



# Elephant Toenails

## The Ultimate Collector's Knife

*"... other old pocketknives just don't cut it."*

August 2005

Hello Toenail enthusiasts

I hope each of you is doing well. I was presented with an opportunity to visit W R Case & Sons Cutlery Company in Bradford, PA recently. It was an exciting trip for me, but more about that in a bit.

In the meantime, I found some really good stuff for you. My wife said I was a "little corny" in this edition (particularly in the section where I tell you about my trip to Bradford)...so if you find that to be true stay hang with me til the end- you won't regret it...if you like Near Mint old toenails that is (now how's that for a hook? ☺).

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### ODDS AND ENDS-

Did you get the notice from Bill Horn of Cumberland Knife recently? He indicated that the Platts Acquisition set had originally been produced with an error. The dealers were asked to send them back. Case then wanted to complete the order, which included "scrolling" the bolsters. He believes there were about 75 or so of the original 250 sets that weren't sent back to Case to have the bolsters scrolled. I agree with Bill who holds the opinion this "defect" will add to collectors' interest and increase the value of the "unscrolled" sets.

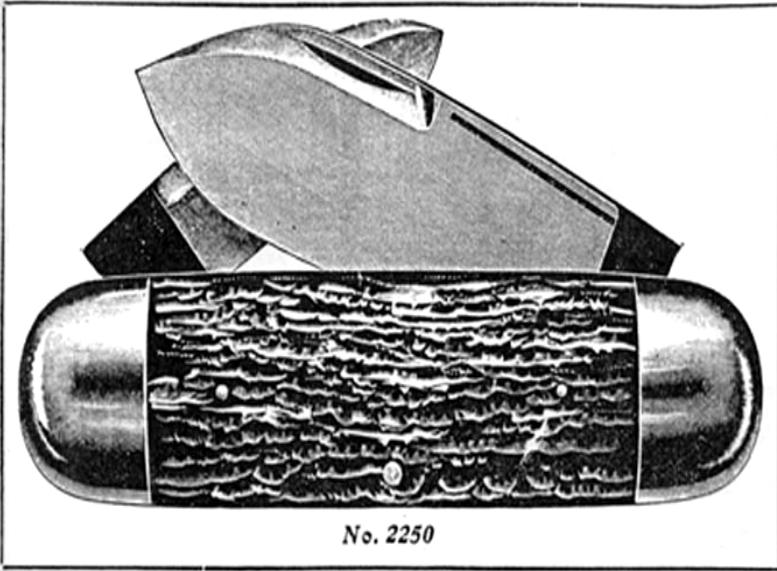
## “THE KING OF ALL POCKET KNIVES”

Ever heard of THOMAS MFG CO, of Dayton, Ohio? Well, looky here- Got this in from a knife friend the other day. It is an ad from their catalog for a toenail that ran around 1909 or so.....

**THE KING  
OF ALL POCKET  
KNIVES**

# JUMBO

**FARMERS' DELIGHT  
RANCHMEN'S  
PRIDE**



*No. 2250*

The Jumbo Knife is the best one for hard service and rough work that was ever made. A growing demand for an extra large knife, made of the very best material and by the very best and most skilled workmen; caused us to put the Jumbo on the market. The blades are extra thick, oil tempered and every one tested by file before polishing. The blades of the knife are its very life, and with this thought in view, knowing also the heavy work expected of this large knife, we have placed blades in it that are as near perfect as can be made. The handle is of the finest grade of stag, bolstered at ends with highly polished german silver bolsters. It has no corners to wear pockets, and is the admiration of every farmer, ranchman, trapper or hunter. Although extra large, the Jumbo is not over-heavy nor clumsy, being very compact, perfectly made and solid.

***Price, only \$2.00***

Interestingly, the toenail photo show in their ad is the exact replica of a toenail shown in Napanoch's early catalog. To save me from having to scan it, take my word for it. It is exactly the same picture even down to the location under the knife of the 2250 pattern number. Mark Z. editor of Knife World told me that he is aware the company sold "knives made by American Shear & Knife" and I believe they sold Napanoch toenails too.

## Thomas MFG Co. Dayton, Ohio

Goins' dates this firm from c 1907 – 1911. Sources have the firm originating in Springfield, OH around 1896 as a bicycle maker. In fact, below are a few of their makes by year during this time.

