

Living

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For the love of steel

Council Tool celebrates 125 years of forging the finest tools known to man.



Raeford Jones heat treats a red-hot shovel head from the furnace by immersing it in a quenching solution.

In 125 years, the Council Tool Company of Lake Waccamaw has made millions of hand tools, each borne from a red-hot piece of steel pounded to life under massive presses, cooled quickly to improve its resilience, and polished to perfection.

The hundreds of employees over the decades have made everything from turpentine hacks to firefighting axes, from spade shovels to sledgehammers, and they do it for the thrill of creation-by-fire, they do it for the passion for perfection, and they do it for the love of steel.



Sammy Formyduval with a firefighter's Quick Access Tool.



Richard Robinson gets a red-hot billet from an induction furnace.



Nicky McLamb operates a cold press.



Yogi Simmons forges sledgehammer heads on a massive flywheel press.



Williams Spears "upsets" (punches out) the eye of an ax head.



Bobby McKoy welds Combi-tool parts.



Purchased in Italy in 2009, this robot can work 24 / 7 and sharpen hundreds of tool heads a day.



Alexander Tomlin operates a trim press.



Wayne Inman inventorys the final product in the Council Tool warehouse.

Photographs by Mark Gilchrist