

COSMOPOLITAN CHRONICLE

True tales from the annals of history, archaeology, construction, and restoration of the Casa de Bandini and Cosmopolitan Hotel.
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Tools and Materials, Now and Then.. Part 6

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"Who doesn't feel a thrill at the soft whistle of a sharp plane as it glides along a board and heaps up on the floor a great pile of aromatic curls? Surely it is pleasurable enough just to be an onlooker, but when you are privileged to be the planeman himself, there is no sensation quite so enjoyable."

Invented by the Romans in the first century, the plane is probably considered the most rewarding tool by carpenters. The plane is now rarely used, but before mould-cutting machinery was invented and introduced, most carpenters in the 19th century had about 30 in their tool cabinet, each with a different function.

A plane in its most basic form can be described as a chisel in a frame. The difference is that while a chisel is guided by hand, the plane blade, or iron is guided by the frame. Although there are many ways to divide types of planes, they can be separated into two main categories: planes, and shaves, which perform three main functions: shaping, finishing, and fitting.

There is a wide variety of planes, which can be roughly divided by size, and service, for example: jointer, trying, fore, jack, smooth, block, and molding. They can have

one, two, and in rare cases, three irons. Finishing planes, jointer and jack for example, are used to remove rough saw marks, and insure boards fit together correctly. Molding planes are used to make moldings and cut joints. American craftsmen made thousands of molding planes and used them to produce millions of feet of hand-planed moldings and joints. In the main sitting room of the Cosmopolitan Hotel, Bandini's former sala, the tongue and groove flooring required about 8,000 linear feet of planing, using paired planes.



Finishing planes



Molding planes

Shaves also come in several categories such as; spoke shaves,

cooper shaves and croze, beading tools, and scrapers.



Shaves

Like planes, each shave has a unique purpose, the blade and body shaped to accomplish one primary task. A croze for example is used by coopers—barrel makers—to put a groove at the top and bottom of the staves to fit the ends of the barrel.



Croze

Although all sharp edged tools need to be sharp, it is most critical with planes.

Dull hatchets can eventually worry through a piece of wood. A dull saw can be pushed hard enough to finish a pathetic cut, but planes and shaves simply will not function if not sharpened correctly. Carpenters therefore included sharpening tools, such as files, and whetstones in their tool box. Sharpening a plane is an art similar to sharpening a barber's razor.

Poetry is a very sharp plane sailing in your hand along a Sugar Pine board.

