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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.

Yours etc.

J. Bradford

The second and third letters are from Hall Case & Co., a Columbus, OH firm, working from 1847 to 1852, when they were absorbed by the plane-making giant, Ohio Tool Co. From the two letters I've read, the company seems to have elevated whining to an artform, and they appear to pit Providence Tool Co against Dwights&French, a competing iron maker located in New Haven, CT, at every chance they get.

Columbus June 6 1849

Providence Tool Company

We rec'd the Plane Irons a few days ago & we regret to say they come in a shocking condition. The cask was broken & the irons was badly wet, so much so that we shall have to polish part of them over. It will not do to pack such a weight in one cask for they cannot be handled. It cost about \$4 for extra drayage in New Orleans on account of its being so heavy, when if they had been packed in medium sized boxes, it would cost much less & most likely would not been damaged as they now are. And furthermore the cask was not more than from 1/2 to 2/3 full with irons & the balance filled up with timber, which will not hardly pay transportation to this country, especially that kind for we have a plenty of it here. After this when we order from you again we wish you would pack in boxes, which we trust will come safe & sound.

Yours Very Respectfully,

Hall Case Co.

for T.H. Drake

P.S. Dwights pack in boxes
that weighs from 3 to 400#
& hoop them.

The other letter from Hall Case Co. to Providence Tool Co. is full of complaints about the bill they received for the irons, and the problems with the exchange rate of monies. They go on in the letter to note how Dwights&French do business, giving discounts and not charging interest, going so far to point out that Dwights&French's product is cheaper to purchase than that of the Providence Tool Co. The letter includes a handwritten enclosure, such as they were back in 1849, denoting the difference in price for plane irons between the two iron-making companies. What's interesting to note on this enclosure is a short scribble that reads:

We would have shortened
the time of this payment on
this account had it not
been for the interruption
of business by the
cholera.

H.C.&Co.

So there you have it, a perfect excuse, which you can use even today, for why the check ain't in the mail.

Patrick Leach

Just say Book-whiff is wafting through my nose as I read this stuff.

etc.

4865	Andrew Barss <barss@U...EDU>	Aug-29-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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By coincidence, an article I read yesterday suggests that some old manuscripts can contain fungal growths that, when being disturbed, as by having their pages turned, produce spores that can, in sufficient quantity, cause hallucinations. (As Dave Barry would say, I Am Not Making This Up).

So, Patrick, if you start seeing large power tools comin' at you out of the darkness, or you think you hear Norm's voice coming from down the hall in your house, have no worries.

-- Andrew

P.S. Amazing find -- where was it before you bought it?

4867	tkissam@c... (Todd Kissam)	Aug-29-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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At 06:03 AM 8/29/96 -0400, you wrote:

> Just a mere 10 hours ago, I snagged something that I find truly re-
>markable, 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.
>

Great find, now you owe us a book. Should this be before or after the panel and tenon IT's.

How does he do it?

Todd

4869	Ed Bell <ebell@p...>	Aug-29-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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Todd Kissam wisely wrote:

>
> How does he do it?

My personal theory is that there really isn't *a* Patrick Leach. He is a composite "figure head" a la Betty Crocker. Behind the image of "Patrick Leach" there exists a vast assemblage of people--a Stanley plane expert, a spokeshave specialist, a wooden plane historian, etc. How else could all this be possible? There are, after all, only 24 hours in a day. And *everybody* has to sleep.

Thanks, Patrick, for everything you do!

--

Ed Bell

Opinions expressed are my own, and do not reflect those of my employer or anyone else.

4874	sjc@m... (Steve Chapin)	Aug-29-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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>> How else could all this be possible? There are, after all, only 24
>> hours in a day. And *everybody* has to sleep.

It's Mick, I tell you. Behind that lovable "dumb mutt" exterior, he's really masterminding the whole Patrick Leach cabal.

SC
--

4879	David Hucaby <hucaby@s...>	Aug-29-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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[snip]

> 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 ...

[double-snip]

> What's interesting to note on this enclosure is a short scribble that
> reads:

> We would have shortened
> the time of this payment on
> this account had it not
> been for the interruption
> of business by the
> cholera.

Hmm. Hope the cholera isn't still lurking amongst the pages to interrupt your business. Seeing as how I work in a medical facility, you may take the proper precautions by sending the documents here for decontamination. When packing them for shipment, some heavy metals will keep the bacteria in check - perhaps an IT saw or an infill plane will contain it.

> So there you have it, a perfect excuse, which you can use even today,
> for why the check ain't in the mail.

The check's in the mail for my last order; I'm only kidding about this one :=)

Dave Hucaby  

4884	Walter Barry	Aug-29-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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OK, my jaw is open, my mouth is watering and my eyes are glazed, and I just have to de-lurk for this one.....

PART1:(congradulations)

Patrick wrote: <which I heavily edited>
> Ephemera, n.;.....

My Amer.Heritage doesn't show an entry for "Ephemera" but does for "ephemerid" (mayflies, etc.) and an an adjective "ephemeral" as in used to discribe something that's short-lived; lasting a brief time. (the noun that they provide is "ephemerality"??)

> The word 'ephemera' is also used in the antiques and collecting
> trade to classify paper goods, advertising, signs, and.....

Funny how it almost sounds like it double as a medical condition too.

> Just a mere 10 hours ago, I snagged something that I find truly re-
> markable, and improbable to have survived as long as it has....
> ...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.....

etc.etc.etc.gloat, gloat, gloat, big gloat, really big gloat!! WOW!!
Absolutely amazing.

Andrew replied:

>P.S. Amazing find -- where was it before you bought it?

Todd replied:

>How does he do it?

Add me in here too. A find of this magnitude is certainly not the likes of a casual Saturday morning hunting trip, right? Like that classic gloat of the stop that led you to that pattern-makers chest. I mean, was this wonderful stuff just sitting around in a box that someone carried down from their attic?? Or how does something like this turn up outside of the basement of a museum???

PART2:(request)

Please let the Stanley elite know about your extra-early #5-1/4C. As an intermediate level collector, I'm still big on Stanley stuff, and would really enjoy seeing your name show up in a future issue of John Walter's "Stanley Tool Collector's News". The idea of how Stanley might have used the New Britain locals as a test market for their ware is very interesting. Because obviously some strange "new" finds that never appeared in catalogs, and "one-of-a-kinds" have certainly surfaced from around that area.

PART3:(rambling & gloat)

Back to the "Ephemera" topic. I'm NOT a big time veteran collector, but I am maturing. Obviously like most galoots, I want to balance my collecting habit with both using these tools and learning as much about them as possible. Dude's entering into this avocation today are very lucky to find that so many reference abound them, written by a previous generation of collectors, which can both answer our questions, and help open more doors for us to explore. I've certainly bought my fair share of many of these "oldtool" books & catalog reprints.

But finding original text is extra cool. You find yourself flipping through the pages with a certain sense of reverence. Being careful not to tear or crease any pages. There's certainly no way your going to be reaching for that yellow highlighter when your browsing something that's 50 or more years old, certainly not as durable as a bench plane, and amazingly didn't get tossed out with the morning news, years ago.

Deny your collector side if you wish, fellow galoots, but I'm sure that there's none among us wouldn't skip a heartbeat, if someone was to pass them an original early reference, saying "...here, I was going to toss this, but I thought that you might be interested..."

Anyway, I thought my late start last Saturday morning hunting trip would net me little, but strangely, I didn't see any of the regular competition. So netted some common old Stanley planes & tape rules, Disston finger-rip, really neat Keen-Kutter combo stone, carver's screw and a never used Stanley Definance #1240 wedge-vice (a fairly neat & useful contraption). Cool since I hadn't much \$\$ and everything only set me back only \$20. Since my MIL was over to watch the kids, I told my wife I'd take her to a local antique show. There was very little in the way of tools, but I always enjoy searching about, and I found 3 stalls with old books. 1st dude looked like an English professor, with lots of old leather bound original copies, but nothing tool related. Next guy had everything in nice little plastic bags, and had a B&S catalog, 3 Starrett catalogs, and a reprint of a Stanley price-list. Last dude had stuff laid out in a mess, but I quickly found a 1943 Keuffel & Essel slide rule book, (which I actually had wanted) and then I asked the dealer, who produced my find of the day, an original Stanley #34 240 pg. catalog 1939 edition, excellent condition except for an original owner's name written in fountain pen on the side of the front cover. \$15 for both (which is a fair deal if your familiar with what Stanley catalogs go for).

OK, so it's certainly nothing of the magnitude of Patrick's score. And I already had some other original stuff from Stanley and others. And Starrett catalogs are fairly common too. But those who do have

some of this surviving "Ephemera" (there, I used it in a sentence) know the feeling of reading about the tools they collect in an original. I know, because this copy kept me late that night at the kitchen table.

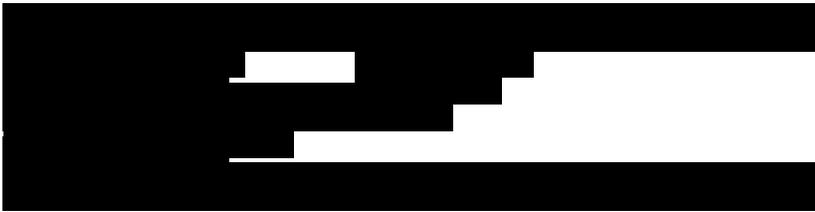
Walter
who certainly enjoys using "paper tools" too.

4899	carl muhlhausen <ledzep@e...>	Aug-29-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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On Thu, 29 Aug 1996 12:04:58 -0400 Ed Bell wrote:
>Todd Kissam wisely wrote:
>>
>> How does he do it?
>
>My personal theory is that there really isn't *a* Patrick
>Leach. He is a composite "figure head" a la Betty

Nah, too many of us have met him. What's really a surprise is that he finds time to glue on a beard, put on glasses, and host the "New Yankee Workshop".

Carl



4901	Mac Geek <john@g...>	Aug-29-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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At 02:52 PM 8/29/96 -0400, you wrote:
>
>>> How else could all this be possible? There are, after all, only 24
>>> hours in a day. And *everybody* has to sleep.
>
>It's Mick, I tell you. Behind that lovable "dumb mutt" exterior, he's
>really masterminding the whole Patrick Leach cabal.

Can't be!
Any creature stupid enough to chew on rocks the size of grapefruits aint got the intelligence!

John,
MY teeth hurt when I hear him chomping!

4906	tonyseo@p... (Anthony Seo)	Aug-29-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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>>Todd Kissam wisely wrote:
>>>
>>> How does he do it?
>>
A wise man once said that "luck is 95% hard work and 5% opportunity". I personally know that Pat ups the antie on the hard work side of the equation to 99%, just to be on the safe side.

