"Brass" Candlesticks - A Primer

By

Jim Melchor and Tom Newbern

Introduction

Notice in the title of this article that "Brass" is in quotes. The reason for this is we will be using the term, brass, generically to discuss copper-alloy candlesticks that range in color from gold - to yellow - to light yellow/white - to red - to brown - to black and numerous shades in between, depending upon alloy and oxidation.

It is not our intent here to discuss the metallurgy of copper alloys in detail. However, it is worthwhile to note the general composition of several modern copper alloys in an effort to understand the metals used in the early "brass" candlesticks that will be discussed in this article.

Technically, brass is an alloy of copper and zinc. Depending upon the properties and colors of brass desired, the copper content can be roughly as high as 95% or as low as 60%. Bronze is an alloy of copper and tin. Its composition, too, can vary widely depending upon desired properties. Generally, modern bronze is composed of roughly 90% copper and 10% tin. Several other terms encountered in discussing period, copper-alloy objects are bell metal, gunmetal, and white bronze. Bell metal, used in casting bells, is a bronze with a higher tin content in the neighborhood of

75% copper to 25% tin. Gunmetal, used in the past for casting cannons, is a bronze with a slightly lower copper content and with the addition of a few percent zinc. White bronze is a corrosion/oxidation resistant alloy of roughly 55% copper, 30% tin, and 15% zinc, and it is light yellow to white in color. When we are relatively comfortable with the metal in an illustrated stick, we will so state. Otherwise, we will identify the metal as "brass", copper alloy, or not mention the metal by name.

Until early in the 19th century, there was no universally accepted formula for copper-alloy candlesticks. Depending upon the availability of raw materials, scrap metals, and the technical capabilities of the diverse makers, candlesticks could actually be brass, bronze, one of the alloys previously mentioned, or various other combinations of copper, zinc, tin, and other elements.

This article will focus on "brass" candlesticks originating in central, western, and northern Europe and the British Isles from the Middle Ages to around the middle of the 19th century. Sticks and miscellaneous lighting devices in silver, silver gilt, pewter, iron, other metals, glass, ceramic, and wood will not be discussed here. The "brass" candlesticks presented in this article, with only a few exceptions, have not been previously published and are in private collections or small house museums. Unless otherwise noted in the credits accompanying the figures, all photos here are by the authors. The stated purpose of this

article is to give a basic introduction to copper-alloy candlesticks within the previously mentioned parameters and to provide a bibliography of pioneer scholars of candlesticks for further study and research. Stick types discussed here are, in no way, all inclusive. This article is simply a primer. There are many variations of candlesticks, and we strongly urge our readers to consult the works in the bibliography and online for a more in-depth understanding of the subject.

To clarify a couple terms, pricket sticks are candlesticks with a spike, rather than a socket, to accommodate large candles commonly found in ecclesiastical (church, abbey, chapel) settings. A taperstick is a small/miniature candlestick designed to hold a wax taper or slim candle, used when diminished lighting is desired. Some also believe that they were used for melting sealing wax, and probably were.

Early Candlesticks, 1100 to Circa 1700

Any discussion of early "brass" candlesticks from post-Roman Britain and Europe must begin with the iconic Gloucester Candlestick, now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London (Figure 1, courtesy V&A #7649-1861). This circa 1104-13, ecclesiastical pricket stick, a masterpiece of the founder's art, stands a little over 23 1/4". It was cast using the lost wax method, then hand sculpted to enhance detail

before the parts were fire gilt.

Figure 1

According to one inscription on the stick, the Gloucester Candlestick was given to the Church of St. Peter of Gloucester (England) (now Gloucester Cathedral) in honor of Abbot Peter and "his gentle flock". Abbot Peter presided over St. Peter from 1104 to 1113. A later inscription indicates the stick was donated to the Church of Le Mans (France), likely shortly after a fire destroyed St. Peter Abby in 1122. For a full description of and extensive photographs illustrating the Gloucester Candlestick, we highly recommend the Victoria and Albert Website:
http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/g/gloucester-candlestick/

Such a grand piece of ecclesiastical art would not normally be encountered in a private collection. However, that is, indeed, where it landed after it disappeared from Le Mans Cathedral during the French Revolution. The Victoria and Albert acquired the Gloucester Candlestick at auction in Paris in 1861.

A considerably more modest "brass" pricket stick, dating contemporaneously with the Gloucester Candlestick, is shown in Figures 2a and b. This stick, which is 6 1/8" tall and a one-piece, solid casting, could have been used in a church, an abbey, a private chapel, or even in a domestic setting. It is likely a bronze alloy and from central Europe.

Figure 2a

Figure 2b

The Gloucester Candlestick is unique and an incredible survivor. While still quite rare, this type of small pricket stick is more common. A nearly identical example is illustrated in Figure 9 in Michaelis. This style persisted through the 12th century. Various similar pricket and socket sticks extended through the 14th century.

Beginning in the late 1300s, a form of candlestick, commonly known as "Gothic", emerged and persisted in several iterations throughout the

1400s. In Figure 3a, a central European "Gothic" stick is illustrated on the left, and an extremely rare English "Gothic" taperstick is on the right.

