



SCANTLINGS

NEWSLETTER OF THE TIMBER FRAMERS GUILD

NUMBER 188

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER 2014

Geometric design intensive with Laurie Smith

RICK COLLINS

It was our privilege at Trillium Dell to host Laurie and his wife Hillary for 10 days in June. This is the third time Laurie Smith has come to the U.S. to be an integral part of a project based on daisy-wheel and five-circle geometry.

I first met Laurie in 2008 at a U.K. Carpenters Fellowship (CF) meeting at the Cressing Temple Barns in Essex. From that point forward, my understanding and perspective of design took a new turn. After 2008, I ran into Laurie at the CF meetings, but it was not until we were back at Cressing in 2013 for another CF meeting that it dawned on me: we

should invite him back to the States to help spread the good word and teach design principles. Nicole and I left the Cressing Temple grounds with Laurie and headed back to Sutcombe, where he lives. There, we formulated a plan to bring Laurie to Illinois to build a structure. Over several months we began working on a design and then got the TFG involved. Brenda Baker, TFG acting executive director, supported our event fully, so we formally launched and advertised the program in mid-winter. Around 17 people attended, including a half-dozen locals. Participants came

*See **Geometric design**, page 3*



Nicole Collins

Laurie Smith shows students variations of basic constructions that can be made using five-circle geometry. He works on a flat surface because on a typically vertically-mounted blackboard, the compass wants to slip.

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Newsletter of the Timber Framers Guild
Number 188 August–September 2014

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Founded 1985

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Scantlings, the member newsletter of the Timber Framers Guild, is published in January, February, April, May, July, August, October, and November. **Next deadline: September 10.**

News contributions and correspondence: **Susan Witter**, editor. 2406 Williams St, Bellingham, WA 98225. 360/647-0310.

Accacia Mullen: new contributing editor

SUSAN WITTER

I'm pleased to announce the addition of Accacia Mullen to the Scantlings team. Accacia will be helping with editorial duties beginning with this issue.

Accacia grew up in Massachusetts, attended Smith College, and lived in Seattle for five years before getting her MLIS from Simmons College in Boston and moving to Lexington, Va., to be a reference librarian at Virginia Military Institute. She is married to Guild member Grigg Mullen III, and they have a cat, Willie.

Accacia has attended the last two TFG annual conferences and the last six VMI timber frame projects.

She enjoys cooking, sewing, knitting, reading, traveling, and is learning to enjoy gardening. She blogs at punsnneedles and flanamullegan. She'll be at the conference this month, so be sure to meet her! Welcome aboard, Accacia.



Grigg Mullen III

Leading the Guild

A last reminder to you that Guild director elections are coming up fast. We are still accepting recommendations for three regular director seats and one special-election seat (a one-year term).

Our Guild needs qualified, engaged, effective directors. If you would like to recommend someone as a candidate, please read the [Timber Framers Guild Board Member Job Description](#) for specific information about qualifications, responsibilities, and expectations.

The nominations committee will interview each recommended candidate to determine their willingness and qualifications to serve and will present the nominations to the board of directors for approval. We would like to finalize the ballot by the conference in August, so send your recommendations in right away to allow us time to complete the process with each individual. Please direct any questions or comments about our process as well as candidate recommendations to [Gabel Holder](#).

Geometric design, from page 1

from as far away as Vermont, the Carolinas, Alberta, England, Massachusetts, and France.

Our objective was to mill, fabricate, and erect this roughly 18-ft. octagonal pavilion in eight days. The geometry of our building was based on the rod (a unit of the acre, a rod measures 16 ft. 6 in.). We chose the rod for dimensioning since most of the well-built timber frame structures in Western Illinois (ca. 1810–1910) use it as a basic unit of measurement for building dimensioning. Not only was the length of the rod used to determine floor and wall plans and the roof pitch; it was also used to size timbers in cross-section. It is a holdover from the time when using divisions and multiples of the rod to size timbers was the norm. (Dividing the rod by 24 gives you units 8 1/4 in. on a side. See sidebar.) A good example is the standard 8 x 8 we build with today.

Proportion was the key element in this workshop. We learned that there is a rhythm and reason to building structures, and forms in nature are the guiding harmonizing elements. The crew began every day with two hours of instruction from Laurie in geometric design and historic examples; throughout the day he was available for private tutoring and general questions. Laurie made all of his PowerPoint presentations available to the students to take home, as well as other related educational material used in the workshop.

