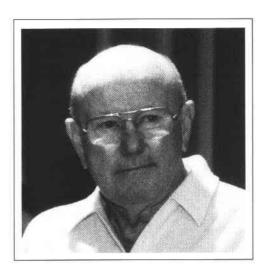
The Sheffield Works

Tom K. Stapleton, M.D.

For the antique Bowie knife collector, a Bowie marked "J. English and Hubers', Philadelphia," was a much sought after and prized possession. Those knives were sometimes marked "Sheffield Works," which led some to believe the knives were imported from Sheffield, England. The markings also included the numbers 2 and 3, a no. 2 being a ten-inch blade and a no. 3 being an eight-inch blade. The actual existence of the Sheffield Works has been questioned by collectors, because no address could be found in the Philadelphia directories. An advertising flyer lists the address of a warehouse at 194 Market Street, which was also the address of the firm of Henry & F. A. Huber & Co.

The actual Sheffield Works was located in Philadelphia's Ward 22 in Germantown Township (Figure 1) along the Wingohocking Creek (Figure 2). It consisted of a two-story stone and frame mansion house (Figure 3) with four rooms and a hall on the first floor and five rooms and a hall on the second floor. A one-story stone kitchen adjoined the north end of the house. Twenty-five yards north of the mansion was a two-story stone barn with a coach house and horse and cow stables on the first floor and a threshing floor and corn crib on the second floor. A three-story stone cutlery mill with a basement was located thirty yards west of the stone barn. It contained a fourteen-foot water wheel into which were geared iron shafts for turning a five-foot drum, six cast iron and three wooden drums with straps for driving grindstones and turning lathes. Three lathes were located on the first floor and three lathes, one circular saw, one upright saw, and one shear for cutting iron were located on the second floor. The third story contained seven vises and benches. Adjoining the west side of the cutlery mill was a one-story stone forging shop containing four double forges with hand-operated bellows. Thirty feet northwest of the cutlery mill was a two-story stone workshop and warehouse containing a furnace, boiler, and room for storing lumber. One hundred yards west of the cutlery mill was a two-story stone tenement house suitable for five families. A single-family two-story tenement house is located near the other tenement building. On the same stream as the cutlery mill and about one quarter mile north was a four-story stone oil factory containing an eighteenfoot water wheel geared by an iron shaft to a nine-foot drum wheel.

Also located along the Wingohocking Creek were other



cotton and linen mills, a lumber mill, and several tanneries. These, however, were not a part of the Sheffield Works.

The mill was purchased by the H. & F. A. Huber Co. in April 1835 from the estate of Phillip Kelly for the sum of \$10,000. It contained the buildings previously described plus more than fifty-eight acres of land. Other holdings owned by the Hubers were located adjacent to this property, and additional land joining the Sheffield Works was also acquired by the Hubers in April 1837. It is unknown exactly when the name Sheffield Works was given to the mill or how long the Hubers had rented the mill before the purchase.

Other holdings by the H. & F. A. Huber Co. included three brick tenements on the north side of High (now Market) Street, a piece of land on Mulberry (now Arch) Street, a building and land on Mary Street, a brick tenement on the east side of Delaware Street, a building on the west side of Sixth Street, land in Penn Township, a brick building on the north side of Courts Street, a brick building and lot on Sassafras (now Race) Street, a warehouse at 40 North Third Street, and the office and warehouse at 194 Market Street.

The earliest and only known advertising flyer of the Sheffield Works (Figure 4) was found in Joseph English's effects after his death. It is dated 1834 (Figure 5) and contains the 194 Market Street address. Because no 1834 directory exists, only someone close to the business would know that they moved to 194 Market Street in 1834. The flyer contains many tools as well as tomahawks, hunting knives, and Bowie knives (Figure 6).

In Miss Lucy Leigh Bowie's article (Figure 7), "The

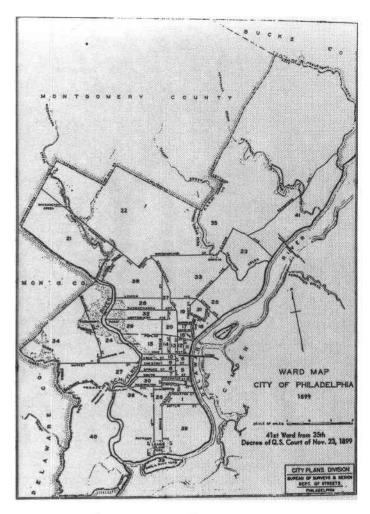


Figure 1. Map of Philadelphia wards.

