

(From: *History of Troop F* — by Sidney A. Bull, Lowell, 1933.)

# CHRISTOPHER ROBY and the CHELMSFORD SWORD

by *John D. Hamilton*

Photographs by the author,  
courtesy of The Museum of Our National Heritage

Christopher Roby (1814-1897), sword manufacturer and Commanding Officer of Troop F, Mass. Volunteer Militia.

AT THE CONCLUSION of the Civil War, many small arms manufacturers succumbed to the economic realities of a glutted market. Frenetic production of edged weapons during the war years had resulted in a huge surplus that, in the face of a much reduced military establishment, netted only negative reaction in Washington to letting out further sword contracts. Some manufacturers were driven out of business; others continued apace on the strength of orders from militia and non-military social or fraternal organizations. Information on these small manufacturers is scant, reflecting how little research has been expended on them in proportion to that devoted to firearms manufacturers. Of all these, sword maker Christopher Roby (1814-1897) of West Chelmsford, Massachusetts, is one of the more interesting figures worthy of study.

As with a number of his contemporaries, Roby began a sword manufacturing career by making edged tools. His factory was located in a portion of Chelmsford that was once known as "Scythe Factory Village," from the small scythe industry started there in 1820 by Deacon John Farwell. Through a series of transactions, Farwell's business eventually passed to F.T. Sawyer in 1846, who in turn sold a half interest to Christopher Roby of Dunstable; the firm then being known as Roby, Sawyer & Co. While still a young man of 39, Roby bought out Sawyer in 1853 and changed the name of the firm to C. Roby & Co.



Roby scythes and machetes were in particular demand in the southern and border states, but by 1861 the embargo on trade with secessionist states caused a marked decline in sales. However, as war approached it became evident that there was a dire shortage of edged weapons in the North as well as the South. Even well established sword manufacturers such as Ames of Chicopee were unable to initially provide sufficient swords to meet government needs. So desperate was the Union for additional edged weapons that Ames, as well as Tiffany & Co. of New York, resorted to importing German cavalry sabres at the outset of the war. For these swords, the government paid premium prices. In December 1861, Roby had little difficulty in disposing of 410 cavalry sabres that had been on hand.

As early as April 1862, local uniform outfitters proudly advertised the sale of "Chelmsford" swords by C. Roby. In addition to swords made by other manufacturers, military "volunteers" were offered a wide selection of Roby weapons that would have included N.C.O., Musician, Horse Artillery, and Cavalry swords for enlisted personnel; a Foot Infantry Officer sword, model 1850; and large bowie-knives with inspiring brass, eagle-head pommels. It is not known if Roby made Naval Officer swords; the author knows of no examples extant.

Roby's first contract with the government called for delivery of N.C.O. and Musician swords and was signed on 29 August 1862 by the Chief of Ordnance, Brig. Gen. James W. Ripley. On this, and all subsequent contracts, Roby received slightly less in payment for the same type weapon than did Ames. Examples of Roby-made Horse Artillery sabres bear U.S. markings, arsenal inspector's initials "A.G.M." (Alfred G. Manning), and the date 1864, indicating that they had been subject to a government contract that was not included in those listed in Executive Document 99. This report, included in those listed in Executive Document 99. This report, made to Congress by the Sec. of War, lists Ordnance Department purchases of small arms, cannon, and projectiles during the period from April 1861 until the end of the war. Included are more than a quarter of a million dollars worth of swords purchased from Roby; approximately as many as were supplied by Emerson & Silver of Trenton, New Jersey. An analysis of Roby contracts reflects government purchase of three principal weapons: N.C.O. and Musician swords and Cavalry sabres.

**The N.C.O. sword contracts:**

2,000	delivered	1862
9,000	"	1863
1,000	"	1864
500	"	1865
<u>12,500</u>	Total	

The first contract for 11,000, awarded 29 August 1862, was also the first contract completed (9 May 1863). A premium price of \$4.37½ was paid for the first 5,000 swords, then \$4.25 for each of the remaining 6,000. The second contract, calling for an additional 1,000, was awarded in July 1863, but completion was delayed for over a year. The third contract, for 500 swords, was awarded two days after the second contract, but was deferred for two years making it the last war contract that Roby completed (2 September 1865) — nearly four months after Appomattox.

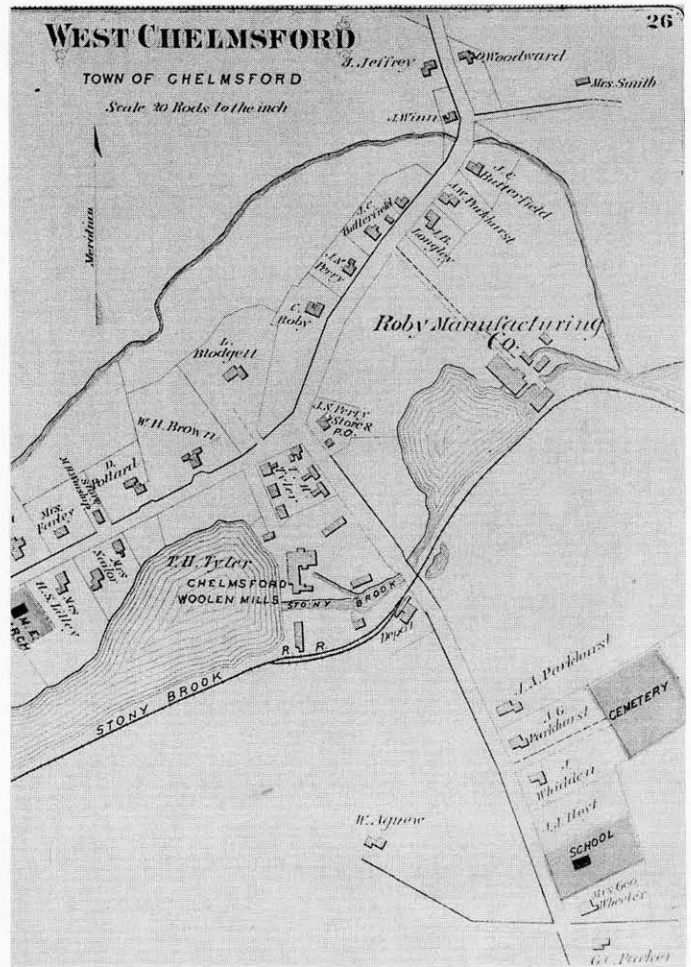
**The Musician sword contracts:**

3,500 total, delivered 1863

An initial contract for 3,000 was awarded in August 1863 and rapidly completed in two months immediately following delivery of the first increment of N.C.O. swords. The second contract, for 500 swords, was given out in July 1863 and completed in just a little over a month before work began on the Cavalry sabres.

**The Cavalry sabre contracts:**

410	purchased	1861
3,000	delivered	1863
14,000	"	1864
<u>15,000</u>	"	1865
32,410	Total	



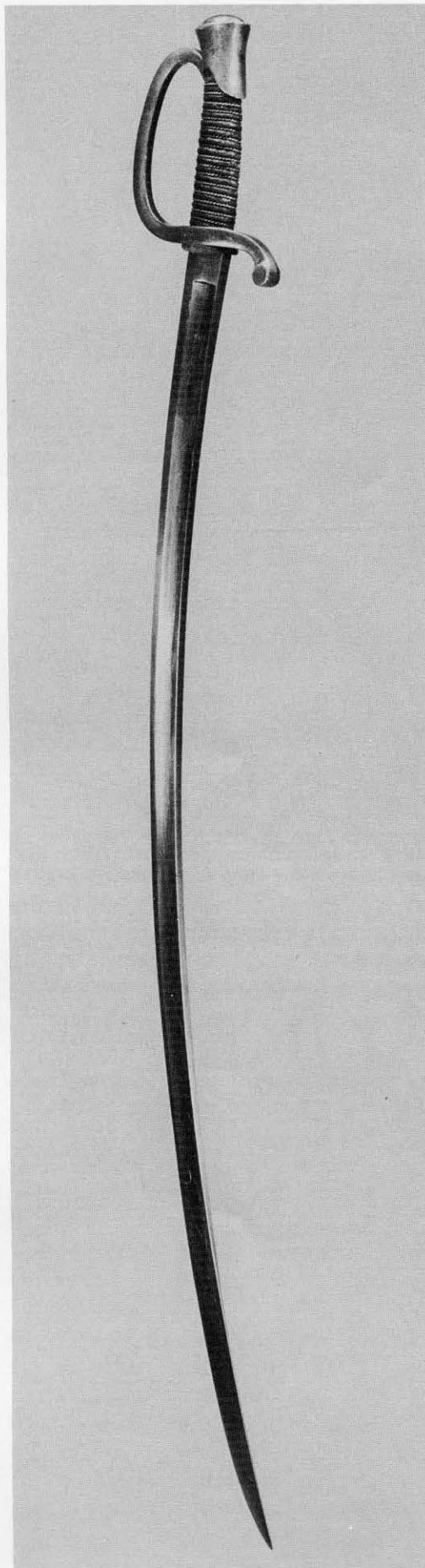
Map of West Chelmsford, c.1870, showing location and extent of factory buildings of the Roby Manufacturing Company. Also shown is location of Christopher Roby's home which is still within view of the factory ruins.