Tony

One is an interest, two is a collection, three is an obsession

4912	Gary Roberts <groberts@s...>	Aug-29-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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Ok, so when can we expect the publication of the full set of Providence Tool Co papers? Maybe SHOT would be interested in kicking in bucks? Or MWTCA? Surely this stuff is a lot more worthwhile than some of the books and papers that organizations have published.

As an aside, I'm in the process of photocopying those pieces of ephemera in my holdings that are just too fragile or rare to handle. If the pieces are single sheets, they are placed in a polyethelene sheet protector and than photocopied. If in book or booklet form (such as The Carpenter & Builder), the fold is relaxed with minimal steam and than each page is photocopied full size. Although exposure to light is a no no, it seems the general concensus in paper conservation is that photocopying is the lesser evil.

Now if my employer would only dump this old XEROX 1090 and get a spiffy new state of the art PC based copier...

Well, gotta go wipe up the drool or it gets in the keyboard...

Gary Roberts <groberts@s...>
Boston, MA...Antique tools, Hong Kong cinema, what else is there?

5055	leach@b... (Patrick Leach)	Sep-02-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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Himicane Edouard KO'ed today's tuna trip, and I find myself here at work, alone, bored of rumaging through co-workers' drawers looking for loose change that I can use as tool money. So, I'll enter some more of the Providence Tool Co. stuff.

Today's installment has to do with newbies and veterans contacting the firm, seemingly throwing themselves at the the mercy of the company.

First letter is from one James Kellogg, a prolific maker of planes from Amherst (the 'h' is silent), MA. I suffer the Kellogg curse - no matter where I am, the first wooden plane I pick up to examine is one from the shop of Mr. Kellogg. I swear, if I ever paddled an outrigger to Pitcairn Island, there would be a Kellogg plane sitting there to greet me (having an American-made plane off the continent sound far-- fetched? Wait for another installment, later in the week).

Anyway, back to Mr. Kellogg's letter. Kellogg had been cranking out products for some 15 years prior. What follows is his initial contact with Providence Tool Co.

Amherst, Mafs, March 12 1850
To the Providence Tool Co.
Gentleman

Will you please inform me
by mail your best terms for your plane irons. I have used
for the last 10 years from 1500 to \$2000 per year. I have
had a few of your irons, and like them very much and
if I can buy of you as cheap as I have done of <can't read> Seymour
I think I may also some of your co.

Respectfully yours
James Kellog

The next letter is from Alfred Alford, president of the Phoenix Co. of Hitchcockville, CT. Some of you may have heard of Hitchcockville, home of the the first mass-produced chairs, called Hitchcocks, made in this country. This planemaking firm was housed in the very same building where the chairs were made, and, in fact, the company had plans to make furniture along with the planes.

Hitchcockville, Ct Sept 27th 1853
Providence Tool Co.

Gents we wrote you some
time since ordering 50 doz plane irons
since which we have heard nothing from you.
Annexed is a list of the kinds we want.

Also we we want the annexed list of soft moulding irons which if you could send us soon we would send you a check on bank for the ammount of both on receipt of bill. We want them sent by way of Bridgeport & Winstead. Please write us on receipt of this whether we can have them or not & how soon

Yours Respectfully
 Alfred Alford
 of the Phoenix Co.

<order of dozens of single, double and molding plane irons deleted>

P.S.

Our company is a new one organized last winter under the joint stock laws of this state with a capital of \$13,000, \$11,000 of which has been paid in. If you have any doubts as to the ability the Co, to meet this you may consider me personally liable & I would refer you to Thos Belknap Esq President of the State Bank Hartford as to my ability.

Hitchcockville

Yours Respectfully
 Alfred Alford

The next letter is from an upstart planemaker from Fellows Balls, er, I mean, Bellows Falls (damn, I hate spoonerisms, especially while typing!), VT. This planemaker is near and dear to our own Jim Cook, he having given away one for peanuts at the last Crane's auction. The maker is H.S.Dewey, a partner of Dewey&Brown, whose exact working dates were heretofore unknown. This letter now pinpoints when they started working.

Their planes, as are most VT-made planes, are extremely hard to find. The only ones I've seen are bench planes, which have an unusual tell-tale shape to their stocks - they are molded with a comfort grip that runs midway down the stock, and runs the full length of the stock and along the ends.

Mr. Dewey had horrible penmanship, and were he reared in a Catholic School, he woulda been tortured mercilessly until he got it 'write'.

Bellows Falls Dec 21st 1855.

To the Providence Tool Company

or to the agent

Mr <can't read>

I am just a starting a shop in B Falls for the manufactory of joiners tools and I wish to by a quantity of irons. Having used some of your own I like them very well. I wish to by some on six months time. I should like some right off. You should feel disposed to sell me in that way. I shall want as much \$4,000 worth in years. I do not wish to get trusted for more than \$5.00 worth. I should like following list sent me.

8 dozen	2 5/8 inch	Double	
8 "	2 1/2 "	"	Please to write me
8 "	2 3/8 "	"	
16 "	2 "	"	Yours
4 "	1 1/2 "	Single	

H S Dewey

It's funny that Mr. Dewey mentions the 4k dollar amount, just like Hermon Chapin did in his first letter to the firm. Perhaps there was a mole operative lurking within the company, and the secret password for instant credit was "\$4,000 worth"?

The next letter is one of two letters, which kinda go hand-in-hand with each other. They are presented in reverse chronological order, the reason for which should be apparent.

The first of the pair is from J.P.Millner&Co. a firm from Kingston, Ontario, dated Dec 12th, 1855. The bulk of the letter contains an order of some 125 dozen double and single "plain" irons. The post script is as follows:

Pleas let us her from
you as soon as you get
the letter. Anny reference
you may want pleas call
on D.R.Barton Rochester.

Now, D.R.Barton was one of the earliest and largest makers/dealers of edge tools, cutlery, steel products, etc., operating in Rochester, NY. It was even the place where the Buck Bros. cut their teeth, so to speak. One might logically wonder why Millner went afar to place an order with a joint located a great distance (by that time's standards), when Rochester was but a mere boatride across Lake Ontario from Kingston. The reason they did is obvious, after reading the next letter.

Rochester Oct 6 1855

Prov Tool Co.

Gentlemen

The result of several conversations with Mr. Noyes was that you would furnish me plane irons on the following terms 25 percent dis. & 10 off - at 6 mos delivered in N.York The irons to be stamped with my name & warran -ted the same as your other irons. If you think best you may fill the following order on the above terms as a begining

Sizes	2	2 1/8	2 1/4	2 3/8	2 1/2	2 5/8	2 3/4	double irons
Doz	5	12	25	8	12	10	5	
4 doz tooth plane irons								

I want the sizes on the ends of the packages but omit the labels on the sides.

Your respectfully

D.R.Barton

I was amazed when I read this. Barton obviously had to have been experiencing problems, and thus send out an S.O.S. for assistance. One wonders if they had labor problems, if there was a shortage of natural resources, whether they made a bad batch of irons, whether they saw a spike in orders, or what. Whatever it was, it lasted for at least 3 months as evidenced by Millner's plea to Providence.

I think it's amusing to note that Barton specifically mentions to Providence Tool Co. not to put their name on the boxes. He obviously didn't want anyone to know that he was using products not of his own manufacture.

Patrick Leach
Just say More to come...
etc.

5057

leach@b... (Patrick Leach)

Sep-02-1996

Re: Bagging the Big Paper...

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I think I may also some of your co.

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time since ordering 50 doz plane irons
since which we have heard nothing from you.
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Also we we want the annexed list of soft
moulding irons which if you could
send us soon we would send you a
check on bank for the ammount of both on
receipt of bill. We want them sent by way
of Bridgeport & Winstead. Please write us on
receipt of this whether we can have them or
not & how soon

Yours Respectfully
Alfred Alford
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<order of dozens of single, double and
molding plane irons deleted>

P.S.
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them very well. I wish to by some on six
months time. I should like some right
off. You should feel disposed to sell me
in that way. I shall want as much
\$4,000 worth in years. I do not wish to get
trusted for more than \$5.00 worth. I should
like following list sent me.

8 dozen	2 5/8 inch	Double	
8 "	2 1/2 "	" "	Please to write me
8 "	2 3/8 "	" "	
16 "	2 "	" "	Yours
4 "	1 1/2 "	Single	H S Dewey

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The result of several conversations with Mr. Noyes was that you would furnish me plane irons on the following terms
25 percent dis. & 10 off - at 6 mos delivered in N.York
The irons to be stamped with my name & warran-
-ted the same as your other irons. If you think best you may fill the following order on the above terms as a begining

Sizes	2	2 1/8	2 1/4	2 3/8	2 1/2	2 5/8	2 3/4	double irons
Doz	5	12	25	8	12	10	5	
4 doz tooth plane irons								

I want the sizes on the ends of the packages but omit the labels on the sides.

Your respectfully

D.R.Barton

I was amazed when I read this. Barton obviously had to have been experiencing problems, and thus send out an S.O.S. for assistance. One wonders if they had labor problems, if there was a shortage of natural resources, whether they made a bad batch of irons, whether they saw a spike in orders, or what. Whatever it was, it lasted for at least 3 months as evidenced by Millner's plea to Providence.

I think it's amusing to note that Barton specifically mentions to Providence Tool Co. not to put their name on the boxes. He obviously didn't want anyone to know that he was using products not of his own manufacture.

Patrick Leach
Just say More to come...
etc.

5059

leach@b... (Patrick Leach)

Sep-02-1996

Re: Bagging the Big Paper...

ecoyle@p... (eric coyle) writes:

>>On Fri, 30 Aug 1996, Patrick Leach wrote:

>>

```
>> >          6 Doz Dbl Plane irons C S 2 1/8 in
>> >          4 Doz Dbl      "      "      " 2 1/2 in
>> >          8 Doz Skew Rabbet irons 1/2 in
>> >          4 Doz do      "      "      ea 1 3/8  1 5/8 in
>> >          24 Doz Soft Moulding irons ea 5/8  6/8 in
>> >          4 Doz do      "      "      " 1 1/8  1 1/2  1 3/4
>>
```

>What are "soft" moulding irons- irons that have been tempered and need to be >profiled, and then hardened again??

Soft irons are those that haven't been tempered, making them easier to shape into the myriad of profiles. This was done through grinding and/or

filing. Once the profile was shaped, the iron was heated, quenched, and then tempered so that it could be honed.

If one were to shape tempered irons, there wouldn't be enough time in the world to do the amount the planemakers supplied.

Patrick Leach

Just say Shaping hard steel is a chore, as some in here can attest.
etc.

5263	leach@b... (Patrick Leach)	Sep-05-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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Gonna try to hack this out prior to my departure for another bout of tuna wishing.

The issue of whom to grant credit to wasn't an easy thing to do, apparently, back in mid-19th century America. Communication was by word of mouth and by snail mail.