Figure 3a

Both date in the 15th century. The "Gothic" taperstick is illustrated in Figure 26 in Michaelis. Based on its light-yellow color and resistance to oxidation, the continental stick is probably a white bronze, while the English taperstick, with its dark patina, is likely a bronze alloy. The continental stick stands 8 1/8", and the English taperstick is 4 3/4" tall.

Prior to the late 18th century, all metals, precious and base, were valuable, and metal salvage and recycling was commonplace. This was equally true in the manufacture of copper-alloy candlesticks. Excess metal in candlestick bases, stems, drip pans, and sockets was removed by combinations of lathe turning, filing, scraping, and polishing. These various actions lightened the castings, provided finished surface details on the candlesticks, and recovered metal for reuse.

In Figure 3b, lathe-tool turning and chatter marks can be seen in the underside of the bases of the two "Gothic" sticks. Tool marks on the outside or show surfaces were removed by polishing.

The round holes or square apertures in the sockets of some early sticks were used for prying out the stubs of spent candles. Not all early sticks were fitted with this convenience.

Figure 3b

Toward the end of the 1400s and into the early 1500s, the stems of the "Gothic"-style of candlestick began to recede, and the ubiquitous capstan form emerged. This form continued in popularity in the British Isles and Europe into the 17th century, and in Spain into the early 18th century. Two central European examples, likely dating to the late 1500s or early 1600s, a candlestick and an extremely rare taperstick, are pictured in Figure 4a. The candlestick is 5" tall and the taperstick is only 2 1/2" tall.

Figure 4a

Capstan sticks were widely used in churches, abbeys, chapels, and homes, and many have survived. On the underside of the capstan candlestick (left in Figure 4b), fire gilding remains. The gilding on the outside of this stick has long since been removed by repeated polishing. Because of the gilding, this particular capstan candlestick probably was used in a church setting.

Figure 4b

In Spain, in addition to the above capstan-style sticks, a variant capstan form developed as seen in Figure 5. This stick stands at 5 1/8" and likely dates to the late 1500s or early 1600s.

Figure 5

The "Gothic" and capstan sticks are cast in two parts: socket with stem and base. The two pieces are joined with a screw and/or peened connection (see Figures 3b & 4b).

Concurrent with the capstan candlesticks more refined pricket sticks with baluster-turned stems were being produced throughout our study area in the 1500s. A near pair of bronze pricket sticks is shown in Figure 6a. These sticks are 8 1/2" tall. Note the similarity of these bases with those of the capstan sticks in Figure 4a.

It has been opined by others that candlesticks of this form were for ecclesiastical use, and indeed, similar examples are still in use in some early churches in our study area today. However, there is no evidence that they were not used in domestic settings as well.

Construction of these pricket sticks varies from the construction method employed in making the "Gothic" and capstan sticks. Here, the top drip pan is one casting, the baluster-turned shaft is a second casting, the lower drip pan is a third, and the base is a fourth. All the pieces are assembled on the cast-bronze extension of the pricket that is peened in the base to hold the candlestick together (Figure 6b). Lathe-tool turning and chatter marks, resulting from the thinning of the base and recovery of excess metal, are clearly visible in this figure.

Figure 6a

Figure 6b

By the mid-1500s, the French introduced a recognizable form of imposing, Renaissance candlesticks. The bronze example in Figure 7a, arguably the best of its type known, is 12 5/8" tall, has handsome casting details, and is highly engraved.

Figure 7a

This impressive candlestick was cast in three pieces: the socket with fluted stem, the plinth, and the base. An extension of the stem passes through the plinth and base and is peened in place as seen in Figure 7b.

This stick is published in Gentle, Feild, and Gentle, page 120.

Figure 7b

Additional examples of this French form are in Figure 8 (courtesy Belinda Gentle) and in Figure 9 (courtesy Musee´ Des Arts De´coratifs Paris).

Figure 8

The candlestick in Figure 8 is published in Gentle, Feild, and Gentle, page 120.

Figure 9

Extending through the same period that the French were producing their Renaissance candlesticks, other regions of western Europe and possibly

England were producing similar, but somewhat less extravagant, candlesticks as in Figure 10 (courtesy Bill Beck). This candlestick is 7" tall. As with the "Gothic" and capstan sticks, these were cast in two parts and joined together with a screw and/or a peened joint.

Figure 10

Toward the end of the 1500s and continuing throughout the 1600s, follow-on candlesticks to the pricket sticks in Figure 6a became quite popular. Two representative examples are presented in Figure 11a. These candlesticks are supported on paw-footed, triangular bases, were found in Spain, and most likely are of Spanish origin (Figure 11b).

Figure 11a

Figure 11b

Considerable construction information can be gleaned from the examination of these two sticks. The larger stick on the left is 16 3/4" tall, and the other stands 11 3/8". The components of both sticks are assembled on rods inserted through the bottom of their bases (Figures 11c & 11d) and secured at the top by a screwed-on socket. The assembly rod in the larger stick is copper alloy, whereas that in the smaller stick is wrought iron. Figure 11e shows the assembly sequence of the larger stick which is composed of six cast elements plus the rod. The smaller has five elements plus the rod. A hint as to the casting techniques of baluster stems can be seen in the small circle in Figure 11f. This will be addressed later.

