

The Old Hatchet Story

I am an old hatchet. I am going to tell those who read this about my long existence. At least I will do it as well as any piece of old iron can. I will start in the present and work back for what I believe is about two centuries of man-years. Yes, I am a hatchet, but there are those who would call me a tomahawk. That is a name that makes even me shudder. I know that others like me and possibly I myself could have been used for brutal uses. However, that is overshadowed by so many other everyday uses I have been put to. I have done my share of digging for herbs and roots for medicine. One of those roots was ginseng that my owner could trade for all sorts of useful things which he was unable to make. There were Dutch, French and English traders who were anxious to get that valuable root. I have helped cut small wood to kindle a fire when the spark was yet made by flint and steel.



My long ago owner was a trapper. He found me useful because my hook could be used to pull trap chains. You have doubtless guessed that my early years were in the hands of a Native American, probably a member of the Mohawk nation. I have already been guilty of not keeping my promise of telling my story from the present then back toward the past. I am now part of the collection of a man named Skip. I am glad because I am one of his most prized possessions. I have belonged to him since May 8, 1943. On that day, he was about a month from his thirteenth birthday. Skip's interest in Native American artifacts then dated back at least six years. On that date, he went with his parents and grandfather Garlock to his cousin Anna's wedding to Carl. As is the tradition, sometimes tin cans were tied to the honeymoon car. Cans did not prove hard to come by, but something to punch a hole in them was. The old woodshed on the back of the house was a logical place to

search. Skip saw a sharp point emerging from behind a piece of studding on the wall. That might be just what was needed. I was quickly recognized as an ancient belt axe. Even in my rust pitted condition, I punched the needed holes. Skip was told that I was found in the ground back of the house and he was welcome to take me home with him. His home was along Bowman Creek in Marshville, New York. There was a great war on in 1943. The aviators wore jackets lined with muskrat fur. When winter came, Skip began to trap for muskrats. He thought how handy I could be in pulling traps from the freezing water. The deep rust pits were ground from me and grandpa made a handle for me. I was proud to be put back in use. I can still see the bright sparks as I was being ground. I am not sure it would not have been better to leave me alone to enjoy my leisure years. The memory of my early days is not clear. The place where I was found was on an old Indian trail that led from Schoharie to the Mohawk Valley. I know now that was near present Sloansville. Along that ancient trail was a stone pile to which legend told me that each Indian passing by added a stone. I know that my owner cast a stone on the pile first before I was lost. How was I lost that day? I really do not remember, but I do know I lay in the ground for one hundred years, or even longer.

Another step backwards takes me to the day I was made. The memory of the puff of the bellows and the ringing of the hammer against the anvil still awakens a thrill in me. On that day a skilled blacksmith created me and my unusual form. I do not know what nationality my maker was. He may have been Dutch from along the Hudson Valley, French from the Old World or Canada, possibly even English or American. I do know that I am still hard, tough even after so many years. Above all I still look forward to other adventures yet to come.

Skip Barshied

Stone Arabia

March 2012