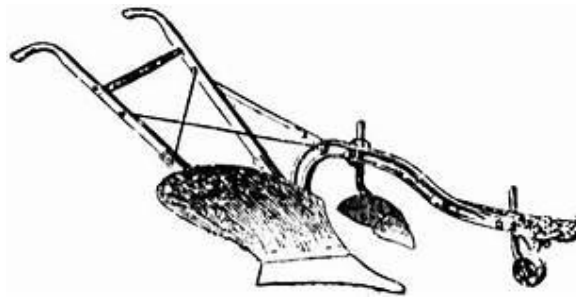


The Vanishing Plow



An old Shaker saying has it that “God invented the circle, religion invented the triangle, and man invented the square.” Certainly these shapes have been richly represented in art lore throughout the ages, but variations of these three shapes produced the plow, which became established as a sign of civilization. Its classic curves have evolved over several centuries, each few years its shape changing slightly and enhancing certain subtleties of design; the final result is a harmony of lines that even a master portrait painter would have difficulty portraying. I know, because I have sketched plows, always finding the slightest deviation from their true lines is jarring and also immediately noticeable. If I were a teacher of art, I would choose the plow as a most exciting subject for students.

Horses have vanished from the farm scene and with them went the horse drawn plow: who would have thought today the value of a used and abused plow would be thousands more than its original price. It seems strange such an item, an emblem of civilized humanity, could have vanished within my lifetime.

I do believe implements of traditional design will become more and more recognized as art, and hand tools, which really are extensions of the human hand, will return to the dignity and respect they deserve and once were given.