Figure 11c

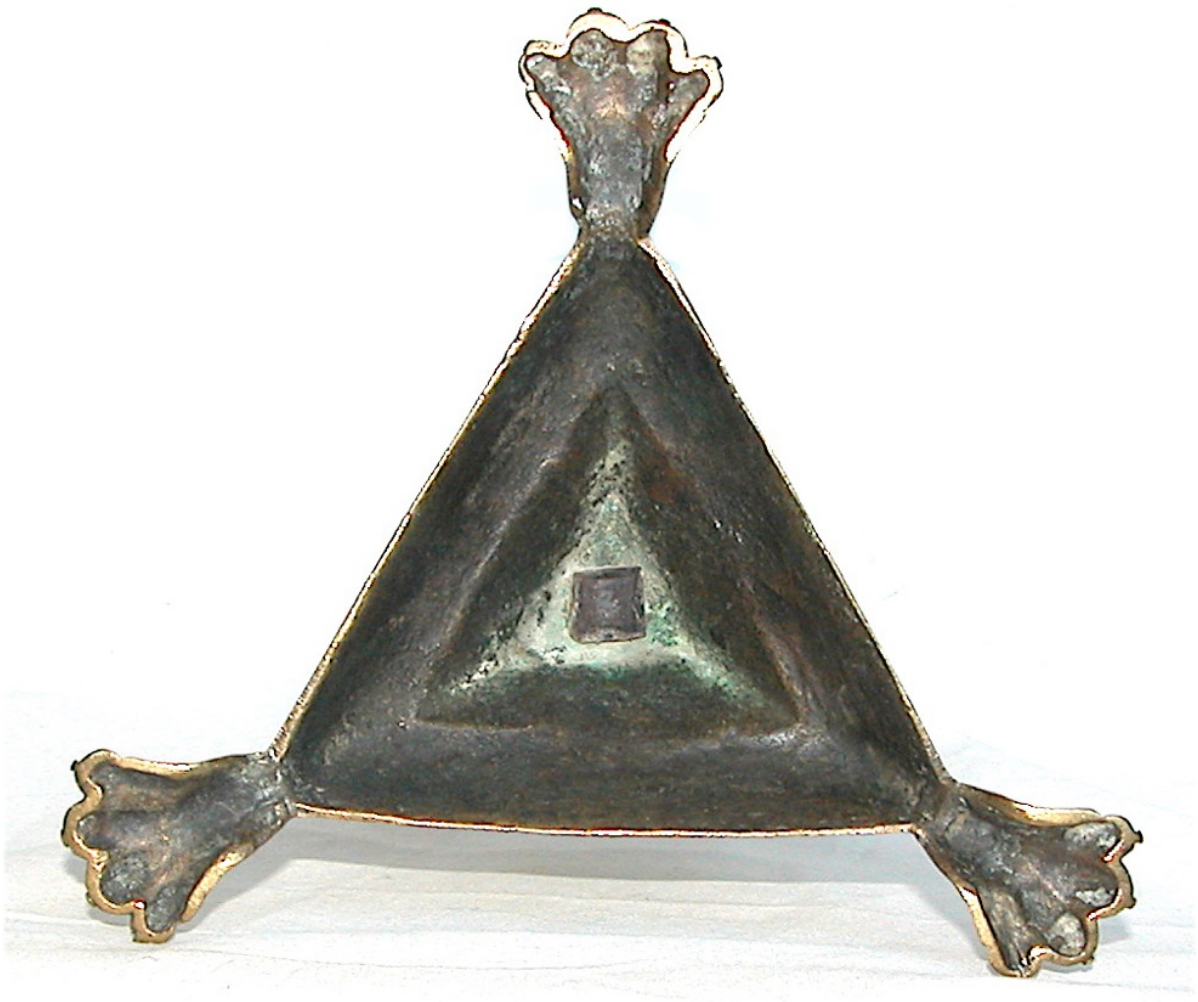

Figure 11d

Figure 11e

Figure 11f

A rare, closely related pair of bronze tapersticks, dating in the 1600s, is shown in Figure 12a. These sticks are 7 1/4" tall, stand on bun feet, and are assembled on wrought-iron rods (Figure 12b). This pair is likely of Spanish or possibly Dutch origin.

Figure 12a

Figure 12b

Another rather common 17th century form is the graceful bell-shaped candlestick. In Figure 13a, there is a Spanish candlestick on the left and a rare Dutch taperstick on the right. This form evolved from the capstan sticks. The Spanish example is 7" tall, and the taperstick is 3 1/2" tall. These sticks follow the same assembly technique as the capstan candlesticks. In this case, the socket and stem of the Spanish stick is threaded into the base (Figure 13b), whereas the taperstick has a peened connection between the stem and base.

