

National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Grand Portage National Monument  
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## Tools



PHOTO TITLE: Scissors - GRPO 279

DESCRIPTION: Household ferrous metal scissors with flat sheet metal finger rings. Scissors proved to be a useful implement in working with textiles and leather. This pair measures 15.8 cm long and is 5.0 cm wide.

PHOTO TITLE: Firesteel - GRPO 342

DESCRIPTION: Hand forged ferrous metal firesteel or strike-a-light, used with a gunflint to generate hot sparks for fire starting. This example here has a rectangular striking surface with a small handle and attached curved finial. The firesteel measures 7.9 cm long and the width of the striking surface is 1.4 cm.

PHOTO TITLE: Trade Axe - GRPO 539

DESCRIPTION: Wrought iron trade axe head recovered from the Basswood River during the initial season of the Quetico-Superior Underwater Research Project in 1961. The total length of the axe is 17.5 cm, the cutting surface is 7.8 cm, and the diameter of the eye is 3.1 cm.

PHOTO TITLE: Muskrat Spear - GRPO 541

DESCRIPTION: Wrought iron muskrat spear recovered from the Basswood River during the initial season of the Quetico-Superior Underwater Research Project in 1961. The total length of the spear is 34.0 cm with a shaft diameter of 1.3 cm. The first barb is 7.0 cm from the spear tip; the second is 11.4 cm from the spear tip.

PHOTO TITLE: Muskrat Spear - GRPO 542

DESCRIPTION: Wrought iron muskrat spear recovered from the Basswood River during the initial season of the Quetico-Superior Underwater Research Project in 1961. The total length of the spear is 34.0 cm with a shaft diameter of 1.2 cm. The first barb is 7.0 cm from the spear tip; the second is 12.0 cm from the spear tip.

PHOTO TITLE: Needle - GRPO 6728

DESCRIPTION: Square shank ferrous metal sailmaker's or sacking needle with eye on one end. The needle is 8.4 cm long and the maximum width of the tapered shaft 0.4 cm.

PHOTO TITLE: Lithic - GRPO 6941



DESCRIPTION: Prior to the advent of the fur trade, Native Peoples in the Great Lakes Region utilized tools produced from wood, bone, stone, and native copper. One such example of a tool is this bifacial chert blade tip fragment that could be utilized as a multipurpose knife. It measures 3.0 cm long and 1.9 cm wide.

PHOTO TITLE: Hand Forged Hammer - GRPO 8228

DESCRIPTION: Hand forged iron hammer pounded thin in center and bent to form eye; ends welded together, bottom half of end of hammer projects 1.5 cm beyond top half. The overall length of the tool is 11.1 cm; it stands 2.4 cm tall, and is 2.7 cm wide.

PHOTO TITLE: Hoe - GRPO 9925

DESCRIPTION: The 1797 North West Company inventory of goods at Grand Portage indicates the presence of multiple garden tools, including 24 hoes. This example here, produced from wrought iron, is 18.0 cm long and 10.0 cm wide.

PHOTO TITLE: Lithic - GRPO 10037

DESCRIPTION: This lithic gunflint silica bifacial blade was produced through a process known as lithic reduction, a technique used to detach flakes from a surface with tools to achieve a desired edge. This example measures 4.0 cm long and 3.0 cm wide.

PHOTO TITLE: Lead Bale Seal - GRPO 12931

DESCRIPTION: Widely used since the 13<sup>th</sup> century in Europe, lead bales seals were placed on containers by carrying goods and furs. The fur companies operating in the Great Lakes region continued this practice as a means of quality control. This example here is stamped “-ILDO-” and 3/21 is scratched on the reverse side.

PHOTO TITLE: Muskrat Spear Fragment - GRPO 13417

DESCRIPTION: Wrought iron muskrat spear fragment with tip and two barbs. The overall length of the spear fragment is 15.1 cm and the diameter of the shaft is 1.0 cm. The first barb is located 7.8 cm from the tip and the second barb is spaced 14.6 cm from the tip.

PHOTO TITLE: Canoe Sail Toggle - GRPO 13997

DESCRIPTION: The use of sails in birch bark canoes is depicted in the artwork of Frances Anne Hopkins and mentioned in the journals of fur traders. They were often rigged with lines affixed to a toggle such as the double cone-shaped style exhibited here. This toggle is 10.3 cm long with a maximum diameter of 2.9 cm.

PHOTO TITLE: Canoe Sail Toggle - GRPO 14147

DESCRIPTION: This cylindrical style toggle with central groove is 9.6 cm long with a maximum diameter of 2.1 cm. The groove in the center is approximately 1.1 cm wide and is 0.3 cm deep.

PHOTO TITLE: Axe with Wooden Handle - GRPO 14152

DESCRIPTION: Small deteriorated wrought iron axe head with wooden handle. The axe head is approximately 13.0 cm long and the wooden handle is 19.8 cm long.

PHOTO TITLE: Lithic Projectile Point - GRPO 15276

DESCRIPTION: Small, side-notched incomplete lithic projectile point produced from possibly a Tongue River Silicified Sediment flake. The object measures 2.5 cm long and 1.5 cm wide.

PHOTO TITLE: File Fragment - GRPO 15910

DESCRIPTION: Over 250 files are listed on the 1797 inventory of goods at the North West Company depot in Grand Portage. This example here is a square shoulder, double-cut steel bastard file fragment with tang. The file, marked "IH HAWKE" measures 10.1 cm long, 2.3 cm wide, and 0.6 cm thick.

PHOTO TITLE: Trade Axe - GRPO 15915

DESCRIPTION: Deteriorated wrought iron trade axe head with steel bit inset. The axe measures 19.5 cm long, 10.0 cm wide at the bit, and 6.5 cm wide at the poll.