**Thomas Racer**-(M) Thomas Manufacturing Company, Springfield OH, **1898**

**Thomas Special**-(M) Thomas Manufacturing Company, Springfield OH, **1896-1898**

**Thomas**-(M) Thomas Manufacturing Company, Springfield OH, **1896-1898**

Source [www.thewheelmen.org/sections/bicyclebrands](http://www.thewheelmen.org/sections/bicyclebrands)

“By 1901, it had patents for rope making equipment (The Rope Makers Bible [www.wctatel.net/web/equityrealty/thomas.html](http://www.wctatel.net/web/equityrealty/thomas.html) ). There are indications that the company continued to specialize in the rope industry perhaps beyond 1909, by which time it was based in Dayton, Ohio.

In the early years of the 20th century, the company was associated with general domestic products.”

We know from their catalog ad here that “*general domestic products*” includes TOENAILS!

They also made the “Armoniola” as was advertised in *Talking Machine World* in November 1916

[www.worldofgramophones.com/gramolist1.html](http://www.worldofgramophones.com/gramolist1.html)

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*For the curious, Napanoch was first known as the Napanoch Knife Company in 1905 and continued until they were bought out by Winchester Repeating Arms of New Haven, CT in June 1919. Also, Napanoch positioned their toenail as being “a Napanoch Axe, for the vest pocket.”*

## “A Trip into the “Magic Circle” –

*You will never guess where I went a couple of weeks ago.....*

Well, I was in Pittsburg for a National Auctioneers Convention, but that is not “the where” I am talking about. This just starts the story.... so, as I was saying, a couple of weeks ago, I went to a convention in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. I landed on a Wed night and guess where I went the first thing the next morning- I went back in time to about 1905. I really didn’t travel in time, of course, but it felt like it as I drove deep into the heart of PA. As I mentioned, I was at the NAA convention, well actually I took some time off from the convention (even though I had yet to go there, you see) to head up to one of the most famous towns in off of America.... Bradford, PA.

Even though I travel quite a bit, I have a very difficult time traveling (being away from home) for “Knife Business.” So, for me to just jump on Delta and fly to PA without having some real business there was out of the question. So, when I realized the convention was scheduled for Pitt, well, do I have to tell you- I just had to go.

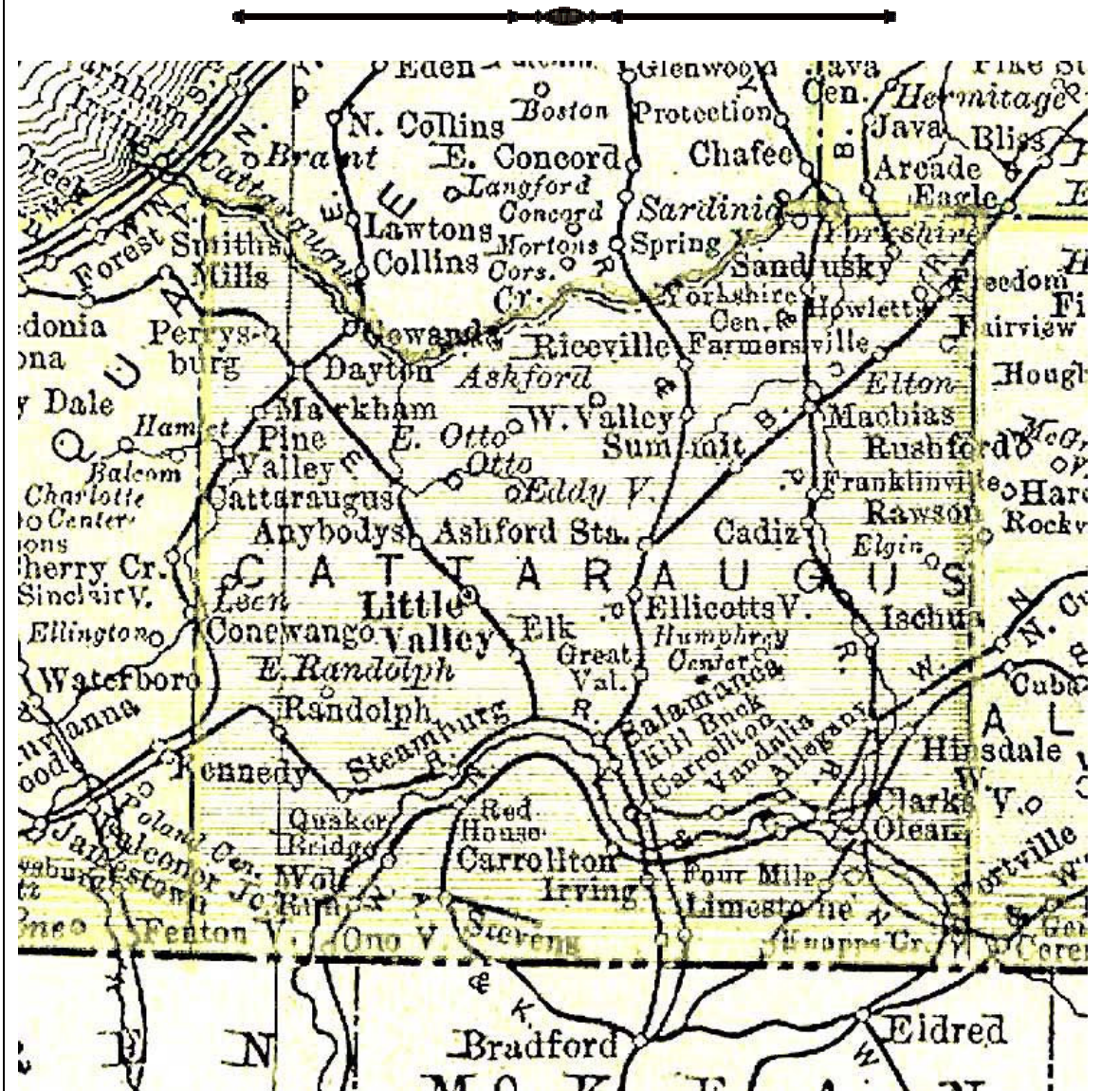
So, I got up very early that first morning and headed out on the 3 hour trip (one way) to Bradford. It was a rainy day, but my spirits were bright was the noonday sun. As I drove along through rural PA, I realized not only was I finally getting close to Bradford, but more significantly, I was right in the heart of the “Magic Circle.”-“The One Hundred Mile Magic Circle” (page 168 of Giles’ book Case, The First 100 Years). I couldn’t help but to imagine what the area was like 100 years before when all those cutlery firms were up and running.

