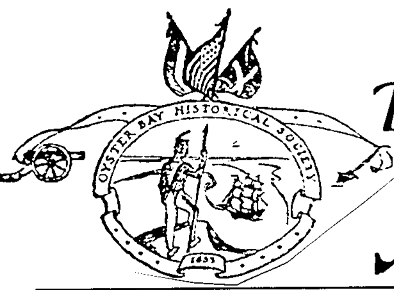

THE FREE-HOLDER

FALL 1996 | THE OYSTER BAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY | FOUNDED 1960

- **OYSTER BAY CARRIAGE-MAKERS**
- **AN HISTORIC ADVERTISEMENT Part II**
- **TR'S HEAD EXAMINED**
- **HISTORICAL SOCIETY GIVEN TOWNSEND BIBLE**

Instruments for Graffing.

A Saw. A Chesill head. A great knife. A proning knife. A wimble bit. A Chesill. A Mallet. A Vine knife. A slising knife. A Graffing Chesill.

A Hammer with a File & Pearcer.

A graffing knife, with each a ring or butten to hang at their girdle.

Staffe with a vice above, to set in what instrument ye list, to clense your Mosse trees.

THE HISTORY MAGAZINE OF THE TOWN OF OYSTER BAY

Editorial

The response to the first issue of *The Freeholder* was overwhelmingly positive! Letters and calls of support poured in, as did donations to fund this effort. People from as far away as North Carolina got wind of the new publication and asked how they could subscribe.

Naturally, we wanted to follow up that initial effort with an even better issue, and I think we have succeeded. However, your support is necessary for your magazine to continually improve. We need your submissions, comments, and financial support. I look forward to hearing from more of you.

THE FREEHOLDER
of the
Oyster Bay Historical Society
Vol. 1 No. 2 Fall 1996

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Purpose: The Oyster Bay Historical Society was founded in 1960 with the express purpose of preserving the history of the Town of Oyster Bay. The Society maintains a museum and research library in the Town-owned c.1720 Earle-Wightman House, 20 Summit Street, Oyster Bay. Call (516) 922-5032 for more information.

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ABOUT OUR FRONT COVER

Shown is a plate illustrating orchardist's tools from the period of the settlement of Oyster Bay or earlier (see related article on p.5). We thank James Sumner, who supplied it, for his enthusiastic support of *The Freeholder* . See Letters to the Editor, below.

Letters to the Editor

Gentlemen:
Noting the "grafting froe" illustrated by Uncle Peleg (Summer '96) it occurred to me that readers might be interested in a picture showing how grafting tools may have looked at the time of the settlement of Oyster Bay. I say may have because, although the picture was taken from an edition published in 1651, the work, the first-known gardening manual in English, Leonard Mascall's A Booke of the Arte and Maner Howe to Plant and Graffe was originally issued in 1572. Worse, it was a translation of earlier Dutch and French material. Shown are both single-function and combination tools. The latter are quite commonly thought of as first appearing in recent times but pictured are at least five multi-purpose tools in use perhaps four hundred years ago. The picture is Mascall's frontispiece but it is not explained in the text.

James Sumner

An English work with a Dutch background seems rather appropriate to a magazine concerned with historical stud-

continued on p.7

CARRIAGE AND WAGON MAKERS OF OYSTER BAY, 1860-1880

By Charles Reichman

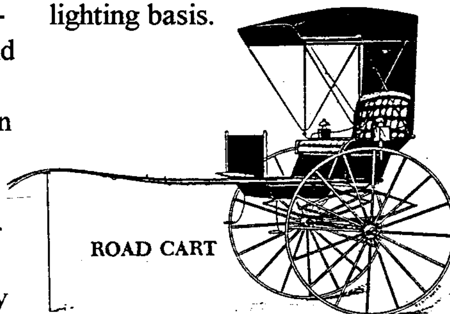
In the 19th Century when the United States was still not whole and farmers and artisans ruled the labor roost, Oyster Bay, like the Long Island towns to its west and east, was largely fertile farmland fringed with thick woodlands. What little manufacturing existed within its bucolic borders was almost uniformly craft-dominated.

Prominent among its diminutive industries were the repair and construction of carriages and wagons - more of the former than the latter - and the making of wheels for both kinds of horse-driven vehicles. Though wheelwrighting and carriage and wagon construction were closely allied crafts, since the former was considered to be in census records an independent enterprise, it will be treated as such in a separate article in a subsequent issue.

