

Collector turns hobby into unusual tourist attraction

■ **HAMMERS:** Dave Pahl has what may be only museum in U.S. dedicated to them.

By **LARRY CAMPBELL**
The Associated Press

Dave Pahl likes hammers. Claw hammers, blacksmith's hammers, hammers to lay railroad ties. He likes farrier's hammers — for shoeing horses — and cobbler's hammers — for shoeing people. He likes hammers from the Colonial days and hammers from the Industrial Revolution.

Pahl likes all 1,200 of his hammers. Now he's starting that passion for pounding implements with the rest of the world.

Pahl and his wife, Carol, run The Hammer Museum in Haines. As near as they can tell, theirs is the only museum in the United States dedicated to hammers — just hammers.

"I guess I'm just an incurable collector," Pahl said.

The museum started modestly last summer when Pahl obtained a small building up Main Street from the cruise ship docks and opened its doors for seven weeks during the cruise ship season. He said tourists packed the museum every day.

Pahl operates a sawmill and is a longshoreman by trade. He came to Alaska 30 years ago with pioneer dreams and began to actually realize some, building his own cabin and dabbling in blacksmithing.

"I started to accumulate a lot of tools doing all that," he said. "After awhile, I had about 100 hammers. There was just something about them that appealed to me. I also found that I could go into places like antique shops and find old hammer heads for, like, 50 cents."

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His collection includes a file maker's hammer. Before mechanization, wood and metal scraping files were made by hand, with a special hammer and a tiny chisel. A craftsman would make 23,000 whacks with the hammer on the chisel to turn a piece of metal into a half-round

10-inch file. He also has a hammer made for hanging posters on the sides of barns.

"It's got these extensions that you screw together that makes it 6 feet long," Pahl said. "It's got these clips on the end to hold the nail and an attachment to hold the rolled-up poster. So you just whack in the nail and there you go."

And then there's the hammer that bankers used to cancel checks with in the 1800s.

This year the hammer museum opens May 1 with an added attraction — mannequins welding some of the hammers.

The five hollow fiberglass men come from the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History. The Pahls went there this winter during an unplanned layover while traveling to visit relatives in Cleveland.

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HAMMERS: Collection of 1,200 includes some dating from Colonial

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They visited with the museum's curator and perused hammers in the Smithsonian collection. After hearing about the Hammer Museum in Haines, the curator offered the mannequins, which had been in storage after being in a display in the 1960s.

"I guess it just turned out to be good timing," said Carter Kuhn, an American History museum spokeswoman. "We were very happy to pass

them along."

Instead of paying nearly \$3,000 to get the mannequins professionally packed and shipped north, Pahl saved the men into pieces and packed and mailed them himself. When they arrived about a month ago, Pahl put them back together, repairing details with paper mache.

Now the fiberglass men dressed in colonial garb are posed in a blacksmith's shop, at a shoemaker's bench and at a sawyer's workbench, all

holding some of Pahl's hammers.

Pahl didn't charge visitors to the museum last year, though he may this season. He'd at least like the museum to pay its own way.

But caring for his collection gives him something interesting to do, especially during winter,

when he spends time repairing rotted pieces.

"And I'll always take more hammers