Napoleonic Prisoner of War Cutlery

Sold

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REF: 82378

Height: 16 cm (6.3")

Width: 2 cm (0.8")

Depth: 1 cm (0.4")

Description

A carved bone Knife and Fork likely to have been made by a French Napoleonic prisoner of war.

The two pieces, although of a relatively simple shape, are lifted by the fine cross hatching and scallop carving to the handles. The fork is a little more intricate than the knife with the maker carving a shaped neck and making use of the natural curve of the bone to shape the three tines.

A wide variety of items from intricate ship models and automatons to simple pipe tampers and apple corers were made by both French and American prisoners out of beef and mutton bone. It was plentiful in the kitchens and would be cleaned, boiled and bleached by less skilled prisoners for the use of those that were good with their hands.

Most prisons and depots held markets to sell the prisoners work and the money earnt allowed them to buy food and tools etc. As far as the prison authorities were concerned, it kept the prisoners busy and so easier to manage. We have had a comparable set of cutlery in the past that was made from marine ivory, pointing to it being sailor made. The bone used for this knife and fork set suggest it was made by a prisoner of war. Early 19th Century.

Knife's dimensions are given.

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