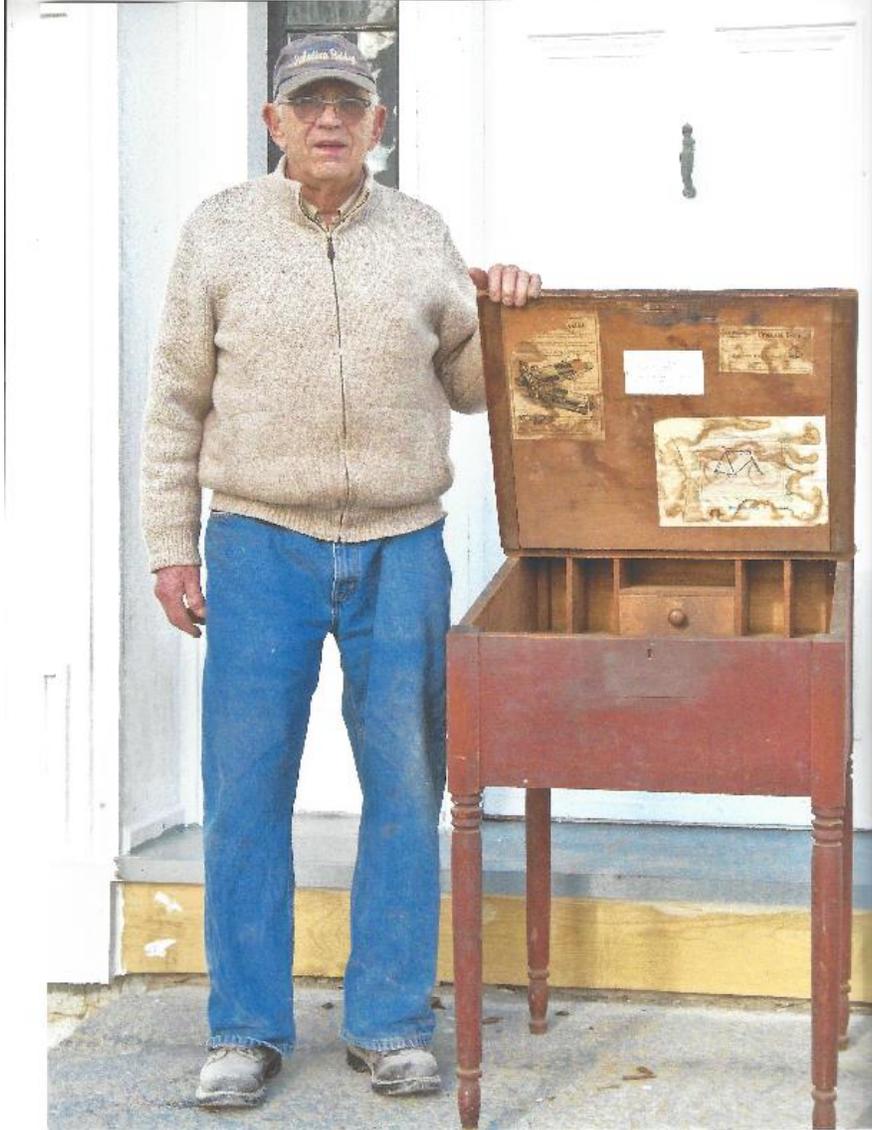


## The Story the Unfinished Ladle Told

I hang here in this historic Stone Arabia house. I'm made of wrought iron and have a copper bowl. Yes, I am complete now but there is a story about me that I'm anxious to tell. That is if an old inanimate object like me can tell a story.



Let me go back sixty years to an old country auction. The location is the old England family home in Stone Arabia. John England the last of the family to reside here had recently passed away and the accumulations of many years were being auctioned. The contents of the house had been sold and the crowd was now at a weathered old outbuilding. This for many years had been the England blacksmith shop. The ring of the hammer against the anvil has long been silent. The fire in the stone forge had died away a half century or so ago.

A neighbor named Skip had talked with John England about the shop and contents not long after he came to Stone Arabia in 1948. John had never been the resident blacksmith but his father had, as had his grandfather. As a boy John had played in the old shop and helped some as well. There was now not

much of value in the shop. Skip bought an old red desk. Then he bought the remainder of the building's contents. There was not much there now. Let's look; what that is hanging in that dark corner on the wall? Why it is a finely made wrought iron handle for a ladle. It was of a style of long ago. We will never know who made it or why it was not finished. Skip took it home and one day he decided to make a copper bowl for it. Now even though it was made by two Stone Arabia residents it is complete.



There comes a time when old collectors must pass some things on to a chosen someone. That is the case with the old red desk. A member of the England family named Valerie now owns the desk with her great grandfather's name stamped onto it. The once unfinished ladle now resides beside the desk.



A finishing note.

Skip said it was purchased probably twenty-five or thirty years ago. Old folks do not always judge time well. Then John England's obituary surfaced bearing the date October 14, 1955. Along with it were copies of two photos of the weathered old England shop taken by Skip's wife Ethel in the early 1960s. The shop still survives much altered.



When the England shop was built is not known. However some idea of its age can be gotten from a large bellows dated 1826 and some very tattered ledgers dated in the 1830s found there.

Now all still survive as part of old Stone Arabia's colorful past.

Skip Barshied, Stone Arabia, December 21, 2015

#### Addendum

Even dedicated old time collectors can mislay some memories after 60 years. As memories return through the years there are special collectables that came to mind. Let's go back to the England family auction and see if other purchases are recalled. While the auctioneer stood just outside the old Greek revival England family house the sparse possessions emerged. Only one item seemed in a price range affordable to the writer of these lines found its way outside. It was the family cherry kitchen table. The base with its four hepplewhite legs stood proudly on the stepping stone. The top bore the scars of kitchen knives and burns from candles and lamps. Only one of its drop leaves remained to attest to the unusual style of its corners. The old table sold for next to nothing and this writer bought it. In time a new top and two drop leaves patterned after the originals were made.

For over a half century the table has held its place of honor in another old Stone Arabia farmhouse.

Two other purchases on that day deserve to be included in this old Stone Arabia tale. The horse shoer's box remained in the shop. Whoever its maker was possessed considerable skill in working with wood and iron. Probably it was made in this shop by someone who also had taste in design. Its design

shows a symmetry not often seen in a work-a-day box used by a blacksmith-horse shoeer to carry the different size nails and tools he required in his profession.

Probably there never was a sign marking the shop. In that bygone era several blacksmiths shops dotted the landscape. Neighbor knew neighbor and had their favorite shop where news and rumors would abound. The weather, crop successes or failures, marriages and funerals would be the topic of the day. Did you see that sign advertising the latest horse drawn machinery sold right there in their shop?

Whoever thought that here in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century our Amish neighbors would still use machines very similar to these? And that horse power would mean just that: horse power.