

## From Anvils to Table Knives – Who Made What in Sheffield

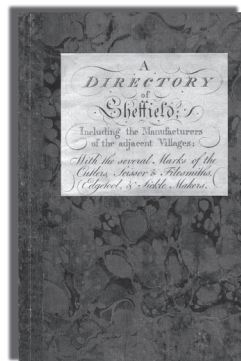
by *Elton W. Hall*

*A Directory of Sheffield Including the Manufacturers of the adjacent Villages: With the several Marks of the Cutlers, Scissor & Filesmiths, Edgetool, & Sickle Makers* with an introduction by Jane Rees. Bath, U. K: Tool and Trade History Society, 2004. 97 pp. \$21.75.

One of the most valuable things an historical association such as TATHS or EAIA can do is to publish important primary source material. Such publications are not always commercially viable in today's market, so they are done ever less frequently. Nevertheless, primary source material, whether manuscript or printed matter, contains information gathered and recorded by people who were present in a certain place and time—recorded facts that are very difficult to track down two centuries later.

Directories were first published as a means for those working in the various trades or needing their services and products to know where to find one another. By the end of the eighteenth century, most manufacturing cities in England had their own. This volume is a reprint of the 1787 Directory of Sheffield and adjacent villages. Reflecting the primary purpose of the original publication, the directory begins with an alphabetical list of trades showing practitioners of the mechanical arts from anvilmakers to makers of table knives. The listings are grouped first by those within Sheffield and then by those in the neighborhood of Sheffield, again reflecting the need for convenient communication.

The second part of the directory is an alphabetical list of the principal tradesmen and inhabitants of Sheffield giving their name, occupation, and street. If one seeks a particular person, these lists are invaluable. Moreover, a browse through the list affords one a glimpse into the composition of the people of Sheffield and the kinds of things they did. One of the most obvious differ-



ences between eighteenth-century Sheffield and any manufacturing city today is the degree of specialization. Many tradesmen made only one item, or one kind of item. That was no doubt a key to productivity. There were many specialists among knifemakers. Scissor and shear making were two different trades. Most of the trades are still recognizable, if not practiced today, such as razor strop or lancet making or flax dressing. But a haft presser requires a little investigation and a vigo buttonmaker requires a lot.

A most unusual feature of this particular volume is a compilation of the marks of the cutlers, and other edge tool makers, compiled by the Cutlers' Company beginning in 1554. In 1624, the Cutlers' Company in Hallamshire was established by Act of Parliament to regulate the cutlery trade and register the marks. Other related edge-tool makers gradually came under the jurisdiction of the company.

At the end of the directory are lists of coaches and wagons that provided regular passenger and freight service to other cities, as well as a schedule for the post. In our age of overnight delivery service, frequent mass transit and airline shuttle service, not to mention e-mail, it is easy to forget how difficult and time consuming it was to get people, goods, and mail around. It was important to know when and from where all forms of transportation set out, for there could be a long time between departures.

For specific research into who was doing what in Sheffield at the end of the eighteenth century or a general impression of the character of the city, this is a useful little book. One could only wish for a good map to go with it.

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*EAIA Executive Director Elton W. Hall regularly reviews books for The Chronicle.*