

THE MYSTERY OF HISTORY — JUNE 7, 2021

# WHAT'S IT?



Fig. 1: Slightly oblique top views views. PHOTO: © 2019 Norm Frisch

## ARTIFACT 21-03

### SPECIFICATIONS:

Material (all): Cast iron. Metrics (largest to smallest):

Length = 26.04 cm (10 1/4 in), width = 8.10 cm (3 3/16 in), height = 6.03 cm (2 3/8 in)

Weight = 1.280 kg (2.82 lb)

Overall length = 20.96 cm (8 1/4 in), width = 8.26 cm (3 1/4 in), height = 3.65 cm (1 7/16 in)

Weight = 1.098 kg (2.42 lb)

Overall length = 14.61 cm (5 3/4 in), width = 5.08 cm (2 in), height = 4.76 cm (1 7/8 in)

Weight = 578 gm (1.27 lb)

Overall length = 13.49 cm (5 5/16 in), width = 4.45 cm (1 3/4 in), height = 4.60 cm (1 13/16 in)

Weight = 497 gm (1.10 lb)

*continued...*

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**WHAT'S IT?**

Fig. 2: One bottom and three side views. PHOTO: © 2019 Norm Frisch

**ARTIFACT 21-03****CLUES & QUESTIONS:**

The use of these artifacts skyrocketed after Nancy Sinatra's hit single topped the charts in 1966(?) Judging by the shape of the artifact its use might seem obvious, but the history of how these cast iron devices came to be is incredibly rich. Their progenitors show up about 40,000 years ago and allowed our ancestors to travel faster and farther than ever before! The artisans that use these tools were an important part of society and created items that are still in use today (in a modified version). We use them everyday and without them there would be 26 bones, 30 joints, and 100 muscles (times 2) that would not be happy!

Up until a few years ago, there was a craftsman in Brockport, on Market Street, that used these items. If you know his name and where he was located please let us know—you will receive extra bonus points!

Since the shape of the artifact provides the best clue as to its function, this is a great artifact for creating other “outside of the box” uses, e.g., attach a wood pole to the smaller molds and one could create tracks that appear as if a small child was walking alongside of you on soft ground. Because of their mass, they make great bases for things such as candles and vases. Here's where you can unleash your creative brain and, if possible, we will reproduce one of your creations and put it alongside the display safe in Seymour Library!

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## ARTIFACT 21-03

### ANSWER:

These artifacts are known as cast iron shoe lasts for making and repairing shoes. Since most everyone wanted shoes, local shoemakers, or cobblers, could be found in most towns and villages. If you looked closely, you would have noted that one aspect of the shoe lasts

is that there was no accommodation for a right or a left shoe — both were identical. Although potentially problematic when a good fit was needed, you never had to worry about putting your shoe on the wrong foot!

### GUESSES:

#### *Seymour Library In-person Responses*

**Dimitri Behrend**, “This is a shoe size tool that was used back in the 1800s to make shoe sizes and build around it to craft it.”

**Terry Everett**, “Shoe horns.”

**Mikayla Green**, “The artifacts on the white paper are molds for cobblers, to shape the leather around, and to provide a comfortable sole.”

**Yvette James**, “These are models for shoes.”

**Heather Kolb**, “Metal shoe shaper/strecher.”

**Michelle Rath**, “Cobbler uses them for making shoes.”

**Ron Wood**, “Shoe trees used by cobblers to build or repair shoes. Large pair = adults, small pair = childrens.”

**Taimoor Zahir**, “Shoe template—used to shape leather into shoes!”

#### *Brockport Community Museum Facebook Page Responses*

**Elyse Jean-Philippe**: “Shoe forms - I think I saw them at the old location library.” “...or some facsimile of...”

**Sharon Ricotta Lampo**: “Shoe forms?” > Bernard Ricotta “great grandpa ricotta was a shoe maker had some of his tools but they disappeared”

#### *Remembering Brockport, NY Facebook Page Responses*

**Katherine Ann**: “I have a few in my house along with some shoe brushes. The house was built in the late 1800’s.”

**Sharon T. Burch**: “Cobblers (mold?) not sure if called a mold, but would have various shoe sizes.”

**Roger Davy**: “Fred’s”

**Vikki Dimatteo**: “A shoe last”

**Ron Dylewski**: “Anvil. The last is a sold piece around which a shoe is made if I recall.”

**Paul G. Ecklund**: “That’s a cobblers anvil”

**Kurt Engelhard**: “Shoemakers form.”

**Betsy Ruf Field**: “My cobbler here in Peoria is “Fred’s”. How could I go wrong with that name?!”

**Richard Fissler**: “Shoe mold”

**Richard Fuller**: “something to use to “cut dads ass with” ~ Alright, I don’t know where that expression ever came from, but I remember it, growing up! (Its a boot jack with the parts to make shoes)”

**Laurie Gurnett**: “Shoe lasts”

**Deb Kenyon**: “Shoe forms”

**Chuck Kimmel**: “Cobbler forms from freds”

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# WHAT'S IT?

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**Barbara Klemenz:** “Yes, a Cobbler’s Anvil.”

**Robin Krueger:** “shoe form”

**Don Loy:** “My dad worked as a cobbler in his cousin Andy Cappa’s combination Shoe Repair/Music Store in Medina for several years before WWII.”

**Kathy Lump:** “Shoe maker forms”

**Chrisandjack Mazzarella:** “I had an uncle who was a shoe maker/repair man. This is a last which was the form for making shoes. I, too, can smell the glue. I loved it.”

**Bob Mullins:** “It could be a tool to put a sole on a shoe”

**Kathy Parlato Mumpton:** “Monopoly board”

**Kim Myers:** “cobbler forms”

**Dan O’Dell:** “Lasts”

**Sandra Oshea:** “back in the day it helped to make shoes and repairs.”

**Gail Barber Popowich:** “Shoe repair, I can still smell the glue in his shop. Right next to my Uncle Tony’s Barber shop”

**Donna Hamlin Symonds:** “My great granddad was a cobbler with a shop in Brockport...made the whole shoe and my granddad lost te tip of his thumb and a finger cutting out soles! Fred and my Dad had nice talks about shoemaking. Mother owned Marie’s Variety when Tony bought the buildings on Market Street!”

**Susan D. Torok:** “Fred’s shoe repair shop”

**Mary Lynne Turner:** “That’s an easy one for those who have been around Brockport for a while.”

**Luther Wright:** “A shoe makers tools of the past.”

**Marshal Young:** “ANTIQUUE CAST IRON COBBLERS ANVIL”

## *Remembering Clarkson, NY Facebook Page Responses*

None

## BACKGROUND

“WHAT’S IT?” has been a feature of the BCM website since its inception in 2007. In 2017 Brockport Community Museum board member Archer “Buck” Noble, a Brockport Central School District teacher (now retired) developed “The Mystery of History” school project that encouraged fourth and fifth grade students to use observational and investigative techniques to help determine the type and use of different historic artifacts.

That project was introduced to the general public during a Brockport Community Museum outreach presence at the 2017 Brockport Sidewalk Sale. That success led to this collaboration between the Brockport Community Museum, Seymour Library and Brockport Central School District.

## GET INVOLVED

- **Take your best guess** regarding the current artifact.
- **Do you have an artifact** you would like to know more about? Open your query to a larger audience.
- **Have a suggestion** about how we can improve this project?

### If so...

Leave your contact information in “Ye old prediction box” near the exhibit display.

## CREDITS

*Museum project committee*

Archer “Buck” Noble

Norman Frisch

Garrett W. Roe

*Seymour Library*

Jennifer Caccavale, Director