From the early beginnings in Colonial times to almost the turn of the century, the business of building and repairing carriages and wagons in Oyster Bay was organized and practiced in much the same way as in its sister towns in Queens and Suffolk Counties; namely, reliance on a continually changing hierarchy of highly-skilled, self-employed master carriage and wagon makers supported by one or two equivalent journeymen plus a carriagesmith and a duet of finishers- a carriage painter and carriage trimmer. Completing the work force were apprentices to one or more of the callings.

The key craftsmen were, of course, the carriage and wagon makers. Their jobs were to construct the bodies of the conveyances from the ground up, using the wooden parts that they had sawed, shaped, planed and joined from raw lumber.

Ironing the parts, particularly the axles and metal segments of the vehicles underparts, was the responsibility of the carriagesmith. This craftsman was invariably a blacksmith who crossed over to carriage smith work on a permanent or moonlighting basis.



The carriage painter and trimmer did not get involved in the manufacturing process until the carriage was fully assembled. Carriage and wagon painting were designated as the "most tedious" occupations in the entire process, largely because of the number of coats of paint and varnish that had to be applied to enhance a carriage's artistic appearance and to protect the paint job from deterioration by the elements. Adding to the tedium was the painting of such adornments as multi-colored stripes, gold curlicues, crests, insignia and lettering.

Final finishing of the assembled and painted carriage was the domain of the carriage trimmer, once described as the craftsman "who must quilt like an upholsterer, stitch like a harness maker and sew like a tailor." Obviously, his task was to cut, sew, finish and install all soft parts of a carriage, that is, the exterior and interior seats, the upholstery covering the ceilings and interior sides of the doors, and the carpeting of the floors.

Carriage and wagon making in Oyster Bay did not blossom into an industry until 1860. According to census records for the preceding year, only one carriage maker pursued his art in Oyster Bay. Ten years later the U.S. Census tabulation enumerated a total of nine carriage makers and two wagon makers plus a carriagesmith, painter and trimmer.

In the next decade the town's labor force in carriage and wagon-making registered a strange and inexplicable change: the number of carriage and wagon makers dwindled to four and the total of carriagesmiths, painters and trimmers rose to seven. By 1880 the industry became a mere shadow of its former size; only four craftsmen (two carriage-makers, a smith and a painter) remained in the business.

Of the 30 carriage and wagon makers, smiths, painters and trimmers that plied their trades in Oyster Bay over the period under study, only three did so for more than a single decade. One was Clarence von Size, a carriagesmith as well as a wheelwright, and another was Andrew J. Thomas, a carriage maker based in Locust Valley.

The third was William P. Newcomb who had moved his shop from Farmingdale to the town of Oyster Bay (Glen Cove). Mr. Newcomb was, like a number of his counterparts, an ambidextrous craftsman. He claimed to be a carriagesmith, blacksmith, and wheelwright as well as a carriage maker.

How well the Oyster Bay self-

employed carriage trade craftsmen fared in the practice of their multiple and single specialties can be determined only for the years 1860 and 1870 when the U.S. Census Bureau gathered information on the value of the real and personal estates of the Island's self-employed artisans.

In the 1860 census year the five Oyster Bay carriage and wagon makers who supplied this data reported average values for both real estate and chattels (personal estate) as $1,033. The top real estate value, $2,000, was reported by Edward Ritchey, a wagon maker. The highest personal estate figure, $2,500, was attributed to Charles A. Carpenter, a carriage maker.

In the succeeding census decade realty and personal estate values were recorded for the same number of carriage makers, but the averages were quite different- a rise of almost 60% in average real estate values and a seven percent drop in personal estate values. Accounting for the huge increase in the former were two steep realty ratings claimed by Jonathan Baldwing and Charles H. Ludlum totaling $10,000 ($6,000 and $4,000, respectively.)

Quite the reverse occurred in the average personal estate values for the 1870 census period: a decline of $93 brought about by a high of only $12,000 and a meager $350 at the low end. The former was recorded for George Waterson, a self-employed carriage painter and the latter for Charles H. Ludlum.

What kinds of vehicles did the Oyster Bay carriage and wagon makers produce? No documentary evidence could be consulted to cast light on this query. We do know that Charles A. Carpenter, a Glen Cove wagon maker, was awarded a patent in 1864 for a dumping cart, a four-wheeled wagon with a tilting body for conveying soil, manure, coal, firewood and the like.

