

Restoration of a C. Cleaves Candlestick

by Bill Collins

In early May 2013 Neil Tysver approached me via the *Forum* about possibly trading what he accurately termed a “beater C. Cleaves fuse cutter stick” for a National Carbide 2-pound tin from Bluefield, West Virginia. It wasn’t my can that caught his eye but a photo I had taken of one that Bob Schroth had for sale back at either the 1995 or 1996 Lead, South Dakota western mining shows. I had just happened to post a photo to the *Forum* adding to a string of comments on National Carbide tins. I didn’t really need an ugly candlestick, however, the thought of obtaining another C. Cleaves candlestick was tempting and we exchanged photos, thoughts and offers.

I contacted Tony Moon for his assessment of the stick. His opinion was: “I hate to say it but this is the worst example of a Cleaves stick that I have ever seen! At least the bar for the fuse cutter still moves!” I then contacted Roger Peterson to see if he thought he could restore the stick for a reasonable price. He thought it was worth a try.

Neil and I worked out a trade and away from my collection went a Twentieth Century hand lamp, missing a handle and the guts, to Alaska; I had recently bought the Twentieth Century at the 2012 Tucson show from Dave Thorpe. Back to me, and true to the photos, came this extremely ugly beater C. Cleaves candlestick. The best things about it were that the teardrop handle still had its shape and the bar cutter worked as shown in figures 1 through 3.



Fig. 1 - C. Cleaves fuse cutter candlestick in its closed position (thimble side) before restoration.



Fig. 2 - C. Cleaves fuse cutter candlestick in its open position (hook side) before restoration.



Fig. 3 - C. Cleaves fuse cutter candlestick in its open position (thimble side) before restoration.

The candlestick was bent and incomplete. Much of what remained was thin and pitted. The thimble was a crushed wreck and it was impossible to tell what kind of top decoration (castellations or flames) it might have had, but it wasn't flat. The standard stamping C. Cleaves was evident and the eyebrows were visible. If there ever were dots under each eyebrow they were now gone. The thumb lever had been broken off many years before this. The hook had been severely weathered and what remained was bent, quite thin and dinky. This damage can be seen in figures 4 thru 6. A topside view is presented in figure 7.



Fig. 4 - C. Cleaves fuse cutter candlestick in its closed position (hook side) before restoration.



Fig. 5 - C. Cleaves fuse cutter candlestick thimble before restoration.