You have to know how excited I was. If you have been a subscriber of TidBits very long, you have gotten to know me fairly well and can imagine I was in hog heaven. As I drove I said to myself, “the heck with the convention, I am going to spend a few days right here in Little Valley, NY.”

I was fascinated with all the familiar town names on the map and I was right there- smack dab- in the middle of where the highest concentration of cutlery firms there had ever been. I couldn't help but to keep looking at my Avis car rental map as I drove. In fact the more I looked at that map the more it changed right before my eyes..... ☺

## CATTARAUGUS COUNTY MAP

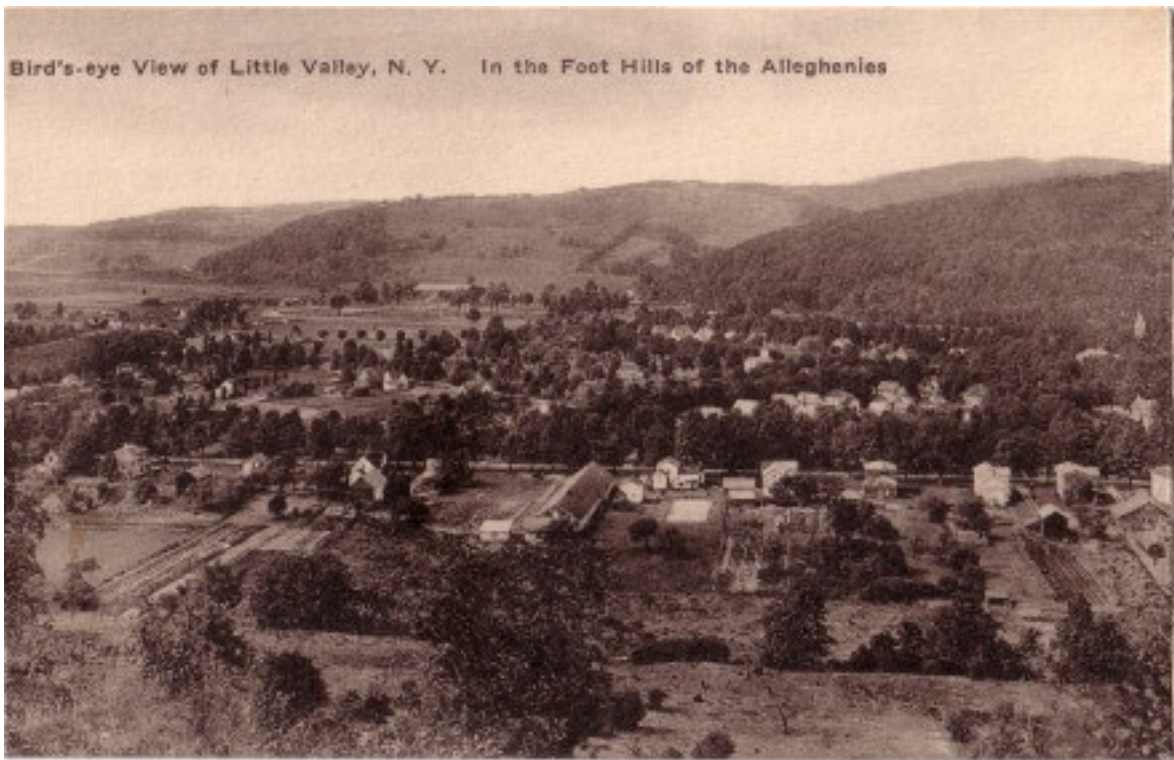
NEW YORK 1895



I saw my favorite town of Eldred, PA (Platts) in the extreme lower right hand corner, just east of Bradford (see map).

I so much wanted to head over to Eldred because it was just down the road. I have been to PA many times working on auctions, but this was the first time I had been to this area.

Then there was Little Valley- I actually drove through Little Valley (WR Case & Son(s), Cattaraugus & Little Valley Knife Association), and knew I was there even before I saw it on the map.



Picture from the early 1900's of Little Valley, PA.

I could see the little valley running along the highway, right there in good old Cattaraugus County.

Also there on the map was Olean, NY (Union Cutlery); Gowanda, NY (Platts & Case Brothers); Springville, NY (Case Brothers); Tidioute, PA (Union Razor/Cutlery); Rochester, NY (Robeson); Andover, NY (Platts Bros); & Kane, PA (Case Manufacturing).

I studied my map looking at the distance between Little Valley and Gowanda. I tried the best I could to imagine the train ride between those two towns that Charles and H.N. Platts took to and from work. They had moved to Little Valley around 1893 to work with Cattaraugus Cutlery only to build their own factory in Gowanda around 1896 (C Platts & Sons) and they commuted back and forth.

The only thing better for me would have been if I could have escaped from the real world ( job, family responsibilities, etc) for about a week to visit each of the major cutlery factory locations in the Magic Circle. I would have loved to have actually walked the streets in Little Valley, Eldred, and Gowanda. But, as you know, we grown ups ☺ have time constraints and responsibilities, so I had to continue on to Bradford for my visit the Case factory- the reason for my trip to Bradford.