The Providence Tool Co. took to corresponding with credit reporting services, who in turn used mole operatives to inform them of the business and personal status of the person or firm in question.

So far, I've come across all sorts of letters written to several different services, but two of them are of interest to planemaking history. Each letter has "Office of the Providence Tool Co." printed on the top to make things look official

The first, dated Nov 14th 1855, inquired about the credit risk of Copeland&Co, founded by Melvin (he not of the Blue Notes fame, but eventually did sent 'blue notes' back to the Company, as we'll see in another installment) Copeland, in the backwater hill town of Huntington, MA.

The letter reads -

James W. Kimball Esq.
Dear Sir,
Please
hand us report of
(Mr's Copeland & Co. Huntington, Mafs)
Plane makers

Yours truly,
J.R.Anthony Treas
By B.D.Slocum

<the credit report, written back on the same letter to the company follows>

Melvin Copeland & Son - Plane makers
April/54 fair risk tho doing pretty business
for their means - mortg'd property to secure
endeavor - both Real & personal. Nov/54 Manuf'rs
Bal sheets called good for wants - has a <can't read>
Gerry Munson Jan/53 to Aug/55 good

Seems like they passed the credit check with flying colors, as the amount of orders from Copeland&Co far outnumber any other planemakers from the era.

The next credit report is about Caleb C. Dresser, the co-founder of Union Tool Co, outta the one-horse hill town of Goshen, MA. Union Tool was another one of the myriad of Western Massachusetts planemaking firms that sprouted up during the mid-19th century. The natural resources of the area - wood for planes, streams for power, and rivers for transportation made it a hotbed of planemaking. Anyway, Union Tool Co. went belly-up, and C.C. was about to strike out on his own.....

The letter, dated Feb 5th, 1857, reads -

James W. Kimball Esq
Boston

Dr Sir,
Will
you please send us your report
of Caleb C. Dresser, Plane Maker, Goshen, MS.

We some time since wrote for informa-
tion of the same party & you were to get
a report of him & notify us. If you
have it, you will oblige by an early
reply

Yours very truly
J.R.Anthony Treas
By W.E.Hine

<the credit report, written back on the same letter to the company follows>

Our corrs'p't writes as follows -
"Has heretofore been cons'd as responsible
for his wants, but some two years ago
he engaged as a partner in the Union
Tool Co. in Goshen - the operation was
rather unsuccessful & several have
managed to have their property covered
in a clandestine way in order to evade
the payment of debts due from the Co.
having others to bear the brunt - in fact
I cannot say that he is perfectly good
& safe"
We have once or twice written
for this name before but having no
corresp't near Goshen were unable to
obtain a report - we hope to be more
more fortunate in answering your
inquiries in future.

There you have it, C.C. was blackballed. Let this be a lesson to
deadbeats everywhere - you can run, but you can't hide, even in farout
Goshen.

Patrick Leach
Just say Contrary to popular belief, I'm not Chim-Chim of Speed Racer fame.
etc.

5273	leach@b... (Patrick Leach)	Sep-05-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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Gonna try to hack this out prior to my departure for another bout
of tuna wishing.

The issue of whom to grant credit to wasn't an easy thing to do,
apparently, back in mid-19th century America. Communication was by
word of mouth and by snail mail.

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porting services, who in turn used mole operatives to inform them
of the business and personal status of the person or firm in question.

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The letter reads -

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Tool Co. in Goshen - the operation was
rather unsuccessful & several have
managed to have their property covered
in a clandestine way in order to evade
the payment of debts due from the Co.
having others to bear the brunt - in fact
I cannot say that he is perfectly good
& safe"
We have once or twice written
for this name before but having no
corresp't near Goshen were unable to
obtain a report - we hope to be more
more fortunate in answering your
inquiries in future.

There you have it, C.C. was blackballed. Let this be a lesson to deadbeats everywhere - you can run, but you can't hide, even in farout Goshen.

Patrick Leach

Just say Contrary to popular belief, I'm not Chim-Chim of Speed Racer fame. etc.

5720	leach@b... (Patrick Leach)	Sep-11-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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So, you wanna be a planemaker? Read on about some of the problems of that profession during the previous century, as experienced by some of the big family names in American planemaking.

The first deals with Phillip Chapin, brother to Hermon, the successful Connecticut planemaker, who was able to ride the gravy train of plane production for a significant amount of time.

Phillip didn't seem to share in his older brother's fortune, as the following letter indicates -

Baltimore Oct 18th 55

Mr Anthony

Dear Sir

I regret that we have not earlier written to you in regard to your bill. It has been owing to extreme difficulty in money matters that I have not paid before. I cannot pay now. I have some heavy payments to meet by the 24th. I wish you to save expense if you can. I cannot pay it. We have done nothing this fall. Shall try & force sales to the middle of Nov. when our fairs are all over. If that does not relieve us shall take some slips to satisfy all claims which I feel we are still able to do.

Respy,

P Chapin & Co.

What's interesting about this letter is that it predates a credit report done to him by Providence Tool Co. The credit report, dated Oct. 23rd, reads -

P. Chapin Plane Manuft.

44 Light St. Baltimore

Oct 23/55 A good honest, industrious, clever man whom we should consider under ordinary circumstances good for any thing he would contract for but we have pretty reliable information that the law suit in which he is engaged will go against him & if so will cripple him considerably. Should however think him good for say 3 or 400 on short time.

Anyone down in 'Ballmer' wanna do some detective work to find out what lawsuit Phillip had filed against him?

The next planemaking family is the Copelands. As I indicated in my previous Providence Tool Co. blathering, Copeland&Co. seem to have

been the largest customer of plane irons from the PTCO. (at least it's shaping up that way).

The Copelands and Hermon Chapin were in bed with each other early on in the two families' planemaking lives. Hermon Chapin eventually assumed the crown of planemaking king in Connecticut, driving the Copelands north to the one horse town of Huntington (Chester Village), Massachusetts. It's in Massachusetts where Copeland&Co was born, and the company rose to be a major manufacturer of planes during the mid-19th century.

The letters of the firm to the PTCO. can probably write a good chunk of the planemaking company's history. There are some very interesting letters, which really shed some light on the company's operations, including its demise.

During the mid 1850's, the company appears to be going like gang busters and having difficulty securing irons, as the following letters indicate -

Chester Village March 22/54
 Providence Tool Co.
 Gentlemen,
 Yours of the
 17th inst. came directly to hand.
 We now countermand all orders
 which you have of ours and
 annex a new order which please
 execute as soon as possible
 as we are troubled a great deal
 to get a supply and are often
 obliged to cut down large irons
 for small sizes.
 <order deleted>
 Very Respectfully Yours
 Copeland&Co

Chester Village October 27/54
 Providence Tool Co.
 Gents,
 We now
 nearly completed a large
 order for South America
 in which order there are a
 large number of Plows
 for which we have not
 bits. Is it a possible thing
 for you to send us fifty
 sets next week.
 An immediate reply
 will greatly oblige.
 Yours Respectfully,
 Copeland&Co.

One wonders (at least this one does) whether the ploughs are still down there intact or whether some of the autochthons of the rain forest primeval ripped them to shreds to use as curare-tipped darts puffed into the hides of unsuspecting capybaras?

Anyway, back to the saga. Seems as though the PTCO. came through for the desperate hill folk....

Chester Village October 31/54
 Providence Tool Co.
 Gentlemen,
 Yours of
 the 28th inst. is to hand which
 sends to revive our drooping
 spirits. To think we can
 send our orders as soon as
 completed not being oblige
 to wait for irons.
 You will annex to our

orders the following
sizes of Tooth Irons which
we should like soon.

1 Doz each 2, 2 1/8, & 2 1/4 incn

Yours Respectfully,
Copeland&Co.

The joy of Oct 31 appears to be short-lived, as the urgency to
secure more irons is back just 1.5 months later -

Chester Village Decr. 16 1854
Providence Tool Co.

Gents,

Please send
us immediately, if possible,
12 Doz Match Iron 1 3/4" wide & 5/16 groove,
& 12 Doz Bits to match.

If you cannot send all now, but
can a part, please do so & send the
balance as soon as you can.

Please write on recpt. of this
as we must have some from
some quarter at once.

We have a decided preference
for your make, and have all our
patterns &c adapted to them.

Respecty. Yours
Copeland&Co.

Last evening, I came across some very interesting letters from
the Copeland&Co, while they were on their deathbed. The letters are
from 1861, during the summer. I've yet to read them all, but the
company has obviously entered an agreement with PTCO. in an attempt
to stave off creditors and remain in business.

On June 5th, the two companies come to an agreement where the PTCO.
agrees "to receive 33 1/3% in planes or plane irons at the factory
at cash prices, or note for 20% pd in one year with interest." This
agreement is scribbled by an employee of PTCO. at the bottom of a
letter from Copeland&Co in which they offer terms. It appears that
PTCO. was doing anything they could to keep the company solvent.
Perhaps it was PTCO.'s inability to get plane irons out the door
fast enough to satisfy the demands of Copeland&Co that led to, or
hastened, the failure of the company.

The arrangement didn't last long, as the company finally succumbed
in August of that year. Copeland&Co appears to have also entered
into some agreement with Humphryville Manufacturing Co., another
maker of plane irons, to whom they also were indebted. I hope to
uncover more letters that fill in the blanks for the relationship
of the three companies.

A letter by Melvin Copeland's son, spells out the final act of
the company -

Huntington Septbr 6th 1861

Mr. J.B.Anthony

Dear Sir,

Above please find a copy
of the writing given me in Springfield. I also enclose
invoice of Planes, Irons, Unwrought material &c
Bill of contents, and bill of my expenses & expenditures.

The goods amount to more than the invoice, but
I have made a true copy of the inventory which
you saw in the book. From this stock I have
retained the square rabbet irons also the cornice irons.
The amount of the Planes sent is considerable more
than the invoice enclosed. The packing of Planes & Irons
I have attended to myself, also marking the cases. The services
which I required were in moving the timber and shipping
the goods. This job has been the hardest & sadest job
I ever attempted, it is a final breaking up of a business
established by my father and one which has given a support.

Now it is finished, and I am to try a new and different trade.

In all probability there will be considerable stir among some of the creditors when they find those goods moving toward the depot and I should not be surprised if they were attached before night and detained here in the cars. In that case Mr. Way will probably make a demand. The goods are to be shipped via Hudson, and unless molested will be on their way tomorrow morning. Which I hope will reach you in due season and in good order, and I most earnestly hope that you will be successful in disposing of the goods, and in the end be benefitted by the transaction.

Yours Very Respectfully,
E.P.Copeland

I've just gotten into this wad of paper, and it seems that a pissing contest between PTCO., Humphreyville, and William Way, the hardware merchant of New York City, is about to erupt. I've gotta put all the pieces of the puzzle together yet.