Figure 13a

Figure 13b

A rare, 17th century, Dutch, sheet-"brass", bell-shaped taperstick, is shown in Figure 14a. The stem with socket is rolled and shaped, and the vertical seam is brazed shut. The bottom of the stem is closed with a brazed-in plug containing a "brass" bolt. The drip pan and base are shaped sheet "brass". The three sections are assembled and fastened with the bolt threaded into a sheet-"brass" nut riveted into the bottom of the base (Figure 14b). It is 4 3/8" tall.

Figure 14a

Figure 14b

An interesting story surrounds the mid-drip style of candlestick now known as Heemskerk. In 1596, Jacob van Heemskerk led a mercantile voyage from the Netherlands in an effort to find a northern passage to China. The fleet ran into trouble in the Arctic Ocean and was forced to spend the winter on the archipelago of Nova Zembla in the Arctic north of Russia. The voyage was abandoned, and a large cache of goods,

including pewter candlesticks, was left behind. This cache was found in the mid 1870s and returned to the Netherlands. In Figure 15a, Heemskerk is the style of stick associated with the candlestick on the left and the rare taperstick in the middle. These copper-alloy examples are usually assumed to be Dutch, but Michaelis and others believe they were native to both England and the Netherlands during the 17th century. The mid-drip candlestick on the right, however, is peculiar to England.

Figure 15a

The various socket, drip-pan, and stem components of the Heemskerk-type sticks are solid cast and threaded together with the lower baluster component of the stem inserted into the base and secured with a peened connection. In the English mid-drip stick on the right, the cast stem above the mid-drip pan has a rod extension that passes through the cast one-piece base/drip pan and is peened inside the base (Figure 15b).

Figure 15b

The Heemskerk stick on the left is 7 1/4" tall, and the taperstick stands 4 7/8". The English mid-drip is 6" tall. Heemskerk sticks are fairly common; whereas, English mid-drips are not. All tapersticks are rare.

Figure 16 is a Dutch, sheet-"brass" chamberstick dating to around 1675. It is repousse´ and punch decorated. The candle socket and handle are attached with copper rivets. The diameter of the pan is 7".

Figure 16

The Dutch, single-tier, late 17th century chandelier in Figure 17 has six branches. Its shaft is composed of seven, "brass" castings assembled on

a wrought-iron rod threaded into the drop and fastened with a wide, wrought-iron cotter pin at the top. The loop on the drop is sheet "brass". The arms, sockets, and drip pans are all castings. Obviously, the chandelier has been wired for modern use.

Figure 17

To complete the discussion of early candlesticks, we will now focus on a fairly common group of Spanish sticks dating mainly from the last quarter of the 17th century. A plentiful supply of these candlesticks has survived, and they can be found on the antiques market today in the range of $100.00, sometimes even less. Considering they are cultural artifacts that are decorative, functional, and over 300 years old, such a low value is difficult to fathom.

This group encompasses a variety of individual styles, several of which are shown here. In Figure 18a, a barley-twist candlestick with an octagonal base is illustrated with an extremely rare pair of baluster-stem tapersticks on octagonal bases. Note, until well into the 19th century, all tapersticks were quite rare, and for candlestick collectors today, these tapersticks never fall into the economical category. The sticks in this Spanish group are two-piece castings: socket with stem and base. They are joined with a threaded or peened connection (Figure 18b). The candlestick is 5" tall and has a threaded connection. The tapersticks are 3 1/8" tall and have peened connections.

Figure 18a

Figure 18b

Figure 18c shows evidence on how the stems of the Spanish sticks were cast. In the center of the barley-twist stem, observe the short linear mark.

Figure 18c

Also look back at the small circle in the stem of the candlestick in Figure 11f. The parts of these Spanish candlesticks were sand cast.

Very briefly, sand casting was done as follows:
Casting sand was packed tightly in half of a two-piece, sand-cast, mold frame. A wooden pattern of the candlestick part was then pressed half way into the sand, and the sand and pattern were dusted with fine charcoal so the two-piece mold could be separated. Next, casting sand was packed tightly in the other half of the mold over the pattern. The mold was then carefully separated, the pattern removed, and sprue channels were cut in the sand to allow molten metal to flow into the cavity left when the pattern was removed. The mold was then placed back together, and molten metal was poured into the sprue channels filling the cavity. After cooling, the mold frame was separated, and the solid cast part was removed for finishing. The sand mold was destroyed in the process. For each new part, the process had to be repeated.

As stated, this process produced a solid cast part, wasting valuable metal. The Spanish, candlestick founders devised a method for conserving metal. They formed a small slag plug around a scrap piece of metal and inserted it into the cavity left when the pattern was removed. This plug partially filled the cavity, reducing the amount of metal in the finished cast part. Evidence of this process can be seen on the surface of some of these candlesticks as an end of the piece of scrap metal in the

slag plug (see Figures 11f and 18c). Several more examples will be shown in subsequent figures.

The pair of candlesticks and the taperstick in Figure 19a are additional examples of the Spanish group. Here, the candlesticks are on square bases, have suppressed-ball stems, and are 5 1/8" tall. The rare taperstick has a baluster-turned stem, is on a round, domed base, and is only 3" tall.