Calculating dimensions in rods

A rod, an ancient measure of area that is derived from the acre, measures 16 ft. 6 in. In the reference to it at [left], the logic plays out like this:

A rod, 16 ft. 6 in., equals 198 in.

A chain is 66 ft., or four rods.

A half-chain is 33 ft., or two rods.

Divide a rod by 24 and you arrive at the most common size of timber in timber-framed buildings: 8 1/4, or thereabouts.

The oldest timber frame yet discovered in Europe, in the Netherlands (from 1475 B.C.E.), was built with roughly 8 x 8 posts.

We did floor plan, wall plan, and roof plan layout using radius rods to scribe the circle and build the daisy wheel. This building was snapped out on the shop floor with chalk lines, then lofted to the timber and scribed using basic tools like simple dividers and plumb bobs. Generally, we cut with Mafell equipment, laid the joinery out for draw bore, and pre-fit all parts and pieces.

Food was hand-made and prepared courtesy of my Mom (Barb Collins), my wife (Nicole Collins), Katie (Brad Collins' wife), and Jen (Katie's sister).

See **Geometric design**, page 4



Barbara Czoch

Above, looking up through the geometry.



Nicole Collins

Right, the completed 18-ft. octagonal pavilion frame.

Thanks, Manchester conference sponsors!

BRENDA BAKER

Our sincere thanks to these sponsors for bolstering various aspects of the upcoming conference. We are proud and grateful that you stepped up!

We will likely have more sponsors to add to this list. TFG members, please help us express our appreciation for these stalwarts by thanking them yourselves.

Platinum sponsors



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Geometric design, from page 3

Local establishments donated some food to the event, though most was provided from the stores and provisions of Trillium Dell Farm. The completed pavilion is a gift to the local volunteer Fire Department in Appleton and will be erected on their site in late summer or early fall.

This project was fantastic success: a beautiful structure was left in the wake of our week of intensive geometry. No math, calculators, or tape measures were used, and no shop drawings were created. Honestly, I

think they wouldn't have made a difference and likely would have hindered the fabrication of the building. Once you understand this system you can put those other tools away for a building of this nature.

Laurie will be creating a booklet from our event complete with all the geometry for the octagonal building, so keep your eyes out for this in around a year. We were proud to host his event at Trillium Dell and look forward to our next encounter with Laurie Smith. Thank you to all who came, took time out of your busy lives, and made this possible.



CURTIS MILTON

The TFG Apprenticeship Training Program, funded by subscribing members and contributors, continues to grow as an entity under the umbrella of the TFG. The Apprentice Training Committee (ATC) is a group of volunteers committed to the program's mission to improve the educational structure and process for professional timber frame carpenters.

Work in progress

Curriculum development. Years of seeking curriculum developers has been less productive than hoped. However, targeting conference presenters is productive. Directly hiring instructors for training is very productive. By specifying content and assessments, we define the deliverables. Filling the curriculum this way takes more time, but we will get exactly the materials we need.

At the 2014 Assessment and Training (A&T), we contracted with a qualified presenter who successfully developed curriculum material. His employer was able to contribute much of the substantial expense because the TFG is a 501c3 non-profit organization. We hope to use this example to help recruit further instructional and program development collateral.

Membership. Registered journeyworker enrollment remains stable: we have added to the initial pool but have also had some attrition, mostly from financial pressure.

In the transition from apprentices to journeyworkers, 2014 saw the graduation of two apprentices to journeyworker status for a program total of three since 2009. Keeping these graduates involved in the program is a priority. One more apprentice is expected to graduate at the 2015 A&T.

New apprentices. The apprentice application process has been solidified, but the ATC continues to encourage a lengthy probation period before applicants join the program. Credit for on-the-job learning and related training is granted when a person applies to the program.

The ATC welcomed two new apprentices at the 2014 A&T in Knoxville, Illinois. Nicole Collins (Trillium Dell) is the first woman registered to the program. Kurt Doolittle is Nicole's supervising journeyworker. Andrew McFadden (Holder Brothers Timber Frames) will be supervised by Whit Holder. The ATC has registered a third apprentice: Willis Rozycki (Cascade Joinery) will be supervised by 2014 graduate RJ Misiolek. Formal apprentice welcome takes place at the annual A&T.

