

What is it?

We're enlisting the help of friends around the world to help us identify this mysterious object found in 1921 and kept at the Southwest Harbor Public Library in Southwest Harbor, Maine. Is it a military weapon or a device used in religious processions, an artifact that might prove the location of the 1613 Saint Sauveur mission? Or is it merely a decorative ornament from a nineteenth-century fence?

In the summer of 1613, a violent collision of European empires took place in the vicinity of Mount Desert Island in Maine. Within a few weeks of its founding, the French Jesuit mission of Saint Sauveur was destroyed by a force of Englishmen commanded by Samuel Argall, who sailed aboard the ship *Treasurer* from the Jamestown settlement. Several Frenchmen were killed, others driven away in a small boat, and the rest taken captive to Virginia. Among those killed was Gilbert du Thet, the first Jesuit missionary to die in North America.

An object found in 1921 has been represented as an artifact of the Saint Sauveur mission. Officials of the Southwest Harbor Public Library, especially Meredith Hutchins, its former director, have attempted to identify the true origins and purpose of the artifact since it was given to the library in 1946. Notes that accompanied the donation say, "This dagger, owned by Christopher Lawler, was unearthed by him at a depth of 18 inches, a greater depth than a plough would ever reach, when he was digging a hole in which to plant a tree on his grandfather's farm at Norwood's Cove in 1921."

Library officials have consulted with numerous experts and volunteers, who have variously hypothesized that the object is an ornamental device used in French Catholic religious ceremonies, or a type of spear called a halberd, or a pike-like weapon called a spontoon, or merely the finial to a Victorian-era fence post.

For more information on the object, including photographs and documentation, visit mdihistory.org/norwood-cove-object.

If you think you know the answer or want to suggest people or resources who can help us, please send an email to tim.garrity@mdihistory.org.



Norwood Cove Object. *Courtesy of the Southwest Harbor Public Library*