

GSMT News

The Newsletter of The General Society of Mechanics & Tradesmen

Founded in 1785, The General Society of Mechanics & Tradesmen is dedicated to improving the educational and cultural opportunities for people in the City of New York • Fall 2015

Inspiring Speakers Congratulate the Mechanics Institute's Graduating Class of 2015



Sixty-two men and women from six different disciplines were honored on May 21 as friends and family joined in celebrating their accomplishments. The Gen-

eral Society's Mechanics Institute has offered tuition-free evening courses for 158 years. Today, workers in the construction industry can enroll in our two-and three-year programs designed to provide them with the state-of-the-art skills needed to advance in their fields. This fall, over 400 students will have enrolled in our workforce development programs, all taught by instructors with hands-on industry expertise. The evening's celebration began with the stirring melody of *Pomp and Circumstances* as the graduates marched into our historic library space. General Society president, **Gerard Drohan, Jr.**, welcomed our guests and graduates, acknowledging the students' hard work and sacrifice in managing MI's intense courses four hours a night, two nights a week, after a day's work and home responsibilities. He applauded the graduates' tenacity in completing their programs. GSMT's executive director, Victoria Dengel, then introduced our keynote speaker, internationally acclaimed structural engineer, **Charles H. Thornton, PhD, P.E.**, the founding principal of Thornton Tomasetti and The ACE Mentor Program. During his 50-plus year career, he engineered some of the world's tallest buildings. After congratulating the graduates, Dr. Thornton said that a signed copy of his newly published memoir, *A Life of Elegant Solutions*, had been placed in a MI bag under each student's chair. He said that in the last section of the



...continued on page 2

Classes Start September 14 for Mechanics Institute Fall Semester

With long waiting lists for our popular two-year program, Construction Project Management, the School Committee has developed a questionnaire to assess student capabilities for admission to this program. Returning students, halfway through programs, registered in the spring. New student registration has been continuing through the summer. The School Committee is planning on a total registration of about 400 students divided among our six different tuition-free programs which include: Plumbing Design, Electrical Technology, HVAC Systems and Design, Construction Project Management, Facilities Management and Historic Preservation as well as AutoCAD and BIM. New curriculums, based on the many job postings received by the Institute, are being developed by the School Committee to meet industry demands. Our focus on workforce development requires constant change as knowledge of technological skills becomes even more essential. For a complete program catalog, please visit our website at www.generalsociety.org.

Twenty-Four Lectures Scheduled for 2015-2016 Series To Start in September

Curators are now scheduling another season of exciting lectures for our 2015-16 series. Details covering dates and subjects will be released in September. Please watch our website for complete information about the new Artisan lectures and the Labor, Literature and Landmarks series scheduled for the fall season: www.generalsociety.org. The lecture story continues on page 4.

Jonathan D. Resnick Named 2015 Craftsmanship Honoree Charles H. Thornton, PhD, P.E., Honored for Civic Leadership

The General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen will hold its annual award ceremony benefiting the Mechanics Institute in the historic General Society Library

Celebrating our 230th year

For profiles of our honorees, please see page five

SAVE THE DATE: Thursday, November 19, 2015

Inspiring Speakers Congratulate continued from page 1

book he stresses “three important ingredients for lifetime success: Passion, Persistence and Flexibility. No one ever knows where a career will take him or her, but these three elements are essential for achievement and advancement.” He also suggested that each student write down his goals for the future and develop his personal strategic plan, showing it to no one, so it can easily change and grow. Dr. Thornton stressed the importance of mentoring throughout one’s career. Ms. Dengel then introduced our alumni speaker, **Frank Gibbons**, COO of Penguin, an EM-COR company. Mr. Gibbons was The General Society’s 2014 Craftsman-