I arrived about 9:30 and was met by Mr. Fred Feightner who had set up the plant tour for me. It was a most enjoyable time. The trip was arranged because I am a lifetime member of the Case Collectors Club. *(Incidentally, if you aren't a member, you need to be. I love their quarterly magazine. It almost always has a great story about cutlery history. If you want more info please let me know. I would appreciate it if you would allow me to sponsor you ☺. I think I get some kind of brownie points or something if I recruit new members.)* Anyway, it was a very educational experience. I won't spoil it by telling you the details, cause you really ought to go, but I will say, you will be surprised by much is still done by hand in the manufacturing process at Case.

Not to drag out the story here, but after I left Case to head back to Pittsburg, I couldn't help but to think how great it is for an old (read: antique) knife guy like me to be able to see the same landscape (albeit different in the year 2005) that the old cutlers from the Golden Era lived in.

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### WHAT IS A BEER CAN WORTH????

Have you ever thought about knives and their prices (values) and tried to figure out how these values related to other collectibles values? I know there are some people out there who think knife values just can't keep going up year after year.

Well, I did a little checking and found some interesting stuff.... If you are one of those who feel toenail prices are too high and have thought that values can not sustain themselves, I want to share pretty interesting prices of other collectibles.

## RECENT SALES OF COLLECTIBLES

The Citizens Voice - New  
07/17/2005

“For Harrisburg resident Jay Herbine, collecting beer cans is a win-win hobby. In order to add a can to his collection, Herbine has to empty the contents first.

‘You get to sample a lot of different beers to empty the current collectibles,’ he said.

... “Last year, **a can from an Ohio brewery was sold for \$19,000,**” Kogoy said. “Rarity and condition make the pieces valuable.””

Antiques and the Arts Online  
April, 2005

“SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF. - Greg Martin Auctions’ sale of antique and collectible firearms, conducted April 25-27. The event also achieved a world-record price at auction for an **historic Colt Walker revolver - \$421,875** - purchased by an East Coast collector. The rare and important US Martial Colt Walker revolver with Gold Rush hand-tooled leather holster, found in Murphy’s, Calaveras County, Northern California, far exceeded its auction estimate.”

