



TimberFest 2025

Presenters

Guild Formation & Inspiration

Tedd Benson

Description: Recollecting the founding of the Guild, our first conference, the early days of finding our path forward, and some defining milestones along the way.

Presenter Bio: Tedd Benson, the founder of Bensonwood (1972), has spent his career pioneering better ways to build. A key figure in reviving timber framing in North America, he was a Timber Framers Guild founding member and authored three timber frame-themed books. Bensonwood became a national leader in energy-efficient timber frame building methods, integrating building science principles and 21st-century building technology. Today, Tedd works with a dynamic company of 150 self-leaders who are advancing off-site building strategies and have established a cutting-edge production facility in Keene, New Hampshire. A nationally recognized speaker, Tedd has earned numerous awards, including an honorary doctorate from Unity College and the Granite State Award for his impact on sustainable building practices. All things considered, he mostly aspires to be on a bike.

The Heart and History of the Heartwood School: Past, Present, and Future

Michele Beemer & Neil Godden

Presenter Bio: Michele Beemer is a celebrated craftswoman, educator, and former co-owner of the Heartwood School for the Homebuilding Crafts in Massachusetts. Alongside her late husband Will Beemer, she led the school from 1982 until its acquisition by the Timber Framers Guild in December 2019. Under their stewardship, Heartwood earned a reputation for hands-on excellence. Michele's home-cooked lunches during week-long workshops became legendary, helping foster a warm, inclusive learning environment.

She is the author of *Lunches at Heartwood*, a charming collection celebrating the simple, hearty meals that became a cherished tradition at the school. In addition to nurturing community around food, Michele developed and taught specialized carpentry courses, most notably a Carpentry for Women's workshop at the school, where she blended technical instruction with encouragement, empowering women to take charge of their own projects or on the job site.

Will and Michele's passion for the craft, generosity of spirit, and commitment to skillful, community-centered teaching helped shape the Heartwood legacy and the broader timber framing revival in North America.





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Presenter Bio: Neil Godden is a seasoned timber framer, educator, and business owner based in western Massachusetts. Since earning his Civil Engineering degree from the University at Buffalo in 1996, Neil has dedicated his career to mastering and preserving the craft of traditional timber framing, learning under master builder Jack Sobon before launching his own company, Godden Timber Frames & Homebuilders, LLC, around the year 2000. His shop specializes in sustainably harvested, heirloom-quality timber structures that skillfully blend centuries-old joinery with energy-efficient design.

As founder and owner of Godden Timber Frames, Neil led projects ranging from homes and barns to pavilions and sheds, often engaging clients hands-on, from forest to finished frame. He joined the Heartwood School instructional team in 2005, initially teaching the Cruck Framing course using hand tools. In November 2020, he became Education Director and Operations Manager, and in November 2021 started as Executive Director, guiding the TFG Heartwood School's mission to deliver high-quality timber framing and craft education.

Neil has also instructed at or led community build projects for the Timber Framers Guild, such as the Bayles Boat Shed at Long Island Seaport (2006), Sunrise Mill in Pennsylvania (2019), and the Champlain Canal Visitor's Center in New York (2016-2018), and taught timber framing workshops at Hancock Shaker Village, Colorado State University's Pingree Campus, and even on Sweden's Gotland Island. Neil has been an active member of the Timber Framers Guild since 1999.

He combines his engineering background with a deep love for craftsmanship, using primarily hand tools to teach traditional building techniques and foster connection through community-driven, hands-on learning. Neil lives in the foothills of the Berkshires with his family and remains actively involved in both his craft and fostering the next generation of builders.

Guild Community Building Projects: Our Past & Future

Jackson DuBois

Presenter Bio: Executive Director Jackson DuBois is a lifetime member of the Guild, a graduate of the Apprenticeship Training Program, and has wide-ranging experience, from hand-tool framing to high-tech commercial shops to working on the restoration of arguably the most iconic timber frame on the planet, the spire at the Notre Dame de Paris.





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Reflections on 40 Years of Guild Publications

Adam Miller

Description: Issue 1 of *Timber Framers News*, which would become *Timber Framing*, appeared within months of the Guild's 1985 founding conference. The journal, established by Ken Rower and produced under his steady editorial hand until March 2018, has appeared quarterly ever since. At once both a technical reference and source of inspiration, the journal has chronicled the ever-evolving revival of timber framing in North America. About five years in, *Scantlings* began to appear as a member newsletter to increase the breadth of Guild publications. The Guild has also published a number of compilations and monographs, principally under Ken Rower's editorship. More recently, the Timber Frame Engineering Council (TFEC) has established a robust technical report publication program. This presentation will discuss the substance and evolution of Guild publications since 1985. A broad range of Guild publications will be on display.

Presenter Bio: Adam Miller is an independent carpenter, teacher, and consultant, specializing in the scribed joinery of timber and logs. He has co-edited *Timber Framing* with Michael Cuba since March 2018. Adam lives in the hills of Vermont, travels widely for interesting projects, and has recently co-founded Kominka North America, devoted to the adaptive reuse of traditional Japanese timber structures abroad.

