |
| 2007 | Bill Robertson | Jeff Mohr | Juan Holbrook | Jim Labolito | Clyde Payton |
| 2008 | Rex Anderson | Charles Pate | Juan Holbrook | Jim Labolito | Mark Stone |
| 2009 | Rex Anderson | Charles Pate | Juan Holbrook | Jim Labolito | Mark Stone |
| 2010 | Jerry Wolfe | Charles Pate | Juan Holbrook | Jim Labolito | Mark Stone |

Table 4: Our Officers over the years

| | | | | | |
|------|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| 1985 | Clyde Payton | Skeeter Prather | Jerry Grice | Don Senturfitt | Ann Senturfitt |
| 1986 | " | " | " | " | " |
| 1987 | " | " | " | Alva Herbert | " |
| 1988 | " | " | Walt Anderson | " | J. C. Hawkins |
| 1989 | " | " | " | Lewis Riggleman | " |
| 1990 | " | " | Joe Forina | Tico Rubio | " |
| 1991 | " | Pat Imbimbo | " | " | Jerry Grice |
| 1992 | " | " | Carl Austin | Dale Kipp | Steve Bloom |
| 1993 | " | " | " | " | " |
| 1994 | " | " | " | " | Ray Roberts |
| 1995 | " | Walt Anderson | " | Willard Smith | " |
| 1996 | " | " | Skeeter Prather | Bill Roberts | |
| 1997 | " | Carl Austin | " | " | |
| 1998 | John Butler | " | Jerry Grice | Ray Reynolds | |
| 1999 | " | Lewis Riggleman | " | " | |
| 2000 | Joel Clark | " | " | " | |
| 2001 | " | John Butler | " | " | |
| 2002 | " | " | " | Charlie Stemmen | |
| 2003 | " | " | Jeff Mohr | " | |
| 2004 | Jerry Grice | " | Steve Kalb | " | |
| 2005 | Tom Kennedy | Clyde Payton | " | John Butler | |
| 2006 | " | " | Charlie Stemmen | " | |
| 2007 | " | Ron Childers | Keith Andrew | Jerry Wolfe | |
| 2008 | Kathy Thomas | " | Ralph Nettles | " | |
| 2009 | " | " | " | " | |
| 2010 | " | " | " | Lee Ann Conner | |

In 1996 the Board divided the duties of Secretary / Treasurer into two offices and elected to have one Trustee from each Region

Table 5: Our Trustees over the years

| 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 |
|---|-----------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Steve Schwarzer | Jud Nelson | Jerry Grice | Charles Ochs | Peter Ross | Jim Hrisoulas |
| J. C. Hawkins | Nol Putnam | Charles Ochs | Ronnie Fowler | Al Pendry | Johnny Kierbow |
| John Dittmeier | Jim Batson | J. C. Hawkins | Jerry Grice | | John Dittmeier |
| Stan Strickland | Jerry Grice | Jimmy Tucker | David Ponsler | | |
| Fred Caylor | John Dittmeier | David Ponsler | | | |
| Alex Klahm | Charles Ochs | Ray Nagar | | | |
| Jim Batson | Steve Schwarzer | Alex Klahm | | | |
| 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 |
| Clay Spencer | Don Winkler | Jim Batson | Doug Hendrickson | Peter Ross | Elmer Roush |
| Steve Schwarzer | Brad Silverwood | Elizabeth Brim | Jerry Hoffman | Chuck Patrick | Frank Smith |
| | John Dittmeier | Jerry Darnell | Hank Knickmeyer | Jack Klahm | Clay Spencer |
| | | | | | Al Pendry |
| 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 |
| Don Tull | Jerry Grice | Jerry Grice | Tom Clark | Clay Spencer | David Ponsler |
| Steve Dunn | Corrina Mensoff | Corrina Mensoff | Uri Hofi | Jerry Grice | Allen Kress |
| K. R. Fritts | Jeff Mohr | Charles Ochs | Ed Halligan | Ryan Johnson | Don Hanson, III |
| | Charles Ochs | Jeff Mohr | Jackie Spencer | | Steve Bloom |
| | Bill Robertson | Rick Jay | | | |
| 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 |
| Rob Gardner | Tal Harris | Jeff Moby | Richard Sheppard | Edgar Chattin | Jim Batson |
| Erik Valleca | Don Fogg | Richard Sheppard | Mickey Wise | Lewis Riggelman | Daniel Miller |
| Jim Hrisoulas | | Edgar Chattin | | | |
| Chris Winterstein | | | | | |
| 2010 = Ken Durham and Clay Spencer | | | | | |

Table 6: Demonstrators at the Annual Meetings

Jerry Grice, Charles Ochs, J.C. Hawkins, Jimmy Tucker, David Ponsler, Alex Klahm and Ray Nagar himself. (It was for this conference the term “Hammer-in” was first used. The term is attributed to Bill Gichner.)