Advertisement for Roby Swords as appeared in the Lowell Daily Citizen & News, 2 April, 1862.

It can be used separately for BAKING and ROASTING, or by the removal of a simple plate, not requiring a moments time, can be used as one oven. The Stove is a beautiful specimen of mechanical skill, simple in its construction, and remarkably quick and economical in its operation. For sale by CUSHING & MACK, mar15dtf Nos. 123 & 125 Market st., Lowell.

**SWORDS, BELTS, SASHES, &c.**—The largest assortment in Lowell. We can show you Swords of half a dozen different makers including the **CHELMSFORD SWORD** manufactured by C. Roby & Co., West Chelmsford. We have all kinds of Military Goods direct from the manufacturers and can and will sell at the lowest cash prices. Please call and examine. JOS. RAYNES & CO., oct2 43 Central street, Tyler's Block.

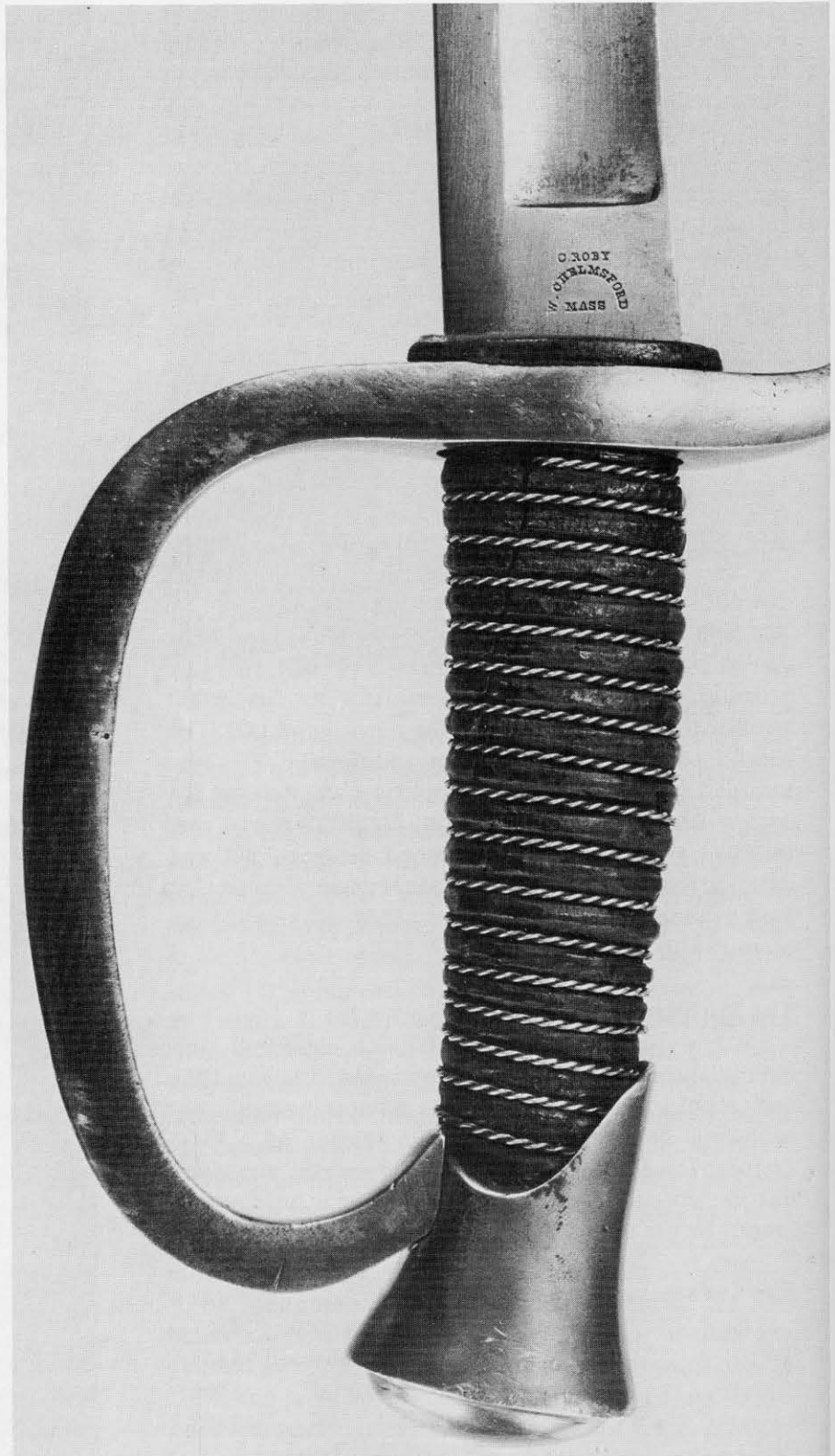
**COUGH PREPARATIONS.**—Mrs. Gardner's Balsam Liverwort and Hoarhound, Masta's Balsam, Ayer's Pectoral, Schenck's Pulmonic Syrup, Wistar's Balsam, Mowe's Cough Balsam, Stone's Cough Elixir, Skelton's Pectoral Balsam, Cod Liver Oil and Cod Liver Oil Jelly, White Pine Compound, &c. All the above for



Horse Artillery Sabre, model 1840. Blade marked "C. ROBY/W. CHELMSFORD/MASS." and "US/1864/AGM".

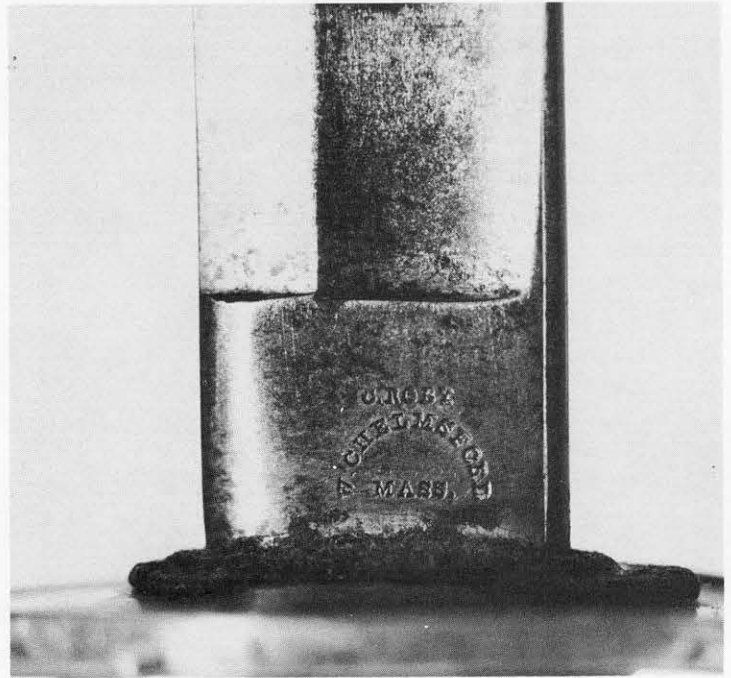
Detail, blade marking, Artillery Sabre, model 1840. Semi-circular marking (Type II) found on cavalry and artillery sabres.