Traditional Timber Frame Research & Advisory Group

Arron Sturgis

Presenter Bio: Arron Sturgis began his career in historic preservation in 1987, and in 1992, established Preservation Timber Framing, a traditional timber framing company specializing in the structural repair of historic timber framed buildings. Slowly and steadily, Arron has expanded his team to seventeen talented craftspeople who are dedicated to the preservation of historic buildings.

Arron has been deeply engaged in the Guild's Traditional Timber Frame Research & Advisory Group since its inception, and has served on the boards of Maine Preservation and the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance. He was instrumental in creating and supporting workforce development internships, combining hands-on preservation experience and advocacy with two state wide preservation non profits.





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Possible Medieval Carpenters' Setting Out Methods in England and New England

Paul Reed & Nevan Carling

Description: This talk will be about the practical method that medieval master carpenters may have used to set out their buildings from Saxon times in England in the 7th century, which may have continued into New England by the new settlers in the 17th century.

This talk is by Paul Reed, who has been researching this subject for 10 years and has studied hundreds of medieval and later buildings: houses, barns, churches, abbeys, and cathedrals with very interesting results. However, to narrow the subject, the talk will focus solely on houses and barns. Paul will be joined by Nevan Carling, a historian and conservator with extensive knowledge of vernacular buildings. They will feature a few examples of mostly publicly accessible 17th- and 18th-century buildings from around New England as examples of how this method may have been applied.

Presenter Bio: Paul Reed is a retired historic building consultant and conservator of medieval buildings based in Hastings, East Sussex, England. He started his career as a carpenter and joiner apprentice in 1964, continued his studies at technical colleges on advanced building construction, and later was employed by a building surveying practice and architect's practices. He trained as a conservation specialist and worked for English Heritage in their works department. Paul obtained his master's degree at York University in Historic Building Conservation in the 1990s.

Presenter Bio: Nevan Carling is a conservation timber framer based in Connecticut. He is a graduate of the University of York, England, where he earned a First Class undergraduate degree in Archaeology and Heritage Management. He is currently pursuing an MSc in Timber Building Conservation at the Weald and Downland Living Museum in Chichester, England.



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Moses Johnson: Framing the Shaker Aesthetic **Ian Stewart**

Description: Brother Moses Johnson joined the Shakers in 1782, and quickly became one of the people responsible for what we see as Shaker buildings and aesthetics. From 1785 until 1794, Johnson oversaw the construction of ten Dutch-framed, gambrel-roofed meetinghouses. Johnson would also oversee the construction of mills, barns, and other buildings for the Shaker communities. Three of the original meetinghouses still stand at Sabbathday Lake, Canterbury, and Hancock. A fourth was saved by Louis Saint Gaudens and is found today at the Saint Gaudens Historic Site in Cornish, New Hampshire. Using the example that stands at Hancock, moved from the Shaker community in Shirley, Massachusetts, in 1962, as well as the other remaining examples, this talk will discuss the framing of these meetinghouses, the Dutch influence visible within, and the work of this remarkable builder.

Presenter Bio: Ian K.M. Stewart is the co-founder of Preservation Inc, as well as the owner and founder of New Netherland Timber Framing and Preservation, LLC, a firm that specializes in the preservation of built heritage through assessment, documentation, and physical conservation and restoration. New Netherland Timber Framing and Preservation also puts great emphasis on the preservation of traditional woodworking and other historic craft skills, tools, and techniques. He has 20 years of work experience with architectural conservation, working on a wide variety of historic wood and masonry buildings and cultural heritage sites around the United States, Scotland, Uzbekistan, Saudi Arabia, Italy, and the Netherlands. He holds a Master of Arts in Preservation Studies degree, with a focus on Architectural History, from Boston University's School of American and New England Studies.



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Pilton Barn and Shakespeare's Globe Theatre - Reconstructing English Historic Timber Framed Structures

Peter McCurdy

Description: Peter will explain the background, precedents, and historical research that informed the design of these reconstructions – Pilton, a medieval cruck barn, and the Globe an Elizabethan open-air playhouse. His presentation will illustrate the work on the projects from selecting trees, the workshop fabrication of the timber frames, and the erection and completion of the buildings.

Presenter Bio: Peter's first timber frame project was the complete reconstruction of an original medieval Wealden framed house undertaken in 1977. This followed training in architecture and in an Arts and Crafts furniture workshop, where Peter developed his understanding of wood and the values of craftsmanship. Other early projects included research-based reconstructions of historic timber framed buildings for Open Air Museums and reconstructions of historic timber structures have continued to form a major part of his work.

In 1979 Peter founded the company McCurdy & Co. to specialize in the repair, conservation, and reconstruction of historic timber framed buildings. Since then, Peter has been responsible for directing repair and conservation projects on a wide range of historic timber buildings and he has led the company's major reconstruction projects that include the Globe Theatre, the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse, and the Shakespeare North Playhouse. The challenges of these reconstruction projects that combine historical research, design, and traditional crafts with the requirements for modern performance venues, have provided Peter with some of his most interesting and rewarding opportunities