Other anecdotal information may be gleaned from sales of farmers' chattels placed in regional newspapers. One can assume that some of the horse-drawn vehicles listed in these advertisements could have been manufactured or at least repaired and serviced by local carriage and wagon makers. Among these were farmers' market wagons, one-horse carts or road wagons and the Rockaway carriage, a popular model on Long Island because of its name association with the beach community at the western end.

As the final decade of the 19th Century approached, the industry's dependence upon self-employed craftsmen had diminished considerably. By the late 1880s mechanization had become widespread, making possible the mass manufacture of individual parts and segments of a carriage and wagon for assembly, not by highly trained and experienced masters of the art, but by common laborers. In 1890 some of the individual carriage and wagon parts which could be obtained off-the-shelf from specialty suppliers were springs, axles, axletrees, pieces of hardware, doors, and spokes, to name a few.

By the end of the century, the obsolescence of the trade's craftsmen triggered the rise of dealerships. In Oyster Bay the self-employed carriage and wagon makers who could afford to do so became dealers. Prime examples were L.M. Hicks and the Waldrons, pere and fils. Hicks built his dealership around road carts, one of which was, marketed under the name "Oyster Bay Road Cart". He also did repair work on all sorts of carriages and wagons and, as a sideline, sold sporting and athletic goods.

The Waldron dealership, a partnership of James and James S., came from a local family long active in the carriage making business in Oyster Bay. Their dealership extended into the 20th Century and may well have become a precursor of the dealerships for the electric and gasoline-driven motor cars that were to replace the horse and buggy, now a generic term encompassing all horse-drawn conveyances for transporting people, goods and equipment.

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Regional Long Island newspapers,ie.*Hempstead Inquirer, Flushing Journal, Glen Cove Gazette, Roslyn News,* and *Long Island Farmer*

THE OYSTER BAY CONNECTION: THE FIRST AMERICAN NEWSPAPER ADVERTISEMENT OFFERING ITEMS FOR SALE

By Elliot M. Sayward
Part II

Bradford was an important man in his day. His presses in both Philadelphia and New York made significant contributions to the developing intellectual life in America. He founded a family group of printer descendants who carried forward the work he had begun. One of his apprentices, John Peter Zenger, enabled by Bradford's training to commence publication of a New York City newspaper, achieved a place in history because he was responsible for a important advance in the American notion of freedom of the press. Bradford's establishment of a paper mill, a bolting milland two important printing offices suggest that he was no smallforce in the developing American economy. Even as a part-time citizen of Oyster Bay he adds luster to its early history.

Although the advertiser himself is perhaps the most important topic introduced by the Boston News-Letter advertisement, that topic is not the only one that has dimmed in at least some 20th century minds. For example, the question was put to three chance-met acquaintances recently: What is a fulling mill? Not one of those asked was able to answer. Let us therefore consider the "very good Fulling Mill to be let or sold." Once a common convenience in American towns and villages. the fulling mill has ceased to exist as such and has been generally forgotten. It existed from early days because most of the non-luxury fabric for wearing apparel and other uses was made locally rather than imported. Weaving was done in many homes by family members or by professional weavers utilizing homespun yarns made from fibers raised or grown as part of the household economy. Much was used straight from the loom or was "fulled" at home. A simple method of fulling at home was the "kicking frolic" involving several barefooted young men. It was an occasion of sociability and shared work like a husking bee or an apple cutting. The purpose was to clean, condense and thicken the newly woven textile by wetting it with warm soapsuds and kicking it around in a circle.

The process causes woolen cloth or other cloth made of fibers that will "felt" to thicken and harden, becoming slightly shorter in both length and width and also becoming capable of a smooth finish. Felting is the amalgamation of the individual fibers that make up the textile. It occurs because the surface of the fibers have microscopic barbs that interlock under manipulation, causing the mass to which they belong to compact and consolidate. Fibers can be felted as was done by hatmakers without the steps of making yarn from them and weaving it into cloth. Heat, moisture and manipulation alone can amalgamate the fibers into a compact textile useful for making hats and some other purposes but infrequently employed in clothing.

Soap or other detergent is a necessary part of fulling as grease is not only natural to wool but is sometimes added in some of the processes necessary to convert fibers to textile. Grease impairs felting and must be removed as must soil. Fulling in a fulling mill was performed by giant hammers or beaters that worked the wet, soapy cloth in a trough.

