

THE MYSTERY OF HISTORY — AUGUST 2, 2021

WHAT'S IT?



Fig. 1 (top): Top view, (middle): Left side view, (bottom): Bottom view © 2020 Norm Frisch

ARTIFACT 20-04

SPECIFICATIONS:

Material: Iron.

Overall length = 67.31 cm (26 1/2 in).

Tine length = 10.16 cm (4 in), average spacing = 3.81 cm (1 1/2 in).

Handle: Proximal end width = 2.22 cm (7/8 in), thickness = 0.64 cm (1/4 in),

Distal end diameter = 1.27 cm (1/2 in).

Weight = 716 gm (1.58 lb)

continued on page 2...

Answers on page 3

THE MYSTERY OF HISTORY — AUGUST 2, 2021

WHAT'S IT?

Fig. 2: Close up of distal end, oblique view © 2020 Norm Frisch



Fig. 3: Close up of handle top, oblique view © 2020 Norm Frisch



Fig. 4: Close up of proximal end, side view © 2020 Norm Frisch

ARTIFACT 20-04**QUESTIONS & CLUES:**

Big appetites require big eating utensils! Why in the world would anyone need a fork of this size and strength? This three tined penetrator was hand forged in the late 17th or early 18th century. During this time period, iron implements people needed were made by a very special craftsman in the community. . . any idea who that person would have been? S/he usually produced iron products that required very high temperatures to work with molten (melted) iron — 2800°F (1538°C)! That's 13 times the heat required to boil water, 4 times the heat produced by a match, and 5 times the heat produced by household stoves! How were they able to achieve this extraordinarily high temperature without electricity, lasers, or plasma generators?

Bonus opportunities you may want to note on your prediction cards: During this time period, iron products were either wrought or hand forged. What's the difference? Are there any identifying marks on the artifact that may give you a hint as to where it came from? Where would this have been used and how was it stored? And, drum roll please for the BIG BONUS, what is the difference between this artifact and Poseidon/Neptunes' trident?

We are looking forward to your imaginative ideas as to what this artifact could be used for, e.g., it could have been used to comb out those nasty hair tangles that woolly mammoths must have suffered from. Happy creative thinking!

THE MYSTERY OF HISTORY — AUGUST 2, 2021

WHAT'S IT?

ARTIFACT 21-04

ANSWER:

If you hypothesized that this artifact was a roaster fork for turning big hunks of meat in ovens you are correct! Many homes had Dutch ovens built into a brick wall around the kitchen hearth—there are still a few of these ovens around in Brockport homes built in the 1800s. This biggie fork would have been the ideal tool for making sure all parts of meat were cooked properly.

The craftsmen/women that created this artifact and many other iron objects, e.g., horseshoes, pots and pans, other iron tools, was called a blacksmith. The blacksmith created the high temperatures needed to melt iron in a forced air forge. Bellows were used to force more oxygen into the forge and burn the fuel (usually coal) at the much higher temperatures needed to melt iron.

If you attempted to answer any of the bonus questions, touché! Hand forged iron was originally wrought iron made from a cast/mold. The casted iron was super-heated and pounded with a hammer to change the grain

flow of the metal to compress atoms together and create a much stronger type of iron. Wrought iron was prone to break when struck or striking an object. Striking instruments like axes, hammers, spikes, horseshoes, etc., we're almost always made of forged iron.

We did not find any identifying marks or stamps, so it's hard to determine exactly where this roaster fork was made. The hook at the end of the fork would lead one to believe that it was hung up while not in use.

There is a subtle but important difference between our roaster fork and Poseidon/Neptunes' trident. Did you find it? When the god of the sea skewered a critter with his trident, he didn't want it to come off. If you take a close look, The god of the sea had barbs (like fish hooks) at the end of his tines to hold his prey. When cooking meat in the kitchen you wanted the tines to go in and come out smoothly—no barbs needed.

GUESSES:

Seymour Library In-person Responses

Lily Clark, "Pitchfork is used when in war [and] you can use it to sacrifice them [the enemy and] also use it for fighting."

Andrew Korzenieski, "Fireplace claw?"

Eileen, "Sifting thru fireplace while burning to retrieve something."

Brockport Community Museum Facebook Page Responses

None

Remembering Brockport, NY Facebook Page Responses

None

Remembering Clarkson, NY Facebook Page Responses

None

THE MYSTERY OF HISTORY — AUGUST 2, 2021

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