PHOTO TITLE: Trade Axe - GRPO 15958

DESCRIPTION: Wrought iron trade axe head with steel bit inset, stamped "JC". The axe measures 16.5 cm long, 8.0 cm wide at the bit, 3.6 cm wide at the notch, and 4.0 cm wide at the poll.

PHOTO TITLE: Paddle Fragment - GRPO 16119

DESCRIPTION: White cedar paddle shoulder and blade fragment, straight-sided with dihedral cross-section. The overall length of the fragment is 40.1 cm; the width of the blade is 19.3 cm and has a maximum thickness of 1.5 cm.

PHOTO TITLE: Paddle Fragment - GRPO 16122

DESCRIPTION: This example is the most complete and best preserved of the paddle fragments in the Grand Portage National Monument collection. It is thought to be a late 18<sup>th</sup> century/early 19<sup>th</sup> century white cedar voyageur paddle. The blade was discolored during the preservation treatment process and has not been painted. The overall length of the fragment is 87.5 cm; the blade is 14.0 cm wide and has a maximum thickness on the dihedral cross-section of 1.9 cm.

PHOTO TITLE: Paddle Fragment - GRPO 16123

DESCRIPTION: White cedar paddle blade fragment, straight-sided with dihedral-cross section and angular tip. The paddle fragment measures 49.5 cm long, 10.5 cm wide, and up to 1.8 cm thick.

PHOTO TITLE: Canoe Thwarts - GRPO 16138

DESCRIPTION: White cedar canoe thwarts, or horizontal cross-braces placed inside the canoe framing for structural support. The ends of the thwarts contain round holes with remnants of black spruce root fiber known as *watape* that was used to lash the wooden frames to the inwale.

PHOTO TITLE: Firesteel - GRPO 17043

DESCRIPTION: Hand-forged, rectangular-shaped firesteel with L-shaped handles extending off at right angles from striking edge and end with curved finials. The overall length of the firesteel is 6.7 cm, the overall width is 4.1 cm, and the thickness is 0.2 cm.

PHOTO TITLE: Firesteel - GRPO 17119

DESCRIPTION: Hand-forged, oval-shaped firesteel measuring 8.3 cm long and 3.9 cm wide.

PHOTO TITLE: Firesteel - GRPO 17601

DESCRIPTION: The 1797 inventory of goods at the North West Company's Grand Portage depot indicates that over 1,020 firesteels were on hand at the post. The oval-shaped firesteel was one of the most common styles traded in the Great Lakes region. This firesteel measures 6.9 cm long, 3.3 cm wide, and 0.3 cm thick.

PHOTO TITLE: Thimble - GRPO 17609

DESCRIPTION: The 1797 inventory of goods at the North West Company's Grand Portage depot indicates the presence of over 1,300 thimbles. This brass thimble with rimmed bottom measures 2.6 cm tall with a bottom diameter of 2.0 cm.

PHOTO TITLE: Muskrat Spear - GRPO 17612

DESCRIPTION: This thin, round-shafted wrought iron muskrat spear fragment with two barbs measures 21.0 cm long with a 0.6 cm diameter.

PHOTO TITLE: Awl - GRPO 17614

DESCRIPTION: Over 3,000 awls were on hand at the North West Company depot in Grand Portage in 1797 when an inventory was conducted. This example is a hand-forged square-cross section double-ended straight iron awl. It measures 9.1 cm long and has a maximum thickness of 0.4 cm.

PHOTO TITLE: Iron Projectile Point - GRPO 17758

DESCRIPTION: This is one of six nearly identical-sized iron projectile points found buried together during archeological investigations conducted in the spring of 2008. This example is 4.8 cm long, 2.0 cm at the base of shaft, and 0.2 cm thick.

PHOTO TITLE: Ice Chisel - GRPO 17766

DESCRIPTION: Ice chisels were valuable tools used during the process of harvesting food and furs. They were useful for breaking through beaver dams and lodges or thick sheets of ice prior to the setting of nets. This example is a wrought iron rectangular shaft chisel with no extant tang, measuring 37.1 cm long, 2.8 cm wide, and 1.9 cm thick.

PHOTO TITLE: Ice Chisel - GRPO 17767

DESCRIPTION: Wrought iron ice chisel, increasing in width from L-shaped tang moving toward end with chisel point; rectangular profile tapering toward flattened edge in final quarter-length of chisel. The chisel measures 35.5 cm long, varies in width from 1.1 to 2.3 cm, and varies in thickness from 0.8 to 2.1 cm.

PHOTO TITLE: Awl - GRPO 17783

DESCRIPTION: Hand-forged rectangular-cross section double-ended offset awl measuring 9.0 cm long, 0.7 cm wide, and 0.4 cm thick.

PHOTO TITLE: Awl - GRPO 17784

DESCRIPTION: Iron awls offered greater advantages over bone tools when it came to penetrating birch bark and leather. This hand-forged square-cross section double-ended straight iron awl measures 11.4 cm long, 0.4 cm wide, and 0.4 cm thick.

PHOTO TITLE: Fishhook - GRPO 17787

DESCRIPTION: Large iron fishhook containing single barb at end of hook with flattened shank at top of cylindrical rod for attachment to line. The hook measures 11.8 cm long, the distance between the hook and the shaft is 4.2 cm, and the shaft is 0.5 cm thick.

PHOTO TITLE: Firesteel - GRPO 1778

DESCRIPTION: Hand wrought, elongated oval firesteel measuring 8.3 cm long, 3.4 cm wide, and 0.4 cm thick.