Figure 19a

The stems and bases of these two candlesticks have threaded connections (Figure 19b). The connection in the taperstick is obscured by an old solder repair under the base. Note the lathe-turning marks under the bases in Figure 19b.

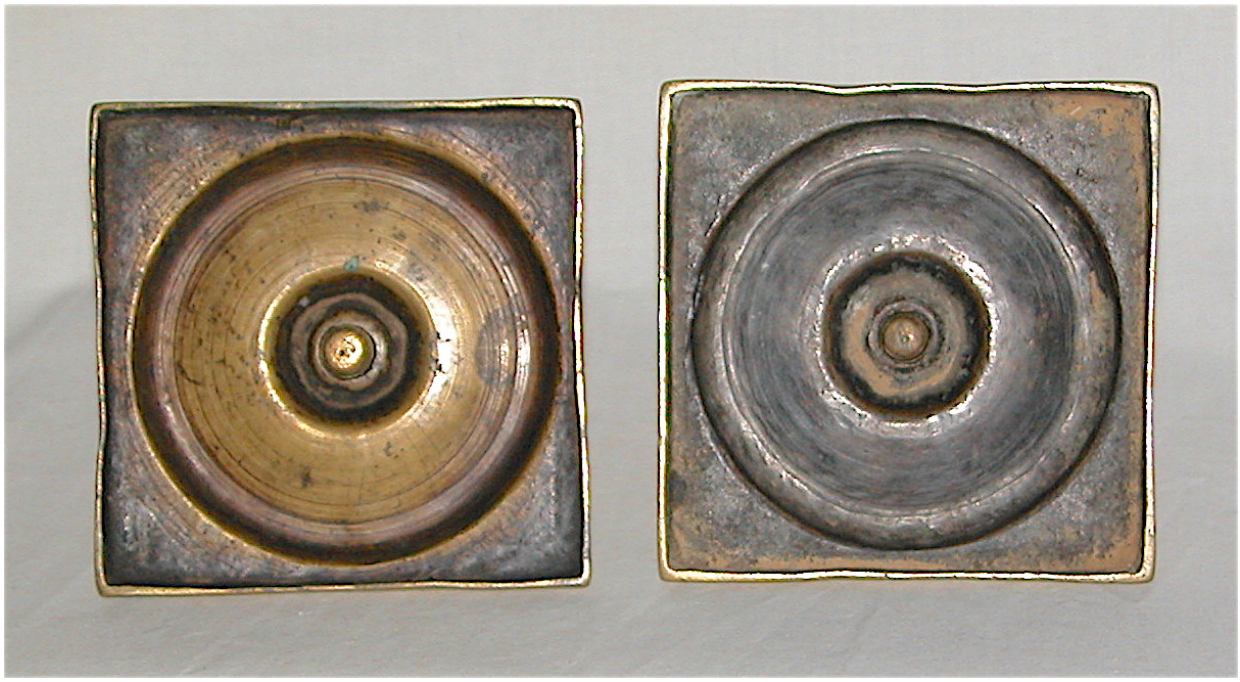

Figure 19b

In the center of Figure 19c, the round tip of the piece of scrap metal holding the slag plug can be seen along with an associated vertical crack in the casting. In Figure 19d, the scrap-metal tip in the taperstick is in the shape of a teardrop.

Figure 19c

Figure 19d

Yet another example from the Spanish group is the rare taperstick in Figure 20. This 3 3/4" tall stick is representative of the more common, larger candlesticks of this form. It is on a square base supported on stylized paw feet and has a baluster-turned stem. The stem and base are threaded together. Based on the weight of this taperstick, it is likely that the stem was cast solid rather than with a core.

Figure 20

A final, but somewhat unusual, candlestick example from the Spanish group is in Figure 21a. This 5 1/2" tall stick is on an octagonal base similar to those in Figure 18. Its stem, however, is different, hexagonal in cross section. In this particular case, the stem is cast solid, but there are numerous variations of this stem that are larger and cast with a slag core. As can be seen in Figure 21b, the stem and base have a threaded connection. Also, note here that the underside of the base has not been lathe turned to salvage metal.

Figure 21a

Figure 21b

Two chambersticks from the Spanish group, also dating from the late 17th century, are illustrated in Figure 22a. The example on the left has a cast pan with a diameter of 4 1/4", and its handle, also cast, is fastened

with rivets. The chamber stick on the right has a brazed-on, cast handle and a cast pan 4 1/2" in diameter.

Figure 22a

Both sockets are threaded into the pans (Figure 22b). Also in Figure 22b, the tradition of lathe turning for thinning and salvaging metal is clearly evident.

Figure 22b

In the center of Figure 22c, the long, narrow tip of the piece of scrap metal holding the slag plug in the socket of the chamberstick on the right can be seen clearly.

Figure 22c

Candlesticks of the 18th and Early 19th Centuries

Without doubt, early candlesticks were durable and continued in use in ecclesiastical and domestic settings even though some were considered out of style. As mentioned previously, a few early sticks are still in use in ancient churches in our study area today, hundreds of years after their manufacture. That said, fashions continued to change, and candlestick styles continued to change as well.

