Jack of All Trades

A Survey of 19th Century Business Cards
In the years I have been relating the adventures of the Book Elves there is one topic I have never broached: What did the Book Elves do before they became Book Elves? Even though they refuse to discuss the issue, there are some intriguing clues. The tendency of a few of them to use long-distance trucker slang may or may not have relevance. Several of them sport tattoos whose origins and meanings are reminiscent of places with the tang of salt sea air and the throb of freighter engines, and the deep and sometimes arcane knowledge with which three of the Book Elves discuss explosives can be downright unsettling. And then there’s the book Elf everybody calls “Frodo”…

…but before the Book Elves became the subject of my irresponsible speculation on their past professions and trades, they finished this catalog.
1. [Bands] **1870s Providence Rhode Island George L. Herrick’s Band Card.** A card for George L. Herrick’s Band of Providence, Rhode Island, “Formerly Herrick & Greene’s - The above Band having been reorganized, are now prepared to furnish Music as the occasion requires. Any number of pieces furnished for Balls, Private Parties, Germans & Fairs, either Brass or String”. 3.5”x2.25”. Some soil. [43127] $20


3. [Boxes] **1870s Boston Paper Dress & Store Box Manufacturer Card.** A card for C.S. Cheever, “Paper Box Manufacturer, Including Dress and Store Boxes of all kinds, Store Boxes Wholesale and Retail”. The card features a clever design with boxes. 3.5”x2.25”. Light soil, some wear. [43158] SOLD
4. [Bronzes] 1870 Metallic Art Works, Bronze Casting of Boston Card. A card for Metallic Art Works, “Manufacturers of Real Bronze Castings, Brass Founders & Finishers”. The 1872 Boston Directory lists the firm at 15 State Street as this card does; by 1875 they had moved to 27 Devonshire. 5”x3”. Minor wear, light soil. [43151] SOLD

5. [Calling Cards] 1870s Boston Card for Calling Cards. A card for… calling cards! “A Pretty Holiday Gift! Call at No. 3 Milk Street (Room 3) and order a package of these Cards. A Package of 50 cards, only Fifty Cts. A Package of 100 Cards, only Seventy-Five Cts. Call Early”. 3.25”x1.75”. Some soil. [43194] $15

6. [Chemicals] 1870s New England Chemical Company Card. A handsome two-color printed card for the New England Chemical Company of Cambridgeport, Massachusetts, “The only manufacturers of the wonderful compound called “Mineraline”, which is composed of several chemically pure metals, in a state of powder, compounded with pure blacklead, and will form a fine Smooth-Running Surface, Like Silver Plate, and will become solid on any piece of machinery where it is applied”. Mineraline was invented by chemists James Manes & Sons, “late of Glasgow, Scotland”. The back of the card lists and described other compositions manufactured by J. Manes & Sons. 6”x3.5”. Soil, light wear. [43118] SOLD
7. [Christian Campgrounds] **1870s Cape Cod Christian Camp Ground Carpenter Card.** A card for Nathan Bennett, “Contractor and Builder, Pleasant Avenue, Christian Camp Ground”, under which is written in light pencil, “Nob(?) 158 - Hyannis”. The Barnstable Historical Commission explains—“In 1871 The New England Convention of the Christian Church purchased and established a camp meeting known as Camp Christian on the 160 acre Perry Farm in Centreville. In 1872 the Christian Camp Meeting Association was established... Camp Christian was renamed Craigsville in 1881 in honor of the life and ministry of Dr. J. Austin Craig. Situated on a bluff overlooking Nantucket Sound, it served as a spectacular spot for a retreat from everyday life. Families were able to buy or lease the 288 small lots... They initially erected tents or built small shelters, and as time and means allowed, small cottages were constructed”. 2.25”x3.5”. Minor soil, 2 pencil notes. [43106] $65