(E.P. Richardson Collection)



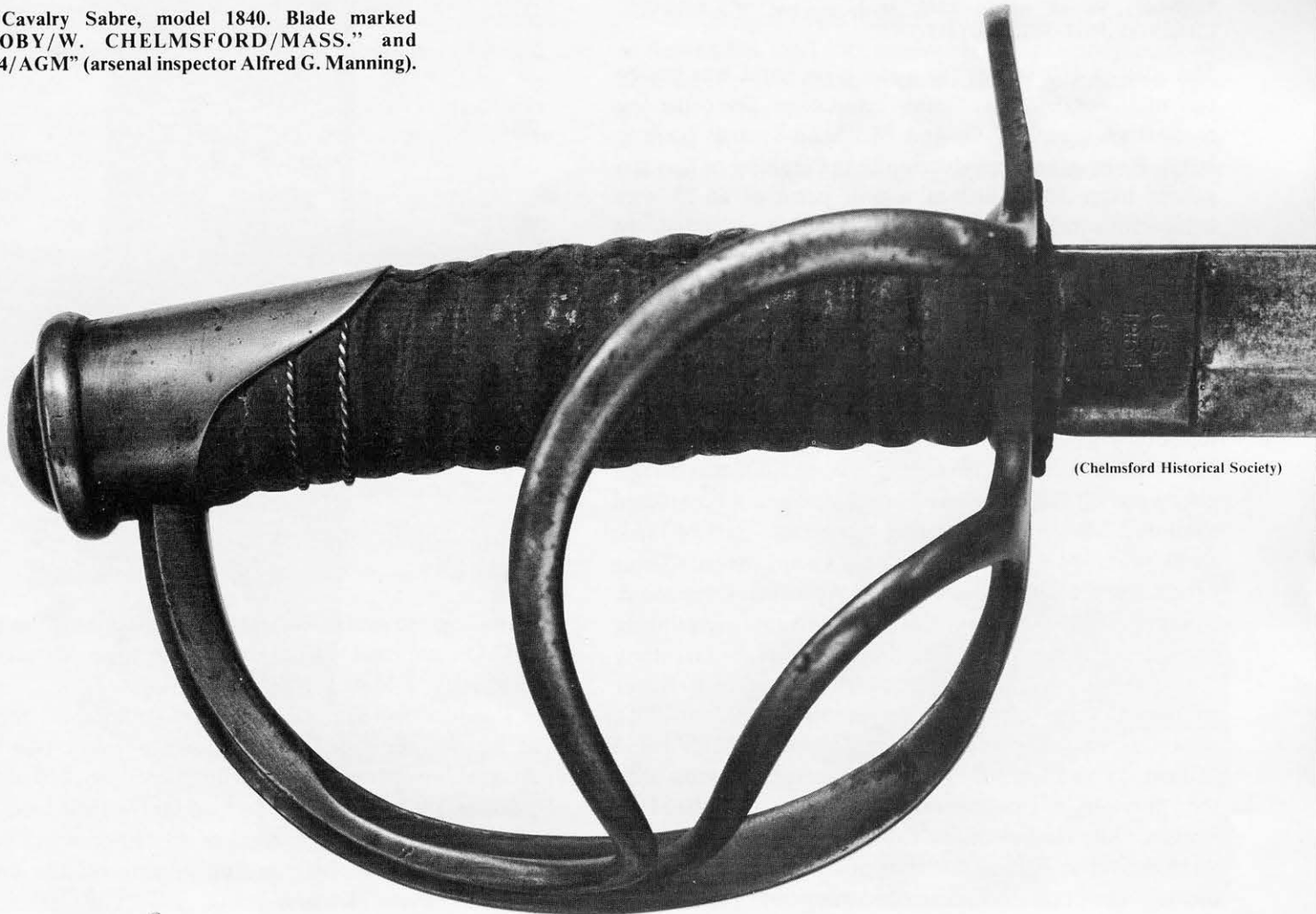
(J.P. Richardson Collection)

Detail, blade marking, Cavalry Sabre. "C. ROBY" above semi-circular (Type II) marking "W. CHELMSFORD/MASS.," found on cavalry and artillery sabres.



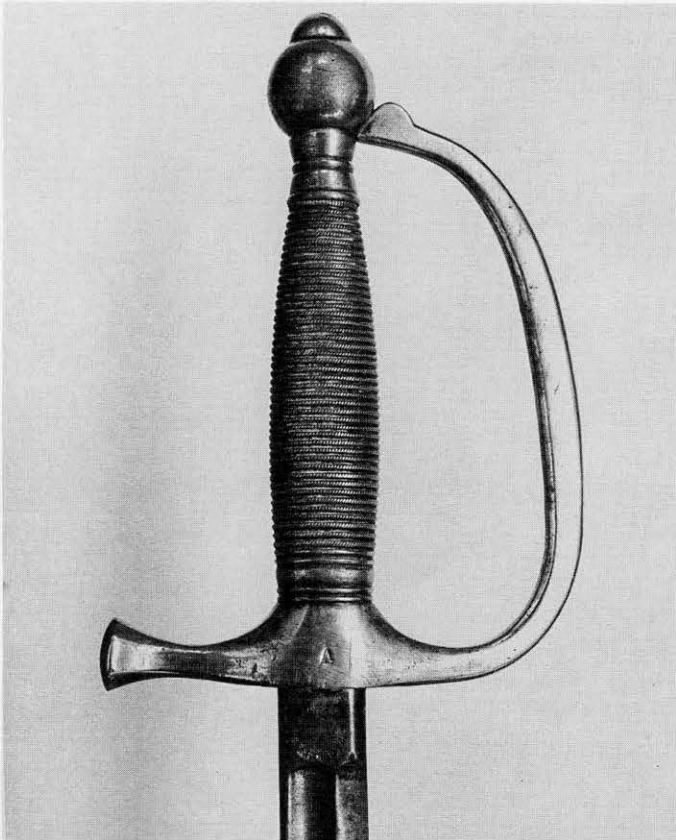
(Chelmsford Historical Society)

Heavy Cavalry Sabre, model 1840. Blade marked "C. ROBY/W. CHELMSFORD/MASS." and "US/1864/AGM" (arsenal inspector Alfred G. Manning).



(Chelmsford Historical Society)

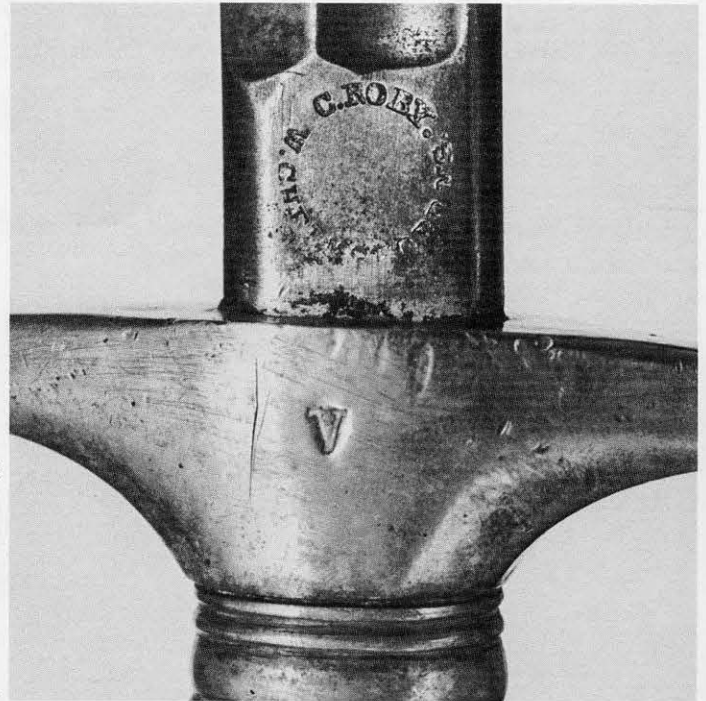
(Chelmsford Historical Society)



Musician's Sword, model 1840, blade marked "C. ROBY/W. CHELMSFORD, MS./US/1863/FSS".

The sale of 410 sabres from stock-on-hand was not by contract, but by open "panic" purchase. Once the less combative type N.C.O. and Musician swords were in hand, Roby geared production to the making of Cavalry sabres from July 1863 at a unit price of \$5.75 with completion taking place before the year ended. In October, a second contract was awarded for 10,000 sabres, and was completed the following June. A third contract for an additional 10,000 sabres was awarded in July 1864 at an increased price of \$6.50. This contract specified that the sabres were to be made to the standard pattern deposited at the New York arsenal and that the first 800 were to be delivered by the beginning of August 1864. In actuality, the first increment of 1,000 was turned over a month late. The entire contract was not completed until mid-March 1865. During the greater part of 1863, Roby seems to have been the only sword manufacturer producing Cavalry sabres; neither Ames nor Emerson & Silver received significant Cavalry sabre contracts during this period. Ames imported 5,000 sabres from Germany for resale to the government, and Emerson & Silver produced none at all that year. Fourth and fifth contracts, each for 5,000 additional sabres, were awarded in January and March 1865. These were not begun until the previous third contract had been completed in March. Only the first 2,000 sabres of the fourth contract were delivered in time to have possibly been in service during the conflict. All remaining in production,

