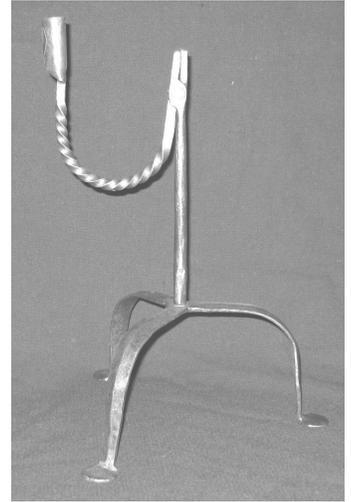


What A Rush! by Jymm Hoffman

Rush Lights were used instead of candles, in certain regions. A rush or reed would be dipped into bees wax or beef tallow and burned. The jaws of the rush light held the rush. These are basically made as small tongs. Many rush lights had a knob on the end of the one of the "tong reins" to aid in keeping the jaw closed. Others had candle holders forged out of the end. These, I refer to as transitional lighting devices, so when the candles run out, the owner can revert to the more primitive method of using a rush. Many rush lights did not have the iron three legged base, simply a point on the straight tong rein and shoved into a piece of wood. There were many variations.



The rush light jaws and candle holder shown is made from 1/2" square stock. The short one about 6" long, the candle holder about 7" long. I forge the jaws the same as making a pair of tongs as shown in the CoSIRA books, using the same basic steps I use for making my working blacksmith tongs, just scaled down. (Photo 1) I draw out the candle holder rein, making it about 3/8" square and leaving some mass on the end for spreading out the candle holder. The candle holder is spread using my cross peen and smoothing up with the face of the hammer. (Photo 2) I then shape the candle holder, starting it by cupping it in the center with the cross peen, roughing the shape on the anvil, then finishing the size with a 3/4" round bar that is tapered on the end. The upright rein has a tennon forged then filed on the bottom end to be peened over into the leg base. (Photo 3) The jaw is then assembled with a rivet, the same as other working tongs this part of the rush light is finished.

These legs are made from 1/4" by 3/4" flat bar. One leg is 6" long, the other is 12" long. I mark the center of the 12" bar and bend to approximately 60 degrees. I then scarf the bend to prepare for welding. The short bar is scarfed on one end and welded to the bend of the long piece. (Photo 4) As soon as the weld is completed, I punch the hole for the upright. This hole is the measuring point for the 3 legs. I draw one leg out, raise a median ridge by hammering the edges. I then set my dividers from the hole to the end of the leg to determine the length to forge the other two legs. I then forge the shoulder and "penny foot" and bend it up. (Photos 5 & 6). Repeat this operation on the other two legs, then bend to shape.

Finally assembly is heating the tennon, putting it in the vise and peening to attach to the leg base. I like to use tung oil or wax for a finish on these.

