

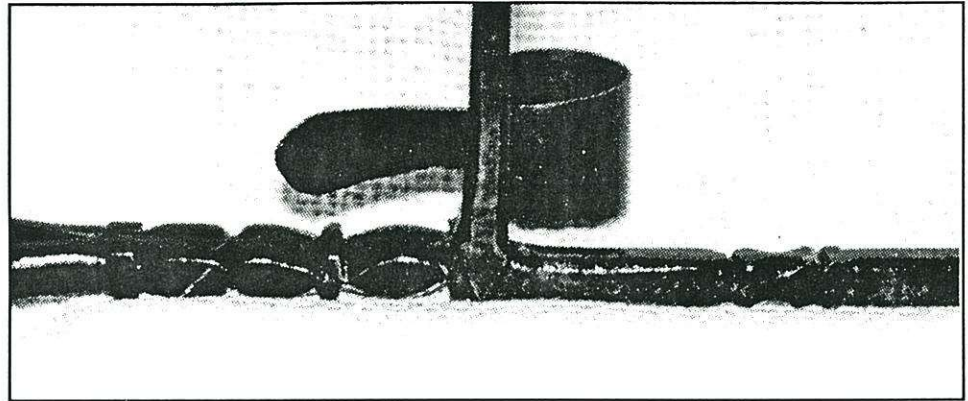
# Blacksmith Candlesticks

by Dave Johnson

*Hand-made candlesticks are often lumped into a category of low esteem. Yet a historical story or slightly different form of workmanship reflecting purposeful thought of the maker adds a certain charm that makes the piece collection-worthy. Three sticks are described below that demonstrate just this.*

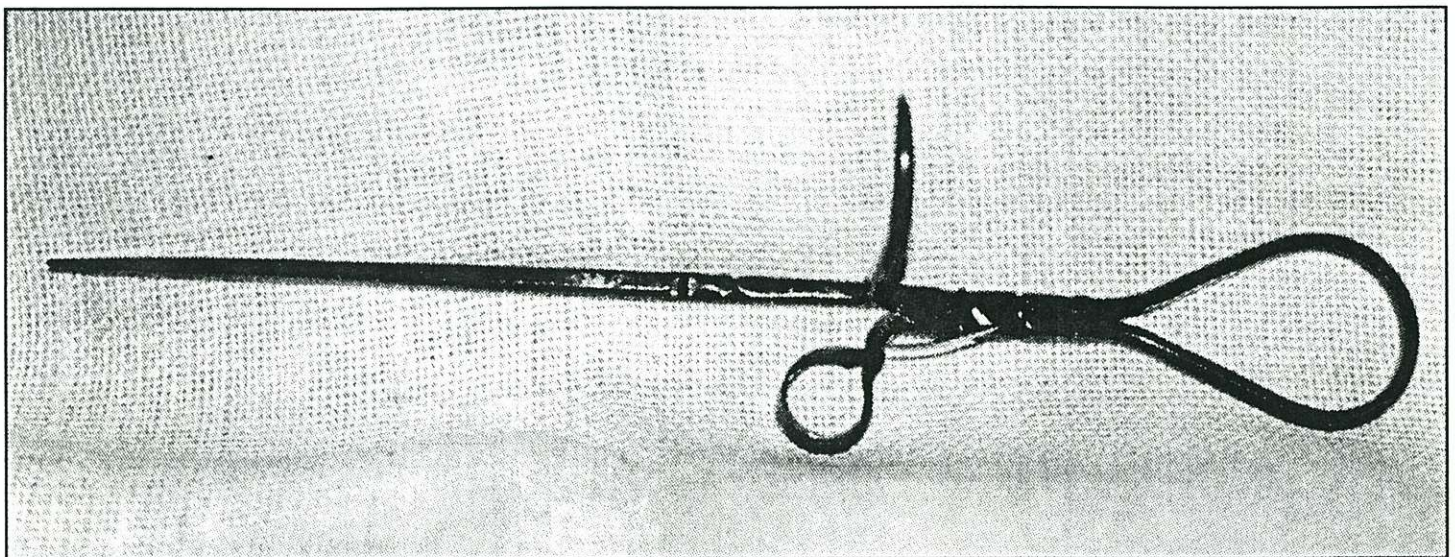
## A Western Stick Moves to the Copper Country

Estate sales are excellent places to acquire candlesticks in Michigan. This fancy stick came from an estate sale in Hancock, Michigan in 1968. The estate was that of the son of the original owner. Family members told me that the stick was acquired while the owner worked as a copper miner somewhere in Arizona, they weren't sure where. In 1902, he moved from Arizona to Hancock, Michigan where he worked as a miner and then supervisor at the Quincy Mine for almost thirty years before retiring.



This movement is the opposite of what was the rule. Generally miners left the declining Michigan copper mines after 1900, moving to newer, more fertile districts. Western style sticks are seldom found in the Lake Superior Region where one sees the distinctive Lake Superior style hook.