The 2015 A&T will be held at Frameworks Timber in Ft. Collins, Colorado, and will focus on design and engineering. Syllabus and format have been outlined, and we will update the details once the presenters have been secured. This event will be open to a limited number of non-program participants. The maximum number is yet to be determined, but we plan to announce all details after the TFG conference this month.

Programming

Graduation from the program requires competence in 70% of the TFG outline. This recognizes that our industry draws on a complex series of specialized skills and that, for practical reasons, most companies specialize. Knowledge of skills outside the needs of day-to-day productivity does enhance the overall abilities of the timber frame carpenter, but it may have limited value to a particular company or customer.

The one non-test requirement that every apprentice must fulfill before graduation is to prepare and teach an element related to the curriculum. This reinforces the most important skills needed to lead an apprentice, a crew, or a company: planning, research, communication, and assessment. With these basic program requirements in mind, we are developing several larger programming concepts.

Continuing education. The ATC believes that the greater industry would benefit from encouraging the continuing education of those it employs. We believe that the TFG, the ATP, and qualified third party platforms provide opportunities. Making materials available and verifying the lessons learned is a long-term goal.

Entry level credential. The ATC also believes that there is a need for an intensive entry level credential for new hires. Currently, a small working group is considering this topic.

The current journeyworkers, many of them your colleagues, have committed financially to supporting the program. In so doing, they are ensuring that the program continues, as well as serving as the mentors for apprentices. We are enormously grateful for their loyal support.

Many of you non-ATP-registered timber framers, some more highly qualified than our average registered journeyworker, also mentor apprentice-level carpenters. We value your insights.

At various A&T sessions, many journeyworkers have realized that the topic of the session was a weak spot in their own knowledge. Thus they are gaining valuable knowledge and skills as part of the program. However, you don't have to be a registered journeyworker to contribute to the program. Many of you non-ATP-registered timber framers, some more highly qualified than our average registered journeyworker, also mentor apprentice-level carpenters. We value your insights, and we always welcome the opportunity to discuss how you might contribute to the education of the next generation, and further, to the structure that will educate the generations we won't know by name.

If you have questions, please [email me](mailto:curtis@tfg.org), the 2014 ATC chair, or call me at 603/387-6770.

Show your work

MACK MAGEE

WoodWorks, an initiative of the Wood Products Council (a cooperative venture of major North American wood groups like the American Wood Council, government agencies, and other funding partners), is developing a seminar series to be given dozens of times starting later this year to architects, engineers, and other professionals who might use wood, lumber, timber, and engineered wood products in commercial construction.

WoodWorks holds events seven to ten days long (**Wood Solutions Fairs**) at which upwards of 1000 architects, engineers, and builders attend seminars on the use of wood in commercial construction. (They hold single-subject, day-long seminars for smaller groups all around the U.S. throughout the year as well.) Although not all timber framers are engaged in commercial work, architects and engineers who do commercial timber work often work on residential projects too. Many American architects and engineers who are interested in bringing wood and timber into their projects attend these day-long events and seminars. Clearly, exposing this group of design professionals to timber framing and the craft-oriented capabilities of timber framing firms is in our timber frame community interest.

I have spoken at eight or nine of these events on timber framing, usually to a room of 100 to 140 architects and engineers, and I assure you that the information was enthusiastically received—they love what timber framers do.

WoodWorks has asked us to provide examples of our work for inclusion in this new seminar presentation series. They expect to create over two hours of presentation content in several different formats.

WoodWorks will cover a wide variety of examples from everyday applications to the truly phenomenal, with the intent to inspire designers to use wood and wood-hybrid systems where they might otherwise default to steel or concrete.

Specifically, they are looking for:

- Two to four good photos (high resolution) that they have your permission to use for this purpose.
- Details of the project—location, architect, engineer, photo credits, occupancy, construction type, etc.
- Roof and floor system details—square footage, spans, member type, species, sizing, interesting connection details, and so on.
- Specifics of the design program, cost information, and the construction story.

In the “story” of the project, WoodWorks is looking for:

- A building use that is not usually met in wood: commercial, school, public, etc.