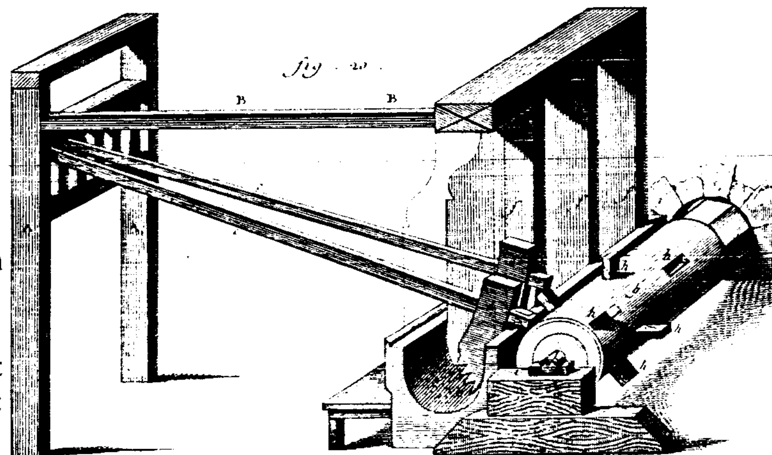

Illustration of a fulling mill from Diderot's Encyclopedie

The hammers were activated by a long shaft turned

by water power. Cams on the shaft engaged the pivoted hammers for part of the shaft's revolution, raising them to their highest point and then dropping them to thud against the textile in the trough.

Following fulling several processes occurred and these were often part of the business of the fuller. Chief among them were teaseling and shearing.

Teaseling was raising the nap or surface fibers of the textile by brushing it with an instrument in which were mounted the teasels, dried, thistle-like flowerheads. These are equipped with many fine, wiry hooks or awns which tease the surface of the cloth, raising a pile or nap.

The nap was raised in order to allow shearing, that is cutting the nap off at a uniform height above the surface in order to create a smooth finish. In the days when there was a fulling mill at Oyster Bay, shearing was done manually using a giant pair of shears, not pivoted like your household scissors but joined by a semi-circular spring at the handle end like an old fashioned pair of garden or sheep shears. A typical order from a customer bringing a length of cloth to the fuller to be "dressed" might have been expressed thus. I want it fulled, teaseled and sheared twice. Some fullers would have dyed it for him as well.

The first fuller in Oyster Bay may have been Isaac Horner who in 1677-8 and again in 1684-5 was granted "ye privilege of ye Stream at ye Beaver Swamp by ye Sho ... to set up a Fulling Mill." [G.W. Cocks, Old Matinecock] A mill privilege was the right to dam running water for power even though it might back up on land not owned by the operator. Against Horner's primacy is Merle-Smith's comment that "As early as 1668 a fulling mill was established at Mosquito Cove."

Men were recorded as having been clothworkers in Oyster Bay by Merle-Smith. William Frost is listed from 1672 to 1702. He may have been connected with the fulling mill. John Dewsbury is also listed between 1685 and 1702. He, of course owned the mill.

When the mill was sold to satisfy Bradford's claim, the buyer was Samuel Haydon, blacksmith. Perhaps Haydon operated the fulling business but at this point that is not clear. That there was work for a fulling mill in the area is hinted at by the estate inventory of Johanna Ffurman. It included among her possessions a loom and tackling in 1672. George Townsend is identified as a weaver in a document of 1711.

The Brick House offered in the advertisement shows how much the standard of living in Oyster Bay had advanced in the 50 years since its settlement. It is the second one we know of. And, although Dewsbury was censured for extravagance, it indicates that a considerable degree of comfort and not a little conspicuous consumption had become available to the people of the town.

The "good house by it fit for a kitchin or a work house" is obviously the earlier dwelling house from which Dewsbury moved. In a time when buildings were few and valuable, older ones being replaced were frequently retained rather than torn down. Kitchens were often the major room in a house. Warm and pleasant in winter, they were hot and fly infested in summer. When possible the desirable location for them was outside the main house. The advertisement implies a recognition of this practical consideration as a sales feature. Further, in a day when almost every household strove toward self sufficiency, much work was done at home. If the householder was an artisan and self-employed, his place of work was usually at home. The extra building, suitable for such purposes, could have been a major inducement to a buyer.

