

FANCY FOLDING SACRED-HEART CANDLESTICK

Wendell Wilson

This fancy folding candlestick was originally purchased at a flea market in Michigan many years ago, offered as a “leatherworking tool.” The purchaser, a member of the Rushlight Club of lighting device collectors, must have recognized it for what it was (inasmuch as most Rushlighters probably don’t collect leather tools). When he passed away, his daughter sold it to Don Schoenly, who is currently the proud owner.



It has a number of interesting features including a clearly stamped date (1897) and an engraved, rather gruesome Catholic religious emblem called the “Sacred Heart,” depicted as a flaming heart shining with divine light, pierced by a bleeding lance-wound, surrounded by a crown of thorns and surmounted by a cross. The wounds and crown of thorns allude to the manner of Jesus' death, while the fire is said to represent the transformative power of love. The thumb lever depicts the crowned head of a man, and the thimble has decorative cut-outs.

A flat spring plate forms the bottom of the handle stem, serving to secure the folding hook, spike, a knife blade, and a small scoop (perhaps for clearing a drill hole) in the open or folded positions. The plate carries an engraving of the Sacred Heart along with an “L★B” gang-stamped maker’s mark and a thorn bush. The spring plate feature is similar in concept to those on the Kaba & Pelham patent of 1913 (see Wilson, *Miners’ Antique Candlesticks* (2021), Fig. 432-433) and the Warbrick patent of 1915 (Fig. 457).

The top side of the handle stem is engraved with the image of an uprooted rose plant with a single bloom—in Catholic iconography standing for eternal paradise (and sometimes also a symbol for martyrs).



Similarities exist between this candlestick and several others, though not enough to declare being made by the same hand. In this case, the blade is poorly located on the *outside* of the neck, pointing right at the user's hand. It would be all too easy to stick the spike in a timber, and have your sweaty hand slip forward and get stabbed. The full folding knife blade, like that on the Larson patent of 1874 (Fig. 431), the Martin patent of 1883 (Fig. 443), the Desmoineaux patent of 1882 (Fig. 439-440), the Laves patent of 1889 (Fig. 458) and the Clinch patent of 1887 (Fig. 507) is actually very rare on surviving miners' candlesticks and is generally designed to fold safely into the *inside* of the handle.



The fancy folding examples from Wisconsin made by Bartolomeo Domenico Battolocletti (1867-1944), who was chief blacksmith at the Montreal mine beginning in 1891 (Fig. 509-512), have a folding spike, hook, and thimble with a folding or *detachable* knife-blade and a similar “feel” to the craftsmanship.



The candlestick measures 7.25 inches open and 3.75 inches folded (not counting the thumb lever on the thimble).