Blacksmiths

History of Blacksmithing

Blacksmithing dates back to around 1500 BCE. From the 1600s-1900s, blacksmithing was an essential skill in every community. Villages would often have 2-5 blacksmiths and they would work alongside other metalsmiths. The first English blacksmiths traveled to Canada in the 1670s to help establish trading posts. They created items out of iron and steel and they used tools like hammers and pliers to bend, mold, and cut the metal into shapes. The items they made included tools, weapons, horseshoes, cooking utensils, farm equipment, and more. Their workshop is called a smithy, a forge, or a blacksmith's shop.

Blacksmithing Today

Modern blacksmiths make custom architectural and decorative metalwork like hand-forging custom gates, railings, furniture, and rustic hardware. The forge technology has advanced but the skills and techniques needed to create items has largely stayed the same. Blacksmithing is often treated as a hobby rather than a career. Although blacksmithing as a whole is not as common, many of the skills are transferable to other fields such as construction, welding, and general metalworking. Blacksmithing is also used in artistic and sculptural practices. Those who do work as traditional blacksmiths generally sell the items they make as artisan, collectible pieces. They also do demonstrations and classes at historic sites to teach others about the history and art of blacksmithing.

Other Types of Smiths

Many smiths get their name from the colour of metal they work with

Silversmith/Brightsmith: Silversmiths work with silver and primarily make forks, knives, and spoons for eating.

Coppersmith/Brownsmith: Coppersmiths not only work with copper, but also with brass and bronze.

Goldsmith: Goldsmiths shape gold for jewelry and other expensive items.

Tinsmith/Tinner: Tinsmiths work with sheets of tin to create a variety of housewares such as cups, kettles, lanterns, and more.

Pewtersmith: Pewter is tin mixed with small amounts of copper and antimony. Pewtersmiths use hammers on thin sheets, spin metal discs on a lathe, weld shapes, and cast pieces in molds.

Bladesmith: Bladesmiths create knives, daggers, swords, and other weapons.

Armorsmith: Armorsmiths build and repair armour and other protective pieces.