With the advent of the 18th century came advances in candlestick casting technologies. The stems with their integral sockets were cast in halves in the lengthwise dimension in cavities formed with wooden patterns relieved or hollowed on the inside surface. These cast halves were then brazed together to form complete, hollow stems ready for finishing. Evidence of this technique is visible on many candlesticks throughout the 18th and into the early 19th centuries. This evidence is in the form of parallel braze lines on opposite sides of a candlestick stem. Examples of these lines will be noted in some of the following figures.

Three English sticks from the first quarter of the 18th century, two candlesticks and a rare taperstick, are shown in Figure 23a. The stick on the left is 7 5/8" tall and is fitted with an ejector to facilitate easy removal of candle stubs. This feature was a replacement for the round holes or square apertures in the sockets of early sticks used for prying

out spent candles. The stick on the right stands 7 1/4", and the taperstick is 4 1/2" tall.

Figure 23a

The stems of all three of these sticks are fastened in place by peening (Figure 23b). Also, note in Figure 23b that the base of the candlestick on the left has been lathe turned to thin the base and to recover metal. The stick on the right and the taperstick (not shown in Figure 23b) both have marks left by a scraper used in removing excess metal. The process of

metal recovery carried over from the early candlesticks and continued throughout the 18th century.

Figure 23b

In Figure 23c, a crack at the top of the socket of the taperstick is visible. This crack is at the upper end of the braze line where the two halves of the stem did not come together completely. Following down the socket from the crack, the successful braze line can be seen.

Figure 23c

A pair of well-executed French candlesticks of the first quarter of the 18th century is presented in Figure 24a. These sticks are 9 3/8" tall, and their stems are cast in halves like their English counterparts. Here, these examples have removable drip pans or bobeches at the top of their sockets.

Figure 24a

Figure 24b shows that the stems of this pair of candlesticks are threaded into the bases and that the pair was originally silvered. The silver on external surfaces of these sticks has long-since been removed by excessive polishing. The remaining silver under the bases provides the evidence for their original appearance.

Figure 24b

Another pair of French candlesticks, also dating to the first quarter of the 18th century, has extensive, but tasteful, floral and scroll decorations chased into their surfaces (Figure 25). These sticks are in bronze, and their stems, too, were cast in halves. These candlesticks stand at 9 1/4", and their stems are threaded into the bases.

Figure 25

The single, bronze, French candlestick in Figure 26a is somewhat less elaborate than those in Figures 24a and 25. It is 8 7/8" tall and is constructed the same as the previously discussed French sticks. This stick is included here because part of its braze line is clear in the stem just above the base. This line can be seen in Figure 26b.

Figure 26a

Figure 26b

In England, as well as the rest of Europe, the flamboyant, free-flowing, asymmetrical, rococo style was in full swing by 1750. It was a reaction against the staid and sometimes boring earlier baroque style. This taste permeated all levels of human endeavor including architecture, music, paintings, fashion, firearms, and even decorative arts.

The two candlesticks in Figure 27a are beginning to embrace this style as seen in the visual movement of their decorative bases. The stick on

the left is 8" tall and that on the right stands at 9 3/8". In both cases, the stems are peened into the bases, and there is evidence of some metal salvaging under the bases.

Figure 27a

The stems of both sticks were cast in halves and brazed together. In Figure 27b, to the right of centerline of the stem, a faint, dark line can be seen running the length of the stem. This is the braze line. The braze line also can be followed across the top of the stick's socket in Figure 27c.

Figure 27b

Figure 27c

A pair of fully developed, English rococo candlesticks is shown in Figure 28 (courtesy Belinda Gentle). These sticks are published in Gentle and Feild, Figure 33 and in Gentle, Feild, and Gentle, page 145.

Figure 28

These candlesticks are 19" tall and weigh seven pounds each. Their bobeches are removable. In this black and white photo, these sticks appear to be in silver, and the high level of their decorative elements, execution, and finish would indicate silver. However, they are, indeed, made of "brass". Rupert Gentle believed they were commissioned for a private chapel.

The next two ormolu candlesticks raise the level of English rococo to its ultimate expression, rivalling contemporary French bronze dore´ examples. Briefly, ormolu refers to fire gilding of bronze. A gold-mercury amalgam is applied to a bronze object. The object is heated in a forge or kiln thus vaporizing the mercury, leaving a gold finish on the bronze object.

The naturalistic, English rococo, ormolu chamberstick in Figure 29, was cast, likely by the lost wax method, in four pieces: the base or pan, the socket, a small spacer below the socket, and the removable bobeche. The leaves, twigs, and caterpillars on the cast elements were then hand sculpted with a graver to enhance detail before the parts were fire gilt. The socket and spacer are secured to the base with a "brass" machine screw. This chamberstick is 3" tall. It is published in black and white in Gentle and Feild, Figure 63 and in Gentle, Feild, and Gentle, page 174.