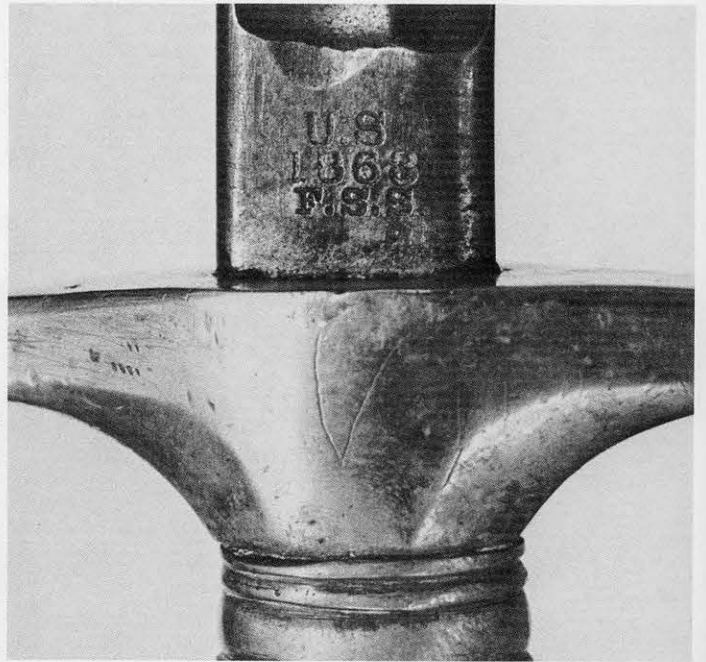
(Chelmsford Historical Society)



Detail, blade markings, Musician's Sword, model 1840. Circular (Type I) marking.

Detail, blade marking, Musician's Sword, model 1840. "US/1863" above Inspector's initials, FSS (Frederic S. Strong).

(Chelmsford Historical Society)



including the entire fifth sabre contract and the second N.C.O. contract, were delivered after cessation of hostilities, 4 May 1865.

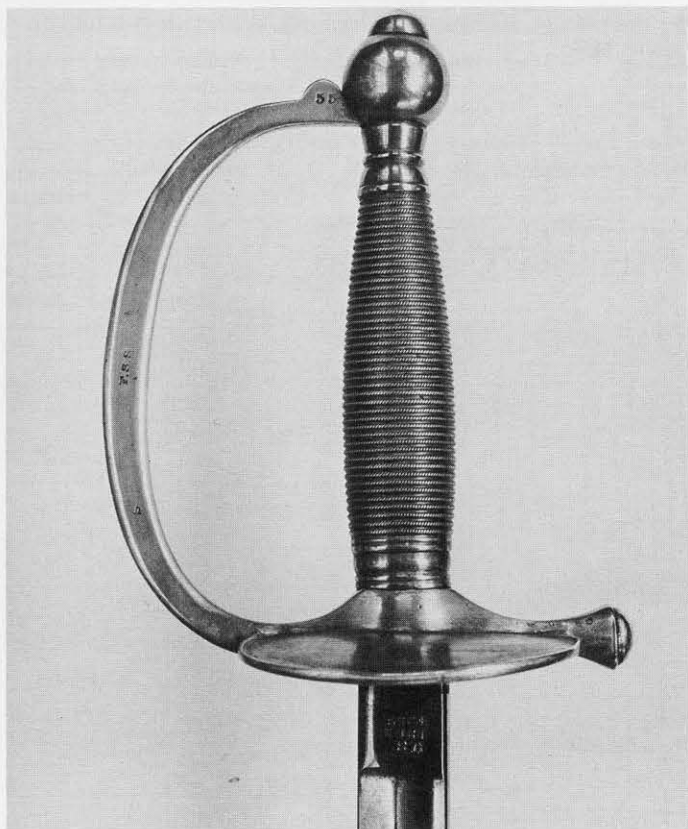
Production throughout the 1861-65 period remained at an average rate of 1,000 swords every two weeks. Annual sword production amounted to 410 in 1861; 2,000 in 1862; 15,500 in 1863; 15,000 in 1864; and 15,500 in 1865 for a war-time total of 48,410 contract swords. Two types of Roby marking appear on the contract blades. Type I, consisting of "C.ROBY / W.

CHELMSFORD, MS.” in a circular format, appears on N.C.O. and Musician swords. A second style of mark, found on Cavalry and Horse Artillery sabres, is designated as Type II and consists of “C. ROBY” above W. CHELMSFORD/MASS.” in a semi-circular format.

In 1864, Copperhead agitation posed a threat to the safety of northern Massachusetts towns. As a result, Roby petitioned the state of Massachusetts for authorization to raise a troop of cavalry for home defense. Roby had gained cavalry experience as a member of the New Hampshire “Governor’s Horse Guards,” and was granted the authority to enlist a company of cavalry, to consist of 100 men or more, in the Independent Division of the Militia of Massachusetts. They were organized to repel invasion, suppress insurrection, and defend the Commonwealth. The terms of enlistment were such that, if called upon, they could be obligated for 30 days active duty within the state borders.

Roby received his commission on 5 September 1864, and that same day election of officers took place in Chelmsford Center. Roby, as would be expected, was elected to the rank of Captain of the Troop. A great majority of the rank and file were men of Chelmsford, although a smattering were from adjacent towns of Carlisle, Billerica, Dracut, and Westford. Of the original eighty-five men enrolled, eighteen were employees of the Roby Company, and listed their profession as “sword

Non-Commissioned Officer Sword, model 1840, marked “C. ROBY/W. CHELMSFORD, MS./US/1863”. Arsenal inspector’s initials, FSS (Fredrick S. Strong) appear on the knuckle-bow.



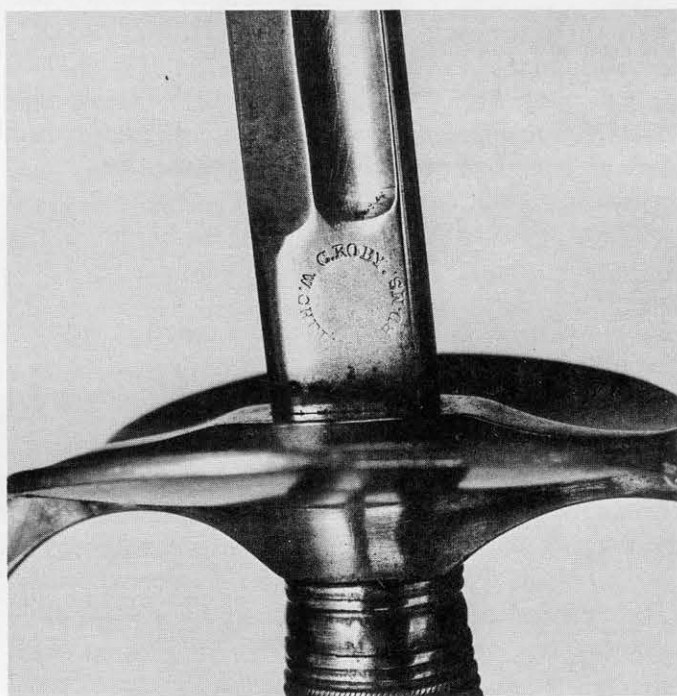
(Chelmsford Historical Society)

maker.” Their organization was given real purpose when, in October, a daring Confederate force crossed the Canadian border and raided St. Albans, Vermont.

The Troop was officially designated Company F, Unattached Cavalry, Massachusetts Volunteer Militia (M.V.M.). According to inspection reports, troopers were armed with carbines and sabres of one pattern “which are well cared for.” Doubtless the sabres were made in West Chelmsford. Troop colours were presented with ceremony by Noah Spaulding, who had previously commanded a troop of Chelmsford’s dragoons during the Mexican War. In recognition of such, Troop F was thereafter known as the “Spaulding Light Cavalry.” An Officer’s Cavalry sabre, with etched blade bearing the name “EMERSON” and “Co. F, SPAULDING LIGHT CAVALRY M.V.M.”, was made for Troop F Adjutant, Lt. H.H. Emerson (1866-74). It represents a transitional-style sabre that bridges the design gap between the regulation cavalry sabre of 1860 and the emasculated 1872 version. The use of Roby’s personal name in the format of the manufacturer’s blade mark, i.e. C. ROBY & Co. rather than Roby Manufacturing Co., would point to a production date between 1866, when Emerson received his commission, and late 1867, when Roby lost ownership of the company.

According to town records, Roby filed for bankruptcy in September 1867 with the court selling factory, mill site, and water privileges for a mere \$2,000. Subsequently, the property was operated as the Roby Manufacturing Company. If Roby felt that this personal failure disqualified him from holding a position of responsibility

Detail, blade markings, NCO Sword, model 1840. Circular (Type I) marking found on NCO and Musicians swords.

