

# Backfill

## Hammer Museum

**M**ost carpenters still carry a hammer on their toolbelt. But even those who pound a nail the old way once in a while would probably admit, if pressed, that hammers are beginning to seem sort of, well, last century.

In fact, hammers have been museum pieces since the first year of the 21st century, when an Alaska longshoreman and former shipwright, carpenter, and blacksmith named Dave Pahl opened what's thought to be the world's only museum dedicated exclusively to hammers.

The Hammer Museum, in the southeastern Alaska community of Haines, contains several thousand hammers used in every imaginable trade. But to a carpenter, the museum's extensive collection of claw hammers alone is worth every penny of the \$3 admission fee. The museum is open from May to September, Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. — *Jon Vara*



Designed to let the user switch from the lower to the upper set of claws partway through pulling a nail, the four-clawed Crusader hammer minimized bending — a useful feature in an age when thrifty carpenters routinely straightened and reused salvaged nails.



Patented in 1906, this machinist's ball-peen hammer with integral nail-pulling claws let the user tackle either trade with the wrong tool.



The cross-peen head on this 1867 combination hammer — like that on a modern cabinet-maker's hammer — was used for driving brads or tacks.



This nifty hammer of unknown date and manufacture may be an inventor's prototype. It features an interchangeable face secured with an Allen bolt, presumably so the waffle-faced framing head could be exchanged for a lighter, smooth face for finish work. The carriage bolt in the threaded hole above the claws allowed the carpenter to adjust the amount of nail-pulling leverage required without having to hunt around for the right-size block.



Who says a claw hammer has to have two (or more) claws? These early 20th-century mono-claw hammers look like they'd still be thoroughly useful today. Both feature an adze- or chisel-like blade with a central nail-pulling slot; the model at far left also has additional notches in the sides for pulling tacks or other small fasteners.



If you know anything about this monstrous 36-pound claw hammer, Dave Pahl would love to hear from you. "It's a beautiful hammer, but I have no idea what it was used for," he says. "It's the only one I've ever seen." (And no, it wasn't used for driving and pulling railroad spikes.)