Charlotte Observer  
06/19/2005  
JACK HORAN - Special Correspondent

### “**Turkey call, other outdoors collectibles fetching big bucks**”

A longtime Charlotte hunter has sold a decades-old S.C. wild turkey call for \$55,000 at private auction, which collectors say is the highest known price ever paid for such a sporting collectible.”

### **1913 Liberty Head Nickel Sets Record**

Industry News:

Scoop, Friday, June 03, 2005

“One of the five famous 1913 Liberty Head Nickels sold this week at the Long Beach Coin Show sold for \$4.15 Million. Legend Numismatics of Lincroft, New Jersey purchased the coin from collector Ed Lee of Merrimack, New Hampshire, according to the Associated Press. The coin, along with the others in the set, are easily among the most sought after coins in the collecting hobby.”

### **Rare misprint of 1918 U.S. stamp sells at auction for record \$525,000**

News - canada.com

Canadian Press

June 5, 2005

“NEW YORK (AP) - A rare U.S. stamp from a botched batch - depicting an upside-down airplane - has been sold at auction for **\$525,000**, the highest-ever price for a 20th-century U.S. stamp, the auctioneer said Friday.”

### **Shelby G.T.500E Convertible Fetches World Record \$550,800 at Barrett-Jackson Palm Beach Auction**

www.theautochannel.com

April 28, 2005

“DALLAS—April 28, 2005—The first 1968 Shelby G.T.500E convertible sold for a world record \$550,800 during the 3rd Annual Barrett-Jackson Palm Beach Collector Car Auction on April 2, 2005, at the South Florida Expo Center in Palm Beach, Fla. After a spirited battle, the winning bidder captured the only Shelby G.T.500E convertible in the world with a portion of the sale benefiting the Carroll Shelby Children’s Foundation. “

### **Rare \$10 bill sells for \$27,100 on eBay**

AP Wire | 04/26/2005 |  
Associated Press

“WILKES-BARRE, Pa. - A \$10 bank note printed in 1905 and featuring a portrait of President William McKinley has been sold on eBay for \$27,100.

The buyer, Jess Lipka, of Flemington, N.J., has been collecting currency for more than 30 years. He said the bill is ‘very rare, very desirable.’”

### **Stradivari violin breaks world auction record**

Yahoo! News  
Fri Apr 22, 2005

“NEW YORK (AFP) - A Stradivarius violin sold for just over **two million dollars** at auction in New York, smashing the previous world record for a musical instrument.

The violin made by Antonio Stradivari in 1699, the year before his golden period, was sold by Christie’s for 2,032,000 dollars, far above its high estimate of 1.2 million dollars.”

### **The most costly cars on the block**

TheStar.com  
Feb. 5, 2005. 01:00 AM

Scottsdale, ARIZ.-Three auctions in three places and three ways to spend my money: Cash, cheque or credit. The star of the RM stable here this year was a 1934 Duesenberg Model T Convertible Coupe that brought in a breathtaking \$2,750,000. The creme de la creme of Russo and Steele this year was a 1963 Shelby Factory 289 Cobra race car - \$2,133,000. Barrett-Jackson Classic Car Auction - 1954 Oldsmobile F-88 GM Concept Car with its 250-hp V8 and four-speed Hydra-matic shifter sold for \$3,240,000.

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## PARTING SHOT-

Now I know it isn't everyday we get to see a truly near mint Case Brothers, so I just had to share this one with you. A collector from Ohio had it for the last 10 years and is now sending it to me to be its custodian☺ for a while. I told him it would definitely have a good home in my collection, plus he will still be able see it on ET.com when he misses it.

The stamps are near perfect- Case Bros. The only "defect" is the etch on the master blade is too faint to be clearly legible, but check out the handle, no wear whatsoever. I will get it in the next week and will add it to The List on my site once I can see it firsthand.



### MINI-EDITORIAL-

This knife is a prime example of the fact that quality toenails still exist and do become available, so I don't want to hear anymore crap (if you will please excuse my french) from collectors who hold the opinion that there aren't any good toenails out there. I know for a fact that there are MANY very high quality toenails in collectors' hands. Yes, they are in collections for the time being, BUT- it is only a matter of time before they are back in circulation.

I am continually asking collectors for the names of collectors who own toenails. Not only can I learn from many of these collectors, especially the old timers (like the man who had this CB toenail), but one day they are going to want to sell. (Remember- I am in sales and know to always be prospecting.)

Take care.  
Scott

Scott King

*"having as much fun as I did as a kid collecting rocks."*

[www.elephanttoenails.com](http://www.elephanttoenails.com)