

Reproducing the Sconce from the Church in Eichede

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I saw the sconce shown on the left in figure 1 in a small country church in the village of Eichede in northern Germany. While the town is far away from the Mid-West, I like to think that perhaps the smith who made it immigrated to this country and if he did, he may well have settled in Indiana, in a small town not unlike that of Eichede.

When I first saw the sconce, I instinctively took a photo, as I was in the habit of photographing ironwork. This sconce is a far cry from the sophisticated work you see in and around churches in Germany. It is not even clear whether it is “old” as it is hard to date blacksmithing work. There is a good chance it was made fairly recently, may be during one of the depressions that followed the big wars of the last century. Some out-of-work smith may have decided that the church needed some light right there where he placed it. Many a times I thought that the sconce is too simple and was about to delete the photo. For some reason though, I could not get myself to do so. While the sconce is simple, it’s simple lines are what make it appealing to me, so much so that I decided to reproduce it. My reproduction is pictured on the right in figure 1.

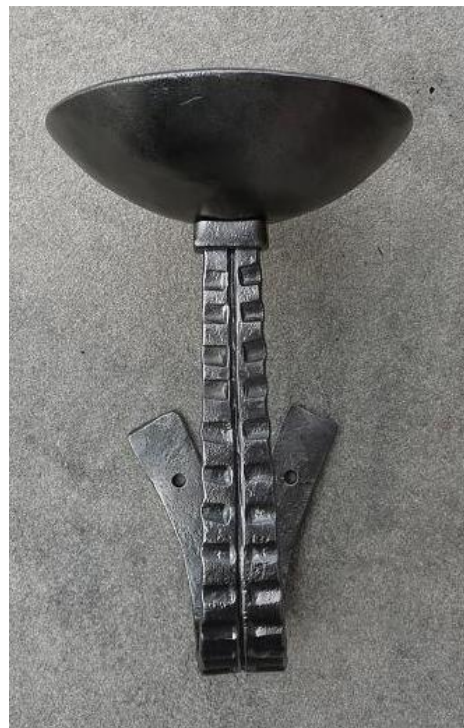


Figure 1: Original sconce on the left, my reproduction on the right

On these pages, I am describing how to make the sconce. It’s reproduction turned out to be more challenging than initially thought. I started with a 9” long and 1” by 3/8” piece of mild steel. In order to have enough material for the two feet, I upset one end and spread it into a fan shape with a cross peen hammer. The fan end ought to be about 2” wide and 1/8” thick by the time you are done with it. The other end is 5/8” wide and 1/4” thick. The width should change so that the piece

is fan shaped and the thickness should gradually change over the length of the piece. When you are done drawing out the piece, it should be about 11" long. Figure 2 shows the fan shaped blank after this stage of initial forming.



Figure 2: Fan shaped blank

Next, you will run a groove along the center of the blank. A used chisel with slightly rounded edges will work well. The notches on the two sides should be made with a punch that has roughly the same shape as the peen on a hammer. If you orient the narrow part of the blank towards the top, then each notch should run downwards from the edge of the blank towards the center. The notches should stay proud of the center groove. Start at the narrow edge, about 7/8" inches from the top and gradually increase the spacing. Stop with about 3" left on the fan side. For maximum consistency, it helps to mark the position of the notches before punching them. Figure 3 shows the billet in its current shape.



Figure 3: The decorated billet

Continue by creating a short 1/4" long by 1/4" round tenon at the narrow end, then turn your attention to the fan side. Split the groove for a length of about 2 1/2". Start on the decorated side and finish on the back side. This way, if your cut is not the nicest one you have ever made, the good side will be up front after you bent the billet. In any case, dress the inner edges of the split to remove any sharp edges. After dressing the feet, spread them apart and try to keep them straight. If you want to punch the holes for the screws, now is a good time to do so. If you want to drill them, you may wait until final assembly of the drip pan. You are now ready to bend the billet.

The feet need to be flat where they will be bolted against the wall. Aim for a fairly even bend. Notice that I bent it not as evenly as it could have been. See figure 4 for details on bend.

Ensure that the tenon end is at least an inch above the feet. Notice that the tenon end is straight for the last three to four inches.



Figure 4: Side view and $\frac{3}{4}$ view of bent scone stem

If you want to pickle the stem to remove the scale, now is a good time to do that. I wire brushed the stem with my angle grinder to give it a brushed steel look. Next, we will make a small collar that goes onto the tenon end of the scone, flush with the underside of the drip pan. It is made from a 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ " long piece of $\frac{1}{4}$ " by $\frac{1}{8}$ " mild steel. If you cut the piece on the hot cut hardy on opposing sides, the scarfs should have the right taper. The collar is a nice touch and serves to hide imperfections and the gap that may exist between the stem and the drip pan. To this end, I slightly rounded the top part of the collar, to follow the rounded underside of the drip pan.

The drip pan is made from $\frac{1}{8}$ " steel and is about 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ " inches in diameter. Using a rounding hammer and swedge block, bend it to the desired shape. If you do not have a swedge, a block of wood can be used. Drill or punch a $\frac{1}{4}$ " hole in the center. In order to ensure a tight fit between the collar and the drip pan, I slightly flattened the underside of the drip pan just around the hole. This is not necessary, if you did a good job rounding the collar. In order to ensure that the drip pan sits squarely on the stem, dry fit the pan to the stem to see whether additional filing is necessary. Before assembly, I removed the scale from the pan by the same process as outline above. Heat up the tenon, place the pan on it and form a rivet head. As you will only put fairly wide candles onto the scone, there is no need to make a spike to hold the candle.

Design considerations. There are several design options that you may want to consider. If you compare my reproduction to the original, you will see that mine is narrower and taller than the original. You need to ensure that you do not mix and match the measurements of the two versions. If you make the wider version, then you need to make a wider drip pan, the feet need to be longer and they need to be spread further apart. You also need to make a wider bend of the stem so as to accommodate the wider drip pan. Another design option is the spacing and orientation of the notches. In my version, the spacing is much tighter and not nearly as angled as in the original.