8. [Chocolate] **1860s Webb & Twombly Chocolate Company Card.** A handsome card for “Josiah Webb & Co., “Manufacturers of Webb & Twombly’s Chocolates, Prepared Cocoa, Broma, Cocoa Paste, Spice & Union Cocoa Sticks, &c.”. Webb & Twombly opened their chocolate mill on the banks of the Neponset River in Milton, Massachusetts in 1843, in a neighborhood which soon became known as “Chocolate Village”, with the Walter Baker Company being the oldest and largest of the several chocolate-making firms there. Josiah Twombly retired in 1861 but the chocolates bore his name until the firm was sold in 1881. 3.75”x2.5”. Minor wear, light soil. [43097] SOLD


12. [Corsets] Late 1860s Boston Business Card for Skirt Supporter/Corsets. A business card for J.C. Brooks, of Boston, “Sole Agent for Nelson’s Patent Improved Skirt Supporter, also Corset & Skirt Supporter Combined - Corsets Manufactured to Order”. On the back of the card are two line illustrations of the frightening device. 3.5”x2.25”. Some wear, light soil. [43078] SOLD
An attractive card for John Reade of Charlestown, “Undertaker, Dealer in Coffins, Caskets & Robes”. Captain John Reade was born in Kilkenny, Ireland, and emigrated to America in 1846, settling near Worcester and working in the boot mills. He served as an officer in the 57th Massachusetts during the Civil War and was captured during the Battle of Petersburg and imprisoned in South Carolina for 7 months. Upon returning home he operated a variety of businesses simultaneously, being a prominent undertaker, as well as running a livery stable, acting as a real estate agent and auctioneer, and serving in the Massachusetts House and Senate. He died in 1897 in Charlestown. 4.25”x2.75”. Minor soil, light wear, short rip at the top edge. [43099] $50

14. [Directories] 1870s ‘Boston Directory’ Directory Publisher Card. A card for Sampson, Davenport, & Co., “Directory Publishers”, of Boston. The firm was the publisher of ‘The Boston Directory’ from 1865 to 1884, and the firm and its direct predecessors and descendants published this important annual from 1846 to 1930. On the back of the card there is a list of directories published by them, including the Boston Directory, and a number of other Massachusetts, New England, and New York directories. Card. 2.5”x2”. Minor soil, light wear. [43095] SOLD
15. [Drapery] 1870s Charlestown Massachusetts Curtain & Window Shade Dealer Card.
A card for Brintnall & Osgood’s Paper Hanging Store, “Window Shades and Curtain Fixtures, of every variety made and put up - Lower Than Boston Prices!”
4.25”x2.5”. Minor soil, light wear. [43186] $35

A card for T. Sheldon, Employment Office, “Reliable help furnished at short notice”.
3”x1.75”. Minor soil, light wear. [43190] $25

17. [Engravers] 1870s Boston Engraver & Designer Card.
A card for Frank Hill & Co., “Designers and General Engravers, Wedding, Visiting and Business Cards; Monograms, Crests, Seals &c.; Door, Bell and Name Plates; Badges, Jewelry, Silver Ware, Ivory, &c.”. 3.5”x2.25”. Minor soil. [43094] $15
18. [Fire!] 1870s New York Patent Fire Extinguisher & Portable Fountain Card. A card for Rhodes & Mathis “Sole Agents for Patent Fire Extinguisher, And Portable Fountain, Hand-pump and Sprinkler; Muff’s Unrivalled Composition For Preventing and Removing Incrustations in Steam Boilers, the only really effectual Remedy; and dealers in Keystone Portable Forges for steam or hand power”. 4.25”x2.75”. Minor soil. [43199] SOLD


22. [Gloves] 1860s Plymouth NH Glove Manufacturer Business Card. A business card for Ward, McQuesten & Hull, of Plymouth (NH), “Plymouth Gloves”. Plymouth, New Hampshire was a glove-making center in the mid 19th century; the firm founded by Alvah McQuesten in 1835 was known as Ward, McQuesten & Hull from 1862 to 1868. 3.5”x2”. Minor wear, light soil. [43077] $40