ship Award Honoree. Mr. Gibbons said he had planned to become a New York City fireman like his three brothers, but during a summer job at a construction site, he became interested in the industry. He joined Penguin in 1985 and a mentor on the job suggested he join the Operating Engineers Union, which he did that same year. He enrolled in the Mechanics Institute in 1985 and studied here three nights a week for three-and-a-half years, completing courses in Plumbing, HVAC and Electrical Design. He continues to attend courses at New York University. He credits the Mechanics Institute with being the foundation of his career in the construction industry. He has now spent thirty years at Penguin, during which time the company grew from twenty to three-hundred-fifty employees. The class valedictorian, **Sharon Abbate**, was then introduced and addressed her fellow graduates and guests. Ms. Abbate said that after earning both a bachelor’s and master’s degree she went to work for a construction company. She enrolled at the Mechanics Institute to learn more about the industry and feels the diploma she earned here has been the most important in her career development. She said that she “learned valuable, relevant information in every class she attended and that her interaction and discussions with other students in the field had been an important element of the experience.” She is currently working as a facility manager at Long Island University. After the presentation of student awards, the alumni pinning ceremony, led by Frank Gibbons, followed. He asked each graduate to reach into the bag under his seat and remove the newly designed alumni pin that carried our motto: By Hammer and Hand all Arts Do Stand. Each graduate was asked to then turn to his fellow graduate and place the pin on his ceremonial gown – the beginning of the networking process, which both guest speakers had stressed.



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Awards Presented at Graduation

This year ten outstanding students received one of the awards presented during the graduation ceremony. Below are three honorees with their presenters:



Navon Mills accepts his George E. Hoe Award in Electrical Technology from Andis Woodlief, School Chair.

Keith Olsen presents an Albert A. Cuneo Scholarship Award to HVAC Systems Design graduate, Albert Pope.



The Thomas S. DeNapoli Award was presented to Joshua Segarra, Electrical Technology graduate, by Kristine DeNapoli.

General Society President, Gerard Drohan, Jr., who presented diplomas to all graduates, delivering his newly earned diploma to Gregory Yavalidakis, Plumbing Design graduate.



Take Your Career To The Next Level

BUILD YOURSELF • BUILD NEW YORK

The Mechanics Institute has focused on workforce development in New York City ever since its founding in 1858. Tuition-free evening instruction in trades-related education has provided many students with the skills needed to improve their job opportunities. Our programs continue to serve those employed in the building and construction trades who are striving to improve their skills and expand their knowledge to increase career opportunities. Each fall, nearly 400 students enroll in Mechanics Institute’s educational programs, including Plumbing Design, HVAC Systems Design, Electrical Technology, Construction Project Management, Facilities Management and Historic Preservation as well as AutoCAD and Building Information Modeling (BIM).

MECHANICS INSTITUTE

Workforce Development Since 1858

a program of

**The General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen
of the City of New York**

Mother and Son both Enrolled in MI Programs



Oumie Ceesay-Peters is scheduled to graduate from the Construction Project Management program at Mechanics Institute in May 2016. Her son, Sheikh Peters, will graduate a year later. He now works with a developer in Pennsylvania.



He and his mother hope to eventually start their own business as developers and construction project managers, an extension of their present employment. Mrs. Peters is most enthusiastic about her class in Contract Documents and sees this as a critically important tool in her future work. She has attended courses at both the College of Staten Island and City Tech in Brooklyn and hopes that after graduation from the Mechanics Institute, she can complete a bachelor's degree. Her son has attended Baruch College. Mother and son both manage to handle their 2-hour commute from Staten Island to make five o'clock classes at the Mechanics Institute.

Plumbing Instructor, James Gallo, In Eleventh Year of Teaching at Mechanics Institute



James Gallo, Master Plumber, and Master Fire Suppression Contractor, generously shares his extensive knowledge with Plumbing Design Program students, even drawing them outside the building on class breaks to continue fielding questions. A member of the Plumbers Union Local One, Mr. Gallo's broad experience working for the NYC Department of

Buildings in many different capacities brought him a special citation from Mayor Bloomberg and then-commissioner Patricia Lancaster for his role in revamping a long antiquated and mistake-prone inspection recording system. This background has given him the diverse skills to teach a variety of courses at the Mechanics Institute to students ranging from plumbers' helpers to engineers and architects. Courses include NYC Plumbing Code and Interpretation, Plumbing Design and Theory, Mathematics for the Plumbing Trade, and Drafting & Blueprint Reading for Plumbers. During the last spring session at MI, he led a cadre of students in restoring heat to a section of The General Society's nineteenth century building that had been cold for over two decades. Mr. Gallo's consistent good humor and raconteur style of teaching is always welcome to students who are attending evening courses after long days working in the industry.

