



Introducing Clinton Byers Master Horner

Becoming a Master in the Guild is not only a mark of one's achievement, but an acceptance of increased responsibility and a heightened dedication and commitment to the Honourable Company of Horners. The Masters are indeed an elite group of artisans at the forefront of representing our Guild.

Master Horner Profiles

This is the 16th article in a series on those members of the Honourable Company of Horners who have achieved the status of *Master Horner*. Featured in this article is Clinton Byers, Master Horner, whose profile will also be added to the Guild's Website at www.hornguild.org along with the other Masters.

Currently there are 16 members who have attained this status and each one's contributions has been integral to the growth and development of our Guild. The 16 *Master Horners* include:

John Proud	Art DeCamp	Carl Dumke
Rex Reddick	Lee Larkin	Erv Tschanz
John DeWald	Tim Sanner	Willy Frankfort
John Kiselica	Ed Long	Rick Sheets
Roland Cadle	Joe Becker	Walter Mabry
Clinton Byers		

In accordance with the Guild's Standing Rules, for anyone to become a Master Horner, an individual must "demonstrate a superlative level of ability in carving, heating and pressing, turning, engraving, and integrating woods and metals with cow horn by presenting three horn objects that demonstrate his or her ability to the Awards Committee for evaluation," plus give "an original written and oral presentation to the HCH at an annual meeting or to another accredited organization on some aspect of horn working or its history." Needless to say, this is a high standard that has been met by less than 4% of the Guild's membership. Each one has played a vital role through their demonstrated artisan skills and leadership abilities in making the HCH what it is today.



Clinton Byers is, without question, a welcomed addition to the *Masters*.

It's always interesting to look into the backgrounds of each Master to learn of their motivation in reaching this level of artisanship. Clint's path is rather unique, as his interest in horn work began at an early age. Born and raised in the western part of North Carolina, his love of the outdoors and hunting was a natural part of growing up. He related that "When I was 13, my Dad gave me my first flintlock rifle along with an old pouch. For a powder horn he took me to a local slaughter house and together we picked out a raw horn from several that were on the roof where they pitched

them after dehorning the cattle. In those days, they would just give them to you. We brought the little horn home and he guided me through the process of making that first powder horn. The next year I scrimshawed a crude version of a hunting dog flushing a pheasant onto the horn. That was the start of my horn making career. I still have the rifle and little horn."

Following graduation from high school, Clint served three years in the U.S. Army with the 1st Infantry Division which deployed to the middle east during the *Desert Shield* and *Desert Storm* phases of the Gulf War. Upon completion of his service, he used the GI Bill to attend Appalachian State

University and following graduation, entered the teaching profession. For twelve years he taught Biology in the public high school system before deciding to continue his profession in the private school sector. For the past six years he has taught middle-school Science and Math at a charter school in Boone, North Carolina.

Although his horn work stayed with him through the years, it wasn't until 2005 when he saw a copy of Jim Dresslar's book, *The Engraved Powder Horn*, that his interest in historically accurate powder horns became a passion. The information, research and photographs contained in the book had a positive affect on Clint as well as his horn work.

In 2011, after meeting several Guild members at a seminar held at the Museum of Early Southern Decorative Art (MESDA) in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, he decided to join the Honourable Company of Horners. When one initially meets Clint, he appears to be a rather quiet, friendly, unassuming individual, only to realize later that he is driven, meticulous to a fault, somewhat intense, and rather demanding of himself. These traits contributed to his future role in the Guild.

Three years after becoming a member, Clint advanced to Journeyman in 2014. It didn't take long for the Guild's officers to recognize his artistic talents and organizational skills. This led to his appointment in 2016 as the Chairman of the Awards Committee. His refinements in the judging and competition initiatives along with elevating the program for advancement to Journeyman and Master has had a very favorable impact on the Guild.

Clint's efforts over the years culminated March 7th, 2020, for this was the day he had decided to present his research in a public forum to the Guild and submit his three items for judging as the requirements to further advance to *Master*. His research topic, *The Scottish Pocket Mull: A Study in its Origins, Evolution, and Manufacture* prompted John DeWald, Guildmaster, to mention in his *From the Guildmaster* article that "The amount of work

and research put into his education and crafting of the mull, was evident the longer he spoke.....He now stands a step above the majority in the mastery of a long sought after process that has eluded even some Masters of the Guild."

Clint stated that powder horns of colonial and early America "will always be my first love when it comes to horn working." However, "the last few years have found me exploring the techniques of making many small European horn items such as cups and snuff boxes."



His favorite style of powder horn is "a well carved homespun horn with good architecture and maybe some simple folk-art engraving. This style of horn probably persists longer than any other style of horn in American history and to me, they just say something about the resourcefulness and creative ability of the people that made them. Whether the horn is from Pennsylvania or Georgia, there is a graceful simplicity to this marriage of form and function that I love."

An interesting observation was made when Clint was asked about projects that had special meaning to him. He replied that he has made a lot of horns "over the years and many of them



took on very special meaning to me during their construction. Not so much because of the horns themselves, but because of the individuals they were being made for." Quite telling about an artisan and his craft!

One special achievement of note occurred when "Tom Ames asked me to serve as an accoutrements judge at the annual Gunmakers' Fair at Dixon's. Being selected for a judging position at Dixon's is indeed an honor and although it is demanding of one's time and efforts, the benefits of participating in this judging panel is a learning experience that seldom comes along."

Besides being a member of the HCH, Clint is also a member of the NMLRA and the CLA. His work has been featured on the Contemporary Makers Blog several times over the last few years. As an avid reader, he enjoys the publications of the HCH, NMLRA, and the CLA. In addition, he also subscribes to *Muzzleloader Magazine*, *Early American Life* and considers the *Contemporary Maker's Blog* an online publication which he visits weekly.

Clinton Byers is truly a student of the horn trade as evidenced by his research, his meticulous work and his dedication. He has truly earned the highly esteemed title of Master. ■



**Congratulations to Clinton Byers,
Master Horner!**