The following year, 1989, the Annual Conference / Hammer-in was held at the “Pioneer Settlement for the Creative Arts” in Barberville. And has been held there, with exception of two years, every year since. Barberville is centrally located in the state with easy access on good road ways. Its blacksmith shop is superior. The buildings, grounds and spaces of the Settlement lend themselves nicely to a large gathering with various "venues" for differing activities going on simultaneously; such as multiple blacksmithing demonstrations.

(A note about the "Barberville Blacksmith Shop" = The grounds and main building were originally the Barberville Public School Building for the northern area of Volusia County. It had been abandoned with consolidation of the County schools. In time through efforts of interested citizens, the facilities were dedicated by the School Board for use as a class room for lessons in Volusia and central Florida history: a “Living History” class-room. Full time teaching staff were

employed. Volunteers were integral to the day to day activities. Lessons there were required for all Volusia County elementary grade students.

There was no blacksmith shop. One of the volunteers, Mr. Walt Anderson, a retired electrical engineer and hobbyist blacksmith, recognizing the great importance of blacksmiths to the development of Volusia County and central Florida, begin providing blacksmithing demonstrations and lectures for the visiting students and lobbying for a shop to be constructed. Permission was ultimately obtained and a few dollars allocated for purchase of materials. Blacksmiths of the N.E. Florida Region and others, as volunteers, pitched in and a building was soon constructed. Furnishing and tooling’s were given by the blacksmiths and others. Notable were the contributions by Lester Hollenback, a retired blacksmith, horse shoeing instructor, and wheelwright. To his honor, the shop was formally named. And he was awarded Life Time dues-free Membership in FABA. Also, contributions of tools and equipment by Bill Gichner - a dealer in Delaware of antique blacksmith tools - were sizable.)

Early planning for the annual “Annual Meetings” encompassed the idea of varying the site by Region. Yet

only two meetings (excluding the first one held in Tallahassee) have been held in places other than Barberville: one in Blountstown and the other at the Tanah Keeta Boy Scout Camp outside Jupiter. Blountstown is in the Florida Panhandle; Jupiter is in the lower Southeast corner of the Florida peninsula - as compared to Barberville, both are way “out of the way”.

(A further note about Blountstown, site of the “Panhandle Pioneer Settlement -a Living History Museum showcasing pioneer life in the Florida Panhandle during the 1800’s. Its founders, Willard and Linda Smith [yes! the same guy responsible for the Florida Blacksmith organization!], recognized the place and importance of blacksmithing in development of rural western Florida. But an old, original blacksmith building could not be located. [All the buildings, and there are many, are original structures found elsewhere and moved to the Settlement site.] Mr. Smith challenged the Northwest blacksmith group to build one!! And they did! It was especially designed to be both a working, demonstration and classroom shop. With speeches and “fanfare” it was formally dedicated May 10, 1997. As Barberville, it hosts groups of students and others on a daily basis. The forge, as at Barberville, rarely gets bone cold!)

These “Annual Meetings” all have been well attended and are viewed as the highlight of the blacksmith year. Quality of the demonstrators is largely responsible, but the camaraderie and maybe the annual auction contribute. The demonstrators are listed in Table 6 by year.

