

Curator's Choice

Roughing It: A Wagon Rough Lock from The City of Deadwood

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Conservator

This iron rough lock comes from the City of Deadwood, South Dakota. A result of the Black Hills Gold Rush of 1874, the City was just one of seven mining encampments in Deadwood Gulch (Figure 1). Its streets, theaters, and saloons (many of which you can visit today) were the backdrop for the escapades of legendary Wild West characters, such as James 'Wild Bill' Hickok and Martha 'Calamity Jane' Canary.

The lock, when fastened to a wheel, would have helped slow a wagon on a steep descent by providing drag, or friction (Figure 2). It arrived at the lab fragmented and heavily corroded (Figure 3). After documenting its condition, the surface was cleaned. Special care was taken to preserve what remains of the original metal surface. Following this initial surface clean, the pieces were submerged in a series of solutions with the aim of slowly removing soluble salts. This process, called desalination, is a preventative measure as the soluble salts act as a catalyst for future corrosion outbreaks. Afterwards the piece is cleaned a final time, before receiving a series of protective coatings which will help stabilize the iron for exhibition (Figure 4).



Figure 2: Modern rough lock in use, courtesy of Doug Hansen.



Figure 1: Deadwood, 1877, from the Historic Preservation Office.

Special thanks to Doug Hansen, of Hansen Wheel and Wagon in Letcher, South Dakota for providing the picture of the modern rough lock.



Figure 3: Rough lock before conservation treatment.

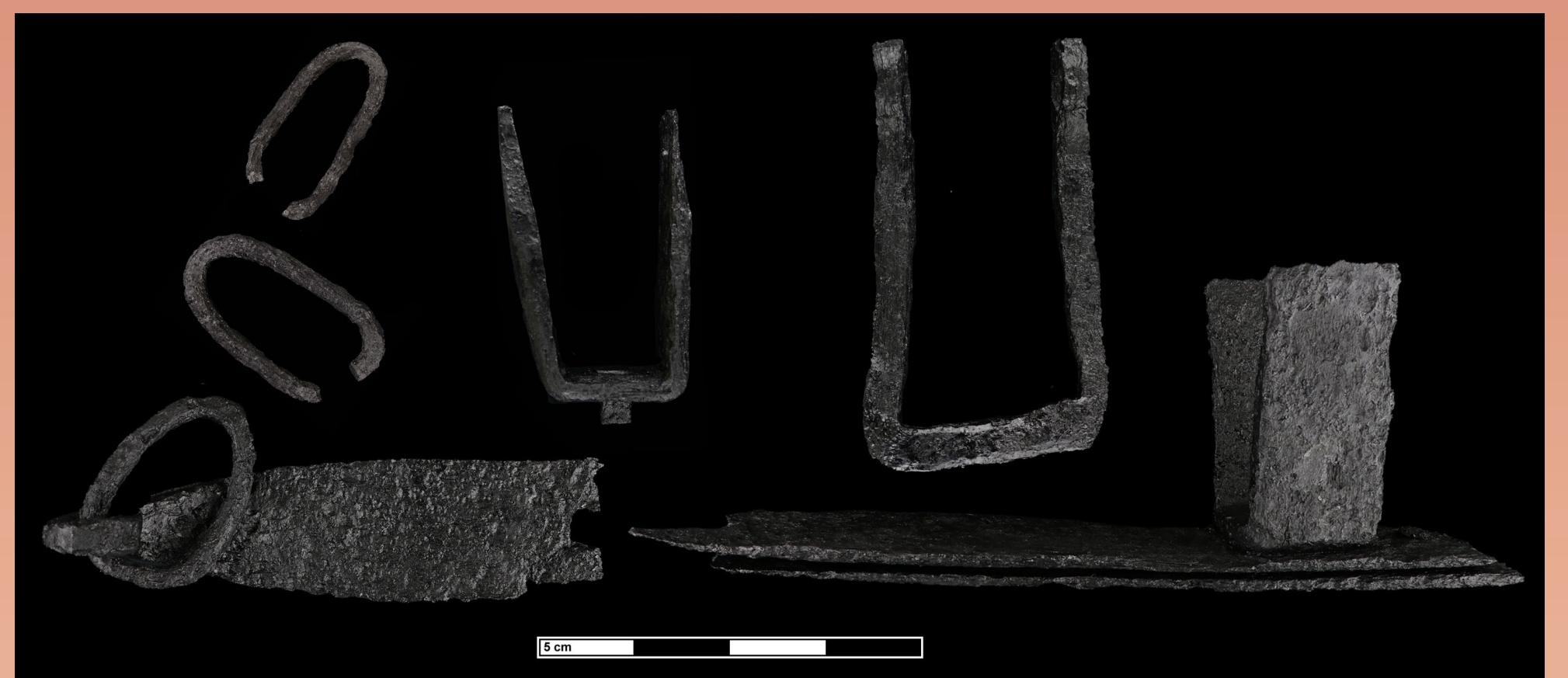


Figure 4: Rough lock after conservation treatment.

References Cited

City of Deadwood, South Dakota

Historic Preservation Office. Timeline of Deadwood, South Dakota. <<https://www.cityofdeadwood.com/historic-preservation/page/timeline-deadwood-south-dakota>>



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