Famous Bowie Knife," presented in 1916, she states that an unnamed Philadelphia cutler made a knife for James and Rezin Bowie in 1832. This unnamed cutler has been shown to be the firm of Henry & F. A. Huber (Figure 8). Obviously, activity occurred at the Sheffield Works before 1834; however, it is not known exactly when the Hubers and J. English began their operation at the Sheffield Works.

Problems for the H. & F. A. Huber Co. began in 1835 when they were sued for \$5,000 by the estate of Henry Huber. In 1836, the company was reorganized under the name H. & F. A. Huber & Co., and H. S. Huber, a nephew, was included in the new company. The company was short-lived; it went broke in the financial panic of 1837, and the Sheffield Works was rented as a print works to Hurst & Schroeder in the latter part of 1837. An advertisement to rent the mill can be found in the *Germantown Telegraph* of Wednesday January 10, 1838 (Figure 9). The 1838 *Philadelphia Circulating Business Directory* shows both the Saddlery Hardware and Manufacturers of English Saddlers Tools portions of the business as being broke (Figure 10).

The company's bankruptcy petition was finally granted and the mortgage taken over by the Franklin Fire Insurance

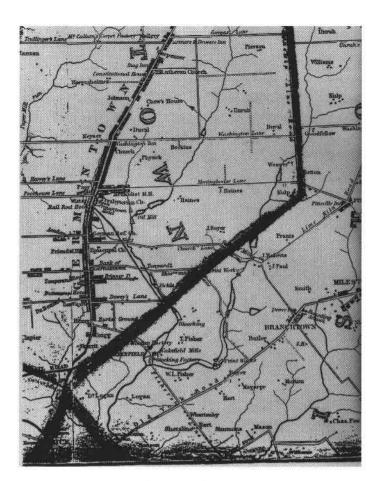


Figure 2. Map of Germantown.

Company in 1840. The Hubers had apparently been unable to dispose of all the property during this time. The final auction of the property took place in 1842.

Joseph English (Figure 5) appears in the 1819 Philadelphia Directory, listed as a cutler at 11 Quarry Street. He moved to 98 North Third Street in 1820, and in 1823 moved to 108 Sassafras (now Race) Street. He is listed at this address until 1828, when he disappears from the Philadelphia Directory. According to the 1830 New Jersey census, Joseph English was located in Newark Township, Essex County. He is not found returning to Pennsylvania until he is listed on the advertising flyer of 1834.

The association of Joseph English and the Hubers was a natural one, since English made saddlers' tools and the Hubers made plated saddles and carriages. Their businesses were located within one block of each other until 1828. It is not known when Joseph English was again associated with the Hubers; however, 1831-32 would be a good guess. Joseph English apparently made quality tools, because he won an award for superior saddlers' implements at the Franklin Institute Exhibition of 1836.

Joseph English was listed in the 1840 census as living in the Germantown Township, probably at the Sheffield Works. He was listed as a cutler in 1842 in Newark, New Jersey. He returned to Philadelphia in 1842 for the final resolution of the

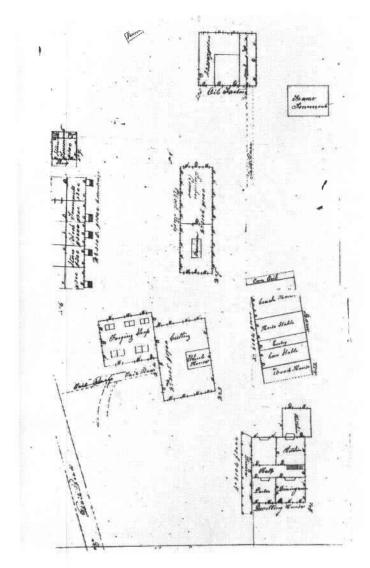


Figure 3. Survey map of the Sheffield Works.

bankruptcy proceedings. He was subsequently listed in New Jersey and was associated with Ezra K. Goodsell and possibly with a Daniel S. English in Newark. Joseph English died in 1853. Only one round, leather-cutting knife was found in an inventory of his effects. No hunting knives or Bowie knives were listed. His business was taken over by William Dodd in 1854. Mr. Dodd's first advertising flyer, dated 1855 (Figure 11), also does not show any Bowie or hunting knives. In 1856, William Dodd became associated with his brother-inlaw, C. S. Osborne. Mr. Osborne eventually took over the business, and it is known today as the C. S. Osborne Company of Newark, New Jersey. The original advertising flyer has been handed down as the business changed owners and can be found at the company headquarters.