MI Alumni Celebrate "Builders Night"



General Society member and Mechanics Institute alumnus, James Hennelly, worked with six 2015 Mechanics Institute graduates to develop an active Alumni Association. "Builders Night" on June 18 was the beginning of what is planned to be a number of future networking events for both new and former graduates. Since 1858, thousands of students have registered at the school. A

number of today's industry leaders in the city have historic ties to the Institute. They understand, and value, the intense instruction received here. Newly designed alumni pins had been provided for each new graduate and were available for other alumni. A highlight of the evening was a violin concert *like no other* by Yut and the "Hot Four." Yut says he's "all about filling people with emotions and making them interact through music." His virtuosity with the instrument is unique. The students who organized the event are Oumie Ceesay-Peters, Sylvette Sloan, and James Du from Construction Project Management; Cindy Malinchak and Deidre Hamill from Historic Preservation and John Rettagliata from Facilities Management.

Annual Exhibit of MI Students



The last two weeks in May brought admiring audiences to the balcony that houses The General Society's historic Mossman Lock Collection. Around the room, on display easels and tables, was student work produced in the

Mechanics Institute's Construction Documents and Design and Historic Preservation two-year programs. The work was developed by students and represented skills learned in five different subjects: Computer-Assisted Drafting, Construction Materials & Methods, Architectural Photography, Perspective Drawing, Visual Literacy and Historic Preservation. The exhibit was supported in part by public funds from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, in partnership with the City Council. The public was invited to attend.

***"By Hammer and Hand
All Arts Do Stand"***

Highlights of 2015-16 Lecture Series

Launching our lecture series, the opening lecture on Thursday, September 17 will feature North Carolina



writer, J. Michael Welton's new book, *Drawing from Practice: Architects and the Meaning of Freehand*. Mr. Welton will be in New York in September and has graciously accepted our invitation to talk about his book, which explores and illuminates the ways that 26 diverse architects use freehand

drawing to shape our built environment. The author traces the tactile sketch, from initial conception to finished product through words images and photographs that reveal the creative process in action. Mr. Welton writes extensively about architecture, art and design for many national and regional publications such as *The New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Architectural Record*. One reviewer wrote that *Drawing from Practice* is a fantastic book that sheds light on how architects envision and bring their buildings to life. His blog can be found at: architectsandartisans.com.



The 2016 Artisan lectures are scheduled to begin in January with a number of eminent presenters with interesting crafts. One exciting lecture to look forward to will be Rhett Butler's narrative about the one-of-a-kind products and restoration projects he works on. His lecture will take place on April 12th. Mr. Butler did not plan to go into the

hardware business, but was brought into managing his father's company while still an architectural graduate student at Rice University. He was impressed with the romance of the history of hardware through the ages and is now the possessor of the world's largest collection of fine architectural fittings. His company, E. R. Butler & Co. has showrooms in New York, Boston and Milan and manufactures from a 130 year-old cavernous 3-story brick factory compound on the Brooklyn waterfront, as well as in Boston. During his lecture, we will learn why a doorknob is not just a doorknob, and why a hinge is not just a hinge. Mr. Butler has designed thousands of different pieces of unique hardware for client's homes. For Bill Gates' mansion in Washington State, he created door handles with the grip of an antique French dagger (designed by Thierry Despont). For Oracle's chief, Larry Ellison's 16th-century feudal Japanese estate, he invented shoji door handles with invisible latching mechanisms. He has supplied hardware to former presidents, Nobel Prize-winning novelists and Oscar-winning actors. He has designed door handles in coral, resins, most semiprecious stones, pearls and every kind of wood and metal. The E.R. Butler & Co archives include basically every catalog from every company in the world that's ever produced hardware – 50,000 volumes which hold the history of the industry.

