

THE MYSTERY OF HISTORY — JUNE 3, 2019

WHAT'S IT?



Figs. 1a, b, c, d (l-r): Face views showing the artifact as rotated counterclockwise. PHOTOS: © 2018 Richard W. Black

ARTIFACT 19-03

SPECIFICATIONS:

Hardwood with leather belt and metal buckle.
 Weight = 2.30kg (81oz.); Height = 72.39cm (28.5in);
 Base width = 16.51cm (6.5in); Base depth = 10.16cm (4.0in)

CLUE:

Found in an 1870s barn used as a changeout station for draft horses.

QUESTIONS:

- What kind of simple machine is this, can you identify its parts?
- What is the purpose of the belt?

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Fig. 2: View of tip end. PHOTO: © 2018 Richard W. Black



Fig. 3: Closeup view of belt and buckle. PHOTO: © 2018 Richard W. Black



Fig. 4: Closeup view of tip end. PHOTO: © 2018 Richard W. Black



Fig. 5: View of base end. PHOTO: © 2018 Richard W. Black

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WHAT'S IT?**ARTIFACT 19-03****ANSWER:**

The device is called a leather harness/saddle clamp.

It was used for fixing/holding in place the portion of leather being worked. The clamp (sometimes called a vice) was used for sewing, putting grommets in a strap, creating a bridal/bit holder, any leather that required manipulation had a visit with this artifact. Where our device used an adjustable leather strap to pull the tongs together, the version in the pic below uses a wooden screw device to hold the armature together while working on the leather.

The clamp was usually attached to a workbench where the leather worker sat. As time passed, more attachments were made for the clamp to increase its efficiency. Simple, clever, and functional—the keys to elegant engineering!”

Thanks for participating in our “What’s It?” guessing contest! Even with the busy summer vacation, we still had some great predictors for artifact 19-03!

Mia [no last name indicated] kept it short and sweet and guessed that the artifact was made in 1897. An excellent guess, but the work horses were used about 40 years earlier. Thank you Mia!

Lily Harridine thought the device was used to connect a horse to a wagon. That is also a great guess because the artifact was used to make the harnesses that did connect the horses to whatever they were pulling. Lily was on the right track!

Benjamin Nephew predicted that the artifact was a horse shoe vice used to form and shape the shoe. He also suggested that it could be used to hold the shoe for etching certain

designs into the metal. Benjamin is spot on in that the artifact was a vice used to hold something having to do with horses. His well thought out prediction was based on his detailed observation concerning the dimpling that appears at the top of one of the two side tongs.

Brett Breslawski speculated that the harness clamp/vice was used as part of farming equipment used when plowing. A very reasonable assumption because many times we only have parts of artifacts and one could imagine this as something attached to an old plow share.

Ron Wood’s prediction hit the nail on the head in terms of describing the artifact’s function. He stated that it was used as a clamp to hold parts together for gluing or for “working” something. It was used to “work” leather, e.g., sewing buckles onto a leather strap, holding the strap in place while grommets were installed, tooling holes into the leather as belt catches, etc.

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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*

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