WoodWorks
WOOD PRODUCTS COUNCIL

- Good design shown in photographs that appeal to architects and owners.
- A solid explanation why the selected framing system was a good fit (economics, environmental considerations, aesthetics, constructability, etc.).
- Under-construction and completed photos to show architects how the framing system works and its finished look. This is less important for exposed timber frames, for obvious reasons.
- The ideal projects should have a combination of wood products, including some solid sawn, engineered wood, or glulam timbers.

Many of the example projects they already have are from the Rockies or further west. If you have examples east of the Rockies, they will round out the geographic coverage of the U.S.

Also, WoodWorks is planning a written case study document, similar to [these](#), on long-span wood roofs. The actual span lengths are not critical at this point because they have had no trouble acquiring examples of long spans from other sources.

Though the focus of the case study is long-span roofs in buildings, it will start by reviewing basic, typical spans before turning to truly inspirational distances. So, examples of some interesting floors 30 ft. or longer and a long span bridge or other long timber framed structures will be useful in the mix of projects.

Of course, WoodWorks will credit the sources of information, including photos. Any images shared but not used will not be used for any other presentation without the express permission of the provider.

If you have any questions, please ask [me](#) or [Scott Breneman](#) (more contact information below).

To submit projects to submit for potential inclusion, send the information along to him at:

Scott Breneman Ph.D., P.E., S.E.
WoodWorks / Wood Products Council
Senior Technical Director, Architectural and
Engineering Solutions
530/723-6230

Please consider taking the time to give WoodWorks project examples of your work. I will be proud to witness your projects highlighted in the WoodWorks presentations.



Convenient disconnect: in sustainability, the environment is not the whole story

AUSTIN PARSONS

The generic sustainability literature has a strong bias toward the environment. There is nothing wrong with this slant as long as one recognizes it is not the whole story.

A case in point is when heritage is involved. Heritage requires a broader perspective. Any heritage challenge is a combination of environmental, economic, social and cultural issues and, by extension, how one approaches sustainability. I recognize heritage is also a subset of the larger picture, but lessons learned when considering sustainability from a heritage perspective can be applied to the broader field.

An example is the Ise Grand Shrine (Ise Jingu) located in the city of Ise in Mie prefecture, Japan. Ise Jingu is not one building or location, but two locations and a set of buildings and associated structures.

What makes Ise Jingu relevant to this article is its planned rebuilding program. Sixty structures,

including the Main Sanctuaries of the Inner and Outer Shrines, treasure houses, offering halls, sacred fences, gateways, and the buildings of 14 auxiliary sanctuaries located at two sites, are rebuilt on adjoining plots every 20 years. The last rebuild, the 62nd, occurred in 2013. The thought is that because of the adherence to ritual and protocol, along with a trans-generational transfer of building skills and use of traditional materials at every rebuild, these structures are authentic.

To complete this rebuild takes a mind-boggling amount of time, resources, effort, and money. The renewal process takes eight years to complete. It requires 14,000 pieces of timber (10,000 trees), 25,000 sheaves of miscanthus reeds, and a staggering 122,000 shrine carpenters. The 2013 rebuild was estimated to have cost 55 billion yen, or US \$0.5 billion. ([Encyclopedia of Shinto, Japan for Sustainability.](#))

See Eco-Logic, page 8

Naiku: the main shrine

The architecture used for the main shrine is known as Yui-itsu-shinmei. The shinmei style and its associated construction techniques date back to 250–538 C.E.

This architecture is thought to have originated from either Polynesian or south Chinese storehouse architecture. It features primitive building techniques in a spare and immaculate straight-line design.

The shrine is made of unpainted wood (Japanese cypress) with two supporting pillars for the ridgepole, a verandah and a thatched roof (miscanthus grass) with ten logs placed across the ridgepole at intervals, and two long slender bargeboards pierced with wind holes (kaze-kiri) projecting in an X shape above the ridgepole at each end. ([Shinmei-zukuri architectural style, Wikipedia/Ise grand shrine.](#))



Wikimedia Commons

Eco-Logic, from page 7

Rebuilding a set of buildings every 20 years forever is not environmentally sustainable, no matter how hard one argues the case; yet it is done, even in this era of environmental consciousness.

Given this amount of resources, time and money, one has to ask why it is done and whether it's worth it. The latter question is not for this author to judge, but why it is done sheds light on how the Japanese define sustainability as well as how they prioritize the tradeoffs of this commitment.

Have a plan in place before there is a crisis.