GSMT Declared "The Home of the Artisan"

On May 14, 2015, a special, memorable event took place, under our soaring Library Skylight, when The General Society hosted a reception for artisans and artisan supporters in celebration of our founding by 22 craftsmen, 230 years ago. The General Society of Mechanics & Tradesmen of the City of New York, continues to honor its original theme, **By Hammer and Hand All Arts Do Stand**. And we have once more declared The Society "The Home of the Artisan," with the mission of ensuring that the unique knowledge of today's artisans is understood and that their skills are preserved and carried forward by future generations. Through our Artisan Lecture Series over the past five seasons, we have presented the intricacies of work done by sixty different artisan trades to fascinated audiences. Our founding



ing curator for the lectures, **Jean Wiart**, is a celebrated ornamental metal work artisan who also produces intricate repoussé designs for architects and designers. In his welcoming introduction for the evening, he spoke of his experience in his native France, which taught him about "Transmission" -- making certain that artisan skills are handed

down generation to generation through shared knowledge. His daughter, Camille Wiart, now curates the series. Additional welcoming remarks were made by **Peter Pennoyer**, a long-standing supporter of the Artisan Lecture series, as well as renowned architect and historic house restorer. He spoke about the importance of artisan skills in great architecture and the importance of training, mentorship and patronage to make certain these skills will always be preserved. The evening was a huge success, with attending artisans all agreeing there should be an annual networking event; and that the legacy of craftsmanship be actively maintained at The General Society.



General Society Receives City Funding for Skylight Restoration

Capital allocation will provide the foundation for replacement of the historic skylight in The General Society Library. We gratefully acknowledge the \$400,000 awarded for this project by Manhattan Borough President, Gale A. Brewer and the \$100,000 provided by District 4 Council Member, Dan Garodnick in the City's Fiscal Year 2016 budget. Funding is provided through the Department of Cultural Affairs. The General Society will need to raise additional funds to complete the budgeted project.

2015 Honorees Have Family Roots at Mechanics Institute

Jonathan Resnick named 2015 Craftsmanship Honoree



Jonathan D. Resnick is President of Jack Resnick & Sons, Inc., one of New York's preeminent family-owned real estate development and management companies. In this position, Mr. Resnick oversees the firm's vast portfolio of approximately six million square feet of commercial office and retail space, and approximately 900 rental apartments. He is directly involved with asset management, capital projects, leasing and the day-to-day operations of the firm. Recent notable projects of the firm include redevelopment of the company's 250 Hudson Street office building; the repositioning of the firm's property at 880 Third Avenue office building; and ground-up construction of The Gershwin, a 550 unit, rental apartment building at 250 West 50th Street. Mr. Resnick is a Director of the Realty Advisory Board on Labor Relations and a member of the Executive Committee of the New York Building Congress. He is also a member of the Boards of the East Midtown Partnership BID, the Salvadori Center and the Borough of Manhattan Community College Foundation. Mr. Resnick is a member of the Real Estate Board of New York's Board of Governors, the Carnegie Hall Real Estate Council, past Chairman of the Greater New York Construction User Council, and a long-time supporter of the Campaign for the High Line. Mr. Resnick holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Syracuse University's Newhouse School of Public Communications, and currently lives with his wife and two sons in Rye, New York. **Jonathan Resnick's grandfather, Jack Resnick, graduated from Mechanics Institute in 1930 with a certificate in plumbing.**

Governor Cuomo Holds Press Conference at The General Society Library



On May 29, The General Society was honored to respond to an eleventh-hour call from Governor Andrew Cuomo's office when space in New York City was needed for a press briefing on worker rights and safety in nail salons throughout the City. The Governor and his staff were impressed with our historic Library space and the fact that our tuition-free Mechanics Institute had been conducting workforce development since its founding in 1858. Executive Director, Victoria Dengel, presented signed copies of Polly Guerin's new book about The General Society's history to the Governor, his staff, and other distinguished guests.

Charles H. Thornton, PhD, P.E., Honored for Civic Leadership as ACE Mentor Project Founder



