



Snuff-Grinder

Date

1800-1900

Medium

Wood, tin

Description

Skittle-shaped object in two parts which fit into each other. Made of turned wood. The inside bottom edge of the base, and the end of the top, both have notched tin plates. The tin plates are rubbed together to grind snuff, a kind of powdered tobacco. Snuff is finely ground tobacco that is inhaled. It was very popular in the 18th and 19th centuries. A small pinch or two is put onto the back of the hand and sniffed up through the nostrils. The expression 'toffee-nose' comes from the fact that habitual snuff takers had to keep their nostrils elevated so that the brown or toffee coloured mucus that the snuff produced wouldn't run down and spoil their clothes. It also explains why the handkerchief was such an important part of a man's wardrobe in the 18th and 19th centuries.