24. [Hair] **A Pair of 1870s Trade Cards for Hair Work and Hair.** 2 cards: S. Cohen & Co., “Dealers in Real and Imitation Hair, Switches, Braids, Curls, Nets, Combs, Brushes, Etc.”, of Boston - J.W. Cullen & Co., “Manufacturers and Dealers in all kinds of Ladies’ Hair Work, Hair Jewelry Made to Order”, of Charlestown. 2 cards. 3.25”x2”, and 4”x2.25”. Minor soil. [43071] $150

25. [Hair] **1870s Charlestown Massachusetts Hair Dressing Card.** A card for J.W. Whiting, “Fashionable Hair Dressing Saloon - Cutting, Curling, and Champooping done in the most artistic manner, Paper Cuffs, Collars &c. constantly on hand. N.B. Satisfaction given or no charge”. 3.5”x2”. Minor soil. [43192] $45

27. **[Hats]** 1870s Trade Card for Boston Silk Hat Manufacturer. An attractive trade card for the New England Hat Store and Silk Hat Manufactory of Boston, “Hats, Caps, Gloves, Trunks, Valises and Bags, Silk Hats made to order, exchanged or repaired.” 4”x2.5”. Minor soil. [43069] $40

28. **[Hoop Skirts]** 1860s Hoop Skirt Repair Business Card. An attractive business card- “To the Ladies. Hoop Skirts Re-Made at No. 4 Princeton Street, Charlestown. Ladies having Skirts in any way out of repair, can have them re-made into the most fashionable styles in a thorough manner.” 3.5”x2.25”. Some soil, light wear. [43072] SOLD

30. [Instruments] 1870s New York Thermometer, Barometer & Hydrometer Maker Card. A card for Giuseppe Tagliabue, “Thermometer, Barometer and Hydrometer Manufacturer”. The back of the card promotes his Patent Coal Oil Pyrometer. “Giuseppe Tagliabue, instrument maker and inventor, was born in Como, Italy, the son of Caesar Tagliabue, a glass-blower. His grandfather Caesar Tagliabue is said to have been one of the first to produce thermometers in quantity. His father moved to London in the early nineteenth century and produced such glass instruments as thermometers, barometers, and hydrometers. Giuseppe learned the instrument trade in London, working with either his father or his brother Giovanni. By 1834 he had settled in New York City. By 1848 he was able to purchase a four-story building at 298 Pearl Street in which he lived and worked. In the late 1860s Tagliabue moved his shop to larger premises at 302 Pearl, and he moved his family into a house in suburban Mt. Vernon, New York. (American National Biography Online). 4”x2.75”. Soil, minor wear. [43195] $SOLD

32. [Iron] 1860s Charles River Iron Works Cambridgeport Massachusetts Card. A card for the Charles River Iron Work, “Kendall & Roberts, Manufacturers of Steam Boilers, Gasometers, Water, Oil and Ship Tanks, Iron Boats, Bridges, Roofs, And all kinds of Plate Iron Work”. The firm was founded in 1860 as Kendall & Davis and became “Kendall & Roberts” in 1865. It later became Kendall & Sons. 3.75”x2.25”. Soil, some wear. [43150] SOLD

33. [Lamps] 1870s Boston Lamp & Glassware Dealer Card. A card for John B. Callender, “Manufacturer and Dealer in Lamps & Glass Ware”. 4”x2.5”. Minor soil. [43143] SOLD
34. [Library] **1880s Bunker Hill Circulating Library Trade Card.** A card for the Bunker Hill Circulating Library, “Stationary, Magazines & Weekly Papers”, of Charlestown. The library was founded in 1881 and in an 1886 census had 400 volumes. 3.5”x2.25”. Minor soil, light wear. [43093] SOLD

35. [Lighting] **1870s ‘Native Burning Fluid’ & Coal Oil, Lamp Dealer Card.** A card for W.H. Kimball & Co., “Manufacturers and Jobbers of The Native Burning Fluid, and dealers in the standing brands of Coal Oils, Lamps, Chimneys, Burners, &c.”. Quite sadly an internet search for “native burning fluid” today produces no relevant results. 3.5”x2.25”. Soil, light wear. [43201] $25