Charlie Thornton knows the value of a professional education and he also understands the urgent need for more young people to develop an early passion to direct their career interests toward the construction industry. In 1991, the Dean of Engineering at Manhattan College, called Dr. Thornton and other Board of Advisors members to report that the college was considering closing the Engineering School for lack of student interest in entering the engineering profession. Dr. Thornton was hugely concerned. As a highly skilled practitioner focused on construction engineering, he set out to develop a program that would engage, excite and enlighten high school students to pursue careers in architecture, engineering and construction through mentoring and to support their continued advancement in the industry through scholarships and internships. He developed a plan to provide mentoring to junior and senior high-school students to spark their interest in these careers. He recruited his partner at Thornton Tomasetti, Richard Tomasetti, and other individuals with major building and construction industry firms to work with him in enlisting mentors, encouraging schools to participate in the program and recruit students. Officially, the ACE Mentor Program was founded in New York City in 1994 and has since expanded its reach across the country. In 2002, a national office was established in Washington D.C. to coordinate the work of local affiliates. Each affiliate has a board of directors, a local coordinator and a number of teams which are composed of 15-25 students and their industry mentors. Teams meet for fifteen sessions during which they develop individual projects. They also have additional activities, such as "College Night" and site visits. Since 1994, over 30,000 students have participated in the opportunities offered by ACE and over \$14 million in scholarships have been awarded. 2015 Impact Studies show 98.6% of ACE High School Seniors graduate versus the national rate of 80%; 92% of ACE Seniors enter college directly from high school versus the national rate of 66%. The ACE Mentor Program started by Dr. Thornton has made a great contribution to workforce development in the construction industry. **Dr. Thornton's father, Charles H. Thornton, Sr., graduated from Mechanics Institute in 1927. He later joined The General Society and was elected president in 1968.**

***"By Hammer and Hand
All Arts Do Stand"***

International Steam Expert Addresses GSMT Members and HVAC Students



Dan Holohan with GSMT Executive Director Victoria A. Dengel

Dan Holohan's 1992 three-hundred page book, *"The Lost Art of Steam Heating,"* now in its 26th printing, has a lot of knowledge to relay to our MEP students. Mr. Holohan blends his enthusiasm for history with hard practical knowledge. In his presentation, he provided many insights into the workings of 19th century steam systems such as those at The General Society and other landmarked buildings like The Dakota. His first admonition was "First, Do No Harm." The systems can work just fine, over a long lifetime, unless one tries to apply 21st century solutions to their repairs. He punctuated his remarks throughout the lecture with "Stop Texting -- Read!" In the June, 2015 issue of *Plumbing & Mechanical*, Mr. Holohan wrote about the GSMT building's steam system: "They heat the building with steam. There's an antique boiler in the basement that once burned coal and then oil and now just sits like a lost old man as district steam from Con Edison enters through a pipe buried beneath 44th Street. The steam moves through two pressure-reducing valves and soars upward toward the radiators, which have been hard at work since the 19th century."

GSMT President, Gerard Drohan Greets Charlie Thornton at Book Signing



Colleagues from the New York construction industry and many friends gathered in The General Society Library on March 18 to hear the author talk about his new book *"A Life of Elegant Solutions."* After listening to Dr. Thornton's description of his life story, the family dynamics and business triumphs, guests queued up to get their signed copies of the book.

Manhattan Borough President, Gale A. Brewer, Delivers Patriotic Address at Annual Fourth of July Celebration



The General Society was hugely honored on July 1st when the Honorable Gale Brewer spoke to over 100 guests at our annual celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. President Brewer exclaimed joyfully that the freedoms that our country longed for in 1776, which are specifically guaranteed in

our Bill of Rights, are still being expanded and interpreted to include new issues, not even imagined by the signers of the historic document. During an opening welcome by General Society President, Gerard Drohan, Jr., in which he said "On this special, patriotic occasion we remember the courage, integrity and sacrifice of the men brave enough to declare their independence in writing while under the domination of a ruling monarch." He noted that the General Society has honored this event each year since 1795. After the salute to the flag, a rousing rendition of the *Star Spangled Banner* was led by Michelle DellaFave, with her beautiful soprano voice. Ms. DellaFave developed her repertoire of patriotic songs when accompanying Bob Hope on USO tours in Vietnam and South-East Asia. The President then turned the podium over to Victoria A. Dengel, General Society Executive Director, who introduced the speakers for the evening. Retired Army Brigadier General Loree Sutton, MD, now Commissioner of the Mayor's Office of Veterans' Affairs, also spoke of the many freedoms our citizens can count on and enjoy which have been preserved over the years by our armed forces. General Society member, Thomas Szekely delivered his usual rousing unabridged rendition of our founding document. At the completion of the program, The Banjo Rascals provided musical selections throughout the celebratory dinner which followed.

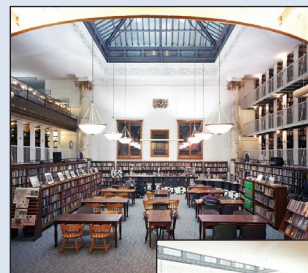
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Please Help the General Society Support Our Programs

The historic GSMT building has space to rent for programs and special events.

