

# OldTools Archive

[Search](#)
[Advanced Search](#)
[Browse](#)
[Recent Messages](#)
[Bios](#)

The following shows the message you requested. To get back to the list of browse results, click the back button on your browser.

If you are thinking of subscribing to this list, please consult the [OldTools FAQ](#).

Implementation details and privacy policy can be found on the [Notes page](#).

**4863**      **leach@b... (Patrick Leach)**      **Aug-29-1996**      **Bagging the Big Paper...**

Ephemera, n.; pl. efemerias, efemerae, [Gr. ephemeros, for the day, short-lived; epi, upon, and hemera, a day.]

1. [E-] in entomology, a genus of insects in which are included the May flies or dayflies of the family Ephemeraidae.
2. an insect of the genus Ephemera and allied genera.
3. anything having a very short life.

The word 'ephemera' is also used in the antiques and collecting trade to classify paper goods, advertising, signs, and all sorts of material that wasn't designed to last for any length of time. It's this 'definition' of the word that this post is all about.

Just a mere 10 hours ago, I snagged something that I find truly remarkable, and improbable to have survived as long as it has, only to land in my grubby paws.

I bought the entire correspondence of the Providence Tool Co, one of America's earliest and largest suppliers of plane irons, hardware, railroad spikes etc. What I now own is a treasure-trove of paper, what must total some 20,000 pieces, which reads as a who's who in American planemaking, as well as other manufacturers (Douglas Axe and Brown&Sharpe are two that I've noted), hardware dealers, railroad companies, etc.

Imagine having orders for plane iron and their comments to the company, written by the hands of the actual dudes who made the planes survive for some 150 years? It simply amazes me that it still exists. It's gonna take me months to read through it all, but it will prove to be more entertaining than watching Norm I should think.

As I pawed through the contents (this just being about an hour's worth), I came across letters to the company from such planemakers as J. Bradford, Geo Burnham, E. Nutting, Copeland&Co, N. Chapin, H. Chapin, Hall Case Co., and Casey Kitchel Co. There's even a receipt from H. Chapin to the company for a pair of log calipers that Chapin sold them.

In what few letters I've actually read, I've come to know more about the planemakers than I could have ever hoped. From the month of June, 1849 alone, I found three letters that I thought were kinda cool.

The first is a letter from Joseph Bradford, a Portland, ME planemaker who worked from the 1830's to the 1880's. He is notable for his cooper's tools, his shipbuilder's tools (he liked to use exotic species), and his general planes.

Portland June 26 1849

Mr. Field,

Sir I have not received those match plane irons for those which I returned and we are losing the sale of match planes in consequence of not having them. We should be very happy to have those howell irons we ordered.























































































