

THE MYSTERY OF HISTORY — JUNE 6, 2022

WHAT'S IT?



Fig. 1: Top view. PHOTO: © 2019 Norman J. Frisch



Fig. 2: bottom view. PHOTO: © 2019 Norman J. Frisch



Fig.3: Side view. PHOTO: © 2019 Norman J. Frisch



Fig. 4: Closer view of top seen in Fig. 1. PHOTO: © 2019 Norman J. Frisch

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WHAT'S IT?**ARTIFACT 20-03****SPECIFICATIONS:**

Material: Cast iron; Weight = 2.577 kg (5.68 lb);
 Length = 16.83 cm (6 5/8 in), Width = 9.37 cm (3 11/16 in);
 Height = 5.40 cm (2 1/8 in); Top cavity depth = 2.54 cm (1 in).

CLUES & QUESTIONS:*Enemy of the Crinkle*

Wow, this artifact is heavy! How do you think you might pick it up without touching it? Believe it or not, you don't want to touch it when it's ready for its true purpose! Can you tell what city and state it was made in? Why does it have those two screws in it? It could be used for a lot of things, e.g., a paper weight, a weight for doing bicep curls, it would be a great egg cracker, etc. What do you think it could be used for?

The modern electric version of this artifact isn't used as often as it was twenty years ago because of chemicals like alkoxyated silicones, formaldehyde, acetic acid with the addition of xylitol, among other chemicals. When this artifact was used, people perceived themselves to look better. As tennis legend Andrei Agassi quipped in 1989, "Image is everything." People used this artifact because they thought it improved their image. The best clue for this artifact is the title—see if you can figure it out and let us know!

ANSWER:

A record has been set; all of our "What's It?" predictors correctly identified artifact #22-03 as being a device used for de-wrinkling fabric, i.e., an iron. Mr. Ron Wood suggested that two irons may have been used. One iron would be in use while another was heating up on a coal or woodstove. Once the in-use iron cooled down, the removable coiled handle could be switched to the second iron so there would be no interruption in the de-wrinkling fabrics process.

In researching the evolution of iron-like devices, we found some interesting facts. The Greeks used a heated round bar of metal to pleat the

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robes they wore. Romans used a level metal paddle and beat wrinkles into submission while the Chinese used a scoop with heated sand or coal to de-wrinkle their clothing. The first electric iron was patented in 1882 and served as the precursor to the irons in use today. These and many other interesting facts about the history of irons can be found on the website, “Magnet Academy”.

GUESSES:***Seymour Library In-person Responses***

Ron Wood, “Flat iron with coiled wire handle. Iron was put on a stove (wood or coal) to be heated. Once iron was hot, handle was used to take it off the stove to iron the clothes. One may have had two irons. One heating while the other was used to iron. Coiled wire in the handle helped keep it cooler to the touch.”

Jennifer McBride, I think it was used to whip on the clothes and get crinkles out.

Ethan Stone, “A[n] iron, heated on coals, then used to iron clothes.”

Caleb Wong, “I think it was an iron and I think it was heated up over a fire and dragged across the clothes to remove wrinkles.”

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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

Seymour Library

Jennifer Caccavale, Director