The Ise Shrine rebuilding program is about rice. In particular, it is a generational reminder about the importance of having enough rice when needed.

Storing rice in a hot, humid climate in buildings made from natural materials that can quickly decompose requires a building maintenance strategy. As mentioned above, these buildings are made from grass and wood. If one defers their maintenance, there will be a point in time when the buildings fail and the rice kept in them spoils. Without the forethought to either maintain the building or build replacements, people could be put in a situation where they have no means to store their rice. If this happens at a large enough scale, a culture's survival could be in jeopardy.

This possibility was recognized 1300 years ago. To prevent this from happening, Emperor Tenmu established a building program along with the required infrastructure and resources to rebuild the selected Ise Shrine structures every 20 years. The 20-year range was selected because of its relation to the generations and to make a point. The existing buildings are still in good shape when they are taken down, but maximizing their service life is not the point. It is a symbolic gesture representing the need to have a plan in place before there is a crisis.

This building program became part of the Shinto religion; the time of rebuilding is referred to as Shikinen sengu, the Sengu ceremony. By incorporating this program into the religion, the lessons of rebuilding and planning on a regular basis, as well as a cultural link between buildings and survival, became engrained in the Japanese culture.

Part of this survival strategy was the guarantee that subsequent generations would both be able to fulfill their obligation and have the skill to pass on the knowledge to the next generation. This came in the form of a trans-generational transfer of building skills and forestry management practices. I wrote about the Ise Shrine to make a point. Sustainability is more complex than dealing with ways to mitigate atmospheric carbon input and minimize resource use and pollution. These are important problems, but they are not the only problems. Sustainability, or being

sustainable, is more than having a concern about the environment. It includes concerns about economics and, as the above example illustrates, the social and cultural. To be sustainable, one has to balance each of these factors—economic, social-cultural, and environmental—in a way that allows an effort to continue happening.

This idea of balancing environmental concerns with economics and social or cultural values is referred to as the three (or four) pillars of sustainability, depending what you read or whom you talk to. Tradeoffs are inevitable, and each society sets its own priorities that result in different choices. This is the rub. Not everyone will agree with how the trade-offs will be made, or what priorities should be put on economics, cultural values, or the environment. As the saying goes, it's the same church, but a different pew. Like a design problem, there is no one answer when it comes to a correct blend of how to balance these issues to come up with a sustainable solution.

No doubt we all make these types of tradeoffs on a daily basis when dealing with sustainability issues centered on our own lifestyles.

To be sustainable, one has to balance each of these factors—economic, social-cultural, and environmental—in a way that allows an effort to continue happening.

What working with heritage has taught me about sustainability is its multi-faceted complexity and the need to be tolerant of how others have set their priorities and tradeoffs. I don't always agree with others' sustainability actions, but I have begun to understand why they do what they do.

This approach has even helped me understand the climate debate in North America. I first saw it as two different views about climate. Now, I also understand that it is about maintaining two different camps' cultural values, their respective economic sustainability and along the way, what they think is happening to the climate. A discussion for another time.

David R. Hourdequin, PE

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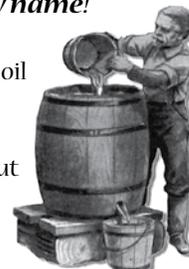
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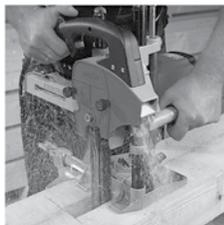
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EVENTS



These listings are for Guild workshops and meetings, were submitted by Guild members, or announce other relevant events. For more info on Guild events or to register for any TFG project, reach [Sue Warden](#), 855/598-1803.

Guild events

2014 Annual Conference Aug 7–10
Southern New Hampshire U., Manchester, N.H.,
[Brenda Baker](#), 517/486-3629.

Canada-East Regional Meeting Jan 2015 (tentative),
Kentville, Nova Scotia. [Mark Gillis](#).

other events

EcoNest Natural Building

Natural building apprenticeship boot camp
Sep 8–Oct 17

EcoNest intensive Sep 15–26

Timber framing Sep 15–19

Nesting instinct seminar Aug 2, Sep 20

Clay-fiber walls Aug 4–7, Sep 22–25

Natural plasters Aug 4–7, Sep 26

Roof construction Aug 11–14, Sep 29–Oct 2

[Econest calendar](#), 541/488-9508.