The "Barn, Stable, Etc" offered tell us that the property had been used for serious agricultural purposes. It is reasonable to infer that hay and perhaps other crops were stored in the barn. Cows and oxen may have been kept there as well. We can guess that the "Etc" stood for items like a corn crib, a tool shed or a chicken house. At an earlier day a stable might have housed any form of livestock from goats upward but by the time of our advertisement the usual occupants were horses. Horses served two main purposes. Like oxen they provided the power that moved plows and harrows and perhaps other farming tools. And in an era when transportation facilities over land were drastically limited, horses transported people and goods to their destinations near and far with considerable speed and a fair degree of comfort for the people. The extent to which most Oyster Bay residents engaged in land travel is not easily gauged but the

appearance in inventories of saddles, carts, horse furniture and horses suggest that people were capable of traveling considerable distances more or less at will.

If we remember that Madam Sarah Kemble Knight traveled, chiefly on horseback and often alone, from Boston to New York in the same year our advertisement appeared in a Boston newspaper, we will have some idea of how far ordinary citizens were prepared to travel in the days before super highways and even paved roads. We can probably assume that once they were supplied with horses and perhaps even before, some Long Islanders traveled both for social and economic reasons if not purely for entertainment. Bradford certainly expected a Bostonian, answering his advertisement to travel a great distance. If that had been unlikely, he wouldn't have wasted his money.

The "young Orchard' does not imply one that has very recently been planted. Bradford is presenting a major asset of the plantation. A quotation from Jonathan Perian's 1884 *The Home and Farm Manual* makes plain the importance of a young orchard, "The first ten bearing years of any apple or other long-lived trees is better than all that comes after. The profit is in young, thrifty trees, not in old ones." The apple was of course the most important fruit tree of colonial America. An orchard of no other fruit could have been described simply as "a young Orchard" with any expectation of comprehension on the part of the reader. The major importance of apples was that cider could be made from them. Households with orchards made many barrels of that popular beverage every year both for their own use and for sale to those not so fortunate. Not too many years later cider was being shipped from Oyster Bay by sloop to the South.

Our discursive ramble through a host of topics suggested by Bradford's advertisement illustrates how many aspects of history there are as well as how rapidly the common knowledge of one day can be forgotten in the next. The importance of our Society and its work is thereby emphasized and, we hope, others are encouraged to explore the roads pointed out by similar historical signboards.

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Franklin, Benjamin *Autobiography*, begun 1771
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Merle-Smith, Van S. *Oyster Bay, 1653-1700*
Pelletreau, William S. *A History Of Long Island*, 1903
Perian, Jonathan. *The Home And Farm Manual*, 1884
Wallace, John W. *An Address Before The N-Y Hist. Soc*, 1863
Copies of various records of early Oyster Bay belonging to OBHS
Various standard histories, encyclopedias, biographical dictionaries, etc.

Letters to the Editor
continued from p. 2
ies of an English town that took its name from a bay christened by the Dutch. ED.

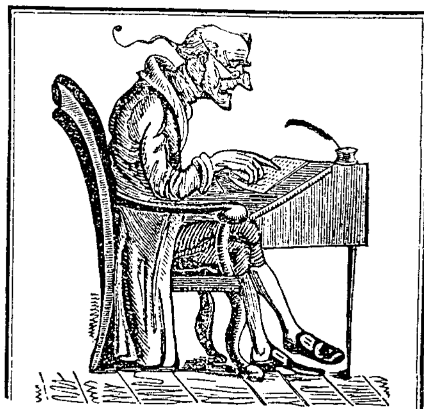
To the Editor:

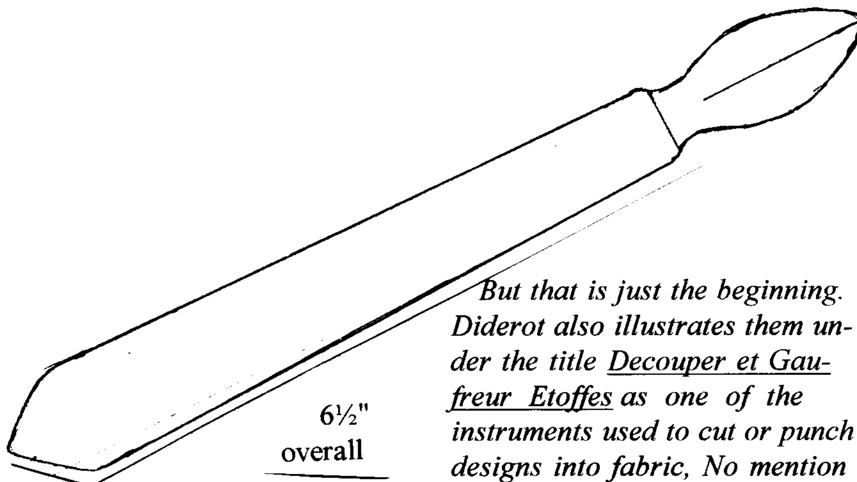
I really enjoyed "Yesterday In Oyster Bay" and hope it will be a regular feature. It so took my interest that I am abandoning a long held prejudice against writing to magazines to ask Mr. Reichman a question and to offer a suggestion.

