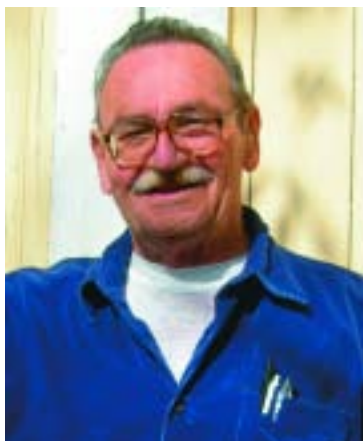


Ain't that something



No one enjoys a mystery more than Croydon resident Bert Smith. It's even more fun if it's a history mystery in need of detective work. So when Jan Pellerin, a neighbor on Cash Street, brought him a colonial-style fork and a knife — which was stamped with the words “Riverside Knife Co” — Smith was on the job to find out which Croydon resident was behind this mid-1800 entrepreneurial venture.



Croydon resident Bert Smith

No mention of a cutlery manufacturer in the town histories. Smith turned to the 1840 census: Nothing. In the 1850 census Smith finds an Oscar F. Morrill, age 29, listed as a cutlery manufacturer. He looks at the census taker's route number and discovers that in the Morrill household there are eight people with the occupation “cutlery maker”: Lewis Bolton, 29; Jasper Buck, 22; Nathaniel Drury, 23; Elias Sawyer, 20; Nathaniel H. Wilson, 16; George W. Way, 20; Prince Burt, 20; and Albert

Fisher, 34. They all lived on Cash Street in the white house that was, at the time, the Pellerin's home. Another scan of the census uncovers six more Croydon residents with the occupation of cutlery maker. With one cutlery manufacturer and 14 cutlery makers living within a ½ mile radius of each other, Smith believes that the Riverside Knife Co was indeed a thriving business.

Without the help of a history book, Smith pieces together what may have happened to the Riverside Knife Co. According to taxpaying records, Oscar F. Morrill probably left town in 1851. That was the same year Joel Ferry started to pay taxes in Croydon. It is likely that Ferry purchased the operation from Morrill, or used what was there to start his own business called the Ferry Knife & Peg Factory. Town history books document this second factory. “The 1860 map shows the Ferry Knife & Peg Factory with J. Ferry living across the road from it,” says Smith. “I think that Oscar Morrill originally lived in the J. Ferry place and ran a factory making tableware before it became Ferry Knife & Peg Factory.”



The handcarved wood handles are a bit rough, but the blade of the Riverside knife is still sharp.

The house, still standing on 168 Cash Street, was in the Ferry family for more than 100 years. Joel passed it down to his son Harvey, who passed it to his son Ervin. In 1956, Ervin, age 88, sold it to William and Avis Kennedy, who later sold it to Jan and Jules Pellerin in 1959. Throughout the years and different owners, the Riverside Knife Co cutlery remained in the house, perhaps in a drawer or on a shelf. One set will now be on display at the Croydon Historical Society.

Is there a Ferry knife around town? Perhaps, and Bert Smith would love to see it.

WHAT: Croydon Historical Society

WHERE: CHS is located at the historic Samuel Morse house on 871 NH Route 10

CONTACT: Bert Smith, bert@sugar-river.net

WHY: Get in touch with your town's historical society and help solve a local mystery