



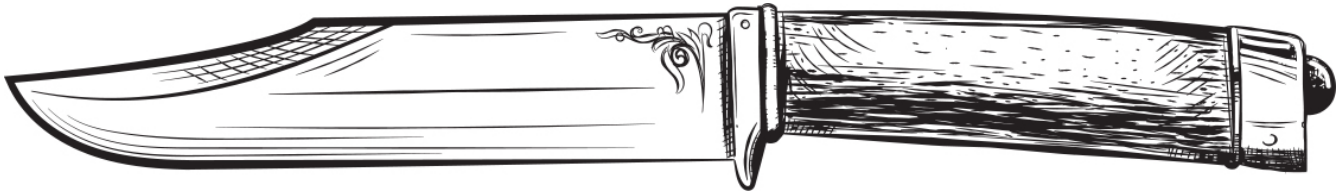
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# OLDE TOWNE *Post-Dispatch*

British Edition  
Continued!!!

Volume IV

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## GREAT KNIFE STORIES IN HISTORY

### THE GREATEST CUTLER TO AMERICA

We needed to continue our British theme for another month because just opening the discussion about the roots of American Cutlery in Sheffield, England would leave out two of the most important names in the entire cutlery industry. Those two names are George Wostenholm and Joseph Rodgers. Once they were rival companies, vying for an ever-larger slice of the American cutlery market, and they dominated the industry for much of our country's early existence; well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. So, this week we are going to combine our *History* and *Meet the Maker* segments, and review these incredible men and their legacies.

#### Joseph Rodgers - Cutler to His Majesty

Joseph Rodgers is the older of the two names as noted by the distinctive Tang Stamp. The Star and Maltese Cross was originally registered in March 1682 by a Benjamin Rich, and became associated with Joseph Rodgers in 1764. By 1780, the firm was producing a substantial volume of traditional pocket knives and expanded to the larger premises at No. 6 Norfolk Street. Eventually they acquired the surrounding property until the famous Norfolk Street Works occupied the entire plot. Around 1800, Rodgers' product line broadened into razors, table cutlery and scissors. In 1821 the firm was appointed as "*Cutlers to The Royal Family*" for the first time; a distinction that would regularly be used in advertising and company insignia.



The Norfolk Knife

The Rodgers firm opened their first celebrated showroom in 1860, where they proudly exhibited their wares, including Rodgers two most famous knives, *The Year Knife* and *The Norfolk Knife*. *The Year Knife* was commenced in 1822 with a new blade being added for each year of the Christian era (the knife now contains two thousand blades). *The Norfolk Knife*, made for The Great Exhibition of 1851, took two years to complete and features blades with stunning etchings. Both are now proudly on display in Sheffield – *The Year Knife* is in The Kelham Island Industrial Museum, and *The Norfolk Knife* is in The Cutlers Hall in the city center.

JOSEPH RODGERS & SONS  
CUTLERS TO HIS MAJESTY  
NO 6 NORFOLK STREET  
SHEFFIELD

Further expansions were required in the late 1800's and more property acquired in the area around Norfolk Street until ultimately it would become Sheffield's largest cutlery factory. Rodgers products were now being exported to growing export markets across the entire world. America would become Rodgers largest export market, and it is claimed that it was a Rodgers' hunting knife, given to Buffalo Bill by General Custer, which Bill used in his duel with Sitting Bull.

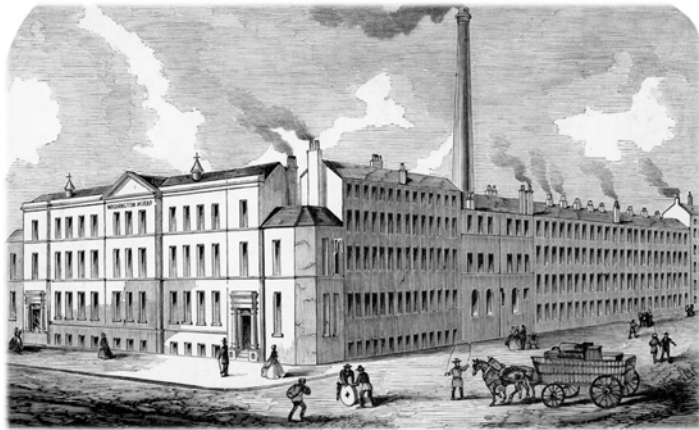
Rodgers focused on producing the finest quality knives and looked for the best in every aspect of knife production from materials to workmanship. Each knife was branded with the Star and Cross as a guarantee of its superb quality. Joseph Rodgers' success is evident in the firm's appointment to five successive sovereigns - George IV, William IV, Queen Victoria, Edward II and George V.

Despite Royal recognition and overseas trade, the company could not escape the decline of Sheffield's cutlery industry. In 1971 the firm was brought together with its once fierce competitor, George Wostenholm. The Egginton Group bought the rights to the name and trademarks in 1986, which meant that fine Joseph Rodgers knives would continue to be produced in Sheffield; the home of the world's finest cutlery.



