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Woodworking Magazine Weblog

Highly Recommended: Saw Sharpening from TechnoPrimitives

Posted 9/22/2008 in [All Weblog Posts](#) | [Saws](#)



Without fail, every week readers ask me where to get their saws sharpened. I've run into some great saw sharpeners in my day, and I'm always happy to recommend their services. Today I'd like to tell you about Mark Harrell, who has taken saw sharpening service into the digital age.

Harrell, a 28-year veteran of the U.S. Army and a long-time hand-tool enthusiast, recently opened his business and web site, called [TechnoPrimitives](#). Harrell offers everything from filing your slightly dull saw all the way up to a complete restoration of the sawplate, teeth and tote.

He also sells vintage saws that he has restored and sharpened. You can see his [current auctions](#) (and feedback) on eBay.

I recently sent Harrell an R. Groves & Sons carcass saw that has been

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sitting on the bookshelf in my office for several years. I bought the saw for a very small sum online because I really liked the shape of the 19th-century handle, and I really have a thing for carcass saws.

However, like many online transactions, this one was a disappointment. The split saw nuts were stripped and unsalvageable. The sawplate was crooked like a hockey player's nose. And the teeth were all kinds of irregular ugly, perhaps like those belonging to its 19th-century English owner. (Note to self: I seem to be beating up on the orthodonture of our British ancestors a bit too much lately.)

I liked the handle too much to simply pitch the saw. So I replaced the sawnuts with some extras we had lying around the shop and put the saw on my shelf of hopeless tools (some day I'll offer you a tour of this sad corner of my office).

So after finding out about Harrell's new business, I fetched the saw and shipped it off to him directly to his shop in LaCrosse, Wis. I figured that this sickly saw would be a good test of Harrell's restoration skills. Or it would make him rethink his business plan.

The saw arrived back today, beautifully packed. The whole process from start to finish took less than a week. Though we are up against two impossible deadlines this week in the office, I sneaked off to the shop on my lunch hour to make some crosscuts.

Sweet mother of mystery. Harrell brought this hopeless saw completely back from the dead. I was expecting Harrell to declare the saw DOA and ship me back the parts, mob-style. Or that he would give it a try but the saw would end up good for rough work only.

Instead, this saw graduated from the shelf of the damned to a prized position above my workbench. The sawplate is near-perfect. The teeth are razor sharp, perfectly formed and set. It cuts fast and tracks straight. I doubt this saw has been in this good of condition for 100 years.

If you want to see the steps he took (and some before and after photos), he set up a page [here](#) that shows the restoration process.

So how much does the service cost? Here's the price list:

- Base cost for just jointing/setting/sharpening: \$35
- Retooling, and jointing/setting/sharpening \$45
- Sawplate straightening: \$25
- Handle restoration: \$25
- Total Rehabilitation / The Works (all of the above): \$85

Harrell did "the works" on the R. Groves & Son, but cut me a break because he didn't repair the upper horn on the handle. My total cost: \$60. I

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consider that price to be more than fair for the results.

If you have a dull saw that's not earning its keep in your shop, I recommend you give Harrell's services a try. Like me, I think you'll be convinced. If you've used his services, feel free to post a comment about them below.

— *[Christopher Schwarz](#)*



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