THE FIRST WELDING TRAINING SHOPS

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Do you wonder how the first welders were trained? Or how did the first welders learn how to “weld”?

Blacksmiths were regarded as fixers of all metals. That could be thought as true for rightfully, they are. How did they learn “fixing metals”? They used forge welding. This craft is not usually taught in schools but was handed down from generation to generation. Amazing, right? Rarely will you find forge-welded metal materials today.

Another interesting observation was the use of the OFW process which was far greater than it is today. This is because many rural areas had no electricity yet during the early times. OFW accomplished farm and mining equipment which were mostly were cast iron repair. At this period, cast-iron usage was more rampant although was not nearly as reliable as it is currently. Thus, there were plenty of water well pumps, automobile parts, and heating and cook stoves. A reliable brazier is usually found in a blacksmith shop. The welded equipment was really sturdy. For example, the handle of a shovel made during this era can be bent but you cannot separate if from the body of the shovel itself. Such great welding!

Shipyards were also used as training grounds to learn welding processes. Many young people who were not able to go to secondary or college, especially those who live near shipyards, took their chance or opportunity to learn welding from shipyard welders. Most were allowed as they eventually were hired at the shipyard as workers. This is one classic example of being “schooled from the streets”. Amazingly, these young people would end up as good skilled welders. However, there was a dark side to this “on-the-
job” training because some trainers would abuse the young ones via scams or what others would call as fly by night scammers. This was the dark side to this kind of training which probably gave birth to the conception that welders are “bad” men. Of course, this is not entirely true.

There are organized welding society which aimed to stop such scam. In America, the American Welding Society (AWS) and the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) were the more famous groups. They came up with guidelines utilizing welding procedures unknown except in large industrial plants. This was because small companies did not require welders to be certified. They hired welders mostly of fillet weld break in any position (most often flat or horizontal) and no paperwork to document skill level.

With the guidelines provided by the organizations, welding programs have finally the procedures to become more strategized and organized. This paved way to a more concrete welding programs for people who wants to become skilled welders.

References:
How To Weld By Todd Bridigum - Motorbook 2008.