Fredrick A. Huber, the brother of Henry Huber, Jr., first appears in the 1825 Philadelphia Directory, listed as a coachmaker and manufacturer of plated saddlery at 40 North Third Street. He remained at this address until 1835, when he and Henry, Jr., were located at 194 Market. The advertising

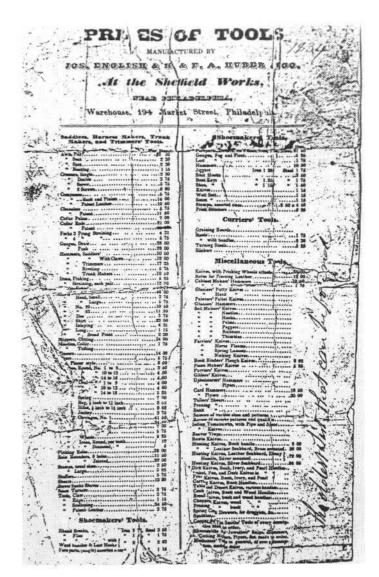


Figure 4. Advertising flyer for the Sheffield Works (courtesy "Early Tools of New Jersey and the Men Who Made Them," by Alexander Farnam).

flyer indicates they moved to this address in 1834. The 40 North Third Street address was listed as a saddlery warehouse. F. A. Huber was also listed as a saddler, but in 1839 both were listed as hardware merchants at 269 Market Street. In 1840, the only listing was the saddlery warehouse at 40 North Third Street. Fredrick A. Huber died in 1840.

H. S. Huber, the other partner in H. & F. A. Huber & Company, was listed as a hardware merchant at 369 Market Street in the 1839 Directory. H. S. Huber is listed as a merchant in 1841 and 1842 at 269 High (now Market) Street. He is named in the final bankruptcy proceedings of 1842. H. S. Huber is not listed after 1842 in the Philadelphia Directory.

Henry Huber, Jr., was listed in the 1817 Directory as a silverplater at 197 North Third Street. In 1819, he was listed as a hardware merchant and manufacturer of plated saddlery at 120 High (now Market) Street. His advertisement of that year also shows him to be a manufacturer of wrought iron plated ware (Figure 12). In 1822, he was at 34 North Third

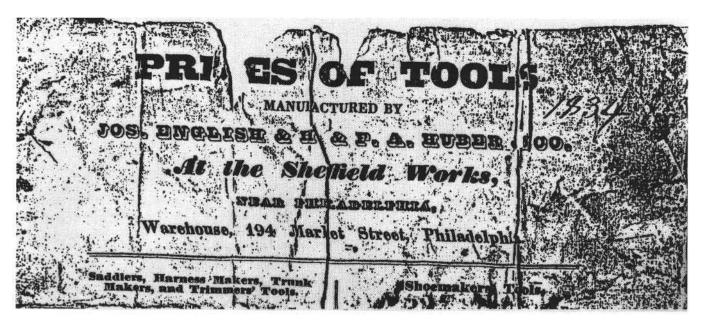


Figure 5. Top of flyer (close-up).

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Figure 6. Advertising flyer (close-up).

Street, and in 1823 he was again listed as a silverplater at 158-160 Vine Street. In 1825, he was listed as a coachmaker at the Vine Street address. In 1829, he moved to Sassafras (now Race) Street, and in 1835 his address is listed as 194 Market Street. It is possible that he moved to this address in 1834;

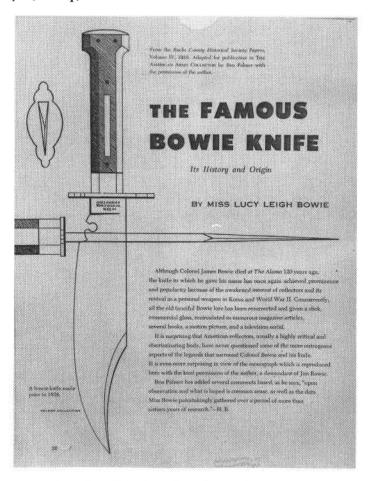


Figure 7. Cover page of the "Famous Bowle Knife."

