



Students work with each other to strike punches in chunks of tool steel and create the eye in hammer heads (for the handles) during a workshop in October 2018, the first year that the school held classes in the shops in Johnstown.

JARROD BUNK, HOPE CYCLERY, JOHNSTOWN

“Hammers like that simply don’t exist anymore,” Quinn says.

Motivated by this tool of yesteryear, he researched its location and contacted the Johnstown Area Heritage Association to inquire about a personal visit to the blacksmith shop, which dates to 1864 and once operated as part of the Cambria Iron Company.

“I was speechless during the tour,” he recalls. “I had never seen anything like these power hammers before. It may have existed in scrapyards or behind closed doors, but I hadn’t seen them.”

Making the Move

RICHARD BURKHART, PRESIDENT OF the heritage association, had a vision to open the blacksmith shop again. He figured it was the best way to preserve the shop’s use. The former Cambria Iron Works is one of two American steel mills to receive a National Historic Landmark designation, and the blacksmith shop is the most historically significant structure, according to the Johnstown Redevelopment Authority, which owns 10 acres of the former steel mill, including four major buildings.

The association had worked with 13 local, state and federal funding sources and agencies to secure grants to stabilize and clean up the shop, whose Italianate design, with 35-foot-high ceilings and octagonal-shaped building, elevated the structure to art.

Burkhart and his team hoped to find a tenant for the shop who would focus on education, but no one had yet come forward with interest. While on the tour, he asked Quinn, “Would you be interested in running a school here?”

Quinn recalls, “I’m the kind of guy who says yes to an opportunity, to an idea. I never even thought of the possibility of the shop coming back to life until I took that tour.”

He and his partner, Dan Neville, had met while enrolled in a Master of Fine

PATRICK QUINN’S SEEMINGLY FAR-FETCHED DREAM OF running a world-class blacksmith school began after finding a black-and-white image of a power hammer in an abandoned blacksmith shop in Johnstown on Facebook.

The hammer had an arch in its design and could deliver a magnificent 10,000-pound punch.