- Our grand three-story library
- Balcony/Museum
- The Assembly Hall
- Conference Rooms for smaller meetings
- Classrooms available for regular day time use or evening lectures, classes, receptions and more

For more information, call The General Society office, (212) 840-1840 ext. 2, or visit our website at www.generalsociety.org and click Rent Space.



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Amiaga Photography

Hammering On...

Sidewalk Book Sale-- An Old Tradition Returns

Members and friends donated over 80 boxes of wonderful books – fiction, non-fiction and collectibles -- for our two-day June book sale on the street in front of the building. General Society members and friends manned the tables loaded with hard cover, soft cover trade books and amazing paper backs that attracted the passers-by. Many of our buyers had walked by the building daily but never really noticed our landmark building listed on the National Register of Historic Places or our beautiful Library. Inside, many non-fiction books were available at bargain prices. The book sale continued as an evening event inside the Library. Proceeds will be used to buy new current books for the Library.

Enhanced GSMT New Member Certificates

General Society member, Bernard Maisner, Master Artisan, has volunteered to use his celebrated calligraphic skills to inscribe all new General Society membership certificates. Mr. Maisner, whose calligraphy has appeared in many movie introductions and corporate logos, was an artisan lecturer in the 2014-15 series. The original art designed in 1786, for this certificate, hangs in the GSMT office.

GSMT Hosts PBS “Finding Your Roots” Interview

Henry Louis Gates, Jr. executive producer, writer and producer of this popular PBS program, chose our General Society Library location for his interview with Maya Ying Lin, American designer/artist, who, at the age of 21, won the nation’s design award for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. The segment will air in late September.

Book Group Reads Trollope’s Dr. Thorn Over Summer

Each month, the Library’s Book Discussion Group meets at one o’clock on the first Thursday of the month for a lively discussion of a classic which many may have read years before. Our first fall meeting, September 3rd, will discuss the many aspects of *Dr. Thorn* – an 800 pager designed for summer reading. Other books assigned for our fall scrutiny are: Anton Chekov’s *Short Stories*, October 1; Tennessee Williams’ *Summer & Smoke*, November 5; Mark Twain’s *Pudd’nhead Wilson*, December 3. Library members are all invited to join the group for delightful discussions as we re-visit old literary friends.

Visitors from The Metropolitan Museum of Art’s Thomas J. Watson Library View GSMT Archives



In July, General Society archivist, Angelo Vigorito, introduced Watson Library’s chief librarians to some of the treasures in the GSMT rare book room. The visitors are shown here examining our Membership Register which lists each member since our founding in 1785. Among the illustrious names, signed, along with their trades, are Duncan Phyfe, Peter Cooper, Abram S. Hewitt and Andrew Carnegie.

The General Society of Mechanics & Tradesmen of the City of New York

“By Hammer and Hand All Arts Do Stand”

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The General Society Newsletter Fall, 2015

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News, photos and editorial suggestions from members are welcome and can be sent to pennspec@aol.com

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*For GSMT Event Calendar, visit the
General Society website at
www.generalsociety.org*



The General Society of
Mechanics & Tradesmen
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Check our web site for current updates on General Society Events and send us your e-mail to receive event information: www.generalsociety.org

Shopkeepers Antique Key, an 18th Century Sign

A beautiful repoussé hand-wrought iron key hangs at the entrance to The General Society's Mossman Lock Collection. It's 3-foot presence announces to visitors that they are about to enter a museum about locks. In earlier centuries, when literacy was low, craftsmen/shopkeepers in England and on the continent advertised their wares with various signs that designated their crafts, hung on the front of their shops along the narrow village streets. For the butcher, it could be a large iron cow. The ironmonger might hang a huge saw or a frying pan. Most signs were highly ornate and had been painted many times. This 18th century antique key was auctioned by Sotheby's in 2003 and purchased by General Society member Joseph G. Reinis, a curator of The GSMT museum. Brother Reinis had it installed, on loan, in the lock collection. In memory of her husband, Maria Reinis has graciously contributed the sign to our permanent collection.



Craftsman's Sign from 18th Century Germany