however, a Philadelphia Directory for 1834 was not published. In 1839, he was listed as a hardware merchant at 269 Market, and in 1840 the only listing was the saddlery warehouse at 40 North Third Street. Apparently this was the only property of the Hubers that survived to this date. In 1844, Henry, Jr., was listed as a manufacturer of cutlery in

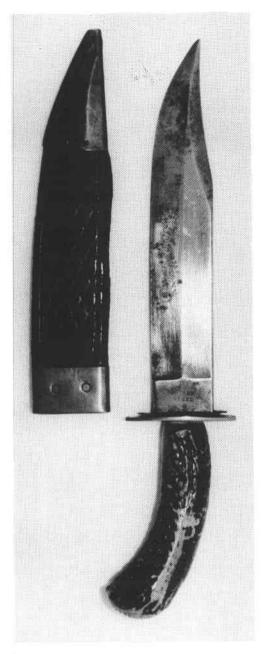


Figure 8. Picture of Huber knife presented in Miss Bowie's article.

McElroy's Philadelphia Directory, and in 1845 he was listed as a manufacturer of shoes, saddlery, and harness tools in O'Brian's Philadelphia Business Directory. He apparently continued to make tools and a few knives until the 1860s. He died July 7, 1868.

Tools made by J. English and Hubers were considered to be of the highest quality. The Bowie knives were also of the same quality and had several characteristic features. The knives had a distinctive clip-point blade in which the clip edge was sharpened. The blades were either 8 or 10 inches long and were hollow-ground above and below the median ridge. There was no recessed choil at the ricasso. The tangs were rectangular-even on round, curved-handle knives and were tapered on the distal end, usually being held by one pin

ILL TO LE HE upper mill at Sheffield Works Hornerly known as Kelly's mills Germantown township, near the Railroad l'he mill has been lately rebuilt, and is in good repair, suitable for almost any manufacturing purpose; is 43 dy 35 feet, 3 stories, parret, and collar under the whole; all well lighted; has a breast wheel 20 lect, and a good supply of water; formerly occupied as a woollen factory. and lately by Hirst & Schroeder as print-works. Possession given immediately. Enquire of JOSEPH ENGLISH, Sheffield Works, or H. & F. A. HUBER & CO., No. 194 Marke street, Philade'phia. P. S. There can be one or two dwellin houses rented with the mill if required: Jan 10-tf

Figure 9. Germantown Telegraph Advertisement (courtesy Dr. Jim Batson).

(Figures 13 and 14). Figure 15 shows an English & Hubers' knife with a checkered ebony handle (courtesy Jack Royce collection). Figures 16, 17, and 18 shows an ivory-handled English & Hubers' knife with a 10-inch blade and close-ups of each side of the ricasso. The makings are quite distinct (courtesy Joseph Musso collection). Figures 19, 20, and 21 show another English and Hubers' knife with a 10-inch blade. This knife has an ebony handle and is brass-mounted except for the iron guard. Markings on both sides of the ricasso are clear (courtesy Norm Flayderman collection). Another knife from the Norm Flayderman collection is the ivory-handled English & Hubers' knife, marked no. 3, with an 8-inch blade. Only one side of the ricasso is marked (Figures 22 and 23). The knife in Figure 24 is marked "H. Huber Steel" and was featured in the article "The Famous Bowie Knife" by Lucy Leigh Bowie, which was presented to the Bucks County Historical Society in 1916. The knife was reportedly made specifically for James and Rezin Bowie in 1832 by an unnamed Philadelphia cutler. This cutler has now been shown to be the firm of H. & F. A. Huber & Co. The knife is the first American clip-point blade and features the other characteristics of the J. English & Hubers knives. It may represent the first knife made at the Sheffield Works. The knife and sheath are brass-mounted, and the sheath does not have the fine finish of the English & Hubers sheaths, indicating it may have been made before the English & Hubers knives. There is little doubt, however, that the same person or persons had input into this knife as well as the English & Hubers knives. At this time, this is the only knife reported to have been made for James Bowie. In twelve years of research,