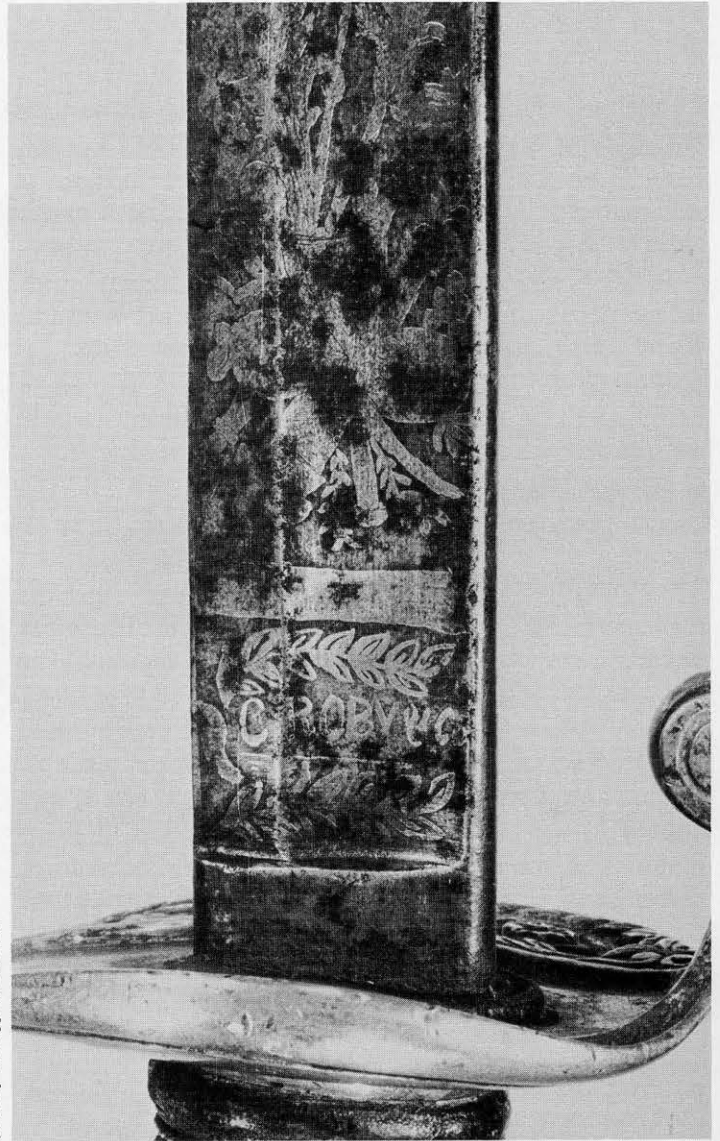


(Chelmsford Historical Society)



(Stanley A. Olpp Collection)

Hilt detail of Foot Officers Sword, model 1850.

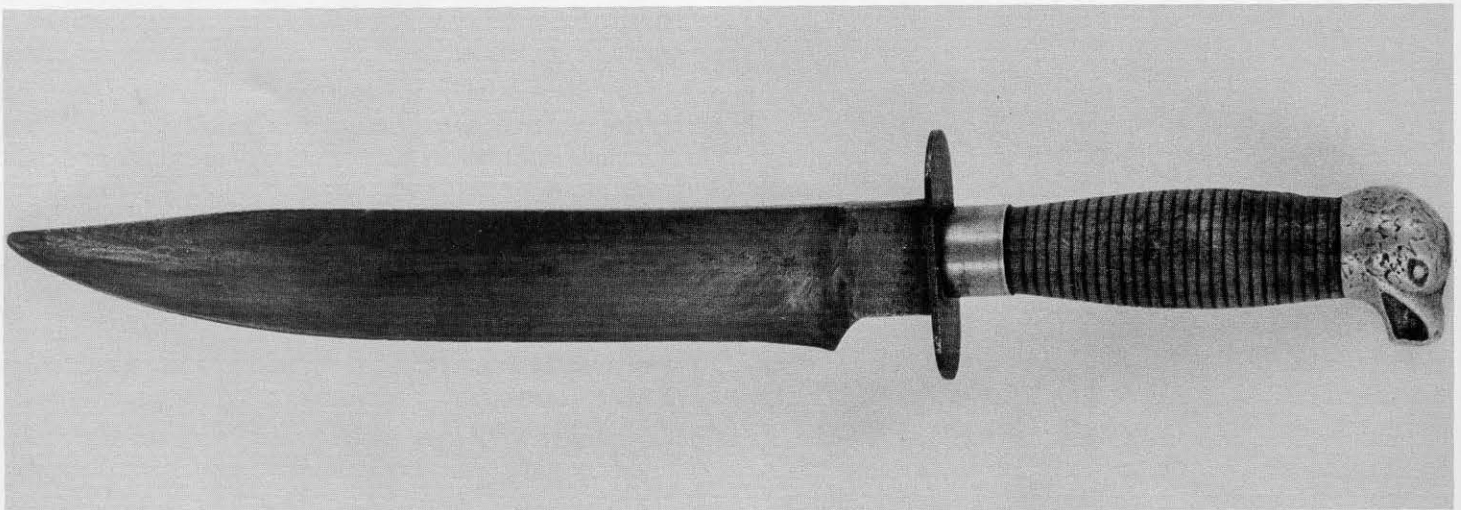


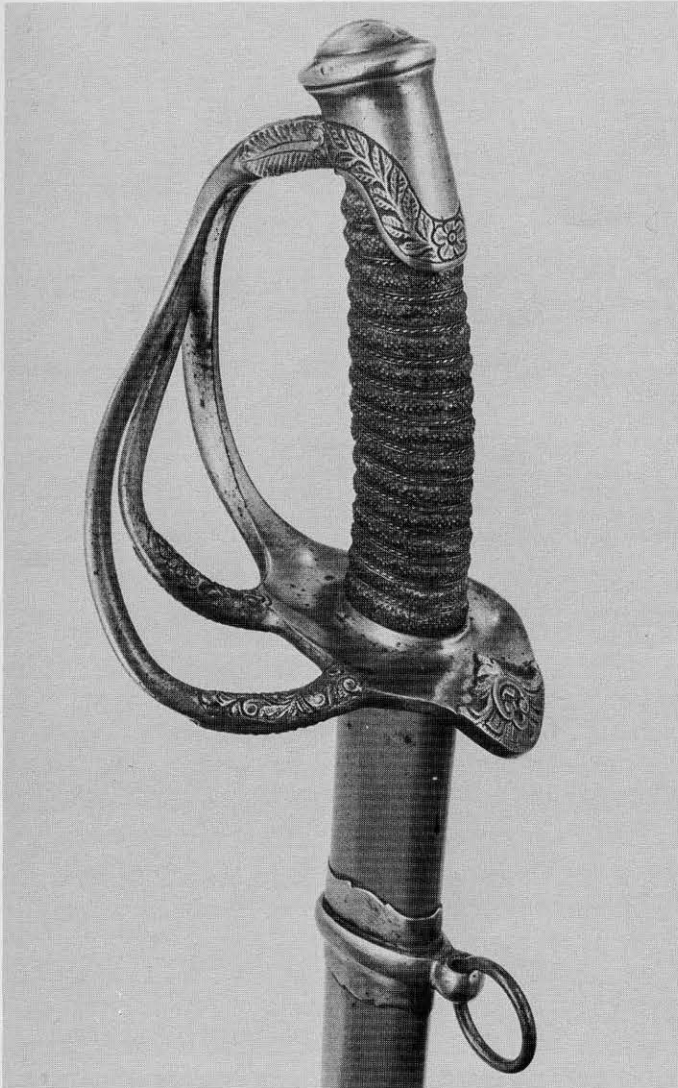
(Stanley A. Olpp Collection)

C. Roby & Co., manufacturer's blade markings, Foot Officers Sword, model 1850.

Eagle-hilt Bowie Knife, manufactured by C. Roby. c.1860.