### George Wostenholm “I\*XL”

Along with Joseph Rodgers, George Wostenholm is possibly the most famous name in cutlery. Although Wostenholm was formed in 1785, it would be three generations and one name change for the company to really make a mark in cutlery history. Originally the family name was spelt ‘Wolstenholme’ but, story has it that George Wostenholm II found this name too long for smaller knives, so he omitted the



letters ‘l’ and ‘e’. The name has been Wostenholm ever since. The second George Wostenholm also built the Rockingham Works (also known as the Rockingham Wheel) around 1810. Knives made in this factory and marked “Rockingham Works” are highly prized by knife collectors to this day. In 1831, the famous I\*XL trademark, which had first been registered in 1787, was assigned to Wostenholm. It was the third George Wostenholm who ensured that this trademark became the world's most illustrious and best loved knife brand.

George III took charge of the company in 1833, and set out on a fiercely ambitious effort to grow the brand around the world. The company had already taken its first steps into the American export market as early as 1830; however, it was the third George who made numerous grueling sales trips to America. Demand from America for superior quality cutlery was very strong, and George Wostenholm's efforts had made certain that the finest cutlery of the time, his I\*XL knives, were the knives of choice for Americans.

Trade flourished, and in 1848 a new factory, the fabled Washington Works on Sheffield's Wellington Street, was opened. The firm then quadrupled in size and employed over 800 skilled craftsmen making knives in a volume never witnessed before.

George Wostenholm, after having reportedly declined the position on many previous occasions, finally became "Master Cutler of the Guild" in 1856. His influence on the city of Sheffield was considerable. He purchased an entire suburb of 150 acres and designing the streets to be laid out to reflect the leafy residential roads of the villages he had visited in New York State; an area which would later develop its own identity as a cutlery manufacturing center; no doubt due to seeds planted in the men Wostenholm met on his American sales trips.



Wostenholm's influence on history was also felt across the Atlantic. Wostenholm had begun making hunting knives in the 1830's. Many of these were exported to America to keep up with demand for highly crafted knives in this incredibly turbulent time in American history.

There are two claims made about Wostenholm and the relationship with one of America's most famous sons, legendary frontiersman Colonel James Bowie. The first claim is that Bowie ordered knives for himself and his close friends directly from Wostenholm.



The second, more famous claim is that, on March 6th, 1836 when Bowie died at The Alamo while General Santa Anna's Mexican Army attacked, a knife found on his body was one made by Wostenholm. Whether or not these stories are true is impossible to say for certain as company records from that period no longer exist, but it is nice to imagine that the paths of these two great men once crossed.

What can be said for certain is that Wostenholm's dedication to his company and its products meant that the I\*XL trademark has come to be regarded as the absolute pinnacle in knife manufacture. These two, once great rival companies have sat alongside each other in The Egginton Group since 1986.

The Great Recession and unfavorable exchange rates dampened exports to the US, but there has been a recent change to these brands which we are proud to announce. **Olde Towne Cutlery has brought back to the states the traditional pocket knives made by these two incredible brands. You can now own a piece of history with your own Wostenholm I\*XL Barlow or Joseph Rodgers Swayback. The quality is the same as it has always been; simply superb!**

# FEATURED PRODUCT AND REVIEW

## [George Wostenholm Clip Point Barlow](#)

Wostenholm knives are known throughout the world because of their “I\*XL” markings on the blade and bolster; which means “I excel”. This mark has been used since 1787. The Wostenholm brand was by far the most popular brand in America throughout the 19th century. These superb knives should be prominently featured in any collectors display, but are also affordable and beautiful for everyday carry. This Barlow features a beautiful Rosewood handle, nickel silver bolsters, a clip point blade and brass liners and pins and the world famous “I\*XL” markings.



[To see the whole Wostenholm line, click here](#)

## [Joseph Rodgers Swayback Lambsfoot](#)

This is a truly unique and amazing traditional knife. Joseph Rodgers is one of the oldest trademarks in the world. The Star and Maltese Cross was originally registered in 1642 and is known the world over as the mark of the famous Sheffield Cutlery Firm. This knife is hand assembled with brass linings, brass pins, nickel silver bolsters, and stunning Buffalo Horn handles.



[To see the whole Joseph Rodgers line, click here](#)

### [Ernest Wright Turton Scissors](#)

We know we featured some Ernest Wright Scissors last newsletter, but we received one more of their patterns. The Turton Scissors are probably their most popular. This is an outstanding product. Stainless steel blades, serrated blade, mirror polish finish, 7" OAL. Made in Sheffield, England, these Ernest Wright & Son scissors are exquisite. These kitchen scissors are hand-made with professional quality. Made for cutting packages or preparing food these scissors can also be used around the house or in your garden. They feature a bottle and twist-cap opener in the handles.



The making of these kitchen scissors are featured in this short video: [“The Putter” by Shaun Bloodworth](#). [Click here for a link to this beautiful film](#). If you missed this film, it is a must see for anyone who appreciates hand made cutlery.

[To see the whole line of Ernest Wright Scissors, click here](#)

Melissa and I sincerely hope this newsletter had something you found useful or interesting.

This concludes our features on British made product, and we thank you so much for taking the time to read. Please keep checking the site for new product as more items are rolling in each week. Lee and Melissa

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