

## WHAT A TIME WE HAD!

We came, we were busy, we learned a lot, and we had a great time! That pretty much sums up the 2019 Early American Industries Association's Annual Meeting in Lowell, Massachusetts. After a Spring filled with rain and cold weather the clouds finally broke, the sun appeared and tailgating started in earnest on Wednesday morning at our hotel, the Westford Regency Inn & Conference Center. Tools of every description came out of trunks and the back ends of lots of vehicles. The usual feeding frenzy began, tools changed hands and both sellers and buyers were smiling at the end of the day.

Everyone settled into their rooms at the Westford Regency Inn & Conference Center and on Thursday morning we were ready to board the buses for Lowell after a breakfast buffet and a spate of announcements. We had a full and fascinating day in Lowell with visits to the Lowell National Historical Park and the New England Quilt Museum. The park rangers did a wonderful job as we toured the Boott Cotton Mill and its museum. We gained an understanding of the life of the "mill girls" who worked and lived in Lowell and the stories of the immigrants who followed in their footsteps. The boat tour of the Lowell canal system was fascinating and helped us understand what an amazing engineering marvel it was. We lingered in St. Anne's Episcopal Church built with stone taken from the canals and were awestruck by the incredible quilt display at the New England Quilt Museum. The Lowell trolley was a great way to get from place to place during the day. It was a full day and everyone managed to put their feet up for a bit before the Thursday Ice Cream Social and the Whatsit's Session. Terry and Donna Page did a great job of helping us unravel the mystery of the Whatsits. Some we identified, and others remained "Whatsits"!

Friday dawned cloudy and a bit rainy, but we were inside for the day and what a day it was. From workshops on weaving, spinning, decorative plaster casting, blacksmithing, 19<sup>th</sup> century candy making, flintknapping, and cross stitch we all had a busy and wonderful day of learning and trying our hand and new and varied early American industries. We enjoyed presentations on everything from 18<sup>th</sup> century American woodworking planes, Civil War soldier's quilts, historic furniture upholstery techniques, American cider making, gilding on book bindings, recreating a rotary gridiron and discovering the hidden proportions of a gentleman's dressing table. There was something of interest to everyone in attendance. A large group took a tour of The Starrett Tool Factory in Athol on Friday morning as well. It was great fun! The Fine Tool Journal put on a great auction with 323 lots of antique tools going across the auction block on Friday evening.

On Saturday morning the hotel ballroom was filled with tool traders and a wonderful variety of displays by our members. Outside the hotel blacksmith Richard Wright was at his forge and a John Deere hit and miss engine was cranking an old-fashioned ice cream freezer. We all got to sample some delicious ice cream. Our 2019 Annual Meeting ended with a fun filled Silent Auction filled with lots of wonderfully diverse items, many of them hand crafted by EAIA members. After a great meal, we held the 2019 EAIA Annual Meeting. Tom Elliott was presented with the J.D. Hatch award for all his research and writing about early American plane makers. We ended the evening with "Once in a Blue Moon," a magic lantern slide show of rare 19<sup>th</sup> century astronomical magic lantern slides.

Whew! It was a whirlwind three days of museums, learning, fellowship and fun. I hope everyone had as much fun as we did! Thanks to all of our talented presenters, lecturers and workshop hosts. We have so much talent within our membership and it's wonderful to see our

members share those gifts, talent, and knowledge with the rest of us. We'll look forward to another great annual Meeting in 2020 in Staunton, Virginia!

Your 2019 EAIA Annual Meeting Co-Hosts

Paul & Eileen Van Pernis

Bill & Alyssa Rainford