Figure 29

The pair of English ormolu wall lights in Figure 30 epitomizes the free-flowing nature of the rococo movement. As with the above chamberstick, each of these wall lights was cast, likely by the lost wax method, in seven pieces: two sockets, two drip pans, two arms, and a baseplate. The cast elements were then hand sculpted with a graver to enhance detail before they were fire gilt and assembled into finished

wall lights. They are approximately 14 3/4" tall. This pair of wall lights is published in black and white in Gentle and Feild, Figures 102 & 102a and in Gentle, Feild, and Gentle, page 216.

Figure 30

By 1700, the English East India Company was ensconced in Canton, and England enjoyed extensive trade with China in the years following. Around 1750, all things Asian had become quite fashionable in England. Today, this period of influence is known as "Chinese Chippendale". One aspect of the Chinese influence was simple, uncluttered, straight lines, a reaction to the exuberant, free-flowing forms of the rococo. However,

the Chinese influence was not the only reaction to the rococo. A renewed interest in the clean, classical forms of Greek and Roman architecture was finding its way into British life. Today, this movement is known as the neoclassical period of decorative arts.

Both the Chinese and classical influences were incorporated into the pair of neoclassical, bronze candlesticks and a similar taperstick in Figure 31, all dating in the 1760s. The clean lines of the columns are classical, whereas the drapes on the bottoms of the candlestick shafts are a nod to the Chinese. The candlesticks are 11 1/4" tall, and the taperstick is 5". With all three of these sticks, the shafts are fastened to their bases with peened joints. The undersides of the candlestick bases show lathe turning for salvaging metal; however, the taperstick has no turning or scraping marks. The pair is fitted with removable bobeches.

Another pair of early neoclassical candlesticks, in this instance without the Chinese touches, is shown in Figure 32. Similar to the pair in Figure 31, these sticks are 11 1/4" tall, have removable bobeches, and have peened joints. However, they have no evidence under the bases of metal salvage.

Figure 31

Figure 32

As the 18th century progressed, so did the form of the neoclassical English candlestick. While still maintaining a classical, Greco-Roman, architectural flavor, they morphed from the more-pure style into a lighter variant with tapered columns for stems. The pair of candlesticks and the taperstick in Figure 33a are representative of this change. The candlesticks stand 9 5/8", and the bronze taperstick is 5 1/2" tall.

Figure 33a

Throughout the neoclassical period in England, candlestick stems continued to be cast in halves and brazed together. However, as the century came to a close, salvaging metal from candlestick bases began to wane somewhat, but not entirely. The sticks in Figure 33a are a case in point. The bases of the two candlesticks show no evidence of metal recovery (Figure 33b), but the underside of the taperstick base has been heavily scraped. Note in Figure 33b that these candlesticks are fitted with through-stem, push-rod ejectors for removing candle stubs.

Figure 33b

As in England, the French rococo gave way to the neoclassical during the reign of Louis XVI; however, that came to an abrupt end. From 1789 to 1799, the French Revolution put France in turmoil, saw the end of the monarchy, and drastically changed the lives of the French people. French rococo and early neoclassical bronze dore´ was superb, of the highest quality. Their candlesticks, similar to the English ormolu examples in Figures 29 & 30, were, and still are, highly prized. That said, the French Revolution put an end to the advancement of their decorative arts for at least a decade.

A fairly common, utilitarian, French candlestick, dating around 1800, is illustrated in Figure 34. This stick, which stands 7", is fitted with an ejector in its hollow-cast stem for removing candle stubs. The underside of the base has been lathe turned to thin the base and to recover metal.

Figure 34

As we have discussed, fashion trends, in candlesticks in our case, have wavered back and forth. The heavier, symmetrical, baroque forms gave way to the flowing, free-form, asymmetrical examples of the rococo. In turn, neoclassical forms with their clean lines were a reaction to the rococo. In the first quarter of the 19th century, the reaction trend continued as candlesticks moved back toward the heavier baroque form. An example is the English candlestick in Figure 35a. Here, the clean lines of the sticks in Figures 31 & 32 and the tapered columns of the sticks in Figure 33a have been replaced with a heavy, baluster-turned, baroque-style stem of at least 100 years earlier.

Figure 35a

Remaining evidence shows that this candlestick, now no thing of beauty, originally had a gold-wash finish. The stick is 8" tall, and its hollow-cast stem is fitted with a push-rod ejector for removing candle stubs (Figure 35b). By this period, no effort was made to salvage metal from underside of the base.

Figure 35b

In the late 18th century, the Spanish also were looking back to the 16th and 17th centuries for inspiration for their ecclesiastical candlesticks. Such a cast-"brass" example is shown in Figure 36. Its stem was cast in halves and its base in three parts. The parts were then brazed together. This pricket stick, assembled on a wrought rod, is 18" tall.

Figure 36

In the second quarter of the 19th century, English candlesticks of Queen Victoria's era devolved into the ubiquitous, mass-produced form seen in Figure 37a. Here, a brass candlestick, 7 1/4" tall, is flanked by two brass tapersticks, 4" tall. The candlestick was cast in two parts: the stem with socket and the base. The tapersticks are one-piece castings (Figure 37b). As mentioned early in this article, all tapersticks, through the first part of the 19th century, are rare. Tapersticks of the type in Figure 37a are the exception. They are nearly as plentiful as the candlesticks of the same form and can be found in most antique shops today.