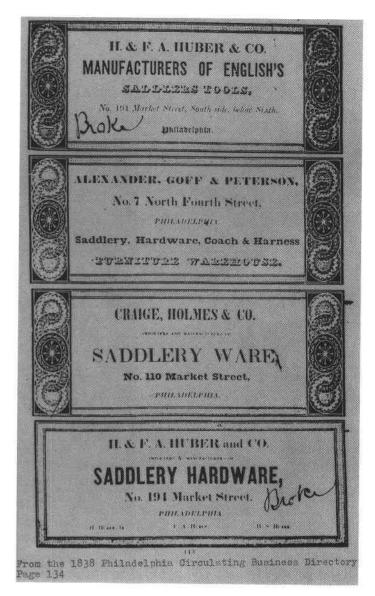


Figure 10. Philadelphia Circulating Business Directory of 1838 with advertising showing the firm as being broke.

all findings have been supportive, and not one negative fact has surfaced to refute the history of this knife.

In an attempt to verify the date of the "H. Huber Steel" markings, the help of tool collectors was elicited. Figure 25 shows a consensus of markings on tools by the Huber Co. Because no tools have been found with the "H. Huber Steel" markings, it is concluded that this marking preceded the Sheffield Works stampings.

Two other knives marked "Huber Steel" have been brought to my attention. Neither of these knives shows the characteristics of English & Hubers' knives, and they have been discredited as not being made by the Huber Firm.

In 1995, another knife surfaced on the West Coast with the same characteristic features as the English & Hubers' blades (Figure 26). The knife (Figure 27) is marked, "Huber—C Steel—Philad." This is the last stamping of the Henry Huber Firm and probably dates to the late 1850s or early 1860s. The

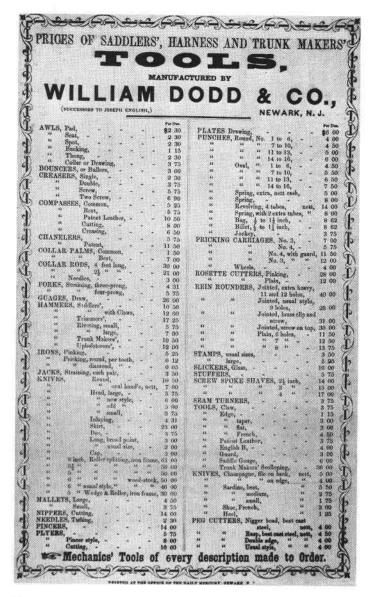


Figure 11. Advertising flyer of William Dodd (courtesy "Early Tools of New Jersey and the Men Who Made Them," by Alexander Farnam).

knife is so similar to the 1832 knife that one suspects that Henry Huber, Jr., had more input as a cutler than was previously thought.

In summary, the Sheffield Works has been identified and a survey map shown. A short history of the Sheffield Works is presented and the four-year longevity verified. Short histories of Joseph English, Henry Huber, Jr., and Fredrick A. Huber are included. The firm of Henry Huber, Jr., as the unnamed Philadelphia cutler has been reinforced. Several knives made at the Sheffield Works are pictured. The only knife reportedly made for James Bowie is shown. One could easily speculate that this knife was the first one made at the Sheffield Works. A chronological list of knife and tool markings by the Huber Firm is included. A knife with English & Hubers' characteristics surfaced with markings representing the last stamping of the Huber Firm. Henry Huber, Jr.,

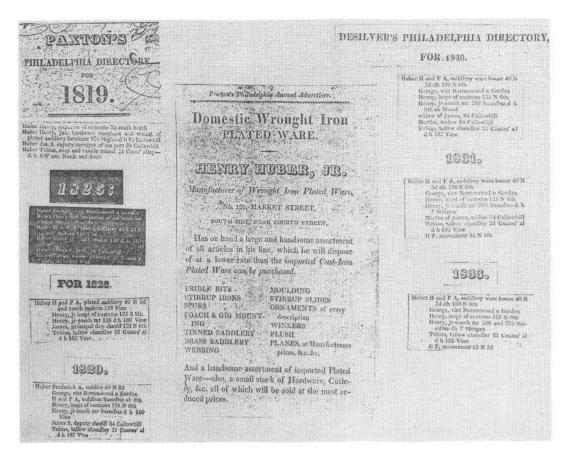


Figure 12. Advertisement of Henry Huber, Jr.

