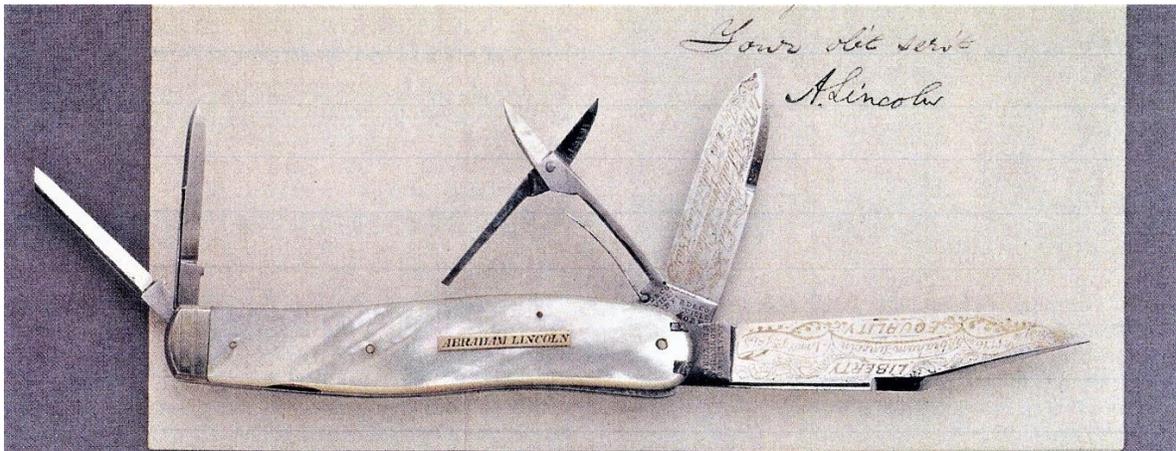


Made in Bronxville— A Pocketknife for President Lincoln

By Ray Geselbracht

On June 16, 1864, while attending a fair in Philadelphia, Abraham Lincoln was presented with a gift, contained in a small oak box. It was a pocketknife, about four inches long, paneled in mother-of-pearl and inlaid with a gold plaque engraved *Abraham Lincoln*. If Lincoln ever had an opportunity during the short term of life that remained to him to open the blades of the knife and look at them closely, he would have seen, besides the beautiful engraving on the two large blades, that each blade was signed at its base by the maker, *J. Ward and Co., Bronxville, New York*.



Abraham Lincoln's Bronxville knife sold at auction in 1989 for \$90,700.

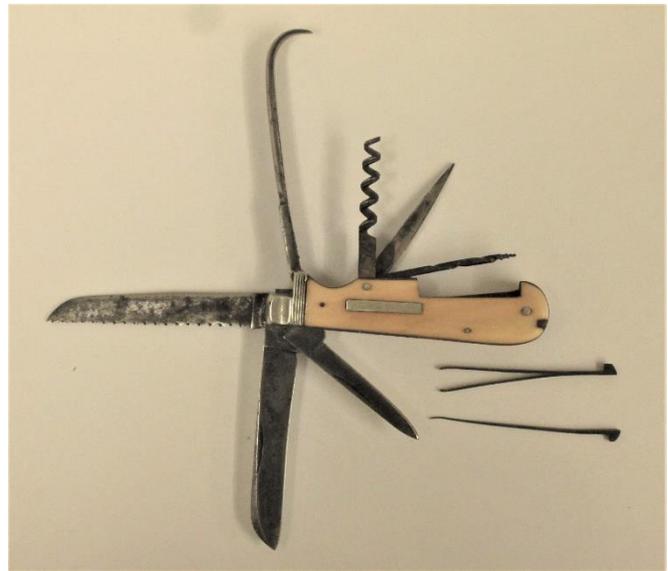
The knife was made at a factory building owned by James P. Swain, located on the site of a grist mill that had been set up next to the Bronx River probably sometime in the mid-eighteenth century, near the pathway that later became Pondfield Road. Swain put up his substantial stone factory building probably in the mid-1840s. For some years he made screws and axles there, but in about 1860 he brought in some skilled cutlery from England and established a cutlery company, called, probably after the head craftsman, J. Ward and Company.



James P. Swain's factory building, in an illustration from a J. Ward and Co. prospectus, c. 1860. Photographs taken in the early twentieth century show an added floor on both wings of the stone building and a long wooden structure in the back.

For several years the company prospered, but by the late 1860s, Swain was considering selling the business. In 1870, it was taken over by his son-in-law, David E. Smith, who had probably helped Swain run the business from the beginning, and by a new partner, John W. Clark. The company, which made its knives under the name Smith and Clark, lasted about five years.

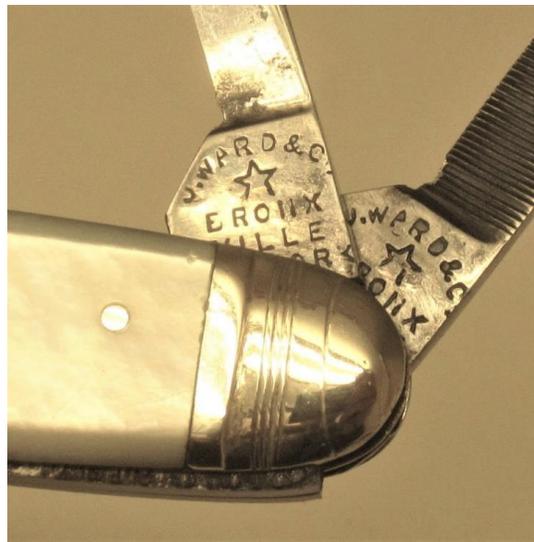
A six-bladed knife, with tweezers and awl inserted in the handle, made by Smith and Clark, c. 1870-1875.



James P. Swain died in April 1875, leaving to his heirs a difficult financial situation. In early 1877, there was a serious explosion at the factory which apparently proved the final doom of the business, and later in the year the family lost the building to foreclosure and it was sold at public auction.

Swain's factory building would survive for another seventy-five years, which included a twenty-year renaissance period at the turn of the twentieth century during which it would again be the central industrial site in Bronxville. More on this in a future article.

A portion the lower story of the factory building's west wall is now part of the retaining wall along the Bronx River of the River House building at 72 Pondfield Road West.



J. Ward and Co. knives are typically signed at the base of one of the blades or, as in this example, all of the blades.