Figure 37a

Figure 37b

Apparently, the English loved their 19th century candlestick designs, as candlesticks of this form were still in production, or being reproduced, after 1890. Figure 38a presents such a late pair. These brass candlesticks are marked on their bases England with the number Rd 223580.

These mass-produced candlesticks are 6" tall, and they were cast in two parts: stem with socket and the base. They are fitted with internal push-rod ejectors to facilitate the removal of candle stubs (Figure 37b).

The sole reason for including them in this article is to warn potential candlestick collectors that everything that looks old is not necessarily old. In this case, the sticks are clearly marked with country of origin. That is not always the case everywhere, so *caveat emptor*.

Figure 38a

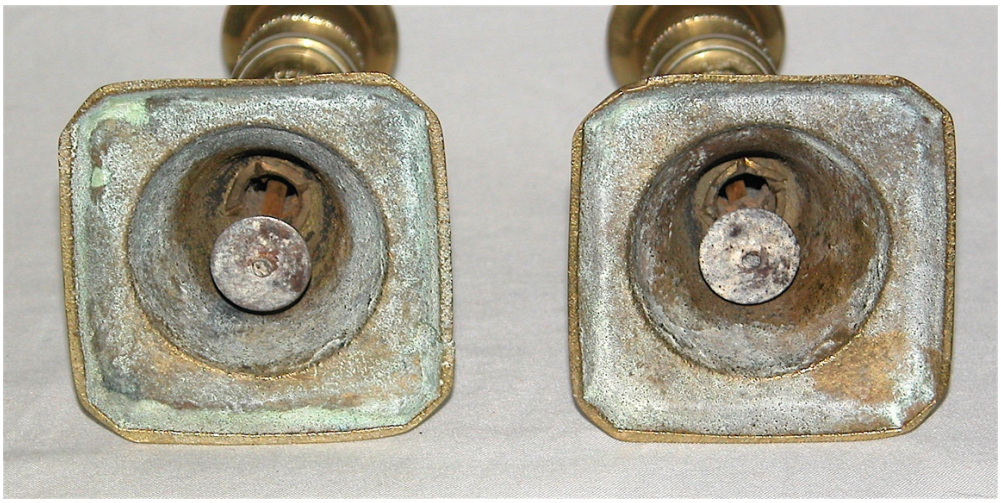

Figure 38b

Conclusion

For tens of thousands of years, humans have needed a source of light, other than from the sun, in their daily lives. In the beginning, our nomadic, hunter-gatherer ancestors would likely have depended upon their campfires for light as well as for heat, cooking, and protection from wild animals. As civilized humans settled into communities, other light sources evolved, including splints of wood, combustible wicks soaked in animal fat, and pottery lamps burning oils from melted animal fat. Some have opined that the Egyptians were the first to make candles, as we know them, from beeswax. Others attribute the development of candles to Asia. Certainly, candlesticks of some sort were in use well before the Middle Ages.

Our primer on copper-alloy candlesticks has taken us from 1100 to 1900. We have presented an assortment of basic types in an effort to assist our readers in understanding the development of candlesticks in central, western, and northern Europe and the British Isles. The stick types discussed here are, in no way, all inclusive. Again, this article is simply a primer. There are many variations of candlesticks, scores, if not hundreds. We strongly urge those with an interest to consult the works in the bibliography and online for a more in-depth understanding of the subject.

Bibliography

Butler, Joseph T., 1967, *Candleholders in America 1650-1900*: New York, Bonanza Books.

Gentle, Rupert, 1975, *G. Dallas Coons Candlestick Collection*: Richmond, VA, Valentine Museum.

Gentle, Rupert and Feild, Rachael, 1975, *English Domestic Brass 1680-1810 and the History of its Origins*: London, Paul Elek Books Ltd.

Gentle, Rupert, Feild, Rachael, and Gentle, Belinda, 1994, *Domestic Metalwork 1640-1820*: Woodbridge, Suffolk, England, Antique Collectors' Club.

Grove, John Robert, 1967, *Antique Brass Candlesticks 1450-1750*: Queen Anne, MD, John Robert Grove.

Lindsay, J. Seymour, 1970, *Iron and Brass Implements of the English House*: London, Alec Tiranti.

Michaelis, Ronald F., 1978, *Old Domestic Base-Metal Candlesticks*: Woodbridge, Suffolk, England, Antique Collectors' Club.

Schiffer, Peter, Nancy, and Herbert, 1978, *The Brass Book*: Exton, PA, Schiffer Publishing Limited.

Thomas, W. G. Mackay, 1954, *English Candlesticks before 1600*: London, Metropolitan Stationery Company Ltd.

Victoria and Albert Museum, London, http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/g/gloucester-candlestick/

Wills, Geoffrey, 1974, *Candlesticks*: New York, Clarkson N. Potter, Inc./Publisher.