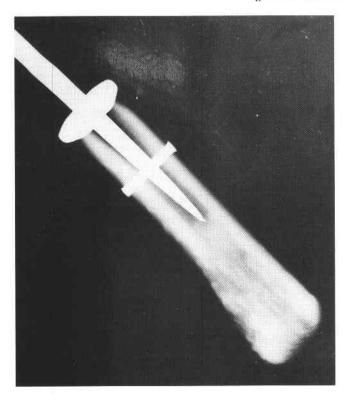


Figure 13. X-ray of Huber knife handle.

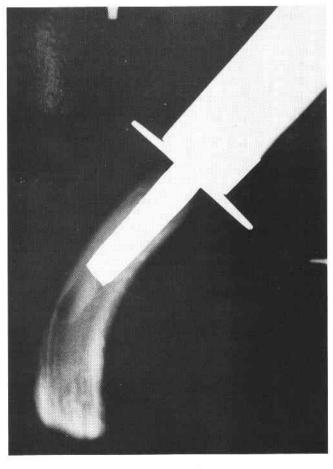


Figure 14. Other x-ray view of handle.

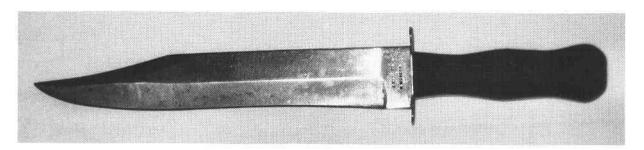


Figure 15. English & Hubers knife with a checkered ebony handle (courtesy Jack Royce collection).

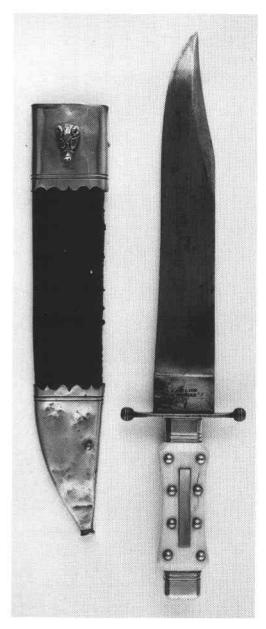


Figure 16. Ivory-handled English & Hubers knife with a 10-inch blade (courtesy Joseph Musso collection).

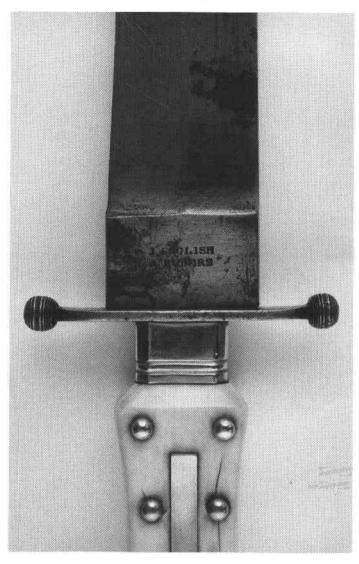


Figure 17. Close-up of ricasso of ivory-handled English & Hubers knife (courtesy Joseph Musso collection).

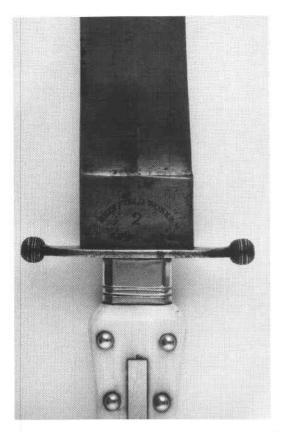


Figure 18. Other side of ricasso of ivory-handled English & Hubers knife (courtesy Joe Musso collection).

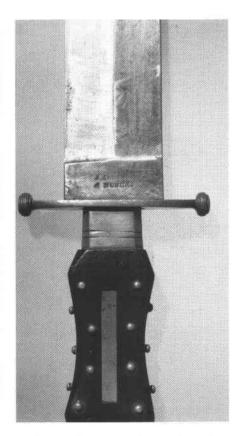


Figure 20. Ricasso of ebony-handled English & Hubers knife.