The auction at the Annual Meeting is a highlight. The Auctioneer, Mr. / Doctor Tim Ryan makes it so! (He has “officiated” the auctions in some 20 of the 25 years!) Members all are encouraged to “make something” for the auction. Pieces put together under the auspices of the individual regions are highly valued (both in monetary cost and competitiveness). The annual auction provides some \$5,000 of the yearly cost. Registration fees cover the rest. As costs have risen, so have registration fees: The fee for the first “Annual Conference” in 1986 was \$15.00; it increased to \$25 in 1991, to \$30 in 1995, to \$40 in 2000 and this year, 2010, to \$45.

| Awardees | City | Date |
|------------------------|------------------|------|
| Thomas Raines | Monticello | 1986 |
| James Clifford Hawkins | Morrison | 1993 |
| E. Charlton Prather | Tallahassee | 1995 |
| Willard Smith | Blountstown | 1997 |
| Clyde Payton | Monticello | 1997 |
| Stephen Allen Bloom | Archer | 2001 |
| Timothy Edmund Ryan | Gordonville, Tn. | 2001 |
| Jerry Grice | Tallahassee | 2004 |
| William A. Robertson | Tallahassee | 2007 |
| Juan Holbrook | Gainesville | 2008 |

Table 7: Our Honorary Ph.D.’s

That our founders envisioned the organization, and incorporated into its Charter, to be an educational institute - teaching, promoting and preserving the art of blacksmithing - teaching, promoting and preserving has been its focus since the beginning. Indeed, again as the Charter provides, in recognizing exemplary service to these purposes, ten (10) Honorary Ph.D.’s (Doctor of Metal Arts) have been awarded (Table 7).

An especially notable way “to teach, promote and preserve” the art of blacksmithing is the “Walt Anderson Founders Scholarship”. Proposed by Bob Jacoby and established by action of the Board July 17, 1999, its purpose is simple: “to further the craft of blacksmithing!” Walt was a founding member of the Association and had served voluntarily as the first editor and publisher of the “Florida Blacksmith News”. He was the major benefactor to a number of developing blacksmith shops about the state, including functioning as the “ramrod” for the shop at the Pioneer Settlement for the Creative Arts at Barberville, and an effective “behind-the-scenes” shaker and mover for things blacksmithing in Florida. He had died a few months earlier of Leukemia. Awardees are chosen by the Awards Committee based upon the applicant’s potential, in the opinion of the Committee, to “further the craft of blacksmithing”. They may attend any organized schooling approved by the Committee. Originally, the award was up to \$500.00 - thought sufficient to cover costs of the instruction, housing, meals and travel for one week at the John C. Campbell School. The amount has increased over the years and in 2010 is \$1000.00. An award has been given every year and the recipients are listed in Table 8.

Every Hammer-in in every district is a “teaching”, “promoting”

| YEAR | RECIPIENT | HOME TOWN |
|------|------------------|-----------------|
| 2000 | Bill Robertson | Tallahassee |
| 2001 | Steve Kalb | Ft. Meyers |
| 2002 | William Christie | Tallahassee |
| 2003 | Lloyd Wheeler | Tallahassee |
| 2004 | Ray Reynolds | West Palm Beach |
| 2005 | Jerry Wolfe | Sarasota |
| 2006 | Charles Pate | Lamont |
| 2007 | Rob Nichols | Tallahassee |
| 2008 | Butch Paterson | Stark |
| 2009 | Nathan Nettles | Jupiter |
| 2010 | Will Manning | Tallahassee |

Table 8: Walt Anderson Scholarship Recipinets

and “preserving” occasion! The Northeast and Northwest Regions have hosted gatherings around a forge fire every month since 1987. (However, the December meetings often are not around a forge fire, but commonly around a “Barbeque” / Christmas fire!!) The Southeast Region was less regular in its monthly meetings largely because of absence of centrally located shops. The Southwest region runs along the west coast of Florida from Pasco County through Naples and south - almost 200 miles!! Distance and widely separated

shops greatly discouraged gatherings. The Crowley Museum Shop out from Bradenton/Sarasota about halfway the distance between north and south extremes offered a sometimes respite. Poor attendance coupled with many skipped meetings cause the President and Board on several occasions to consider dividing the Region into two - a NSW and a SSW! Concomitant with increasing numbers of hobby smiths in the region, coupled with its current "go-getter", bulldog tenacity Program Chairman, its monthly meetings have become regular with a goodly amount of "good stuff" being reported in the Clinker Breaker!

Promoting and preserving blacksmithing in Florida has included the organization's attention to building, furnishing or otherwise enhancing blacksmith shops. Over these years no less than 19 shops have benefited from FABA membership attention. Three have been built "from scratch". Others received a forge and basic tools and instructors. Others have received plans for a shop, and promises of help with construction and furnishing. All have received demonstrators! (see Table 9).