One other thing worth mentioning - It's probably failures of plane-making businesses that led to the double struck makers' marks that are sometimes found on planes. PTCO. was a manufacturer of iron products, not set up to distribute wooden planes. My hunch is that they sold the 'spoils' of the Copeland&Co. to some other maker or hardware company, and let them distribute them. The last planes out of Huntington were likely already stamped with Copeland&Co, and instead of cutting off the toe to remove their mark, the distributor would whack his imprint over the insolvent company's.

Patrick Leach

Just say If anyone finds this boring, email me and I'll stop posting it.
etc.

5728	seskfur5@i...	Sep-11-1996	RE: BAGGING THE BIG PAPER...
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Patrick Leach wrote..

<megasnip of intrigue and beat the receiver stuff>

>Just say If anyone finds this boring, email me and I'll stop posting it.
>etc. -

I hope that *most* of the list will agree that the doings of early planemakers related by our noble historian is fascinating, and please don't stop. This is like what I thort the oldtool list wud be full of.

Richard

5730	tonyseo@p... (Anthony Seo)	Sep-11-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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>Patrick Leach

>Just say If anyone finds this boring, email me and I'll stop posting it.
>etc.

Don't you dare!

One is an interest, two is a collection, three is an obsession!

(Then why do I have 95 gimlets.....)

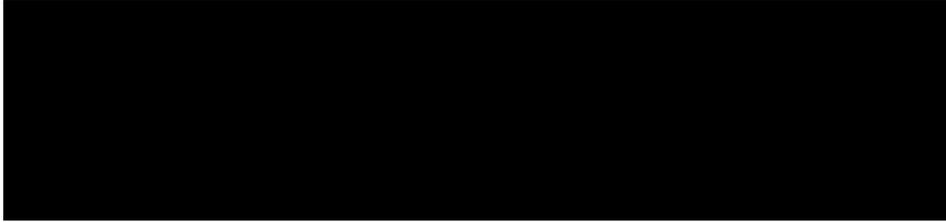
5735	gisjef@i... (jason fink - isd 39)	Sep-11-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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>Patrick Leach
 >Just say If anyone finds this boring, email me and I'll stop posting it.
 >etc

Even though I'm a metallic plane freak, and not interested in getting wooden planes (yet), I find this correspondence fascinating. I'm sure many others on the list do as well.

Keep it coming Patrick!

-jas



5737	Steve Turadek <turadek@c...>	Sep-11-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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boring? hell no.

I remember a few years ago there were a couple of best sellers consisting of insidiously vacant love letters between Sabine and someone else. (uh, I think one of the correspondents was supposed to be in the imagination of the other, actually.) my SWMBO of those days totally dug those books, and, from the looks of it, so did millions of others. ('course, millions of people bought "Bridges of Madison County" and those William Bennet books too.) once when we were having a particularly bad time I threatened to publish a transcript of our email, and she nearly jumped a bridge.

there's something fascinating about reading other people's mail.

> So, you wanna be a planemaker? Read on about some of the problems of
 >that profession during the previous century, as experienced by some of
 >the big family names in American planemaking.

<tear out>

>-----
 >Patrick Leach
 >Just say If anyone finds this boring, email me and I'll stop posting it.
 >etc.



5742	RPolinski@g... (Richard E. Polin)	Sep-11-1996	RE: BAGGING THE BIG PAPER...
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Please keep posting. These documents are very interesting and helpful. You are providing a great service to everyone.

5743	Tim Swihart <tim.swihart@a...>	Sep-11-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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>Patrick Leach
 >Just say If anyone finds this boring, email me and I'll stop posting it.
 >etc.

If anybody's finding this boring, they're on the wrong list... :-)

Keep it coming, please.
 Tim S.

5749	Jerry Serviss <serviss@e...>	Sep-11-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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>
>
>>Patrick Leach
>>Just say If anyone finds this boring, email me and I'll stop posting it.
>>etc
>

It is a great insight to history. Keep it up.

I just wish that I could understand
what some of these guys were trying to say. :)

Jerry

5759	rburton@v... (Richard Burton)	Sep-11-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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snip

> Last evening, I came across some very interesting letters from
>the Copeland&Co, while they were on their deathbed. The letters are
>from 1861, during the summer. I've yet to read them all, but the
>company has obviously entered an agreement with PTCO. in an attempt
>to stave off creditors and remain in business.

>
>Perhaps it was PTCO.'s inability to get plane irons out the door
>fast enough to satisfy the demands of Copeland&Co that led to, or
>hastened, the failure of the company.
>

Here is a quote from the history of the Disston company that may be
related to similar problems that plane iron makers may have had in 1861:

"The Morrill tariff of 1861 added to Disston's profit margin by placing
import taxes on iron entering the country. Saw-makers who had not built
their own steel mills were virtually put out of business by this act."

This must have also effected plane iron makers that used imported steel.

Richard Burton

5763	"Alan N. Graham" <agraham@m...>	Sep-11-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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Patrick Leach wrote

>Just say If anyone finds this boring, email me and I'll stop posting it.

This is fascinating background. Please keep posting excerpts.

Just say (TM) another east coast hurricane has been arranged to give you
time to catch up on your reading, rather than your tuna.

6084	leach@b... (Patrick Leach)	Sep-17-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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While moving some of the boxes in which the PTCO. stuff is stashed,
I happened to notice something in one of them. Its timing was amazing
with my having just received a tool auction catalog. More on this below.

One of the cool things within all this paper is that there are many
letters written by the company's salesmen, which got sent back to the
company. These letters offer a different perspective on the planemakers,
a perspective no planemaker would ever make visible in their own
letters to the company.

One salesman, James Hutchinson, worked the Connecticut River Valley,
filing orders for all sorts of trades. Some fascinating information is
presented through his hand in two letters written two days apart (Jan.
21 and Jan 23) in 1852.

The first letter reads (uppercase letters indicate underlined words):

Hartford 12 O'clock Jany 21 1852

Rufus Waterman Esq.

Treas'r &c

Dr Sir We have just arrived here from Springfield after a hard fight of three days with delays from snow & breaking down - It is so late we cannot wait to give any account of our journey and can only give a short account of our doings. We have seen Mr. Parker of the Conway Tool Co. who says the note shall be paid within the week. They are nearly ready to start their works and will send orders in a very few weeks. Parker says he would buy all of us if he could have his way, "but to tell the truth Dwights & French own 30 shares of the stock and think they have a claim." More on our return or when we have more time to write. We gave 35% & 30%. Kellogg of Amherst is VERY WELL PLEASED and will give all the orders he can. We have today seen N. Chapin who says there is no irons made in the U.S. equal to ours and nothing better anywhere else, and he is doing much for us among the merchants. A VERY FINE OLD MAN.

<rest of letter, dealing with hardware, omitted>

Very Respy Yours
James Hutchinson

This letter is interesting for the mention of Dwights&French, the New Haven competition to the P.T.Co., having a vested interest in the Conway Tool Co. It seems that Conway Tool Co, was not free to choose whichever iron manufacturer they wished, but were tied to a specific one as their source. Conway Tool Co. didn't have a long relationship with Dwights&French, however, since the buildings burnt down a few years later. From the ashes of the former company left forth the wooden plane giant, Greenfield Tool Co.

The contents of the next letter from Mr. Hutchinson surprised the hell out of me as I read it:

Ther. 20 below 0

Winsted Jany 23, 1852

Rufus Waterman Esq
Treas.

Dr Sir we arrived here last evening from Hartford & Pine Meadow.

<hardware related stuff omitted>

We found Mr. Chapin in Pine Meadow in very good humor, but not in present want of irons. He is making a very large lot of 2nd qlty planes for Way&Sherman and takes his pay in irons which enables him to work up all his poor stock, but for 1st qlty planes he and all others we have seen will use P.T.Co irons - they stand high! We have just seen the Winsted Co. and find them exactly like Chapin - making 2d qlty planes and from what we have seen the P.T.Co will have to make the same kind of irons in order to compete. It can easily be done, which will enable us to keep our best irons as present priced. We will show what they are on our return. They are sold at 40%. This Co. will want irons in the spring. Chapin is making 2400 and Winsted Co 1700 planes for W&S all of 2nd qlty.

<rest of letter omitted>

Very Respy Yours
James Hutchinson

What's interesting about this letter is that Way&Sherman, a very large hardware store located in New York City, is selling second quality planes. The planes I've seen stamped by the hardware company seem to be good ones, certainly as good as any made during the later part of the century. It's also interesting to note that the salesman is telling P.T.Co. that they are going to have to introduce a lower quality line of plane irons to remain competitive (to whom is not apparent).

To the south, in Baltimore, S.A.Nightingale was attempting to sell the company's products. In his letter to the company, S.A. seems semi--hopeful, somewhat sarcastic, and possibly desparate to get out of Baltimore for the more fertile feeding grounds to the north:

Baltimore Feby 17th/52
Providence Tool Co.
Rufus Waterman Esq.
Treasurer
Gentlemen

Below please find two small orders one from Harris&Borther to assort their stock of hinges & to give your plane irons a try, which if they give satisfaction they will order largely from you.

The other from Hopkins, Lake & Harden is for the same purpose & if they can sell them will give you all their orders in the fall. They have just received a large lot of Butcher Irons for the spring trade but would rather sell American if their customers will buy them.

I have now talked with most of the hardware dealers & can see no reason why you cannot have almost the whole of the hardware trade here by the time we get another Whig President. In your letter of 10th inst. you mention that I could return to

Providence before

trying the New York Market again, but as far as my feelings are concerned I should much prefer seeing the trade at once as there is very little doing at present. I could have more time with them & perhaps obtain a few orders that would otherwise be sent to D&F Co. or some or some other sharper who is doing his best to make a handsome iron but don't know how.

<rest of letter omitted>

Yours With Respect
S.A.Nightingale

The part about the Whig President cracked me up - those guys musta be going nuts while Millard Fillmore was sitting in the White House (I wonder what the letter would have read if the current squatter of the same house was pretending to be presidential back then?).

Switching gears, a letter from Melvin Copeland follows:

Chester Village March 3 1852

Providence Tool Co.

Gents,

I have on hand quite a quantity of English Plane Irons, Single; and among them several dozen that are cut, designed for caps.

Now as there is scarcely any call for Single Iron Planes, this stock is lying useless on hand. It has occurred to me that I can make them available if the caps can be supplied.

Will you be so good as to furnish me with the caps, at a fair price, for the

different widths? I can send for such widths as I want, and fit them to the irons myself.

Your early answer will much oblige

Yours Respectfully,
Melvin Copeland

<the following is written on the letter>
<by an employee of P.T.Co. >

Answered March 4 saying we would supply him. If the edges are <can't read> to be half price. If not <can't read> to be at list price. Direct as our Plane Irons.

