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*"Lincoln the Railsplitter" by Norman Rockwell.
—Collection of The Butler Institute of American Art, Youngston, OH*

*"Give me 6 hours to chop down
a tree and I'll spend the first 4
sharpening the ax."*

—Abraham Lincoln

Foreword—A Shared Inheritance

In today's society, new technology and mechanization have replaced, with unintended consequences, the need for much of the lore and skills maintained by American pioneers. What used to be required knowledge by most is now known by few. Commensurate with these losses is a similar lack of awareness that traditional tools are required to manage some of our most cherished backcountry and lands in the National Wilderness System. Recognition of these issues brought about the development of this book, and others, to preserve what is hopefully an enduring legacy and appreciation of historic, traditional tools, the traditional skills to use them, and the pride that comes from mastering them.

*—Robert Wetherell, Supervisory Program Leader,
U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service,
National Technology and Development Program*

National Technology and Development Program Traditional Tools and Skills Publications

- An Ax to Grind: A Practical Ax Manual
- The Crosscut Saw Filer
- Crosscut Saw Manual
- Crosscut Saw Tooth-Setting Tool
- Crosscut Saw Underbucking Tool
- The Crosscut Sawyer
- Dovetails and Broadaxes: Hands-on Log Cabin Preservation
- Handtools for Trail Work
- New Tools for Old Saws
- Saws That Sing: A Guide to Using Crosscut Saws



Abraham Lincoln's ax.
—Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (ALPLM)

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Don Jastad earned the title "Bull of the Woods" at the International Lumberjack Championships, Century 21 Exposition, Seattle World's Fair, 1962 (near right). Jastad participated in the Forest Service Traditional Skills demonstration at the Florida Folklife Festival, 2005 (far right).
—*Courtesy of Dr. Don Jastad*



Contents

Chapter 1—Introduction	1
Chapter 2—The Ax in the Forest Service	3
Relevance of the Ax in the Forest Service Today	3
Chapter 3—A Brief History of the Ax	5
Chapter 4—Anatomy of an Ax	9
Chapter 5—Types of Axes and Related Tools	11
Single-Bit Axes	11
Double-Bit Axes	14
Pulaskis	16
Undercutter Axes	20
Cruiser, Saddle, and Camp Axes	21
Brush Axes	23
Swede Axes	24
Specialty Axes	25
Hatchets	26
Miniature Axes and Child’s Axes	27
Survival Axes	28

Preservation Tools	28
Broadaxes	28
Adzes	30
Other Preservation Tools	33
Chapter 6—Selecting the Right Ax for You	35
Ax Size and Weight	36
Ax Head Construction	41
Ax Head Materials	41
Ax Head Patterns	43
Selecting an Ax Handle	44
Ax Handle Materials	45
Types of Ax Handles	50
Chapter 7—Files and Filing Basics	53
File Types	53
File Characteristics	53
File Patterns	54
File Tooth Cuts	54
Rasps	56
How a File Cuts	56
Push Filing	57
Draw Filing	58

Filing Height, Stance, and Grip	59
File Care	61
File Safety	62
Chapter 8—Sharpening and Shaping an Ax Head.	63
Ax Head Shapes.	67
Ax Head Profiles	68
Ax Head Grinds	72
Is Your Ax Head Worth Shaping and Sharpening?	74
Shaping an Ax Head	77
Sharpening an Ax	79
Forming the Cutting Edge	80
Honing the Bevel	82
Developing the Microbevel	83
Putting the Final Cutting Edge on an Ax Head	84
Chapter 9—Reshaping or Replacing an Ax Handle	87
Removing an Old Ax Handle	87
Shaping an Ax Handle	90
Finishing an Ax Handle	96
Chapter 10—Hanging an Ax	99
Properly Fitting an Ax Head to Its Handle	99
Steps for Hanging an Ax	103

Chapter 11—Using an Ax	113
Basic Ax Safety	116
Handling an Ax	118
Using the Forest Service Cutting Process	120
Objective	120
Hazards and Obstacles	120
Leans and Binds	121
Escape Paths	121
Cutting Plans	121
The Mechanics of Chopping	122
Chopping Styles	126
Basic Chopping Styles—Over the Shoulder	128
Basic Chopping Styles—Overhead	132
Ax Strokes	137
Chopping Patterns	137
When Chips Fly	138

Felling Trees 141

Sizing Up and Analyzing the Tree. 141

Making the Initial Cuts 146

Felling With a Crosscut Saw and Ax 147

Wedges. 152

Moving the Wood. 160

Splitting Wood 165

Removing Bark With an Ax 174

Chapter 12—Maintaining an Ax. 177

Cleaning and Protecting an Ax. 177

Storing an Ax 181

Chapter 13—Purchasing an Ax. 183

Buying a New Ax 183

Buying a Used Ax. 183

Restoring a Vintage Ax Head 190

Collectable Vintage Axes 196

Chapter 14—Conclusion	199
Glossary	201
References	205
Additional Resources.....	209
General Information.....	209
Ax Handle Manufacturer and Suppliers.....	210
Ax Manufacturer and Suppliers	210
American Ax Manufacturers.....	210
Foreign Ax Manufacturers	210
Vintage Ax Restorer.....	211
Appendix A—Full Page Ax Illustrations	213
Appendix B—Technical Drawings.....	219

Ax Condition

Many of the axes shown in this manual appear in unrestored condition, similar to what you might find in a garage, shop, or barn, or what you might purchase at a garage or antique sale.