

Women's History

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More Than 3 Wise Men Saw

In the east, west, north, and south, all saw better thanks to Tabitha Babbitt who invented the circular saw in the early 1800's. While working in her and her husband's sawmill, she noticed the wasted energy of the push forward effort, with cutting accomplished only on the back pull. Kate Braid, carpenter and poet, poetically recorded this history. Happy Holidays!

WOMAN'S TOUCH

*Lunchtime, sitting on a lumber pile
in the middle of the construction site,
my eye fell
on Sam's 32 ounce hammer
with the 24 inch handle.*

*'How come all our tools
are longer than they are wide?'
I asked.*

Silence.

*Feeling reckless
with confidence because
that morning I'd cut
my first set of stairs
at a perfect fit, I pushed on.*

*'How come the hammer,
the saw, the everything
except the tool belt looks like
you know what?'*

*'Don't be so sensitive.' Sam said.
'How else could they be?'
There was a chorus of grunts
in the bass mode.
'Besides,*

*Sam was on firm ground now,
'the circular saw is round.'*

*Ed raised his head slowly.
'The circular saw was invented by a woman,'
he said, and took a bite of salami.
He finished the meat and then sat
quite still, contemplating his Oreos.
'In 1810 in New England,' he continued.
'Sarah Babbitt's husband had a sawmill
where they cut logs over a pit
with a man at each end of a huge hand saw.
She noticed they wasted half
their energy, for hand saws only cut
on the push. She had an idea.'*

*Ed took a chocolate bite and chewed.
Even Sam was quiet.
'She went into her kitchen,
fetched a tin dish and cut
teeth in it. Then she slipped it
onto the spindle of her spinning wheel,
fed a cedar shake into it
and the circular saw was born.'*

*Ed folded his brown paper bag.
After a certain silence
Sam spat.
'I knew there was something funny
about that saw', he said
and sulked off stomping sawdust.*