36. [Martha’s Vineyard] **1870 Oak Bluffs Martha’s Vineyard ‘Central House’ Hotel Card.** A card for Central House, Vineyard Grove, “Conducted on the European Plan, Fuller & Field, Proprietors - Forty-two well furnished Rooms, with a large Parlor, Dining Hall, and Ice Cream Saloon, and every facility for a First Class Hotel”. Located on the scenic Oak Bluffs waterfront on Martha’s Vineyard, the Central House Hotel hosted President Grant and his family for a grand dinner during the President’s 3-day visit to the island in August, 1874. 3.5”x2.25”. Some soil and wear. [43163] $60
37. [Minton Tiles] Early 1870s Gilbert Elliot / Minton Tile Company Trade Card. An attractive 1870s trade card, “Minton’ Tiles, Gilbert Elliot & Co., Sole Agents”. Elliot was an Englishman who not only acted as an agent for Minton in New York, but founded the American Encaustic Tiling Company in Zanesville, Ohio in 1875. 5.5”x3”. Minor soil, some wear. [43073] $85

38. [Ophthalmology] 1860s Boston Eye Specialist Card. A card for Dr. Henry W. Williams, “Special attention given to Diseases of the Eye”. The 1861 edition of The Boston Medical and Surgical Journal lists Dr. Williams at this address; the 1871 Transactions of the American Ophthalmological Society show him moved to 15 Arlington Street. 3.25”x2”. Minor soil. [43200] $25
A card for the “Boston & Maine Ladies’ and Gents’ Oyster House and Restaurant” of Boston. 4”x2.5”. Some soil, light wear. [43133] $25

40. [Paddles] 1870s Hiawatha Paddle Card.  
A card for Charles Howard’s “Hiawatha Paddle, Patented 1872”. The Hiawatha Paddle does not seem to have taken the market by storm as an internet search for it produced no results. Sad. 2.75”x1.5”. Minor soil. [43193] SOLD

41. [Paint] 1870s Boston Paint Manufacturer Card.  
A card for Carpenter, Woodward & Morton, “Paint Manufacturers, White Leads, White Zincs, Colors, Varnishes, Putty, etc., etc.”. The reverse side of the card has small box advertisements for 9 related businesses. 4.75”x2.75”. Minor soil. [43176] $40

43. [Pianos] 1870s Charlestown Massachusetts Piano Forte Tuner Card. A card for Fernando De Anguera, Piano Forte Tuner. De Anguera is also listed in the 1875 Boston Directory as a piano teacher. 3.5”x1.75”. Soiled, pencil notes on the back. [43191] $25

44. [Preserves & Pickles] 1870s Boston Pickle, Preserves, Ketchup & Syrup Maker Card. A card for the Globe Preserving Works, “Manufacturers of and Dealers in Jellies, Preserves, Syrups, Extracts, Ketchup, Salad Cream, Sauces, Pickles, All Kinds of Canned Goods, &c.”. G.P. Sanborn founded the business in 1864, and it was still listed in the Boston Directory in 1872. 4.25”x2.75”. Minor soil. [43205] SOLD

46. [Rubber] **1860s Goodyear India Rubber Glove Company Card.** A card for Goodyear’s “India Rubber Glove M’f’g’ Co. - Manufacturers, Wholesale and Retail Dealers in all kinds of Rubber Goods - Factories at Naugatuck, Ct.”. The Goodyear's India Rubber Glove Mfg. Co. (renamed from the Litchfield Rubber Co. in 1847) manufactured rubber gloves for telegraph linemen as its main product. In 1892 it was one of nine rubber companies which were amalgamated to form the United States Rubber Company (Goodyear). It was the only one of the nine original Goodyear companies that Charles Goodyear owned stock in. 4”x2.5”. Minor soil. [43164] $85