Ol' Melvin didn't want to waste anything, in typical Yankee fashion it seems. Reagardless of his intent, the letter does offer proof that double irons (i.e. those that use a cap iron) had become standard by the mid-19th century due to the cleaner cut they yield.

The last letter floored me, when I noticed it on the top of a bundle of letters. The letter offers some insight into just how crazy things were back in mid-19th century PRINY (the FBI could have a field day analyzing this dude's rambling tone):

Ithaca Oct. 2nd 1856

J.B.Anthony
Providence

Sir

Your delayed note of Sept. 24th was recd by me today. I supposed that I informed you by my first that I was at present at Ithaca not Dundee.

In consequence of your long delay I wrote you again on the 29th Sept.

I had calculated sir that any emergency of the character which seems to have given rise to the delay (might there any such exist) was provided for in my proposition that should you not deem it satisfactory to deal on time I would deal for the present order at cash and should you of been so apprehensive as not to of ventured the goods on my promise of immediate remittance. Should you not properly have sent the bill with information that the goods might be shipped upon the receipt of the amt thereof. No NEW YORKER SIR EVER LOST TO EXCEED THE AMT OF A POSTAGE STAMP BY ME. Seymour & Marshall are the only persones there with whom I have a business acquaintance and I never was refused a farthing of goods from either of them at my own proposed terms. I suppose Mr. M. would like to sell some more of his bungling bad ground irons but he will not do so with me unless he shows a decidedly improved sample and should I ever receive any of yours and they compare in any respect with those made at present by the Humphreysville Co. you may calculate most assuredly they will be returned. But I may enquire how am I to receive of your goods. It is not customary I think to remit payment before receiving a BILL. Now Sir do not understand that I am extremely anxious IN THIS MATTER. I am not necessitated to purchase of you. I am aware that there is not a monopoly of the plane iron manufactory but I had seen some of your goods and like the style therefore I thought it worth while to try a small order. Just act your pleasure with reference to sending the goods, the bill, or no deal.

Yours &c
M.B.Tidey

I wish to be understood that by remitting your bill I will return cash whereupon you can venture of course with satisfaction the shipment but I want the irons ground and polished complete on the upper side and unstamped, but relative to the extra expence of which please inform beforehand.

Anyone know who this psycho is?

Seriously, this guy is friggin nuts! We all know how difficult it is to communicate over the wires without pissing someone off, but imagine opening this guy's letter and reading his spew? Would you have sent him irons on credit?

Anyway, this psycho is the guy who is purported to have been the inspiration for Gage's planes - Tidey held a patent that eventually was refined to become a very popular plane. Tidey also held a patent for a strange double bevelling plane, which resembles a plough plane. One look at it, after reading this letter, offers enough proof that the guy was a sandwich short of a picnic. Although, Tidey will have the last laugh since his ebony version of the plane, as featured on the cover of an upcoming tool auction catalog, is guess-timated to fetch 20-28k!

 Patrick Leach
 Just say There's a fine line between genius and insanity.
 etc.

6252	leach@b... (Patrick Leach)	Sep-19-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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Today's installment of the neverending (seemingly) saga of PTCO deals with some feedback the planemakers sent the company regarding their product. The Copeland boys will be leading off (uppercase letters indicate underlines in the original letter)....

Chester Village January 12th 1852
 Providence Tool Co.

Gentlemen

Please add to the order sent last week, unless you have sent those already.
 8 doz ea Dbl Plane Irons 2-2 1/8-2 3/8-2 3/4 & 6 doz 2 5/8"
 8 doz soft Moulding Irons ea 7/8- 1 1/4-1 3/8 & 1 3/4"
 Skew Rabbet Irons 6 Doz ea 1 7/8 & 2 1/4

I should prefer the Rabbet Irons not TEMPERED as we are obliged to draw the temper to work them and then temper them again. I find that the irons tempered and worked in this way are more likely to crack when tempered the second time than those not tempered. If you are oblige to make many of these irons now ordered please send a part of each kind as soon as possible, the double irons particularly

Yours Respectfully
 Melvin Copeland
 By E.P.Copeland

Interesting this, the fact that they find the irons prone to cracking after they re-temper. This may want to make you think twice about drawing the temper, grinding, then tempering molding plane irons in the future.

Next, Greenfield Tool Co. sent the following.....

Greenfield March 17, 1852
 Providence Tool Co

After examining the match irons and bits you sent us we find we cannot use them without making anew our back goods for making matchplanes. Therefore have thot best to return all except the 1 3/4x5/16. Those are right & we can work them. At the earliest opportunity we will make patterns & send you exactly what we want. One thing I will mention, the bitt of your match iron is too long. We cannot use in match planes a bitt longer than than 2 inches and the slot is cut 1/4 inch too far up. One inch

is enough & |-----+-----+
 +-----+-----+ +-----+-----+

not exceed 1 1/8 inch, and the
 bitts should be bevelled back from the

	1 inch	
+-----+		+-----+
	2 inches	
+-----+		+-----+

face the same as the best plow bitts so that they will not bind. I have marked one bundle thus (Examine). This is the only dozen that I have opened & I find only one bitt in the whole dozen that will work. I suppose you know the bitt stands square in the plane & not on a skew like a skew rabbet.

Yours Respectfully
 Greenfield Tool Co.
 A. Parker Agt.

In this letter, Parker is complaining about the grooving iron, or as they called it back then, a bitt. These irons are tapered over their length, as well as being a uniform width over their length, unlike the tonguing iron, as sketched on the letter, which is usually, or nearly, parallel (an equal thickness over its length). It seems odd to me that the "bitts" could be too long (perhaps they were too thick at their business end, making it impossible for them to fit between the front and rear skates, or plates, of the plane).

It is interesting to read that the "bitts" were not bevelled. Like plough irons and joiner's morticing chisels (the pigsticker variety), a grooving iron has a cross-section that is trapezoidal so that only a small area of its sides makes contact with the wood. If it were square in cross-section, the iron would cause significant binding due a combination of the iron's thickness and the depth of cut by the plane.

John Reed, he of horrible writing fame, sends his thoughts on PTCO's irons....

Utica July 28 1847

Mr William Field

Sir i want the following articles as soon as you can send them as i have become very short

2 in	---	2 doz
2 1/8	---	4 "
all double	2 1/4	---
	2 1/2	---
	2 5/8	---
		5 "

Your bench plane irons now stands as well here as and english or any other irons i find. So few that wants any other i do not now buy any but yours. Your moulding irons makes trouble on account of bad grinding and to wide shanks. They are about all a little rounding across and lengthwise which is the difficulty. They should be full toward the edge and sides. i should be glad to get all the articles of you together. i cannot take the soft rabbet irons. i should be willing to pay a little more to have them tempered and the edges ground. The right edge on a bevil. can't you furnish some plow bitts.

yours respectfully John Reed

Reed's complaint here is that the widest portion of each molding iron is not a uniform thickness, preventing it from bedding properly over its area. This is important so that the iron doesn't rock side to side during use, that the iron won't chatter, and that the iron will stay wedged firmly in place.

Phillip Chapin sent the following letter to the company....

Baltimore March 24

Gentlemen

Enclosed you will please find a small order for plane irons. I suggested

to your agt when in Balto. some of my ideas in regard to your irons. Of course they are only the ideas of one altho I have been selling planes upwards of twenty years at 30 or 40 perct higher than those makers who consume most of your irons. Of course you will make what use you please of it. All I DEMAND of you is the BEST ARTICLE you make or SEND.

The 2 1/4 & 2 3/8 irons are about the right proportion. The 2 3/4 are about 1 in too short. The 1 3/4 are full one inch too long. The screws in the cap are too delicate as some have already failed. The cap should be lighter toward the top so as not to spring the cutting part so much in screwing it injures the bed of the bit. If the top corners were an oblong mitre it would relieve the fore finger which always rests upon the bit when working a jack plane and sometimes a fore plane. The plow bits are too short for our best plows as our plates are 1/4" deeper than eastern make, not for the depth we plow but to make a better eye to clear itself. To meet our ideas fully the steel should not be less in the smaller irons than now and should be proportionally increased on the larger ones.

P. Chapin & Co.

Some neat stuff in this letter. I wonder how those proponents of the "cap iron's function is to stiffen and straighten the iron" will react. Any of you in the viewing audience with this thought care to comment?

The other neat thing is Chapin describing that their plough planes are different from the "eastern" design, meaning those made in New York and New England. The plate, or skate, the part of the plough on which the iron rests and acts as the plane's sole, is taller on Chapin's ploughs. He feels that this design makes for better shaving ejection, by allowing the cutout, or "eye" as he called it, between the two plates (recall that there is one forward of the iron and one rearward) to be larger. I've never had a problem ploughing with the "eastern" design, where the shaving tend to jam in the "eye". Have others?

It's also interesting that the proper plane grip, where the fore finger is not wrapped around the handle, but is extended forward, is mentioned in the letter. Nice of Phillip to be concerned about blistered or cut fingers from sharp edges (sides) of the iron.

Patrick Leach
Just say More later.
etc.

6267

Steve Turadek <turadek@c...>

Sep-19-1996

Re: Bagging the Big Paper...

Patrick,

I think you've unearthed the earliest known example of ascii-art.

At 5:06 AM -0700 9/19/96, Patrick Leach wrote:

```
> bitt of your match iron is too long. We cannot
> use in match planes a bitt longer than than 2 inches
> and the slot is cut 1/4 inch too far up. One inch
```