(Stanley A. Olpp Collection)

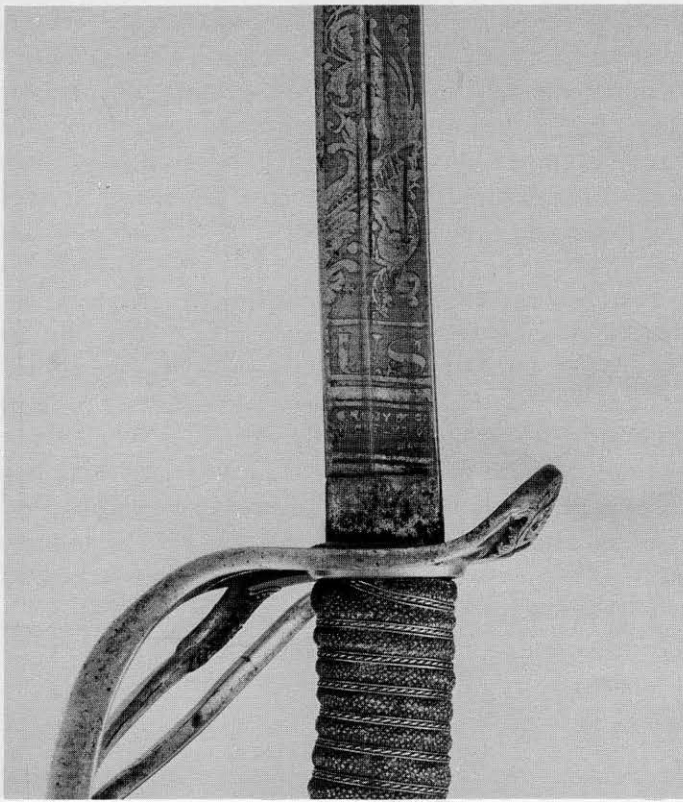




(Stanley A. Olpp Collection)

Officer's Sabre, Spaulding Light Cavalry. Manufactured by C. Roby & Co., W. Chelmsford, Mass. c.1866-67.

Detail of engraved blade, Officer's Sabre, Spaulding Light Cavalry, M.V.M. Manufactured by C. Roby of W. Chelmsford, Mass. c.1866-67.



(Stanley A. Olpp Collection)

in the Troop, he was mistaken. He submitted a resignation of command in 1868, but it was refused by unanimous vote. With that vote of confidence Roby continued to command the troop until finally stepping down in 1877. Meanwhile, the factory operated on a reduced scale, producing edged tools for agricultural use and the textile industry. Militia swords, including sabres such as that presented by Troop F. to General Chamberlain in 1871, were still manufactured by the company. These, as well as Masonic regalia swords, were manufactured until 1875, when the factory was sold to the Hiscox File Co., and sword production ceased there altogether. The site was subsequently used until the industrial depression of 1889, at which time it was destroyed by fire and never rebuilt.

Roby had been raised a Master Mason in 1862 and continued his masonic affiliation as an active member of Mount Horeb, Royal Arch Chapter in Lowell, Massachusetts. As a sword manufacturer and staunch Freemason, it is small wonder that numerous Masonic swords, having Roby markings, turn up in the Chelmsford/Lowell/Worcester area. Unique varieties appear from time to time. One of the earliest and perhaps rarest is a Scottish Rite sword made for Dr. James H. Freeland of Lowell, who was elevated to the 33rd Degree in 1863. The high quality blade, decorated with bright-etched and engraved floral strapwork, is marked "C. ROBY & Co./W. CHELMSFORD", indicating manufacture prior to 1867. The gift of a sword by friends was customary on such an occasion.

Roby's enthusiasm in Masonry extended to his duties as West Chelmsford's Postmaster, an appointment he held from 1852 until 1885. During that period, postmasters provided their own cancelling devices which were hand-carved from blocks of wood or cork. It was a practice that resulted in some highly original and individualized postal cancellations. Occasionally, cancels used by Postmaster brethren such as Roby, incorporated designs of the square and compasses or other Masonic symbols. Consequently, such cancellations are considered true philatelic rarities. Advertising covers (envelopes with commercial logo) from the Roby Mfg. Co. are known to bear the West Chelmsford postmark (dated July 18, 1870) and a Masonic cancellation whose design is in the shape of Masonic square and compasses. Roby maintained his Masonic affiliation until 1891, when he demitted (relinquished membership) for what were probably reasons of ill-health or infirmity. When Christopher Roby died in 1897, he left his entire estate in trust, to be used for the benefit of West Chelmsford.



# Sword slices a chunk of history in

*Fifth in a series on Chelmsford's industrial history.*

BY THOMAS P. SILEO  
CORRESPONDENT

It has been said that the area today known as the location of the Roby Sword Manufactory, on Stony Brook at the northeast corner of School and Main Streets in West Chelmsford, was the site of an early mill, established by one of Chelmsford's first settlers.

The original name of the rapids that gave power to the factory is said to have been "Bogy-niggan," a name not used since the eighteenth century.

About 1820, Deacon John Farwell moved from Fitchburg to West Chelms-

ford, built a factory on the west side of Stony Brook and began manufacturing scythes. Before long, Farwell's scythes sold throughout New England, where they earned a strong reputation for quality.

At this time, the area of the factory became known first as Farwell, and later, as Scythe Factory Village, or simply Factory Village, but still the area known today as West Chelmsford, was considered a continuation of North Chelmsford, and the people living in the area were forced to walk two miles to fetch their mail.

About 1839, the value of scythes man-

ufactured was \$12,500 and 12 men were employed. The scythe, pronounced like "sighth," was an improvement on an ancient implement called a sickle, which was used for mowing and reaping hay. While the sickle had a short blade that was swung with one hand, the scythe consisted of a longer curved blade attached to a long, curved handle or "snath." By the nineteenth century, these handles were constructed with hand grips or "nibs."

The inner side of the blade was kept sharp, and the farmer swung the implement with both hands to cut the grass. Later, a cradle was attached to the blade to facilitate the lifting of the grass, and today, mowing machines have made the

## A Look Back

## n West Chelmsford

scythe obsolete for haying.

The railroad, which ran adjacent to the scythe factory, was completed and began running on July 4, 1848. At this time Roby Sawyer, and William Calvert of the Chelmsford Woolen Mills, fought to have a post office in Factory Village. They met strong opposition, but they persevered, and soon a post office was established, and the name of the village was changed to West Chelmsford.

The post office was in a store located in the central part of the village. The store was built by Alpheus Nesmith, but by this time, it was owned by John Goss and David Simonds. Simonds was therefore appointed the first postmaster, but two months later, Roby, Sawyer & Co. bought

the store, Simonds left town, and Sawyer was appointed postmaster with Roby as assistant postmaster.

In 1852, after Sawyer left the business and moved to New Hampshire, the firm became known as Roby & Co. At this time, Roby was appointed postmaster of West Chelmsford by Samuel D. Hubbard, postmaster-general during President Fillmore's administration.

Roby was very familiar with the scythe business, for he began as an apprentice, and later as a journeyman in Farwell's factory. Roby & Co. expanded their product line to other implements, but the majority of their business continued to be from the sale of a wide variety of scythes, sold

# Sword slices new village

**SWORD**, FROM PAGE 13

throughout New England, but also in the western and southern parts of the country.

The other implements included cane knives, which were sold for use in southern cane fields; machetes, which were sold in Cuba and South America; corn knives, which were sold to southern and western states; hay and straw knives and cotton hooks.

The 80 by 40 foot building in which the forging and iron work was done, stood on the west side of Stony Brook, with its end facing the brook. This building was destroyed by fire in 1852, but was quickly rebuilt. Another building, built about 1855, was two stories high and 100 feet long by 30 feet wide. It stood parallel with the brook, between it and the railroad track. The work done in these buildings included forging and tempering the steel, finishing the wooden handles and packing. The scythes were boxed and tied with rope that was also manufactured on the premises.

In the late 1850's, Roby & Co. sold from 24,000 to 30,000 scythes and 2,400 to 7,200 cane knives annually. Consistent with their business of manufacturing blades, Roby & Co., in 1860 manufactured a new skate, which they called "North Star," and which the Lowell Journal & Courier called "light, yet graceful and substantial."

At its prime, 15-20 men worked in the factory. The water power of Stony Brook operated the trip hammer for pounding out the steel, and the grindstone for sharpening the blades.

The factories were conveniently located adjacent

to the Stony Brook Railroad, from which coal was dumped for use in the factory's furnaces, and onto which goods were loaded to be shipped out to their respective markets.

Beginning in 1861, the Civil War quickly wiped out Roby & Co.'s market in the south. But being a resourceful businessman and a former captain in the military, Roby began to manufacture swords and sabers, many of them quite exquisite, to be sold for use in the war.

Captain Roby was not, however, a mere opportunist; in 1864, according to Waters, when those in sympathy with the Southern Confederacy made raids on the Canadian border, Roby, at the time a member of the Governor's Horse Guards of New Hampshire, applied to Adjutant-General Schouler of Massachusetts "for permission to raise a troop of cavalry that would be in readiness for any call that might be made to suppress the depredations referred to."

By September 5, 1864, Roby recruited a troop of 100 men at Chelmsford Center. Captain Roby continued in command of this troop until 1877, and it was disbanded in 1907.

When the war ended, in 1865, Roby & Co. again lost their market, and this time, they sold the factory to the Hiscox File Company, which sold files and machine knives until about 1888. Meanwhile, Roby remained in West Chelmsford, but in 1867, he established a New York division for Hussey, Wells & Co. Roby also remained postmaster of West Chelmsford for many years afterward.











