

Bern Dibner (1958) *Agricola On Metals*. Burndy Library, Norwalk, Conn. 128 pages. Publication No. 15.

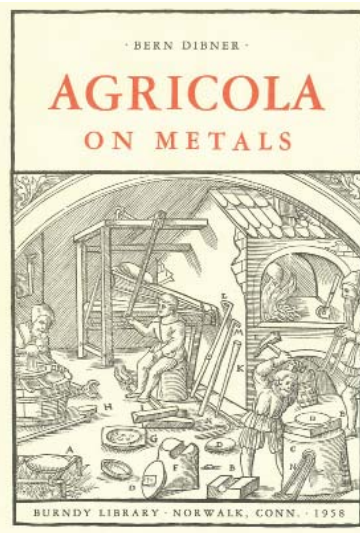
"The use of the touchstone was known to the Greeks as early as the fifth century B.C. --- from that set of 24 needles derives our system of carats."

Georgius Agricola (1494-1555), was a German physician who wrote the first definitive book on mining, metallurgy, and geology. An enormous work of 586 pages, it remained the standard reference for 180 years. What Bern Dibner does for the modern reader is provide metallurgical background, then dive into a short and readable summary of each of the twelve "books" of Agricola. In the process he also treats us to many perfectly reproduced woodcuts that were included in the original book.

Two contrasting items stick out while reading Dibner's "Cliff Notes": One, how much was known in the 1500's about metals (in separating copper from gold, Agricola describes nine methods); and two, how much was not known (they still thought that metal gave birth to other metals like plants and animals, and they believed that demons lived in mines).

As fascinating an education that *Agricola on Metals* is, I would like to direct your attention to the larger body of work put out by Bern Dibner through his Burndy Library. Founded in 1941 by Bern, his library had one of the world's largest collection of books on the history of science and technology, many of them the original works by the likes of Newton, Pasteur and Archimedes. He then offered summaries or condensed versions of these books for sale. Often included is the original artwork and drawings from the primary source. Four that I can recommend are *Oersted* (1961), *The Atlantic Cable* (1959), *The Founding Fathers of Electrical Science* (1954), and *Stradanus: New Discoveries, 24 engravings* (1953). The last are 11" by 13" on high-end card stock.

All these books are long out of print; but thanks to the Internet, you can get many of these editions for a few dollars. I just checked ABE books and they listed 826 Dibner titles, most starting at around \$5.00. Jeez, when I was a drinkingman, I tipped the bartender more than that.



## Pioneers of Technology

Archie Green  
(1917-2009)

Father of The American Folklife Center

My first awareness of Archie Green was in 2002 with the publication of his book *Tin Men* -- the history of sheet metal workers and their figurative sculptures known as tin men. The next year he put out a book about millwrights in northern California from 1901-2002. They were each, in their own unique way, informative and interesting reads.

He died last year and Elaine Woo sums up his important impact: "Archie liked to tell people he had two educations -- one on San Francisco's waterfront, the other in the university. But the former shipwright and carpenter didn't just trade his blue collar for a white one. He merged the two identities and created a new field of study."



Archie (left) in 1962 with Dock Walsh the "Banjo King of the Carolinas."

Green, who was 91 when he died, was a pioneering folklorist who studied the language, music, art and customs of working men and women. It was a unique pursuit that required a name, which he coined: He called it "laborlore."

Archie Green's pioneering laborlore effort was published in 1972. By researching and collecting mining song records, his *Only a Miner* was the first discographical history of the mining industry. He went on through other publications and by lobbying Congress to honor labor-related folklore, and finally achieved passage of the *American Folklife Preservation Act* which was passed by Congress and signed by President Ford in 1976.

Green's last project was one that he had worked on most of his adult life. John Neuhaus, a machinist and I.W.W. member had spent his life collecting a near complete set of I.W.W. songbooks and the music to which they had been set. When he died in 1958, he left them to Archie to finish the research and get them published. By 2007 Archie was 89 years old and finally completed his work. The resulting book he labeled *The Big Red Songbook*. It will undoubtedly be history's permanent record of the songs of that highly controversial group of labor activists from early century America.

## Quarter Inch Drive

A quarterly newsletter for friends and graduates of Tom Hull's shop programs

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"Golden lads and girls all must,/ As chimney-sweepers, come to dust."

From *Cymbeline*, dandelions were the Bard's smoky reference; but this Iris, with its short season, fits half the metonymy. In the larger metaphoric sense, this print is for Shawn Lee Richardson, past student passed away.

### In This Issue

1. 190 Duration: Category Allegory
2. SUccess Story: Shawn Boqua
3. Here's How: Tips From The Field: Making Do
4. Review: *Agricola On Metals*
5. Pioneer of Technology: Archie Green
6. Insert: Shawn Richardson (1969-2010)