

Restoration of a Charles Parker 102-3 Bench Vise

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The Charles Parker company made a superior line of machinist vises. I found this example at a really good price and thought it would be a nice worker. The price was lowered because of a repair. At some point, one of the side mounting flanges broke off and was welded back on. The repair was done exceptionally well, but it noticeable and that kill the collector's value. Of course, that is good for me because I am able to have a really nice vise for an affordable price.

This vise is a 102-3 model and has 3 inch wide jaws. It was made sometime between 1923 and 1929 and weighs 23 pounds.

Here is a picture of the vise when it arrived. It has splashes of white paint but is in great mechanical condition. The action is very smooth.



Although somewhat worn, the jaws are in really good shape. This vise will be a great user.



The leadscrew is in good condition and the handle is straight. No one abused this vise.



The nose of the leadscrew needs a little attention. A visit to the wire wheel will make it happier.



I made a bench mount out of some recycled heart pine which has some history. These boards are probably 75 years old and were originally shelving in my grandfather's woodshop. W.C. Reed was superintendent of schools in Eagle Lake, Texan, but was also a woodworker. My dad and I recovered these boards from his workshop and also used them as shelves. I slapped two of them together and made a nice mount. I hope Granddaddy Reed would find pleasure knowing that he helped me outfit my shop.



The vise mount does require a little work. You can see the beveled base projection. The front floor projection of the static jaw receives much stress and punishment and this extra iron provides strength.

I made two saw cuts and used a wide Japanese chisel to cut the bevel. Those chisels take lots of pounding from the metal hammer, but they work quickly. This wood cut easily, even with the knots. Ten minutes of hammering gave me a perfect bevel



I could have mounted the vise forward, but mounting it rearward has advantages. This allows the mount to take some of the stress from the static. It also moves the mounting holes further back and makes them less prone to pulling out.

Here is a picture of the underside. Our notch is perfectly sized.



Unfortunately, the perfection does not apply to the vise mounting. It is common construction on vises of this era to have a leadscrew nut which sits in a dovetail. I removed this nut to clean it and also to clean the female dovetail slot. Here is the nut and the bent pin which holds it in place.

Notice the small sheetrock screw at the far right. Yes, the mount is attached to the workbench.

BUT the nut will not fit in the slot unless the rear bolt is removed. AND the bolt cannot be removed unless the whole mounting bracket is REMOVED from the workbench.



Finally. The mounting bolt is removed, the base nut is replaced and pin is inserted.



And here is the vise in its new home. It is quite fitting that its neighbors are the Japanese chisels that helped with the base.

There are too many projects in the shop right now. In addition, the shop is oppressively hot. This quick clean up will have to do for now as this vise is put into action. Sadly, this little vise will have to wait for a more comprehensive restoration.