Fox Maple Workshops

Timber framing Sep 1–13, Nosara, Costa Rica.
[www.foxmaple.com](#)

Heartmoor Farm

Timber Frame Intensive Aug 13–17

Timber Framing I Sep 16–Oct 9

Timber Framing II Oct 21–Nov 20

Kents Store, Va. [heartmoorfarm.org](#),
[Robert MacKinnon](#), Tom Elliott

other events, continued

Heartwood School

Carpentry for women Aug 11–15

Converting trees to timber Aug 18–22

Timber framing Aug 25–29

Timber frame design and joinery decisions Sep 4–6

Compound joinery for timber framers Sep 8–12

Advanced SketchUp Pro: Layout Sep 26–27

Washington, Mass. [Michele Beemer](#),

[www.heartwoodschoo.com](#), 413/623-6677.

North House Folk School

Build your own timber frame—large frame Aug 15–24

Grand Marais, Minn. [www.northhouse.org](#),

888/387-9762.

Penn State

Ag Progress Days Aug 12–14

Pennsylvania Furnace, Pa. [Rudy Christian](#)

Rocky Mountain Workshops

Square rule timber framing—straight and curved members / Skip Dewhirst, Chris Drake, Aug 17–23
Seed to shelter—forest ecology and basic carpentry / Chris Drake, Peter Haney Sep 20–28

Colo. State U. Mountain Campus, Pingree Park, Colo.

[Peter Haney](#), [www.rockymountainworkshops.com](#),

970/482-1366.

Sobon/Carlton

Traditional timber framing / Jack Sobon and Dave Carlton Sep 24–28

Hancock Shaker Village, Pittsfield, Mass. [Dave Carlton](#),

413/684-3612, or [Jack Sobon](#), 413/684-3223

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Notices are for one-time events and offers, and they run free to Guild members for two issues per year. The cost to non-Guild members is \$60 per notice per issue. A notice, whether free or paid, runs for a maximum of two issues. Notices are intended for onetime events and offers; appropriateness for inclusion is decided by the [editor](#).

help wanted

Designer.

Fire Tower Engineered Timber, a specialty structural engineering firm, seeks a designer for its Providence, RI office to support our growing engineering practice. Primary task will be to prepare electronic drawings and specifications for our heavy timber and structural panel work. Other light admin duties required. Minimum qualifications: 2-year college degree, 3–5 years of 3D model and 2D drawing preparation in AutoCad a must (experience in other CAD programs a plus); and an ability to communicate effectively with our far-flung team and clients. Wages commensurate with experience. Please send resume and portfolio to [Mack Magee](#).

Designer.

[Homestead Timber Frames](#), a small, productive hand-cut company in Tennessee, has an immediate opening for an experienced timber frame designer. For this you must know 3D AutoCAD or ArchiCAD, be able to develop shop drawings for cutting timbers, and produce construction drawings for all projects. Please send resume with examples of work to [Cyndy](#).

HSB designer.

Experienced HSB and/or AutoCAD timber frame designer required for a full-time position in Denver, Colorado. Must be able to produce professional shop drawings; knowledge of Hundegger K2i machinery operation a plus. [Rocky Mountain Joinery Center](#), 720/407-7760 or [Justin](#).

help wanted, continued

Joiners.

Also at [Homestead Timber Frames](#), openings for TWO joiners. Experience is a plus but would enjoy training interested woodworkers in layout, cutting mortise and tenon joinery, and raising our structures onsite. Please send resume with letter of interest to [Jason](#).

Timber framer.

Timber framer wanted by Cabin Creek Timber Frames, in the North Carolina mountains. We are a hand-cut shop with radiant floor heat. [Joe Bell](#), 828/369-5899, www.cabincreektimberframes.com.

Timber manager.

[Montana Reclaimed Lumber Co.](#) is seeking a hand-hewn timber manager. Responsibilities are to assemble hand-hewn timber packages as per customer specifications. Work is outdoors year round. Background in carpentry and log/timber work is required. Pay DOE. Our 16 acre reclaimed lumber yard is located just southwest of Bozeman, Montana. Please email resume to [Mike Halverson](#) or call 406/763-9102 for more information.

tool wanted

Mortiser.

Like new Makita chain mortiser wanted to purchase. Email [Robert Laporte](#) or call 541/690-9213.



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See you at the Conference!