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>
> is enough & |-----+
>
> not exceed 1 1/8 inch, and the | | 1 inch
>
> bitts should be bevelled back from the | 2 inches |
```

> +-----+
 > face the same as the best plow bitts so that
 > they will not bind. I have marked one bundle

6317	leach@b... (Patrick Leach)	Sep-20-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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Before I scribble in today's PTCO junk, I need to clarify something about yesterday's. I dicked up with my description of the one sent by Greenfield Tool Co., the one where they complained about the iron being too long. I had misread the thing (it's easy to do since punctuation was a foreign concept to these guys, and because of the loose use of the terminology, where "bitt" and "match iron" are used interchangeably). The complaint was about the tonguing iron, not the grooving iron.

Those Copeland boys have provided me with some of the best entertainment I've had since watching a John Waters/Divine picture-flick marathon years ago. It seems as though everyday, something was happening around the greater Huntington planemaking metroplex.

Chester Village July 2nd 1845
 Mr William Field

Dear Sir

Your favor of the 4th March last, with card sample of soft moulding irons &c were recd. But expecting to see you soon, I neglected to write, as I otherwise should have done.

I like the appearance of your irons, and am glad that you are prosecuting the business of making them with so much success. Their USE must be introduced by those who use planes; the manufacturer being obliged in a measure to conform to the wishes of his customers. If your irons prove good, as I doubt not they may, and the price is satisfactory, you will soon find a demand for all you can make.

As I sell most of my planes to wholesale importing merchants, I have to put in such irons as they direct. And it is generally for their interest to have imported irons used.

Respectfully Yours
 Melvin Copeland

Odd that Melvin took to stating the obvious (high quality at an affordable price will make Joe Businessdude very busy) to the company. Perhaps PTCO. was just starting its manufacture of the irons at this time, and solicited input from some established planemakers; Melvin may have been one of the company's earliest guinea pigs.

The last paragraph of the letter is sorta confusing to me. Does Melvin mean that he's selling planes abroad (recall the letter I posted about their sending plough planes to South America), and that the merchants want American irons? Or, is Melvin selling the planes to merchants within USofA and who prefer English irons? It's odd that the merchants are calling the shots about the irons. One would have assumed that the planemakers were the best informed about which irons were the best.

The next letter is really two letters in one, with the first being an order, and the second, well, the second offering some hint at the perils of mid-19th century planemaking.

Huntington Aug 2 1854
 The Providence Tool Co.
 Will please send us the
 following plane irons
 12 Doz Ea 2 2 1/8 & 2 1/4 Dbl
 6 " " 2 3/8 & 2 1/2

2 " " 1 1/2 & 1 3/4 Sgl
 6 " Ea Moulding Irons
 1/2 5/8 3/4 7/8 1 3/4 & 1 7/8

Respectfully Yours
 Copeland & Co.
 per J.J.Bowles

Mr J.B.Anthony,
 Sir
 Mr E.P.Copeland wishes
 me to say to you that
 he will write to you
 in a few days: or as
 soon as he is able.
 He had the misfortune
 a short time since to saw
 his fingers and has not
 been able to write since.

Your truly
 J.J.Bowles

And now it's time to take a moment to talk about shop safety. Be sure to read, understand, and follow the instructions that come with your power tools. Knowing how to operate them safely will prevent injury. And remember, the most important lesson to learn is to wear these, safety glasses.

 Patrick Leach
 Just say S.W.Palmer's letters are next.
 etc.

6321	"Scott E. Post" <spost@k...>	Sep-20-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
> From: leach@b... (Patrick Leach) > > And now it's time to take a moment to talk about shop safety. Be sure > to read, understand, and follow the instructions that come with your > power tools. Knowing how to operate them safely will prevent injury. > And remember, the most important lesson to learn is to wear these, > safety glasses. Did anyone else spill their morning coffee upon discovering that Patrick has this mantra memorized? -- Scott "disillusioned" Post spost@k...			

6336	geoff@b...West.Sun.COM (Geoff Ki	Sep-20-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
> > > > And now it's time to take a moment to talk about shop safety. Be sure > > to read, understand, and follow the instructions that come with your > > power tools. Knowing how to operate them safely will prevent injury. > > And remember, the most important lesson to learn is to wear these, > > safety glasses. > > Did anyone else spill their morning coffee upon discovering that Patrick > has this mantra memorized? > What's the fuss? Wasn't that taken from a 1857 letter from N. Abrams Sr. to Providence Tool Co? Yeah, that's it. Sure. Geoffrey Kimbrough IT69 Just say be careful around those waterfall-powered machine shops.			

6339	Michael D Sohn <msda+@andrew.cmu	Sep-20-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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Re: Bagging the Big Paper... by Patrick Leach@b... :

> Mr E.P.Copeland wishes
 > me to say to you that
 > he will write to you
 > in a few days: or as
 > soon as he is able.
 > He had the misfortune
 > a short time since to saw
 > his fingers and has not
 > been able to write since.

I find this interesting. This suggests that Copeland didn't saw with his writing hand. I wonder if he was ambidextrous. I for one HAVE to saw with my strongest (and writing) hand. How about you guys. Do you hold with the opposite had?

Mike

6346	Mark van Roojen <msv@u...>	Sep-20-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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At 06:22 AM 9/20/96 -0400, Patrick Leach wrote:

> I like the appearance of your irons,
 > and am glad that you are prosecuting the
 > business of making them with so much
 > success. Their USE must be introduced
 > by those who use planes; the manufacturer
 > being obliged in a measure to conform to
 > the wishes of his customers. If your irons
 > prove good, as I doubt not they may, and
 > the price is satisfactory, you will soon find
 > a demand for all you can make.

> As I sell most of my planes to wholesale
 > importing merchants, I have to put in such
 > irons as they direct. And it is generally for
 > their interest to have imported irons used.

> Respectfully Yours
 > Melvin Copeland

> Odd that Melvin took to stating the obvious (high quality at an
 > affordable price will make Joe Businessdude very busy) to the company.
 > Perhaps PTCo. was just starting its manufacture of the irons at this
 > time, and solicited input from some established planemakers; Melvin may
 > have been one of the company's earliest guinea pigs.

> The last paragraph of the letter is sorta confusing to me. Does Melvin
 > mean that he's selling planes abroad (recall the letter I posted about
 > their sending plough planes to South America), and that the merchants
 > want American irons? Or, is Melvin selling the planes to merchants within
 > USofA and who prefer English irons? It's odd that the merchants are calling
 > the shots about the irons. One would have assumed that the planemakers were
 > the best informed about which irons were the best.

I take him to be offering an excuse for not buying more irons from PTC. He says the irons are good and will soon catch on, but that plane buyers dictate the market for makers and hence he has to buy imported (British) irons to please the end users who pass their preferences on to the retail merchant. If this is to change, he thinks the end users must be better educated about the quality of domestic products.

That's how it looks to me.

Wonderful info, as usual.

Mark

[REDACTED]

6351	geoff@b...West.Sun.COM (Geoff Ki	Sep-20-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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> Re: Bagging the Big Paper... by Patrick Leach@b... :
> > Mr E.P.Copeland wishes me to say to you that he will
> > write to you in a few days: or as soon as he is able.
> > He had the misfortune a short time since to saw his
> > fingers and has not been able to write since.
>
> I find this interesting. This suggests that Copeland didn't saw with
> his writing hand. I wonder if he was ambidextrous. I for one HAVE to
> saw with my strongest (and writing) hand. How about you guys. Do you
> hold with the opposite had?
>

It probably means he's left-handed. Many lefties were *forced* by their teachers to write right-handed regardless of their natural tendencies. I almost fell victim to this practice myself. (fortunately, my Mother came down to the school and read them the riot act. Still, though I'm left-handed with pen, saw, or chisel, I'm righthanded with a baseball or bat, because none of the kids on my block were lefties.

6352	James Foster x2912 <jaf@h...>	Sep-20-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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>
> I find this interesting. This suggests that Copeland didn't saw with
> his writing hand. I wonder if he was ambidextrous. I for one HAVE to
> saw with my strongest (and writing) hand. How about you guys. Do you
> hold with the opposite had?

My writing hand is my left one. My strongest one is my right. I'm not as ambi as I used to be, but then I practised it more when I was younger. Generally I'm right sided for most things except writing and eating. I'm not too bad with a hammer in either hand though I'm better with the right. I don't saw very well left handed. Hmmm, I don't know what "hand" I use for chiseling. I've never thought about it. I think I mostly use my left hand but switch pretty easily. Should have put this in my bio, I guess. B^)

6370	tkissam@c... (Todd Kissam)	Sep-20-1996	Re: Bagging the Big Paper...
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At 01:48 PM 9/20/96 -0400, you wrote:
>Re: Bagging the Big Paper... by Patrick Leach@b... :
>> Mr E.P.Copeland wishes
>> me to say to you that
>> he will write to you
>> in a few days: or as
>> soon as he is able.
>> He had the misfortune
>> a short time since to saw
>> his fingers and has not
>> been able to write since.
>
>I find this interesting. This suggests that Copeland didn't saw with his
>writing hand. I wonder if he was ambidextrous. I for one HAVE to saw
>with my
>strongest (and writing) hand. How about you guys. Do you hold with the
>opposite had?
>
>Mike
>

They did have machines - so it may have been pre-normie stuff that did his hand in.

Or you may have just caught them in a "check is in the mail" type

of excuse.

Todd

8513	"Independence Tools" <leach@i...	Oct-27-1996	Re: Bagging the big paper...
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Next installment of PTCO. The first one has nothing to do with tools, directly, so I hope none of you get cheesed off at me for entering it. I just thought it would be kinda sorta cool to read other stuff that the company had sent to them.

Aurora Ill, Aug. 3 1860
Providence Tool Co.

Gentlemen, I am informed by the Providence Rivet Co. that my letter to them with model of skate have been handed over for your inspection, & that you have every facility for doing work of this kind, & that if all the difficulties which will be found to spring up in their manufacture can be successfully overcome the business will be large enough to draw to it your careful & energetic attention??

From the experience I have had in manufacturing shovels & other business requiring the use of swedging & cutting dies I am under the impression that there will be no great difficulty in manufacturing the skate successfully.

I have had several applicants for the patent & some offers, but have not closed in with any yet, not being fully satisfied of their ability to do justice to the business. Should you think favourable of it I would like to have an offer for the patent in the shape of a present BONUS & a tariff of a certain percentage on the amount manufactured till the expiration of the patent.

Presuming it would be in your line to get up the tools for manufacturing the skate & that you can get them up as cheap & perfect as any other parties, in order that I may answer enquiries made by applicants for the patent, I would like to know what price you can get them up for.

To begin the business, one power press will answer for cutting blanks & punching the rivet and strap holes - one drop press for swedging. Three pair of dies will be required to one size. About five sizes of the skate will be required - 2=4=6=8=&10 corresponding with the shoemakers sizes. Besides these there will be required a small lathe for countersinking, a milling lathe for rounding strap pins, riveting tools, vices, &ct grindstones emery wheels, skeling trough, tempering furnace, oil bath, &ct. but the latter will not be in your line.

By having two power presses for cutting blanks, the business may be doubled in amount.

It is my impression that an outlay of \$600 in tools will be capable of making a corresponding amount of business per week.

The object of most of the skate patents within the last few years seems to have been more for NOVELTY than improvement

without regard to cost.
 Mine was wholly for IMPROVEMENT
 by cheapening the article without
 depreciating its quality.

There have been 43 patents for
 for skates & skate fastenings taken out
 within the last 10 years & not one
 of which I can learn, for the object
 of cheapening the price & retaining the quality
 except mine.

Hoping to hear from you
 by return of mail. I subscribe myself
 yours respectfully,

Wm Scarlett

In case it ain't obvious, Mr. Scarlett is a patentee of ice
 skates, and he's looking for someone to manufacture them. This
 searching for a manufacturer by a patentee was commonplace back
 in the last century. For example, Otis Smith, a gun manufacturer,
 made the Fale's Patent Plane.

One of Fitchburg's finest (no, not the dude who invented the
 pink plastic flamingo, who, as those of us local to the anal pore
 of America all know, was spawned by a fellow from Fitchburg), sent
 the following letter to PTCO, probably in a desperate attempt to
 flee the place.

Fitchburg Dec-10-/54
 Messrs Fields&Waterman -
 Sirs

there was a
 gentleman told me that he thought
 that you did want to hire some
 more grinders to grind chisels if
 you do I should like to come to work
 for you I have ground for several
 years he told me you did make
 chisels and planing irons.
 if you do pleas let me know this weak if
 convenient for you if you do or not
 at this present time. Your Obt Servt
 Pleas let me know your B.A. Bachelor
 terms by the day or job

 Patrick Leach
 Just say Beats the hell out of organ grinding, I suppose.
 etc.

8671

Independence Tools <leach@i...>

Oct-29-1996

Re: Bagging the big paper...

Before tonight's Godzillathon feature, Godzilla vs. Mothra, I
 thought I'd scribble in this letter from a chump planemaker in
 Pennsylvtucky.

Lancaster July 22nd /53
 Providence Tool Co.

Gentlemen,

On receipt of your
 Bill and B/L I was greatly disappointed to find that
 what I most needed you had not sent; and such as I
 least required, more than I ordered. On opening the
 bits I was sorry to discover that many (nearly all) of
 the 2in dble bits were steel cracked which cracks
 you must look sharp to discover as they only develop
 themselves whe you straiten the bit. Many were deeply
 pitted on the face of the steel; so deeply, that I could
 not grind them out; having no steam or water power.
 I ground out a number of them however and return the
