



## Brief History of The Shapleigh Hardware Company

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Headquarters of Shapleigh Hardware Company, St. Louis

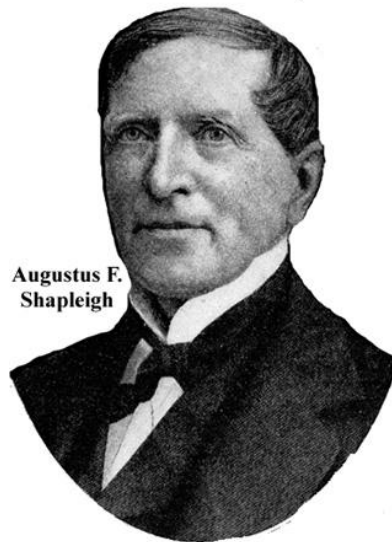
Born January 10, 1810 in New Hampshire, Augustus F. Shapleigh made his first excursion into the hardware business at the age of 15 in order to contribute to the support of his family after his father's death. A brief bout of wanderlust sent him to sea for the next three years.

In 1829, he took up a position as a hardware clerk with Rodger Brothers and Company of Philadelphia, PA. In response to the great westward expansion, this company opened a branch in St. Louis, MO. This hardware house, known as Rodger, Shapleigh and Company opened in 1843



Shapleigh Knife Display and Cracked Ice Pocket Knives  
Collection of Mike Baker

An entrepreneur extraordinaire, Mr. Shapleigh quickly gained prominence in the business community and the store flourished. Its first year inventory exceeded \$20,000.00--quite a substantial amount for the mid-1800's. In 1847, the company reorganized as Shapleigh, Day and Company, due to the death of Mr. Rodger, the senior partner.



Augustus F.  
Shapleigh

Augustus Frederick Shapleigh  
Founder of Shapleigh Hardware, St.Louis, MO

St. Louis was not only the gateway to the west, it was also the hub of the wheels of industry and progress for the nation during these years and well past 1900. The first traveling salesman went out from Shapleigh House in 1848. In 1852, the first steam railroad west of the Mississippi left from St. Louis. The first Shapleigh catalog was published in 1853, basically as a salesman's pricing book.

At Mr. Day's retirement in 1863, the name of the company became A.F. Shapleigh and Co. The famous Diamond Edge trademark was adopted in

1864. The slogan, "Diamond Edge is a Quality Pledge", is said to have first been used in 1909. Diamond Edge tools were the first line of edge tools (knives, razors, axes, cutlery, etc.) in the United States to be covered by a jobbers trademark

By the late 1800's, Shapleigh Hardware was a well-established, healthy and successful enterprise. It incorporated under the name of A.F. Shapleigh and Cantwell Hardware Company, with A.F. as the president. It published its first general catalog featuring over 200 different items in 1880. Upon the retirement of Mr. Cantwell in 1886, the firm became A.F. Shapleigh's company again.



Famous Diamond Edge Logo

Augustus Shapleigh took his retirement in 1900 and the company reorganized in 1901. Another name change occurred. The new name was Norvell-Shapleigh Hardware Company. Saunders Norvell was its president for the next ten years. he was an extremely astute businessman, salesman and knowledgeable hardware man.



A Shapleigh's Diamond Edge Store Sign

Mr. Norvell had been part of Simmons Hardware for many years. It is believed that his expertise and influence on that company was greatly responsible for its success. With his less than cordial leave-taking, Simmons Hardware started a downward slide from which it never recovered.

In addition to its famous Diamond Edge, other recognizable "house" brands marketed by Shapleigh were Mound City, Norleigh Diamond, Diamond Brand, Jersey, Panama, Ice Diamond, Bluebelle, Sageware, Black Jack, Red Raven, King Nitro, Sahara, Black Prince, Blue Diamond, Rugby, Triumph, Defiance, Black Wonder, Double Diamonds, Mascot, Bull Dog, Ozark, Columbia, Longwear, Mizzou and Bridges.



Shapleigh's Keen Kutter Old Logo

In 1918, the company became Shapleigh Hardware Company. They bought the assets of Geller-Ward- Hasner in 1937. After the bankruptcy and closing of Simmons Hardware, they bought its entire stock in 1940. At this time the Keen Kutter and Diamond Edge trademarks were joined. Other items were now marked Shapleigh' Keen Kutter, instead of E.C. Simmons Keen Kutter.



Shapleigh's Late Keen Kutter Logo  
Letterhead Stationary and Post Card

Shapleigh celebrated its 100th Anniversary in 1943. In 1955, the directors sold the company to Curtis Mfg. Co. He continued to operate the business under the Shapleigh Hardware name until closing in the early 1960's. Val-Test owns the rights to the Keen Kutter and Diamond Edge logos today.



Val-Test Keen Kutter  
Store Sack w/ logo

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- THCKK is a not-for-profit organization formed in March of 1996. It serves to distribute information and provide an interactive forum about vintage hardware companies such as E.C. Simmons, (Keen Kutter), A.F. Shapleigh (Diamond Edge) and The Winchester Store (and the popular collectibles bearing their logos and associated house brands) as well as other historically interesting hardware companies such as "Our Very Best" (Hibbard, Spencer & Bartlett), Blue Grass (Belknap Hardware), Stanley, etc. are included as interest dictates (Witte, Wyeth, Lee, Sargent, etc)
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