

Long Grove History

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Mystery Tool

Four years ago, when the Society started a quarterly newsletter on local history, it was met with a wee bit of skepticism — "This won't last more than a year; they're going to run out of material." Fortunately, history is full of undiscovered little tidbits if you simply look for them.

By **Aaron Underwood** · Long Grove Historical Society



Long Grove Historical Society board member **Bob Borg** with an unknown mystery tool, photographed at the Society's 1840's Ruth Barn.

And perhaps if the subject was limited to the half-dozen or so common Long Grove tales that area old-timers tell, the concern might be warranted. But consider a recent outing to the Society's 19th-century barn.

The barn is chock-full of old tools used by the area's original settlers — donated and collected from local farms as they've given way to the subdivisions where we now live. Bob Borg, the resident tool expert, was queried regarding what was considered the barn's most unusual or interesting tool.



After pondering a minute, Bob gathered a large piece of iron from the corner and responded, *"I'm not sure it's the most interesting, but we've got this big mystery tool that we really don't know where it came from or what it was used for."* Further inspection revealed a worn inscription — **"Goldenberg Acier Fondu."**

INSCRIBED ON THE TOOL

*"Goldenberg Acier Fondu"*ALSACE · STEEL FOUNDRY · EST. 1834

The inscription is French and translates to *"Goldenberg Steel Foundry."* Surprised that an original settler would have a French tool and not a German one?

While we think of Long Grove's original settlers as being from Germany, the area they were from — Alsace-Lorraine — is a border region between France and Germany. It has changed hands back and forth over the years and is presently in modern-day France. So the original settlers were from a place that could be considered French or German, depending on your perspective, and even today you find a mix of the two cultures there.

The Goldenberg Steel Foundry was located in Alsace and was started in 1834 — a good fit to have produced a tool brought over by an original settler. But what was this tool used for? No easy answer was forthcoming. So while the tool was worthy of a story, it didn't have as satisfying a conclusion as I would have liked, and a bit of mystery remained.

A Long Grove reader — and an unexpected reply.

Through the magic of the internet — the newsletters are all posted online at LongGroveHistory.org — a few months later I received an email from someone who had seen the article and recognized the tool. It is known as a *Dopplestichaxt*.

The easiest way to understand how it might have been used is to recall the Lincoln Log toys you or your children may have played with. Picture the carved-out area of the log that allows one log to interlock with another. The *Dopplestichaxt*'s beak would be used to chop out the bulk of the notched area, and then the flatter end would be used to smooth, square, and finish the notch.

So more than likely, this tool came over with an original settler and was used to build some of Long Grove's first homes and barns. As for which specific settler brought it over, or how the *Dopplestichaxt* found its way into the Society's barn... that is a mystery that will likely always remain.



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