 rest with others in which the steel was half an inch
 shorter than the rest. Of the plow bits I will keep 5 sets.

You will recollect I desired you to send me none which were not nice and smooth on the edges. Could you not remedy the pits on the face of the steel? Why are the 2in dble bits more steel cracked than the rest? I also return some 2in dble bits which I received in a former invoice which were steel cracked and another bit which which was too soft & not of your stamp I received in a still earlier order^all of which I forward is by Adam's Express and paid half the freight of 75c as you will see pr check. I must be very particular with my bits as my customers are of the best me-chanics. It affords me the greatest pleasure to recom-mend and introduce your tools among my customers and friends and tell them what gratification it affords me to know that we have as good manufac-turers in our own country as England. This morn-ing a gentleman from the South called on me; who had previously purchased planes containing your bits; he expressed himself much pleased with the irons and purchased again. If you will but send me good bits I am confident I can in time work them exclu-sively. I sell the planes as much lower as you charge less than Butcher which is certainly a great inducement to many, being warranted as good as Butcher's. Please find inclosed check for bits retained and or-der for more bits. Please be careful to send none that are steel cracked or pitted. As I before stated it is exceed-ingly difficult to discover the cracks which are scarce-ly ever perceptible to the naked eye, and only develop themselves when I straighten them. The order is as follows.

<order omitted>

Your Friend
E.W.Carpenter

Please find enclosed a circular explanation of my improvement in planes.

EWC

Patrick Leach
Just Say The circular isn't present :^(
etc.

8677

"Independence Tools" <leach@i...

Oct-29-1996

Re: Bagging the big paper...

Before tonight's Godzillathon feature, Godzilla vs. Mothra, I thought I'd scribble in this letter from a chump planemaker in Pennsylvtuckey.

Lancaster July 22nd /53

Providence Tool Co.

Gentlemen,

On receipt of your Bill and B/L I was greatly disappointed to find that what I most needed you had not sent; and such as I least required, more than I ordered. On opening the bits I was sorry to discover that many (nearly all) of the 2in dble bits were steel cracked which cracks you must look sharp to discover as they only develop themselves whe you straiten the bit. Many were deeply pitted on the face of the steel; so deeply, that I could not grind them out; having no steam or water power. I ground out a number of them however and return the rest with others in which the steel was half an inch shorter than the rest. Of the plow bits I will keep 5 sets. You will recollect I desired you to send me none which were not nice and smooth on the edges. Could you not remedy the pits on the face of the steel? Why are the 2in dble bits more steel cracked than the rest?

I also return some 2in dble bits which I received in a former invoice which were steel cracked and another bit which which was too soft & not of your stamp I received in a still earlier order^all of which I forward is by Adam's Express and paid half the freight of 75c as you will see pr check. I must be very particular with my bits as my customers are of the best me -chanics. It affords me the greatest pleasure to recom -mend and introduce your tools among my customers and friends and tell them what gratification it affords me to know that we have as good manufac -turers in our own country as England. This morn -ing a gentleman from the South called on me; who had previously purchased planes containing your bits; he expressed himself much pleased with the irons and purchased again. If you will but send me good bits I am confident I can in time work them exclu -sively. I sell the planes as much lower as you charge less than Butcher which is certainly a great inducement to many, being warranted as good as Butcher's. Please find inclosed check for bits retained and or -der for more bits. Please be careful to send none that are steel cracked or pitted. As I before stated it is exceed -ingly difficult to discover the cracks which are scarce -ly ever perceptible to the naked eye, and only develop themselves when I straighten them. The order is as follows.

<order omitted>

Your Friend
E.W.Carpenter

Please find enclosed a circular explanation of my improvement in planes.

EWC

Patrick Leach
Just Say The circular isn't present :^(
etc.

8770

"Patrick Leach" <leach@i...>

Oct-31-1996

Re: Bagging the big paper...

Took a break from packing JoeyB's Barnes' Velocipede jigsaw, so I thought I'd hack in some PTCO stuff. It's either that, or watching The Jerry Springer Show, where today's topic is Female Chain Gangs (despite the fact that there's something rather erotic about dames in chains). ooh, er....

Today's PTCO is the follow-up that E.W.Carpenter sent to PTCO, just a mere 6 days after the date of the one I posted earlier in the week. It's amazing to me that Carpenter could send his first letter on the 22nd, have PTCO. respond, and then his firing off another letter on the 28th. Quite remarkable considering the distance between Lancaster, Pennsylvtucky and Rhode Island, about 300 miles as the crow flies.

Lancaster July 28th /53

Providence Tool Co.

Gentlemen,

Your favor of the 25th containing returned check was rec'd this day. I confess I was somewhat surprised by its tenor. In reply I can only say that the test you complain of I have employed more than thirty years with un -varying success and satisfaction to myself my customers and agents from whom I purchase my bits; and have ever had the privelege of returning such as proved unfit for use. I must therefore de -cline changing my test. The absence of complaint from other parties can easily be explained as they neither try or grind their irons (generally speaking) as

I do. You say it is utterly impossible to have the edges perfectly smooth, which I am quite willing to admit but at the same time know that they might be more so than they are. It is only of the sights of the plow bits that I complained. Of the rest I only spoke as being pitted and steel cracked and round on the face. The curve on the face can easily be remedied if the steel is solid. This is a general fault with all bits and one for which I do not blame you. It appeared strange that the 2 in. Dble Irons are more steel cracked than all the rest combined. I ground out many shallow pits but the deeper required to much labor. A bit which is not steel cracked will bear the test of straightening and I would beg leave to say I did not attempt to straighten one of those returned. My custom consists only of the best mechanics throughout the US to old California and even foreign countries so that I must have the best articles. In justice to myself I would only ask that you would closely examine the bits which I returned, and ask you if you would stake your reputation on any as much steel cracked and as deeply pitted as they are. From the tenor of your letter I perceive that you do not desire my custom any longer except under certain restrictions to which of course I cannot submit. Let me know by return of mail whether I may expect my last order, subject to be returned if they are deeply pitted or steel cracked. You may recollect that in your first letters you stated that you would warrant your bits and take back such as were not perfect.

Your Friend
E.W.Carpenter

It's obvious from this letter that Carpenter was very anal in his work. If you could see the letter in person, you'd realize from his handwriting alone that he was a perfectionist - the paper is unlined, yet his sentences are perfectly spaced and straight across the page.

Patrick Leach
Just Say Must have been due to very strict potty training.
etc.

8795	John Hunt <diveboat@n...>	Oct-31-1996	Re: Bagging the big paper...
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Patrick,

Can you explain to me what this condition of being 'steel cracked' is that Mr. Carpenter is complaining about?

-John-

8810	"Patrick Leach" <leach@i...>	Nov-01-1996	Re: Bagging the big paper...
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John Hunt [REDACTED] writes:

>Can you explain to me what this condition of being 'steel cracked' is
>that Mr. Carpenter is complaining about?

Not entirely sure, but my money is on the weld between the hard steel and the soft steel. It may be a problem about the seam, over its length, or on the joint on the face of the iron. I recall there being other letters to the company regarding the improper welding of the two steels, and it may be that Carpenter has his own term for it, although it seems that PTCO understood what he was saying since they didn't ask for clarification (as evidenced by Carpenter's second letter to the company).

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11774
Patrick Leach <leach@i...>
Jan-10-1997
Some more PTCO stuff...

Since I'm in a typing mood, I've a few more interesting letters to the PTCO that I'm posting.

The first is posted just to show that the PTCO did more than make irons.

"

 Providence Dec.5 1860

 M.McDowell Esq.

 Dr. Sir,

 Please

 make for Police Station (26) twenty

 six of those bunks immediately. There

 will be one cell which will be

 padded for insane & have no bunk.

 The other (13) will have two each.

 When ready to be put up, call

 on or notify the City Marshall

 & he will show you in which cells

 he wishes them placed. You will

 have them put up in a good & substantial

 manner so that they can be easily removed

 for purposes of cleansing &c, charging us

 for same a fair price.

 Yours Jas.H.Coggeshall for

 Committe on Police Station"

I wonder if the PTCO referred Mr. Coggeshall to Ithaca for a man to beta test the one cell?

The second is a PTCO salesman's, W.E.Hine, who was busy doing the Connecticut River Valley planemaking firms. This area was a real hotbed of mid-19th century planemaking due to the natural resources (both timber and water power) and its proximity to the technological centers to the south (the Springfield, MA area, where the US Arsenal spawned many inventors and inventions).

"

 Greenfield Mass Dec 10/56

 J.B.Antohny Esq. Treas.

 Dr Sir,

 I reached here this afternoon.

 Spent Monday night in Worcester, as I found I could

 not get from Palmer to Amherst till yesterday afternoon

 at about 3 o'clock. In Amherst I saw Mr. Kellogg

 & had a long interview with him, as I think we shall

 get his trade for irons. He will be wanting Irons in 2 or

 3 weeks. He is buying Dwights&French Irons 30% from list

 prices for both hard & soft irons. I found there was no way to

 induce him to order, but to offer him a large disct. I named

 33 1/3% off but he would not promise to give us his

 orders at that. This rather exceeded my authority, but I thought

it best not to lose his trade if it can be secured. He said he would give us his trade at 35% off, but would rather not change unless we could make him that offer. I said I would refer the matter to you, & you would write him immediately. I think it the best thing you can do & the only way in which you can get his trade. If you give him those terms, he will buy a good many irons. In the evening I took a sleigh & went to see Mr. Nutting. He was absent from home. I saw his father, who said he would order. I gave them list at 30% & 20%. The old man liked the samples very much, but for every word about plane irons, would put two in about the Abolitionists.

This afternoon I had an interview of 2 or 3 hours with Mr. Parker of the Greenfield Tool Co. He told me confidentially that he is buying Dwights & French Irons of all kinds 35% off & showed me invoices with that disct off. It was a long time before I could find out what discounts they were getting. I of course immediately made the same offer, subject to your approval, providing their purchases should reach ant considerable sum. Mr. Parker also said that were under some obligations to Dwight&French to bring their purchases up to \$15,000 a year, & that the last year they had reached that amt. He promises to send us an order some time in January. He will not order any thing more of any one till after New Years, as they are about taking a/c of stock &c. I think they will in Jany commence a trade, & if they once get to going it will be a large one. They like the finish of the Tool Co Irons much better than any others, & I think if you approve of the 35% they will order. If they do not, they must be seen again. Mr. Parker does not speak very well of the Union Tool Co., but says that Kelly&Co of Ashfield are good. I shall go to see them to morrow. It is a long ride of 18 miles by stage, & I do not know if I can get to Springfield to morrow night or not. Goshen is 6 or 8 miles below Ashfield, & I shall go to see the Union Tool Co. & find out what I can about them.
<some non plane stuff snipped>

Please excuse the rambling style of this letter, as it is written in the Bar room or office of a village tavern, where village gossip is ringing in my ears.

Yours very truly,

W.E.Hine"

In this letter, Hine is doing his best to get the two largest Massachusetts planemaking firms, J. Kellogg, and Greenfield Tool, into the PTCo fold. He's up against Dwights&French, the New Haven, CT edge tool firm. Both of the planemaking firms were cranking out planes by the boatload, so securing their business was of utmost concern. Both of the companies ultimately placed orders with PTCo, but the orders I've seen so far don't seem to be significant, given the amount of planes these two firms made. BTW, Alonzo Parker, the dude at Greenfield, was one of the founders of Conway Tool Co, which went up in flames in 1852, and later reformed as Greenfield Tool.

Hine also has a chat with Edward Nutting's father, Ebenezer. Edward ordered a lot of irons from the company, and it's odd that not very many of his planes have surfaced - they are quite rare. It may be that Edward, like his father, was under contract with some other local planemakers by making planes for them. I think it's funny that the elder Nutting was so pumped to gab about Abolition.

Another tidbit to fall out of this letter is that the Union Tool Co. was still in business in 1856. Pollack writes that they terminated business in 1854. I wonder what M.B.Tidey woulda thought of Union Tool (if that really was the firm he wanted) if he knew of Parker's opinion of them?

Patrick Leach

Just say The Post Office is the place for village gossip in Ashby.
etc.

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11832

 Patrick Leach <leach@i...>

 Jan-12-1997

 Another Carpenter letter...

Here's a neat letter that speaks volumes of E.W.Carpenter's opinion of himself, and his work ethic (upper case letters indicate underlining in the original text).

As an aside, I've found out how all the PTCO stuff managed to survive this long. Back during the 1920's, a man in the Providence area bought all the paper from the company (probably after it went belly-up). This man was a postage stamp collector. What he did was go through each pile of letters to pull out all the letters that still had their postage stamps affixed to them (back when these letters were sent, envelopes weren't common, and the letters were folded with a postage stamp stuck on them).

Fortunately, the old dude wasn't as thorough as he thought when pulling out the letters. This one I enter today escaped his phil-latic eye since the letter was folded backward when it was originally read. It's really unfortunate that the rest of letters, which could fill in some of the gaps of many of the planemakers, are no longer with the bulk of the letters. The guy I bought the stuff from tells me the dude's son still has them, but thinks they are worth a fortune due to the postage stamps.