G. ROBY  
W. CHELMSEFORD  
MASS.





Roby Sword (Private Collection)

1864

5/4/2004 F. Merriam



C. Roby & Co.  
W. Williamsford  
Mass.



**Roby Masonic Sword (Private Collection)**

**5/4/2004 F. Merriam**



Roby Masonic Sword (Private Collection)

5/4/2004 F. Merriam



Roby Masonic Sword (Private Collection)

5/4/2004 F. Merriam



Scythe/Sword Factory - West Chelmsford

No. bk. 011, pg. 321 So. bk. 247, pg. 138	27 Dec. 1822	Stephen Spaulding, to John Farwell
No. bk. 011, pg. 322 So. bk. 247, pg. 139	27 Dec. 1822	Henry Spaulding, yeoman, to Deacon John Farwell, Fitchburg \$90 1 A. & 53 rods - east side of Stony Brook
No. bk. 011, pg. 325 So. bk. 247, pg. 141	27 Dec. 1822	Elijah Richardson, to John Farwell
No. bk. 011, pg. 326 So. bk. 247, pg. 143	27 Dec. 1822	Jonas Keyes, Westford, yeoman, to John Farwell, Fitchburg, Gentleman 1 A. land - by Stony Brook 1 A. land - by west side of road 1 3/4 A. land - road, Stony Brook right: of flowing water of said brook
No. bk. So. bk. 248, pg. 290	26 Apr. 1823	Jonas Keyes, to John Farwell
No. bk. 012, pg. 168 So. bk. 282, pg. 329	04 Feb. 1826 acknowledged	Jonas Keyes, Westford, yeoman, to John Farwell, Chelmsford, yeoman \$20
No. bk. 012 pg. 328 So. bk. 293 pg. 031	04 Nov. 1829 mortgage	John Farwell, yeoman, to John Abott, Westford, Esquire 15 A. messuage & messuage: scythe manufactory, house & other buildings right of flowing water of Stony Brook same: Jonas Keyes to Farwell paid by John T. Farwell, Fitchburg
	Discharge: 05 Aug. 1846	
No. bk. 013 pg. 193 So. bk. 345 pg. 301	24 July 1835	John Farwell, yeoman, to John T. Farwell, Fitchburg, Scythe manufacturer 1 undivided moiety - 13 A. & buildings on south side of road machinery & tools in said building for manufacture of scythes water privilege except - wood now standing on east side of Stony Brook & all stock now on hand same: Keyes to Farwell, No. bk. 11, pg. 326 except - 2nd piece, north side of road Richardson to Farwell, No. bk. 11, pg. 325 S. Spaulding to Farwell, No. bk. 11, pg. 321 H. Spaulding to Farwell, No. bk. 11, pg. 321 subject: 2 mortgages to secure payment of \$1500 to John Abbott of Westford & interest

No. bk. 015 pg. 569 So. bk. 485 pg. 066	13 Oct. 1843	John Farwell, yeoman, to John T. Farwell, Fitchburg, yeoman \$3000 15 A. messuage & lands: scythe manufactory, house, & other buildings right of flowing the water of said brook except: what I have conveyed to John T. Farwell & George Messinger $\frac{1}{2}$ messuage: 58 sq. rods (189 Main) same: Perham to John & John T. Farwell bk. 358, pg. 66
No. bk. 016 pg. 128 So. bk. 490 pg. 432	01 Aug. 1846	John Farwell, Fitchburg, yeoman, to Lincoln Drake, Easton, yeoman \$6000 15 A. messuage: scythe manufactory & other buildings right of flowing water of Stony Brook 58 sq. rods (189 Main) 71 $\frac{1}{2}$ sq. rods & buildings: east of first tract (193 Main) reserving: all water wheels, fixtures, tools in scythe shops, all crops of this season
No. bk. 016 pg. 160 So. bk. 495 pg. 113	28 Sept. 1846	Lincoln Drake, Easton, to Frederick T. Sawyer, North Chelmsford \$6000 15 A. messuage: scythe manufactory & other buildings right of flowing water of Stony Brook 58 sq. rods (189 Main) land & buildings, north side of road (193 Main) reserving: right to raise my stone dam below said premises 12 inches from the highest place in said dam
No. bk. 016 pg. 163 So. bk. 495 pg. 115	30 Sept. 1846	F.T. Sawyer to Christopher Roby, Gentleman \$6000 15 A. messuage: scythe manufactory & other buildings right of flowing water of Stony Brook 58 sq. rods (189 Main) land & buildings, north side of road (193 Main) excepting: right of Lincoln Drake to raise his stone dam below said premises 12 inches from the highest place on said dam
No. bk. 016 pg. 195 So. bk. 496 pg. 561	15 Dec. 1846	Christopher Roby, gentleman, to Frederick T. Sawyer, gentleman \$3000 $\frac{1}{2}$ part: 15 A. messuage: scythe manufactory & other buildings right of flowing water of Stony Brook 58 sq. rods (189 Main) land & buildings, north side of road (193 Main)



Bk. 257 pg. 022

13 July 1894

Estate of Charles G. Sargent, Westford, deceased, to  
George C. Moore

\$4000

½ part - land & buildings in West Chelmsford

land

10,000 ft. - opposite side of highway

dwelling house & barn (189 Main St.)

except: except that released to John H. Whidden, June 4, 1882,  
in bk. 155, pg. 122

(189 Main St. & Scythe Factory)

No. bk. 016 pg. 241 So. bk. 504 pg. 538	26 Apr. 1847	Frederick T. Sawyer to Christopher Roby \$3000 ½ part: 15 A. messuage: scythe manufactory & other buildings right of flowing water of Stony Brook 58 sq. rods (189 Main) land & buildings, north side of road (193 Main)
Bk. 058, pg. 416	27 Sept. 1867	Jabez A. Sawyer, Cambridge, Assignee of Christopher Roby, bankrupt, to George Stark, Nashua \$2000 land & factory, mills, water & mill prividge, dam, sight of water & flowage machinery, fixtures & buildings (scythe factory, 189 Main St., 203 Main St.) reserving: right & title conveyed to Stony Brook Railroad Company & to Town of Chelmsford in the highways leading out in said premises
Bk. 072, pg. 165	29 June 1869	George Stark, Nashua, to J.W.P. Abbott & Charles G. Sargent, both of Westford, Josiah Gates, Lowell, & Christopher Roby, Chelmsford \$10,000 land, water power, & shops, formerly occupied by Christopher Roby land & brick dwelling thereon - west side of highway (189 Main St.)
Bk. 081, pg. 035	31 July 1871 Mortgage	Roby Manufacturing Company, Charles G. Sargent President, John W.P. Abbott Treasurer, to Lowell Five Cent Savings Bank \$1200 land, water power, & shops, formerly occupied by Christopher Roby land & brick dwelling thereon - west side of highway (189 Main St.)
Bk. 141, pg. 231	02 Sept. 1880 Assignment	Lowell Five Cent Savings Bank, to Estate of Charles G. Sargent, & John W. Abbott, Abial J. Abbott, both of Westford, and George Abbott of San Francisco, Cal. ½ part: to Frederick G. Sargent, Artemas S. Tyler & George A. Griffin ½ part: to John W. Abbott, Abial J. Abbott & George Abbott
Bk. 197 pg. 271	27 June 1888 Possession	Frederick C. Sargent, Artemas S. Tyler, George A. Griffin, John W. Abbott, Abial J. Abbott & George A. Abbott
Bk. 257 pg. 024	01 Jan. 1894	Frederick G. Sargent, Westford, Artemas S. Tyler, Lowell, George A. Griffin, Melrose, Abiel J. Abbott, Westford, George Abbott, Cambridge to George C. Moore, Chelmsford \$1 & other valuable considerations

To Mr. Lowell Powers

Middlesex Village, County of Middlesex, and State of Mass

Creditor of CHRISTOPHER ROBY, Bankrupt.