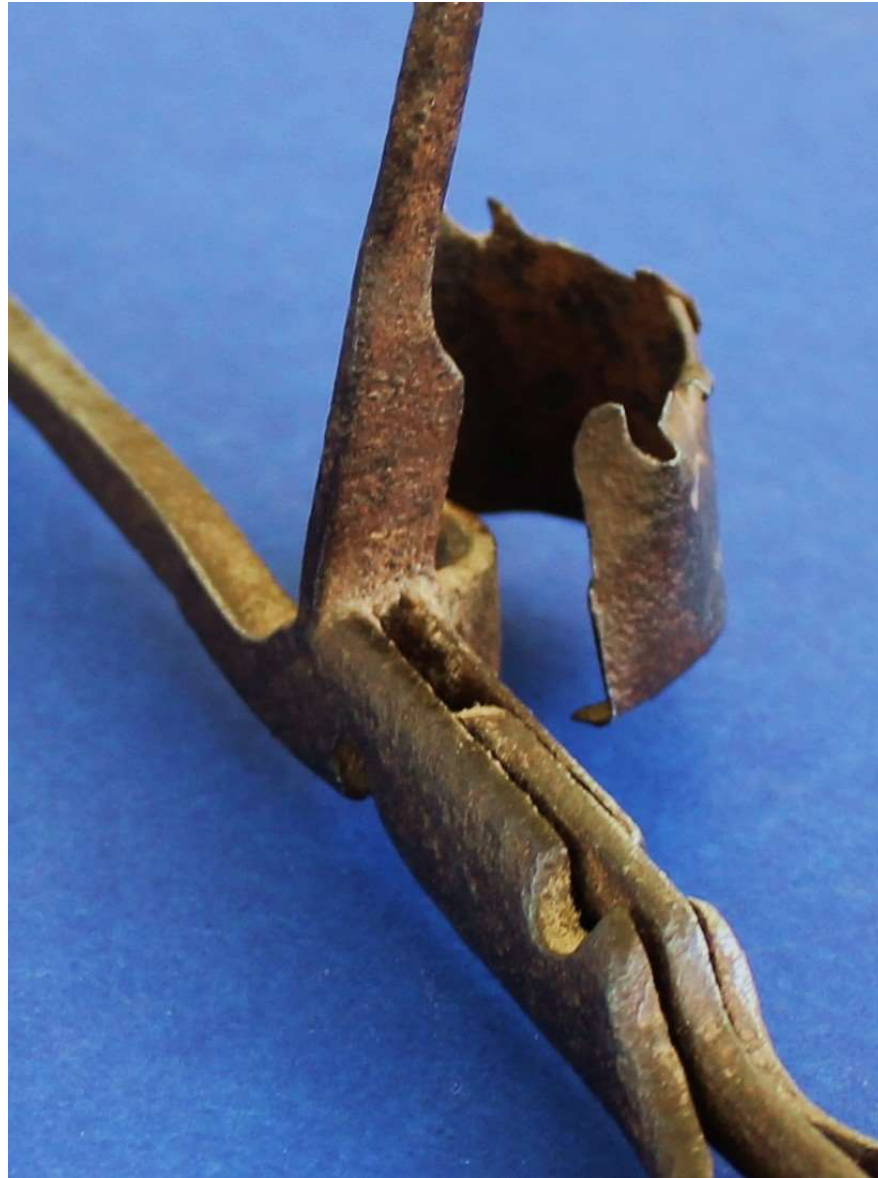


Fig. 6 - C. Cleaves fuse cutter candlestick thimble without thumb lever before restoration.



Fig. 7 - C. Cleaves fuse cutter candlestick in its closed position before restoration.

It was Roger's opinion the thimble would be difficult to be even partially salvaged due to the severe pitting and getting a proper weld to hold it together but we could try. Also the hook was frail and should be replaced. So both items were removed. Templates for the thimble and hook

were constructed for each part. A proper flat thimble was fashioned and sent to an engraver for the addition of C. Cleaves and the eyebrows with dots. The initial “C,” which usually appears to be backwards, was purposefully engraved as a forward “C.” The steel was then formed into a properly sized thimble with an attachment arm. The replacement hook was fashioned by Roger. Roger straightened out the spike and was able to remove most of the rust and shallow pitting. Another party did the welding. After the removal of any signs of welding and some additional tweaking, the candlestick was finished March 2014.

Several delays were caused by time spent trying to save the thimble from total replacement by welding a new ornate top to the old pitted metal (it just wasn't going to happen), scheduling time with the engraver (it took a couple times to get it right), and lastly scheduling time with the welder. The restored stick, which can be viewed in figures 8-13, was not polished off to blacksmith newness. Considering that none of the C. Cleaves handmade sticks is exactly the same I think the restoration project turned out quite nice. Thanks to Tony Moon and Roger Peterson for reviewing the draft of this article.

Stick dimensions:

Length: 11 9/16 inches (290 mm) Thimble height: 1 3/16 inches (30 mm)
Thimble arm: .54 inch (14 mm) Hook height: 2 15/16 inches (74 mm)



Fig. 8 - C. Cleaves fuse cutter candlestick in its closed position (thimble side) after restoration.

