

With the last riveted bridges built back in the 1970s, much of this old technology is being lost. Which makes people like Steve, Dan and Patrick more than artists or blacksmiths. They are industrial archaeologists, rediscovering the old ways of ironworking.

That's true in ways beyond riveting for Patrick and Dan, who relocated their Center for Metal Arts here from upstate New York more than a year ago. They moved into what once was the Cambria Iron Company – a world leader in integrated steelmaking during the 1870s and '80s – and is the Cambria Iron and Steel National Historic Landmark today.

Dan and Patrick are working to restore an industrial blacksmith shop that dates to 1869 and contains five massive power-hammers, including one that brings up to 10 tons of force and is owned by the Smithsonian Institution. They already have successfully returned one of the smaller hammers to working condition, using compressed air to operate it.

Meanwhile, the CMA is occupying three of the old Cambria mill buildings, including the old Rolling Mill Office, which soon will house a metalsmithing classroom, retail store, library, studio and gallery; and a former church rectory in neighboring Cambria City, which is being used for student housing.

So this Center for Metal Arts is drawing students, teachers and artists to Johnstown. It is preserving historical technologies. And it's creating art.

The I-beam sculpture symbolizes all of that, plus Johnstown's past, present and maybe even its future. When a grouping of I-beams gets imbued with that much meaning, it's got to be art.

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