The stick is 13 1/2" long. The hook is octagonal at its base, becoming round as it curves. The thumb lever on the thimble is longer than average. The handle is half round on the loop, with high ornamentation on the neck which continues about a third of the length of the spike before becoming square. Overall workmanship is excellent.

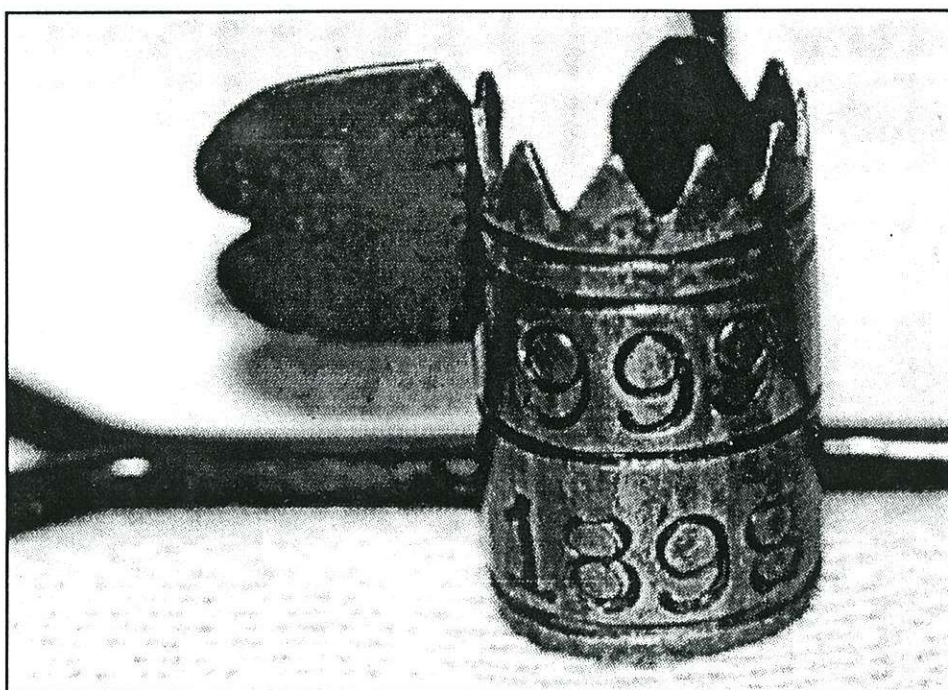
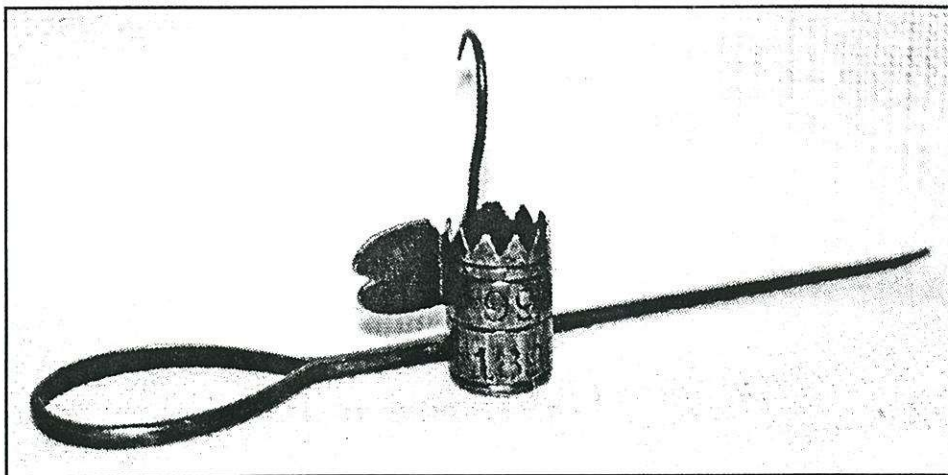




## Presentation Stick

Purchased at an estate auction in Ironwood, Michigan, this semi-fancy stick reportedly originated in Colorado. According to the grandniece of the former owner, the stick was given to her great-uncle by his family in 1898 while he worked as a miner in Cripple Creek, Colorado. She stated that in 1905 the family moved to Ironwood, where her great-uncle joined his brother, her grandfather, working in the local iron mines until his retirement in 1932, from his position of shift foreman.

While the 1898 date signifies the date the stick was given to its former owner, the significance of the 999 was not passed down along with the stick. The stick measures  $8\frac{7}{8}$ " overall with a teardrop handle. The handle is half-round, with an octagonal spike. The hook is round at its base becoming square about half-way through its length and is constructed of very slender stock. The thumb lever is highly ornamented. Overall, the stick is only  $\frac{1}{2}$  to  $\frac{1}{3}$  as heavy as a Varney stick, making this a very finely crafted stick.



## An Unusual Thumb Lever

This small, rather plain stick was found in Montana. Measuring just  $6\frac{3}{4}$ " in overall length, this stick has a hook that is  $3\frac{3}{4}$ " in height, more than half its overall length. The unusual feature of this stick is the extended vertical thumb lever. The handle is half-round and the spike is square. The handle loop does not close at the neck, but rather is separated by about  $\frac{3}{4}$ ".