47. [Scissors] **1870s Meriden CT Cutlery & Steel Scissor Card.** A double card, for the United States Steel Shear Co., “Only Manufacturers of Solid Steel Shears and Scissors in America”, and for Miller Bros. Cutlery Co., “Manufacturers of their Celebrated Fine Pen and Pocket Cutlery”. Both firms were, as one might expect, in Meriden, Connecticut. 2.5”x4.25”. Minor soil. [43166] $35
A card for E.J. Nagle, dealer in all the First Class Sewing Machines. Machines Exchanged & Let, with right to Purchase, on easy terms”. A handwritten note on the back of the card says- “Friend Cragie, Call at 510 Parker Street new store, think you can make a sale. They want a Singer. Yours truly H. Reed”. 3.5”x2.25”. Some soil and fading, light wear. [43184] $45

A card for Smith & Garvin, “Machinists and dealers in all kinds of Gun and Sewing Machine Machinery and Tools, Gear Cutting, Counter Shafting and Hangers, pulleys and half pulleys of light and desirable patterns, twist drills and chucks. Every kind of Tool and Machinery for Manufacturing Designed and Perfected promptly”. The reverse side of the card has a priced list of machinery. An 1870 NY directory lists the firm at 3 Hague Street; an 1872 directory lists them at 3, 5, & 7 Hague Street; an 1873 directory announces their move to New Jersey. 5”x3”. Some soil and wear. [43182] SOLD


53. [Sponges] 1870s New York Sponge Importer Card.  A card for Ferdinand Hayman & Co, “Importers & Wholesale Dealers in Turkey, Bahama and Florida Sponges, French Capots, Also Chamois & Turtle Shells”. The firm of Ferdinand Hayman was part of a notorious sponge fraud case that made it all the way to the NY Supreme Court in 1878 (they won). 3.75”x2.25”. Some soil and wear, corner creases. [43196] SOLD
54. [Summer Cottages] **1870s Boston Harbor Island Cottage Resort Card.** A card for Ocean House, Island Cottage, and Belle Cottage, Long Island, Boston Harbor, R. Potter and C.K. Cary, Proprietors. “The above named Houses, celebrated for being the most desirable Summer Resorts in the vicinity of Boston, are respectfully recommended by the Proprietors to pleasure parties and private families seeking an agreeable residence during the sultry weather. Connected with these Houses are Verandas, Swings, Dance Halls, Bowling Alleys, etc., and every means whereby the patrons can enjoy their pastime. Mr. Potter in order to add to the recreations of his friends will exhibit his tame Bears in their many tricks and frolics”. There follows a steamer schedule from Lewis Wharf, Boston. Long Island was a resort destination for a very short period of time following the Civil War- in 1882 the city of Boston began purchasing large tracts of land there, including the grand hotel which it turned into an almshouse for male paupers. In 1885 the city bought the entire island and that was that as far as resorting went. 4”x2.5”. Minor soil, light wear. [43130] $85
55. [Tailor]  **1860s Business Card for Boston Military, Naval & Civic Tailor.** A business card for F.L. Toppan & Co., of Haymarket Square, Boston, “Civic, Military & Naval Tailors, and Wholesale and Retail Dealers in Ready Made Clothing and Gentleman’s Furnishing Goods”. Toppan is listed at the Haymarket address in the 1865 Boston directory. 3.5”x2.25”. Some wear and soil. [43079] SOLD

56. [Tea]  **1870s Boston Tea Importer Card.** A card for Dorr, Parks & Co., “Importers of Teas”. The company is listed in the 1870 edition of “Greenough's Descriptive Gazetteer and Commercial Directory”. Fraught with peril as the business of importing tea to Boston was, Dorr had a handsome card. 4.5”x2.75”. Minor soil. [43203] $25