First, some background for the question. The word "lumber" in its meaning of timber prepared for market is thought to be an Americanism appearing as early as the 1660's. Prior to that and for many years thereafter in England, lumber meant disused furniture or useless odds and ends. My question, of course, i.e. what did Thomas Hendrickson mean by lumber? Odds and ends or marketable timber? Does any further information in the recorded document provide a basis for supposition?

The suggestion has to do with the "reasons unknown" for selling the property. I have read (source forgotten) but have no evidence that in the early days a sale of property to a relative, when the owner was moving away, was a means to procure cash for the move without having to wait a long time for a buyer to be found and a sale effected. The conveyance was a sort of mortgage giving the relative the ability to conduct a later sale as well as providing him with security for the money advanced.

I'd be interested to find out if
continued on p. 20





ASK UNCLE PELEG

Dear Uncle Peleg:

Perhaps you can explain a tool that has puzzled me for years (see sketch). My mother, from whom I inherited two, called them penknives. I inferred they were for sharpening quills or perhaps for scraping out writing mistakes. However a lady at a tag sale in Connecticut was convinced such tools were used in tatting. The blades are good steel with a sharp edge; the middle is thicker than the edge The handles are smooth hardwood, not the same kind for each. One is marked ROGERS / CUTLER /TO HER /MAJESTY one side and * + / SHEFFIELD/ ENGLAND on the other. The second, not as well finished in the handle, has BANKERS on one side and "241" on the other. I use them all the time for scraping ink off my pens (calligraphy), taking out staples and other little jobs. I love to handle and use them.

Sally Campbell

You pleased Uncle Peleg because he has a small clutch of the things you describe. Among them is one marked the same as your Rogers example. Such instruments have raised a number of inquiries in antiquarian circles over the years. Folk have been puzzled by the fact that similar instruments have been advertised in sources like turn-of-the-century Sears Roebuck catalogs- both as ink erasers and poultry killers. Confusion is added by statements of medical instrument collectors that as long as two hundred and fifty years ago they were scalpels and lancets. Others have sworn they were to scrape away errors and blots from the written page.

To sift these notions a certain amount of detective work was necessary. Uncle Peleg feels justified therefore to name the affair "The Great Paper Scraper Caper!" Turns out almost all explanations are more or less right.

As early as the mid-Eighteenth Century the Diderot Encyclopedie illustrates similar knives as scalpels and lancets used by physicians and surgeons. As well, the Encyclopedie shows them as used by farriers whose trade included horse-doctoring as well as horse-shoeing.

But that is just the beginning. Diderot also illustrates them under the title Decouper et Gaufreur Etoffes as one of the instruments used to cut or punch designs into fabric, No mention of tatting was found. Last of the uses found in Diderot is under the Art D'Escrire (Writing) where the instrument is called a grattoire (modern spelling) meaning an erasing knife, a scraper-eraser. The usage carries us back to the scriptorium of the Middle Ages where, next to the quill, the erasing knife was the scribe's most important instrument. We found no medieval leaf-shaped knives, however.

Rogers was the English cutlery firm of the brothers, Joseph and Maurice. Their star and Maltese cross symbols are recorded in the Sheffield Directory of 1787 where they are listed among the razormakers and the forgers of pen- and pocketknives. They had a reputation for quality and it is said that consumers in distant places looked for the Rogers name as assurance of dependability. The firm continued for many years. We don't know Bankers or even if it is a proper name. Our questions into the multi-purpose scraper/ knife form have disclosed that people who own the handy little knives put them to many uses not yet mentioned, sharpening pencils, opening envelopes, folding paper (with the smooth wooden handle), cutting twine around parcels, and occasionally peeling apples.