

A GUIDE TO ANVILS

Submitted by Hollis Wooldrige

This is some interesting info I pulled off the ABANA forums. It was posted in the public section by Ken Scharabok. Might be of some use to folks shopping for anvils.
Hollis

This is just intended as a rough guide for identifying anvils which are not clearly marked. For more detail information see Anvil's in America by Richard Postman. (and More on Anvils when it is published):

- If there is an oval depression in the bottom it may be either a Trenton, Arm & Hammer or Swedish. If there is a clear line/seam showing a top plate it would likely be a Trenton or Arm & Hammer. If the area under the heel is rough worked, it would likely be a Arm & Hammer. No seam, then I would suspect a one-piece cast Swedish.

- If there is an hourglass shaped depression on the bottom it is likely a Hay-Budden (with the exception of some manufacturer put out 50 pounders with a hourglass depression also).

- If you see a series of numbers (serial number) on the front foot, it is almost certainly to be a Trenton, Hay-Budden or Arm & Hammer. If it starts with an A, it would be an H-B. Arm & Hammers do not go over about 52,000.

- If it meets the other criteria for one of the above, and it has no serial number, it may be one of their rejects sold on the secondary market. Usually, but not always, it was due to an incomplete weld between the anvil and top plate. When they tested it, they didn't get the 'ring' all over the plate they wanted.

- If you see numbers at the waist such as 1 1 20, it is a British made anvil. This is their stone weight system to where the first number represents multiples of 112 (1/20th a long ton), second represents multiples of 28 and third is remaining pounds. Thus

this would be 160 pounds (112 plus 28 times two plus 20). Usually off from scale weight a tad.

- If you see punch marks between the numbers, such as 1 . 1 . 20, it is likely a Mousehole. Sometimes all which remains are the two punch marks.

- If there are small, flat steps on top of the front and back feet it is almost certain to be an English Peter Wright.

- If it has five handling holes, with two on the front and back feet, it is almost certain to be an English Peter Wright.

- If it is the London pattern (what you would typically consider an anvil to look like) and there is no seam between the body and top plate, it may be Swedish one-piece cast steel. (However, anvil makers were sometimes very, very good at working in the seam.)

- American British and Continental Europe manufacturers made double-horned anvils, and specialty anvils, such as saw maker, carriage or plowshare anvils, so these are of little help by themselves.

- If you see what looks to be an Eagle on the side, it is almost certain to be a Fisher Norris. Eagle is usually holding an anchor, perhaps because Fisher made many of the big ship and shipyard anvils for the U.S. Navy. Largest anvil ever known to have been made (1,400 pounds) is a Fisher.

- If you see what looks to be an arm holding a hammer on the side it could be either Vulcan or Arm & Hammer. Vulcans were raised while Arm & hammer's were stamped in. Vulcans tended to be short and blocky while A&Hs were more sleek looking.

- If the anvil has no 'ring' when struck, it is likely a cast iron body with steel plate on top. (These were sometimes called 'city anvils'.) Likely either Vulcan or Fisher. Vuncans tended to be more blocky while Fisher's were more typically of the sleeker London pattern. Older Fishers had a handling hole under the horn and heel also, while Vulcan's didn't, and

newer Fishers (after the late 1800s) usually had the mold pattern date under the heel.

If you see what looks to be II&B on the front foot it would be a Vulcan (Illinois Iron and Bolt Co). Some people incorrectly think this is H&B for Hay-Budden.

- If you see what looks to be a relief of a Badger within an oval, it would be a Badger (American Skein and Foundry Co. of Racine, WI). If for sale snatch it up at almost any reasonable price as this would be a very, very rare anvil. The other American anvil considered to be rare is the Samson. After the manufacturing of Trentons moved to Cleveland, OH, one of the former owners continued to make anvils in Trenton, NJ calling them Samsons.

- If the anvil has a very narrow waist and an 'oversized' horn, likely it is one of the newer farrier anvils. These are all one piece cast steel to my knowledge.

- On aging, steps came into common use on American and British anvils about 1780. Pritchel (punching) holes about 1830. (However, some older anvils had pritchels later drilled into them.)

Any anvil with letters, numbers or logos raised, would have been at least partially cast. In the latter years of manufacturing the American wrought iron anvil makers used cast bases rather than forging them out. Sometimes the base doesn't match the top, such as a 140 pound base used for a 160 pound top.

Raised weight markings were pretty well only on cast anvils (or cast bases) and usually had the last digit left off, such as 8 representing 80 pounds or 16 representing 160 pounds.

Anvils were usually marked on the side with the horn to the right, under the horn and on the front foot. Wirebrush using soap and water to base metal. Let thoroughly dry. Lay on side and dust with flour. Brush off, leaving flour in depressions. Do same with front foot with anvil resting on heel.

Sometimes lettering or numbers just jump out at you.

If you see a 'painted lady' (a painted anvil) and it meets some of the above criteria, you might take a chance on it. However, be aware a coat of paint can hide a multitude of sins and it can still turn out to be a 'prostitute', rather than a 'good woman'. Many of the new imported anvils are painted. Personally I would not be interested in an anvil with a painted top plate as there may well be body putty under it.

If you can make out any markings you can contact me at my e-mail address as I may be able to help you identify it. A good photograph (with flour in depressions) goes a long way. It has been pointed out to me some early Trentons also had the hour-glass depression on the bottom. These also had flat top front and back feet, but wide ones, not a small ledge as with P-W.

Trenton, Hay-Budden and Arm & Hammer (as well as the British firms) made anvils using the buyer's logo. For example, Acme (Sears) and Lakeside (Montgomery Ward) anvils were made by both Trenton and Hay-Budden. If it has a serial number on the front foot the anvil was almost certainly made by one of these three. You then have to look at secondary characteristics.

SMI TOUR

For a great report on last month's tour of SMI (now called CMC) please go to our website and check out the article put together by our webmaster, Scott Little.

Be sure and say thanks to Jerry Achterburgh for arranging the tour.