You are hereby notified, that a Warrant in Bankruptcy has been issued out of the District Court of the United States, for the District of Massachusetts, against the Estate of CHRISTOPHER ROBY, adjudged a Bankrupt, upon his own Petition: That the payment of any Debts, and the delivery of any property, belonging to said Bankrupt, to him, or for his use, and the transfer of any property by him, are forbidden by law: That a meeting of the Creditors of said Bankrupt, to wit:

Town of Chelmsford,		about \$180.			
Elisha Shaw,	N. Chelmsford, Mass.	50.	Jos. Murgatroid,	W. Chelmsford,	\$82.80
G. W. Waite,	Omaha, Nebraska,	50.	Jos. A. Parkhurst,	"	700.55
Willard Toles,	Nashua, N. H.	50.	John Shandley,	Lowell,	175.
E. Bourke,	Lowell, Mass.	50.	Chas. Fuller,	W. Chelmsford,	115.14
Jas. Rawlings,	Chelmsford,	50.	Jonas Longley,	"	336.52
H. H. Coburn,	"	21.58	Fuller, Dana & Fitz,	Boston,	103.75
W. H. Brown,	"	50.	John Buckley,	W. Chelmsford,	39.86
Sam'l Naylor,	"	50.	Thos. Osgood,	"	90.70
Henry Jackson,	"	50.	Geo. Osgood,	"	24.22
J. R. Bunker,	"	50.	American Tool & Machine Co.	Boston,	12.
J. D. Brough,	"	50.	A. W. Parkhurst,	W. Chelmsford,	145.43
Joseph Lawrence,	Manchester, N. H.	10.60	L. M. Lawrence,	"	30.65
Jas. McGlinch,	Chelmsford,	50.	A. G. Parkhurst,	"	19.95
William Jubb,	"	50.	J. P. Hamblett,	"	698.54
George Moore,	Lowell,	50.	S. N. Bayley,	"	60.55
C. A. Wheeler,	Chelmsford,	50.	Oliver Woodward,	Westford,	38.97
Jos. Quessey,	"	50.	James Edmund & Co.,	Boston,	51.10
G. H. Holt,	"	50.	Moses French,	Milford, N. H.	50.88
John Currier,	Charlestown,	50.	Cushing & Mack,	Lowell,	214.91
Wm. Edwards,	Chelmsford,	50.	Chelmsford Foundry Co.,	N. Chelmsford,	178.91
C. D. Price,	Middlesex,	17.54	John Butcher,	Lowell,	77.69
D. Pollard,	Chelmsford,	50.	Lot Colburn,	Brookline, N. H.	150.
George Lawrence,	"	50.	Thos. G. Flint,	W. Chelmsford,	300.11
John McClair,	"	50.	H. & A. Whitney,	Lowell,	307.50
T. H. Parker,	"	50.	Fielding & Bartlett,	"	45.53
Wm. Cummings,	Nashua, N. H.	50.	Butterfield & Hunt,	W. Chelmsford,	40.34
R. J. Butterfield,	Chelmsford,	50.	C. P. Talbot & Co.,	Lowell,	78.70
Jos. Murgatroid,	"	50.	J. J. Hoyt,	W. Chelmsford,	196.37
Jos. A. Parkhurst,	"	50.	George Stark,	Nashua, N. H.	3,767.40
John Shandley,	Lowell,	50.	John N. Perry,	W. Chelmsford,	200.
Chas. Fuller,	Chelmsford,	50.	"	"	200.
Jonas B. Longley,	"	50.	"	"	200.
John F. Buckley,	"	50.	J. F. Seamans & Co.,	Boston,	477.33
Thos. Osgood,	"	50.	F. H. Chandler & Co.,	Lowell,	400.
Thos. Firth,	Lowell,	21.29	R. J. Bunker,	W. Chelmsford,	200.
A. W. Parkhurst,	Chelmsford,	50.	Sewell Bowers,	Middlesex Village,	250.
L. M. Lawrence,	Omaha, Nebraska,	50.	Geo. H. Holt,	W. Chelmsford,	400.
J. P. Hamblett,	Lowell,	50.	Dawson Pollard,	"	200.
F. Perkins,	Chelmsford,	44.75	Smith & Blodgett,	N. "	100.
T. M. Bailey,	"	50.	J. W. Smith,	"	139.30
J. J. Hoyt,	"	50.	J. J. Hoyt,	W. "	400.
Thos. G. Flint,	"	50.	"	"	400.
George Osgood,	"	50.	Lucretia Hill,	Carlisle,	150.
J. S. Seaman & Co.,	Boston,	112.57	Prescott National Bank,	Lowell,	1,000.
John M. Perry,	West Chelmsford,	220.04	"	"	1,000.
Elisha Shaw,	North "	185.77	"	"	1,000.
G. W. Waitt,	Omaha, Nebraska,	55.54	"	"	1,000.
Abbott & Howard,	Boston,	613.71	"	"	1,000.
Willard Toles,	Nashua, N. H.	31.37	"	"	1,000.
E. Bourke,	Lowell,	31.89	"	"	1,000.
Thos. Woodward,	Dunstable,	304.30	"	"	1,000.
Arcade Mall. Iron Co.,	Worcester,	850.93	"	"	1,000.
Thos. Flint & Co.,	Boston,	27.75	Wamesit	"	1,000.
Foster & Roby,	"	400.70	"	"	1,000.
Geo. H. Gray & Danforth,	"	106.42	"	"	1,000.
James Rawlings,	W. Chelmsford,	95.25	"	"	1,000.
W. H. Brown,	"	55.02	"	"	1,000.
Sam'l Naylor,	"	23.50	"	"	1,000.
Henry Jackson,	"	143.99	"	"	1,000.
A. L. Brooks,	Lowell,	70.29	"	"	1,000.
Pierson Noyes,	"	12.50	"	"	1,000.
J. R. Bunker,	W. Chelmsford,	125.88	"	"	1,000.
J. D. Brough,	"	144.50	Blackstone	Boston,	1,500.
Chase, Sargent & Shattuck,	Lowell,	24.42	"	"	1,500.
J. J. Peach,	"	15.97	"	"	1,000.
Holmes, Booth & Hayden,	Boston,	38.62	"	"	1,000.
Joseph Lawrence,	Manchester, N. H.	10.60	Nat. Park Bank,	New York City,	1,075.84
James McGlinch,	W. Chelmsford,	52.70	"	"	1,082.62
Wm. Jubb,	"	366.17	"	"	1,096.54
George Moor,	Lowell,	15.58	"	"	1,096.67
May & Co.,	Boston,	90.30	"	"	1,087.90
C. A. Wheeler,	W. Chelmsford,	330.51	"	"	1,036.42
Jos. Quessey,	"	91.06	"	"	1,083.64
C. B. Coburn & Co.,	Lowell,	335.69	"	"	1,096.55
G. H. Holt,	W. Chelmsford,	199.29	Albert Brown,	Springfield, Vt.,	1,062.84
John Currier,	Charlestown,	239.51	"	"	1,092.41

Today we're going to visit the Scythe factory in W. Chelmsford, which, after re-tooling, became the Roby Sword Factory at the time of the Civil War. If one reads the census from 1855 and 1865, you will see that many of the men living in the area of Nabnasset worked in this factory. A few years ago, George Parkhurst showed me the Roby sword that he owned. Also, you may be interested to know that in 1860, the Westford Poor Farm showed an expense of \$1.75 to C. Roby for scythes.

Before Sherman H. Fletcher became Captain of Troop F, a gentleman by the name of Christopher Roby was Captain. And, in Dec. of 1872, Troop F purchased a sabre from the Roby Mfg. Co. for \$50. And, I'll bet that all the sabres used by Troop F, MVM, came from the same company.

**Jane Drury**, Chelmsford Historian, will lead us on our walk today. She will tell us about the mill site and the houses involved with people in the mill. So there will be some walking.

Jane arranged for us to be given one-time permission only to park along the right-hand side of the driveway at **190 Main St., in W. Chelmsford**. We will not be able to cross the brook. If you are really interested, you may park near Stan's Train Shop on School Street and hike in from that direction sometime on your own.

Jane Drury will be our hostess today, so please follow her guidance, and say a thank you to the homeowners whose yard we will be parking in. So today you will see the ruins of the scythe/sword factory; I hope you enjoy our field trip.



FILE SHOP 190 MAIN ST W. CHELMSFORD 1880<sup>s</sup>

F80  
15





FILE SHOP 190 MAIN ST. W. CHELMSFORD 1880<sup>s</sup>

f80  
15



**Photo courtesy of Bernie Ready**





File Shop final destruction 1904

S. Snow Jr.



**Roby Sword Mill Site**

**4/30/2004 F. Merriam**



**Roby Sword Mill Site**

**4/30/2004 F. Merriam**



**Roby Sword Mill Site**

**4/30/2004 F. Merriam**



**Roby Sword Mill Site**

**4/30/2004 F. Merriam**



**Roby Sword Mill Site**

**4/3/2005 F. Merriam**



**Roby Sword Mill Site**

**4/3/2005 F. Merriam**



**Roby Sword Mill Site**

**4/3/2005 F. Merriam**





**Roby Sword Mill Site**

**4/3/2005 F. Merriam**