

## Instructors

The cottage craft coopering tradition taught at the Somerset Historical Center stems from continual passing down of the craft within Somerset County from the 1800s to the present day. James Johnson and Jubal Werner, whose family were Somerset County coopers, shared their knowledge in the 1970's with Mark Ware who in turn shared the techniques and knowledge with numerous other persons throughout the years as a Museum Educator with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission at the Somerset Historical Center.

Mark Ware: Coopering since 1974, he learned from Somerset County descendants, and has documented and preserved Somerset County coopering techniques throughout the years. He also studied coopering through a Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission Professional Enhancement Grant with Master Cooper George Pettingill at Colonial Williamsburg, a PA Council on the Arts grant with James R. Johnson, and at Petersvalley, a New Jersey Craft School.



Numerous volunteers who have previously taken the coopering workshop come back to assist participants. The Somerset Historical Center's Coopering School is dedicated to teaching these traditional Somerset County coopering techniques for future generations. To date more than 150 persons have participated in the coopering school classes.

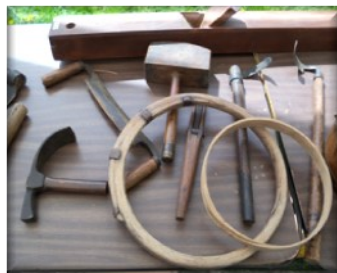
## Coopering in Somerset County, Pennsylvania

Coopering was an important cottage craft industry throughout the Somerset County Maple Sugar Region. Wooden buckets, tubs, sugar keelers (buckets to collect maple sugar water as it dripped from the spile) and other wooden vessels were needed throughout the county for the burgeoning maple sugar industry. Many farmers in the region were 'Jacks of all Trades' and were able to make the needed items as a sideline to farming.

These skilled artisans fashioned thousands of maple sugar keelers from white pine and bound them with hoops made of white oak.



Participants construct a maple sugar keeler using traditional methods and hand tools. Stave construction, head measurement and fitting, metal hoop splaying and riveting will be taught. Students work at their own pace, a person of average wood-working skills is able to complete the project during the workshop.



## Historical & Genealogical Society of Somerset County

10649 Somerset Pike  
Somerset, PA 15501  
(814).445-6077

# Cottage Craft Coopering

*A workshop for teaching the basic skills of coopering as practiced in the maple sugar producing region of Somerset County, Pennsylvania*



**SOMERSET HISTORICAL CENTER**  
[www.SomersetHistoricalCenter.org](http://www.SomersetHistoricalCenter.org)

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*The Somerset Historical Center is administered by Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission in partnership with the Historical and Genealogical Society of Somerset County*



## Schedule of Work

### Friday evening

6:00PM - 9:00/10:00PM

Gather at the Trades and Crafts Classroom at the Haupt Educational Center for welcome, background of the coopering industry, tool identification, tool sharpening, and demonstration of coopering techniques. Students will prepare materials and make guides in preparation for stave construction.

### Saturday

9:00AM – 5:00PM

Students will begin dressing staves for their keeler vessel. Lunch will be provided. Work will progress at the students own pace with the assistance of their instructor as needed.

### Sunday

9:00AM– 11:00AM

Students will continue work on their keeler. Work by this time should progress to measuring and fitting of the heading, and splaying and riveting of hoops under the direction and assistance of the instructor. Most participants have their project completed during this time.



## Cost of Workshop

Workshop is \$150 for members and \$165 for nonmembers of the Society.

All tools and materials will be provided for students to use during the workshop. Students are encouraged to bring their own tools for use if they have them. Students should bring a pair of tight fitting gloves to the class. Stave and heading wood, hooping and rivets are provided.

### Lunch on Saturday is provided.

Checks should be made payable to:

*The Historical and Genealogical Society of Somerset County.*



## Location

The Somerset Historical Center is located four miles north of Somerset on Route 985. Take Route 601 north from Somerset to Route 985.

## Lodging

A wide variety of lodging facilities are available in the town of Somerset within four miles of the Museum. Ample camping space with electricity and water is available for those wishing to camp onsite.

## Who should take the coopering workshop?

The workshop is open to anyone 18 years or older who is interested in learning the basics of traditional cottage craft coopering. Museum guides will find the workshop informative and enlightening, especially if a coopering element is part of their museum interpretation. The workshop will also teach proper and safe techniques for demonstrating the various processes of coopering within public programs.

Students should understand that the class involves strenuous physical activity for some of the processes and that they will be using traditional techniques along with sharp-edged hand tools to craft wooden staved containers.