57. [Temperance Hotel]  **1860s Worcester Massachusetts Temperance Hotel Card.** A card for Waldo House, “Waldo Street, Worcester, Mass., Good Stabling for Horses, Thomas Tucker, Late Senior Proprietor of the Old American House”. In his ‘History of Worcester, Massachusetts” (1862) Charles Hersey noted- “This house is situated on Waldo Street; it formerly stood on the site of the Mechanic's Hall, and was built and occupied by Hon. Daniel Waldo as his mansion. Since its removal it has been kept as a hotel; it is now kept by Thomas Tucker as a temperance house”. 3.25”x2”. Some soil and minor wear. [43132] $40
58. [Textiles] 1870s Lawrence Woollen Co. Mills Card. A handsome card for the Lawrence Woollen Co., which was founded in 1864 by Captain Oliver H. Perry, the 3rd son of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry of War of 1812 fame. Captain Perry was a navy man himself, enlisting as a midshipman at age 14 and eventually serving in the Wilkes exploring expedition, and commanding a battery during the bombardment of Vera Cruz. After leaving the navy he worked as an agent for the Middlesex Mills in Lowell and of Bay State Mills in Lawrence, before striking out on his own and starting the Lawrence Woollen Co., which produced woolens, cloakings, suitings, and shawls. The mill was sold shortly after his death in 1886. 2.75”x4”. Some soil and wear, several pencil notes  [43189]  SOLD


62. [Unmentionables] 1870s Trade Card for a Boston Underwear Dealer. An unusual trade card for Rice & Peck, “Manufacturers of Ladies & Gents’ Underwear”, of Boston. This firm was on the corner of Washington and West streets, which is just a few yards from where Boston’s legendary Brattle Bookshop is located today. 4”x2.5”. Somewhat soiled. [43068] $35

65. [Veneer] **1870s Boston Fancy Wood Veneer & Cigar Box Board Dealer Card.** A card for H. Parker & Co., “Importers, Manufacturers of and Dealers in Rosewood, Mahogany & Fancy Wood Veneers. Door Stock and Cigar Box Boards constantly on hand”. The back of the card has a red line cut of Parker’s handsome smoke-belching factory. 4”x2.5”. Minor soil. [43202] $25

66. [Watches] **1860s Boston Agents for the American Watch Company Card.** A card for Robbins, Appleton & Co., “Agents for the American Watch Company”. The 1865 Boston Directory lists Robbins & Appleton at this Washington Street address, by 1870 they were on Summer Street. The American Watch Company was an early iteration of the famous American Waltham Watch Company. The company went through a variety of owners, principals and names in its first decades, and at about this point both Robbins and Appleton were part owners. 3”x2”. Minor soil, light wear. [43147] $65
1860s Narragansett Bay Disreputable Watering Place Card. A card for Mark Rock, “This Beautiful Watering Place, situated on the Narragansett Bay, Being only six miles from Providence, R.I., is easily accessible by land or water. Families & Private Parties accommodated at short notice”. The Warwick Rhode Island website has a somewhat less flattering description of the hotel, which was built in the early 1850s- “During the mid-19th century, steamboats cruising along the Bay were enchanted with Warwick’s shoreline and the desire to establish shore resorts came into vogue. While Rocky Point, established by Capt. William Winslow in 1847, was the most well-known and largest shore attraction in the area, resorts were also founded in and around Conimicut. Mark Rock, north of Conimicut Point, near the present day Rock Avenue, was the most notorious for many years. The Mark Rock Hotel, like the Longmeadow Hotel south of Conimicut Point, catered for the most part to transient visitors in the late 19th century. Unlike Rocky Point, it never attempted to become a “rich man’s resort” or an amusement park, but rather developed into a drinking and gambling mecca. The Mark Rock Hotel was located near a large, flat rock which archeologists believed bore indications of Indian, or perhaps Scandinavian, hieroglyphics. Steamboats from Providence stopped at the dock near the hotel and unloaded its group of merrymakers. According to newspaper reports of the time, the patrons of the Conimicut resort were ‘thoroughly disreputable.’ The excursion boat from Providence brought its passengers to Mark Rock early on Sunday morning and came back in the evening to gather its patrons after a full day of ‘carousing.’ It was common, we are told, for a detachment of Providence police to meet the returning boat to arrest the ‘brawling, intoxicated revelers as they disembarked at the wharf’.” 3.5”x2.25”. Minor soil, light wear. [43131] $65
68. [Whiskey] **1873-79 E.H. Chase Louisville Kentucky Distillers Card.** A card for E.H. Chase & Co., Distillers of Louisville Kentucky. The No.12 Third Street address was used between 1873 and 1879. 4.25”x3”. Minor soil, light wear. [43140] $25

That's All Folks!