```

"
    Lancaster Aug 5th/53
    Providence Tool Co.
        Gentlemen, Your favor of
    the 1st was duly received. Your acknowl-
    edgement of their condition was just,
    and was received. You spoke only of
    the pits however, I remind you
    of the steel cracks, which are infinitely
    worse, a pit may be ground out, but
    a steel crack renders the bitt useless.
    You may consider me very particular
    in regard to my bitts but my business
    is an exception to the generality of the
    trade. I try and grind all my irons
    single jacks excepted. All my work
    leaves my establishment in order for im-
    mediate use passing first through the
    hands of myself or the most competent
    workman of his department. This poli-
    cy I have pursued for above 30 years
    with such success that I have established
    my name throughout the Union as the
    GREAT PLANEMAKER, and am an Oracle
    to all my friends or customers who wish
    to purchase a good tool of any descrip-
    tion, and are always willing to abide
    by my decision. A few mistakes among
    my new customers would produce a loss
  
```

of confidence. I would not therefore put an imperfect iron in a plane for a thousand times its value. For nearly 30 years (or since Cam's became worthless) I have used Butcher's bits exclusively. I have always returned at the request of the agents, such as proved imperfect. This make I should have used only, but was prompted to try your make by that conservative principle which should animate every true patriot to encourage home industry. I can have no other interest as it is of no pecuniary benefit to me as I sell my planes containing your bits as much less as they are compared with Butchers. I also warrant them good and recommend them to all my customers. Since sending my last order (of July 22nd) I find I need a few additional articles. I will therefore alter it (the last) and desire that it may countermand all former orders or order not entirely filled.

viz	1/2 doz	3	inch	double	irons
	2	"	2 1/2	"	"
	2	"	2 1/4	"	"
	1	"	2	"	"
	4/12	"	1 3/4	"	"
	2	"	2 1/4	"	single "
	2/12	"	4	"	Raising Plane irons
	2/12	"	3 1/2	"	"
	2/12	"	3	"	"

As the 2 inch dble bits were the most steel cracked please pay particular attention to selecting those in the above order, since my last I have found several badly cracked but having tried to straiten them and applied the hammer before discovering the cracks, I would not of course return them.

Your friend,

E W Carpenter"

Carpenter is again complaining of the steel cracked irons (a continual complaint of his about PTCO's irons). The steel crack is likely welding faults between the hard steel (the cutting edge) and the soft steel (the bulk of the iron). He isn't concerned with the pits, however.

He speaks of his using Butcher's Irons, and English make, after he found the quality of Cam's Irons, another English make (a very early maker, working back in the 18th century), suffering in quality.

It's interesting to note that Carpenter is willing to risk his reputation as the "Great Planemaker" by going with American-made products; it seems his patriotic pride is perhaps greater, but surely equal to, than his pride of workmanship.

One conclusion can certainly be drawn from the letter - Carpenter wouldn't think of sending back defective irons that he already tried to correct, which speaks clearly of his honesty.

Patrick Leach

Just say Speaking of patriots, go you Pats!

etc.

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23782

Patrick Leach <leach@s...>

Aug-09-1997

The saga continues....

The dude who has been rooting out The Providence Tool Co. stuff called me to tell me that there's more. That's the good news.

The bad news is that it's a buttload of correspondance from The Civil War years, when the company operated as an armory, and thus the pricetag of it is mondo bucks. I fear that the stuff is gonna go *POOF* despite my plea to the fellow doing something good for history's sake. It's too bad the sounds of cash registers ring in most folks' heads when something this significant is discovered. Anyone wanna start a fund drive so it can all stay together? ;^)

It's amazing to see the stuff that they were making to assist the war effort during that time of our history. There are piles upon piles of letters from saber/sword manufactures, gun manufacturers (Sharps, and Remington are just two more famous ones), the company's manufacture of handcuffs, leg irons, rifles, etc. On top of that, there are all sorts of letters from the War Dept., Dept of Ordnance, Springfield Armory, etc. The stuff reads like a who's who of arms merchants.

I did manage to snag a few tool-related pieces on this trip. The most interesting piece I snagged is an 8"x10" price flyer of saws, etc. made by Atkins, Allen & Co., of Bristol, CT. The flyer isn't dated, but it appears to be ca. 1850 (Erv, you know the real date of the joint?). It lists circulars saws, mill saws, pit saws, felloe saws, hand, pannel, and rip saws, chest saws (dunno what them are), dovetail, tenon, sash, and carcass saws, even saws for slicing ivory. The company also lists prices for bevels and plated squares.

Some of you might get a kick out of reading the prices for their back saws ("C.S." stands for cast steel):

Length,	DOVETAIL, CARCASE, SASH, & TENON SAWS						inches.
	10	12	14	16	18	20	
C.S. iron back	10.50	11.25	12.00	14.00	15.00	16.50	per doz.
" " blued "	11.50	12.25	13.00	15.00	16.50	18.00	" "
" " brass "	13.50	15.00	16.50	19.50	21.50	24.00	" "
Spring " "	16.00	18.00	20.00	23.00	25.00	27.50	" "

If you note the price of 10" spring steel dovetail saws, you'll see that they are about \$1.25 each, a hefty sum of moolah back then. Sorta puts things in perspective when the IT saw is \$125.00. It's too bad that loudmouth in rec.norm, who is whining about the prices of new quality handtools, can't see this.

Patrick Leach

Just say On second thought, it would probably be lost on him anyway.
etc.

23788 [<elschaffer@j...>](mailto:elschaffer@j...) **Aug-09-1997** **Re: The saga continues....**

Patrick: Ah yes--a nice find is that Atkins, Allen, & Co catalog! E.C. Atkins was apprenticed there as his Uncle was an owner of the company. It operated -1844-1855- in Bristol, CT. Info from the "Gristmill" 7/20/96 by Ken Wasson.
--ErvSaws

23828 **Josh Kaufman** [<kauf@e...>](mailto:kauf@e...) **Aug-11-1997** **Re: The saga continues....**

What would the \$1.25 dovetail saw from 1850 cost in 1997 dollars ?

Patrick Leach wrote :

> If you note the price of 10" spring steel dovetail saws, you'll
>see that they are about \$1.25 each, a hefty sum of moolah back then.
>Sorta puts things in perspective when the IT saw is \$125.00. It's
>too bad that loudmouth in rec.norm, who is whining about the prices
>of new quality handtools, can't see this.
>
>-

23847 **Ray McCaleb** [<ray_mccaleb@o...>](mailto:ray_mccaleb@o...) **Aug-11-1997** **Re: The saga continues....**

Josh asked:
What would the \$1.25 dovetail saw from 1850 cost in 1997 dollars ?

A question like this comes up from time to time, Josh. I like the comparative data that is often cited. In your query, consider that \$1.25 would probably have been a pretty good daily wage for a carpenter of the era. At \$15/hour today a carpenter would earn \$150 for a _10_ hour day (I guess other things have changed also). So, a hard day's work for a new saw...sounds reasonable to me...then or now...

Ray...just say (tm/PL)...kinda makes the IT sound like a bargain...

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