

# Hammer time: Center for Metal Arts reuses closed steel plant's machine

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What was believed to be the last industrial power hammer in operation at the old Bethlehem Steel Corp. blacksmith shop in Johnstown sat idle for more than a quarter-century.

First as a symbol of an industry that had gone away leaving behind a devastated city. And, later, when the years passed, as an artifact, seen mostly only by a handful of historians and individuals who worked to preserve the structure that was built in the 1860s and its tools.

But then, on Friday morning, with one crash of metal – driven by 3,000 pounds of force – striking hot steel, the hammer came back to life, this time

as a viable piece of machinery capable of forging tools, architectural products and art work. The hammer, which was converted from steam to air pressure, was demonstrated by Dan Neville and Patrick Quinn, who have operated the Center for Metal Arts at the blacksmith shop and former pattern shop for a little more than a year.

“I think it’s gratifying and surprising,” said Msgr. Raymond Balta, chairman of the Johnstown Redevelopment Authority, one of the organizations that have worked to preserve and market the site. “This equipment, we were preserving it. They’re showing us that they can actually utilize it, which is much more than we ever expected.



“We never expected to see these machines operating again. We were preserving historical pieces. But, to see them be able to restore that and to refurbish that to the point where you can operate it and be productive, that’s fascinating.”

The hammer was last used before Bethlehem closed its Johnstown facility in 1992.

“To have this hammer work for the first time in 27 years is one of many ways that the Center for Metal Arts is making an impact in our community,” JRA Executive Director Melissa Komar said. “Seeing this hammer work again

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