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Pioneer Settlement | Barberville |
| Panhandle Pioneer Settlement | Blountstown |
| San Luis Mission | Tallahassee |
| Tallahassee Museum of Nat. History | Tallahassee |
| Ft. Zachary Taylor Heritage Site | Key West |
| Yesteryear Village | West Palm Beach |
| Fort Clinch State Park | Fernandina Beach |
| Heritage Village | Largo |
| Stephen Foster State Park | White Springs |
| Tana Keeta Scout Reservation | Jupiter |
| Crowley Museum | Sarasota |
| Junior Museum | Panama City |
| Fla. Fly Wheelers Park | Ft Meade |
| Morningside Nature Center | Gainesville |
| River Bend Park | Jupiter |
| Heritage Village | Jasper |
| Fla. Agriculture Museum | Flagler Beach |
| Heritage Village | St. Michael, Barbados |

Table 9: Blacksmith shops built, outfitted, furnished or otherwise enhanced by FABA members

There are two shops the organization helped dismantle - one by an auction in which the shop was emptied of contents and the proceeds given to the widow. The other was receiving partial contents of a shop for gifts to "public shops in need" or selling to the benefit of FABA.

Two additional matters needful of noting: The two are related but different. First - a "forging trailer", variously referred to as a "Teaching Trailer" or "Traveling Forges". The utility of such was recognized early - Alex Klahm first mentioned it to the Board on January 9, 1987. No action was taken. Over the following few years the subject reappears with some

frequency and on January 24, 2004 the newly installed President, Bill Robertson, "presses" the issue. In time Steve Bloom presents a plan, a drawing - and cost estimates! The record shows that Steve presented "updated" plans on April 10, 2008. Still no appropriation! Steve proceeds on his own - soliciting parts and construction helpers! The trailer's inaugural trip and "christening" was the Annual meeting at Barberville October 2008!! Its four forging stations (complete with forges, anvils, vises, and hand tools) worked as hoped - nicely! Its travels from Archer to Barberville both in 2008 and 2009 took some toll! For necessary repairs, the Board on April 15, 2010 awarded \$100.00!!

An early and continuing concern is where to keep it between uses. At this writing that is not a settled issue! Sister to that concern is the matter of safe storage of all FABA's equipment and belongings. Over the years the Association has purchased or otherwise obtained items of needed equipment mainly for use at the Annual meetings. Safe keeping between meetings has been problematic. Inventories have not been carefully maintained. Things become "lost". A secure storage space at the Barberville facility was suggested very early. And came "to a head" January 2006. Further discussion with the Settlement Administration yielded approval for such a "storage shed" and its location. At its meeting April 16, 2009 money for materials was allocated - \$1600. Immediate Past President Rex Anderson (a licensed building contractor) accepted responsibility for construction - and promises that it will be ready for the 2010 October Annual Meeting.

Finally, some "Postscripts":

- ~ Word is that FABA was the first state blacksmith organization to become incorporated.
- ~ First use of Credit Cards - at the 2000 Annual meeting.
- ~ Liability insurance covering FABA sponsored events first purchased July 2001
- ~ At Uri Hofi's (a Demonstrator at the 2001 Annual Conference) request, the \$655 received from his items donated to the auction were given to the American Red Cross toward its costs in responding to the Sept. 11 Twin Towers tragedy.
- ~ March 2001 - ABANA directs that Anvil Shoots are disallowed. As a result, the seven southeastern states, including Florida, are expelled from ABANA. A great furor erupted nation wide! July 2002 ABANA announced discontinuance of the "Chapter concept" and inaugurates "State Affiliates". The seven SE states are readmitted as "Affiliates".
- ~ All funds collected for the "Buck-in-the-Bucket" at the 2005 annual meeting committed to the ABANA Relief Fund for blacksmiths affected by Hurricane Katrina.
- ~ In registering with the Florida Department of State as a Cooperation and with the U.S. Department of Revenue as a Tax-free entity, both agencies require identification of a "Registered Agent" - a member of the organization, preferably not an officer, who will be the "official" contact person. FABA does, and has had, such a person: Clyde Payton."