

THE MYSTERY OF HISTORY — OCTOBER 4, 2021

# WHAT'S IT?



Fig. 1 (top to bottom): Top view, left side view, bottom view. PHOTO: © 2020 Norm Frisch

## ARTIFACT 21-05

### SPECIFICATIONS:

Material: Iron and wood. Overall length = 61.6 cm (24 1/4 in).

Wooden handle: Circumference = 10.64 cm (4 3/16 in),  
length with metal ferule = 37.78 cm (14 7/8 in).

Iron oval shank: Width = 0.95 cm (3/8 in), thickness = 0.79 cm (5/16 in).

Head: Width = 3.49 cm (1 3/8 in), length = 7.30 cm (2 7/8 in).

Teeth angled outward from center.

Weight = 372 gm (0.82 lb)

### CLUES & QUESTIONS:

The “Floating” Artifact

So, with no horsing around, what could this artifact be?

This is the only “floating” artifact we have encountered to date. While doing research for this particular artifact, we learned about the Hardie Hole.

It is a square hole built into a large anvil that receives several other square

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Fig. 2: Close up of top of distal end. Might any part be replaceable? Why not now if so?  
PHOTO: © 2020 Norm Frisch



Fig. 3 (above): Close up of bottom of distal end. Note that grooves are angled differently.  
PHOTO: © 2020 Norm Frisch

shaped base inserts with different tools attached to the base head, e.g., tools that help bend heated metal rods into S shapes for hooks, tools that employ custom jigs, and other iron implements that require a firm foundation against which heated metal might be pounded to a desired design.

A cobbler's shoe peg rasp (a very coarse file) was a common tool that could be used in conjunction with the Hardie Hole. Think of the end of the artifact as being a rasp, except that it has a square base that fit into Hardie Hole. Cobblers (shoemakers) use this type of tool to shave down the wooden pegs that held the heel of a shoe onto the sole of the shoe. Very clever!

But guess what, that's not what this artifact was used for! So what could it possibly be?

Look at the length of the handle. Why is it so long compared to the tool at the end? Is there a patent date on the tool? Why are there ridges in the handle? If you can answer the question as to why the rasp is so far from the handle, you'll be on the right track.

## Answers and Guesses on page 3

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### ANSWER:

While researching the long handled floating peg rasp, almost everything that was posted involved using a much shorter version of the rasp as a cobblers' tool for "rasping" (filing) down wooden pegs that were used to put the heels of shoes in place. That would have involved placing the rasp into a hardy hole on an anvil to hold the rasp in place while the shoemaker removed the excess peg wood pounded into the shoe heel. So why the long handle? Horses.

This artifact was actually a multipurpose equine tool. It could be used to shave down horse teeth that wear

with time and/or be used as a file for keeping horse hooves trimmed and neat. The modern tools that are used today are similar to this antique variety of rasp (sometimes called a float). The riddle of, "Why such a long handle?", is answered when imagining sticking a file in a horse's mouth to file its teeth down—I don't know about you, but sticking my hand in a horse's mouth with a file lacking a handle would likely result in great equine teeth impressions on one's forearm. Neither the rasper nor the raspee would consider this horse-play.

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# WHAT'S IT?

## 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