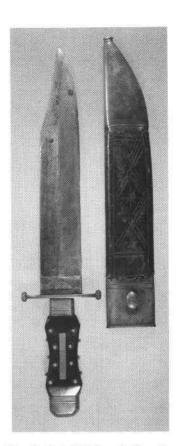


Figure 19. English & Hubers knife with an ebony handle, brass mounted except for an iron cross guard. The blade is 10 inches (courtesy Norm Flayderman collection).

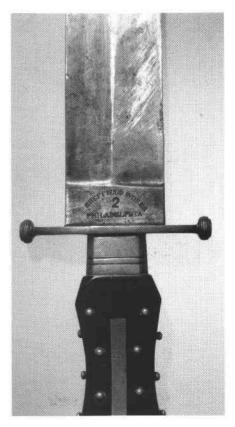


Figure 21. Other side of ricasso of ebony-handled English & Hubers knife.

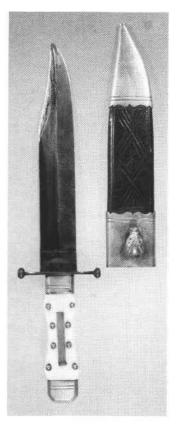


Figure 22. Ivory-handled knife with an 8-inch blade and marked no. 3 (courtesy Norm Flayderman collection).

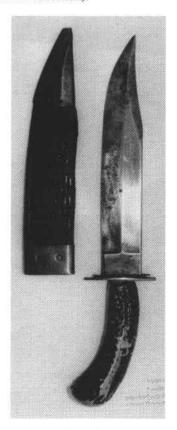


Figure 24. Knife marked H. Huber Steel.

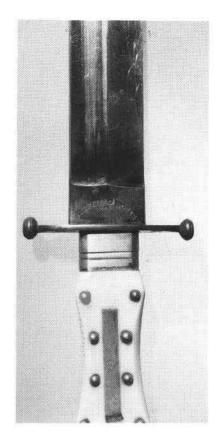


Figure 23. Close up of ricasso of 8-inch ivory-handled knife.

CHRONOLOGICAL LISTING OF KNIVES & TOOLS BY HENRY HUBER JR. COMPANY

-) H. Huber Steel 1832-1833
- 2) J. English & Hubers 1834-1837 Sheffield Works Philadelphia 2 OR 3
- 3) H. Huber Philad
- 4) Huber C. Steel Phila
- 5) H. Huber C. Steel Philad to 1860's

Figure 25. Chronological marking of Huber tools and knives after the demise of the Sheffield Works (courtesy Ken Hopfel).

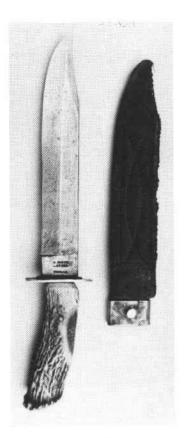


Figure 26. Knife marked "H. Huber—C. Steel—Philad." (courtesy Dr. John Pettus).

probably had more cutler expertise than was previously documented.

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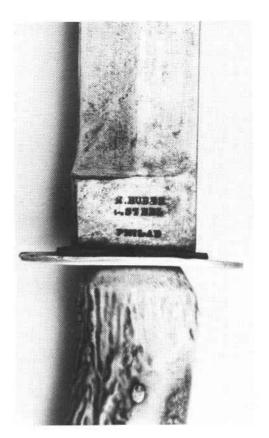


Figure 27. Close-up of ricasso of knife in Figure 26.

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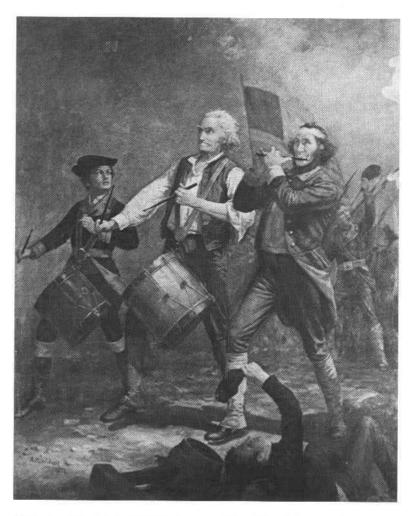


Figure 1. "The Spirit of '76" by Tompkin Mattison. (All items pictured in this article are from the collection of the author.)