



Lest We Forget

by Bob Roger

Lest We Forget is a series of short articles, each about a tool or implement that was once a common household, farm, or trade necessity, but whose use or existence may soon be forgotten.

Carton Cutters

We all have modern cardboard box cutters in the shop. They are small, lightweight, and have retractable throwaway blades, and they are easily and safely carried in a pocket. But let us not forget their more substantial forefathers. Figure 1 shows a couple of the earlier cutters that you will not often see anymore, and each has an interesting story to tell.

Tool A is a grey iron casting with an adjustable steel blade attached. The raised letters on the handles spell DUNHAM'S COCOANUT and PAT APLD FOR. The nickel plating has almost all worn off. I bought it from an elderly lady who insisted that it was used to cut the eyes out of cocoanut shells and that she had used it for that purpose when making cocoanut cakes. I would have loved to watch her trying to cut those eyes out with this tool.

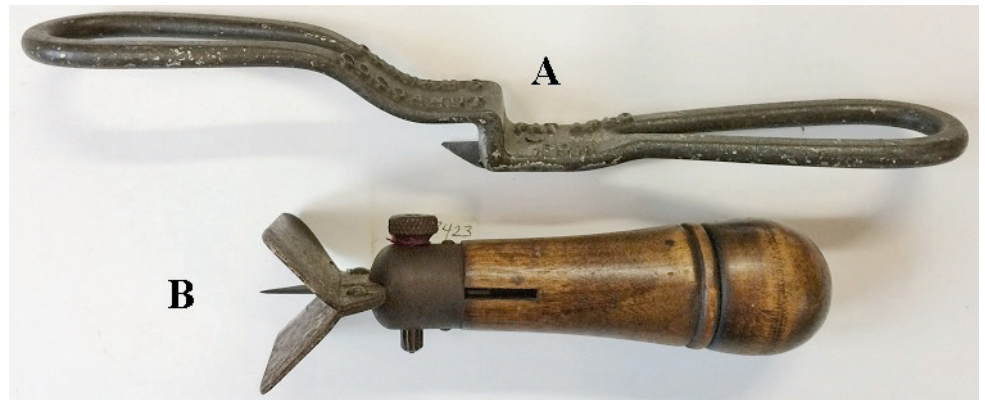


Figure 1. Early Carton Cutters

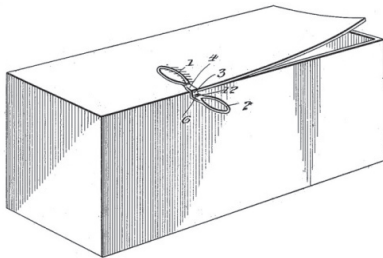
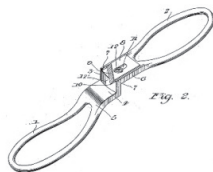


Figure 2. Budlong's Box Opener



It is Budlong's paper box opener, Patent #1,121,469 which was applied for on March 4, 1914 and issued on December 15, 1914. The tool was probably made between those dates. The patent drawing is shown in Figure 2. Budlong was from Massachusetts, and as expected, his patent does NOT mention opening cocoanuts.

The Dunham Manufacturing Company of St. Louis was a producer of their patented (1879) concentrated cocoanut. Why would an advertisement be cast into a pre-patent tool by a company that may not have any connection with the inventor? My guess is that during 1914 Dunham somehow learned about Budlong's idea and obtained permission to have the cutters made with their name on it for use in their food processing plant. That would also explain why the tool was plated. You can obliterate my guess by finding another with different markings. However, it may be awhile before another example is found.

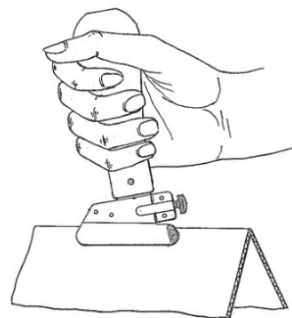


Figure 3. Platt's

Tool B is an example of Arthur Platt's paper carton opener, Patent #1,129,310 issued on February 23, 1915. His drawing is shown in Figure 3. He assigned the patent to the Bridgeport Hardware Manufacturing Corporation, a maker of many box and crate openers including this tool. The hollow handle stores the extra blades. The tool is marked with the patent date, the maker's logo (BHM), and also WASH HANDS and CLEANS HOMES. The story for this tool is in these markings, and I do not know what they are trying to say. If you know the rest of the story, please clue me in.

In the meantime, do not forget the older unusual carton cutters. Collecting them will not break your bank and you just might uncover an interesting story.