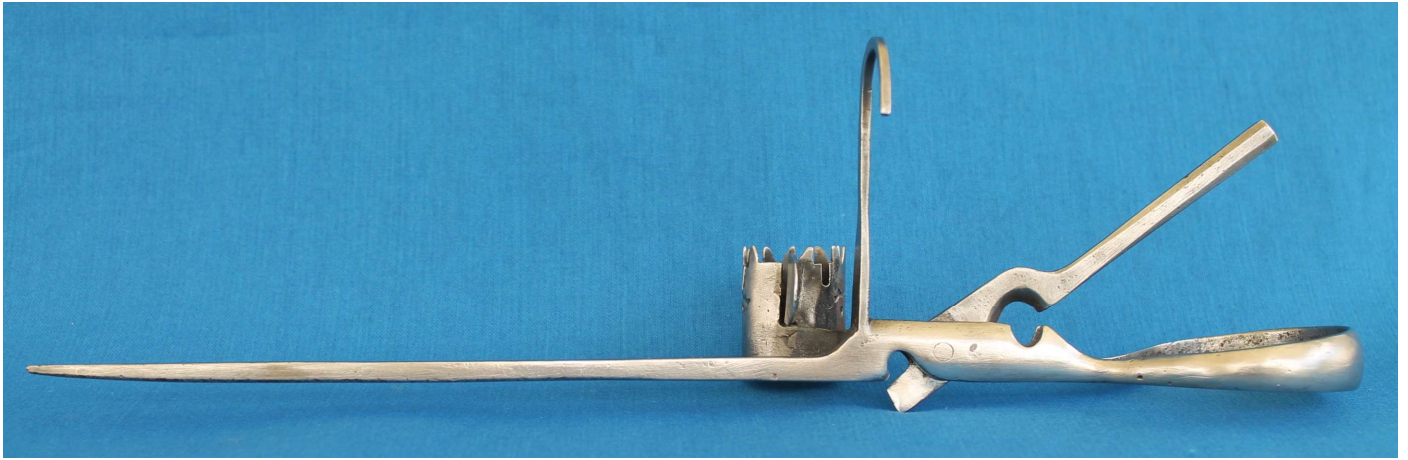


Fig. 9 - C. Cleaves fuse cutter candlestick in its open position (hook side) after restoration.



Fig. 10 - C. Cleaves fuse cutter candlestick in its open position (thimble side) after restoration.



Fig. 11 - C. Cleaves fuse cutter candlestick in its closed position (hook side) after restoration.



Fig. 12 - C. Cleaves fuse cutter candlestick thumb lever and thimble with corrected “C” after restoration.

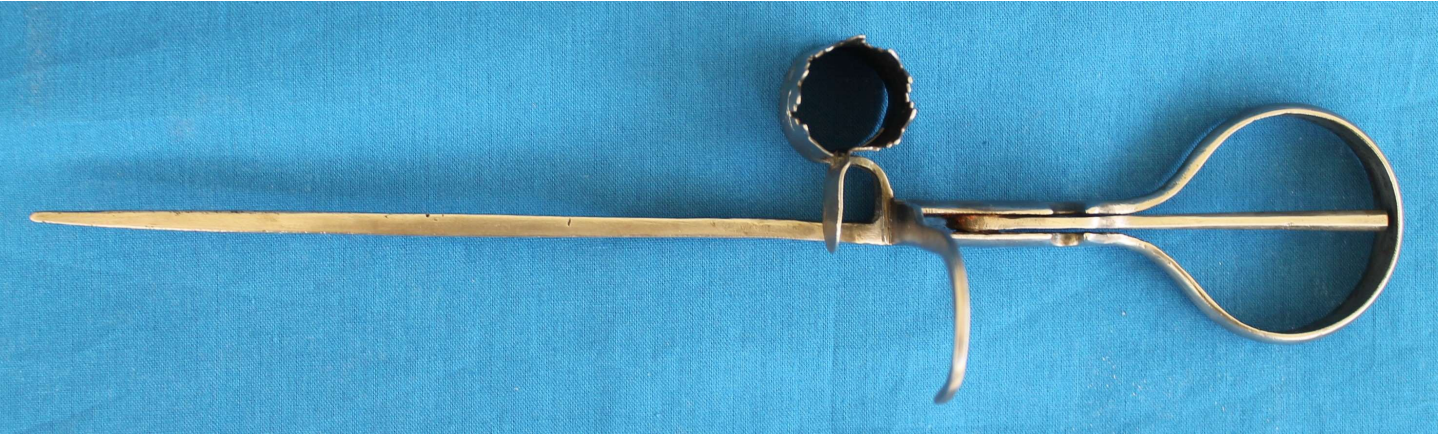


Fig. 13 - C. Cleaves fuse cutter candlestick in its closed position (top down view) after restoration.