

Some Interesting Facts About Artifacts Unearthed At Brigadier General Edmund Munger's Home

This educational display case contains artifacts left behind by former residents of the property located at 9955 Yankee Street, referred to as The Edmund Munger House on pages 142-144 in the Centerville-Washington History publication "A Sense of Place". The importance of BG Munger to the history of Washington Township and Ohio cannot be overstated. In addition to his service during the War of 1812, he performed many local civic duties, and was a blacksmith by trade. His deeds and home are recognized by the Ohio Historical Marker located near the end of the driveway.

Several challenges arose while metal detecting the property. As with most historic homes in the area other people had metal detected the property before me. In addition, a 2007 aerial photograph shows that except for the yard immediately surrounding the house, the soil had been disturbed. Lastly, because the property was a place to party, the amount of litter in the soil was overwhelming. Despite these challenges, several artifacts which date from the 1820s to the 1980s were found. After cleaning, identifying, and preserving each artifact, I assembled the smaller ones into this display case which was then donated to Centerville-Washington History. In addition, larger artifacts including several pieces of a single tree possibly hand wrought by BG Munger himself, were also donated. For more details about the artifacts, ask to read the metal detecting survey report. Remember every artifact has a story to tell, if we're willing to listen.

Alan S. Price

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Harmonica reed: Harmonicas were invented in Europe in the 1820s. The absence of a makers mark on the fragment found makes narrowing the date of manufacture difficult. That said, given that a harmonica reed is found at nearly every property, attests to the staying power this small but mighty musical instrument has.

1919 Wheat Penny: One sure sign that the property had been detected before my arrival was the scarcity of coins found, and of those found none dated to the 1800s. This 1919 Wheat Penny was dug about 150 feet west-northwest of the home, where in 1949 a vegetable garden was grown.

Cast iron furniture piece: This shape of the piece suggests it was part of a table leg or maybe a stove. The channel in the center with the shape of an ornate scroll is characteristic of cast iron furniture dating to the mid-late 1800s.

14K Gold Girl's Signet Ring: When I find jewelry dating from the 1940s on, an effort is made to return it to the original owner. Because this 14K gold ring appeared in a 1980-81 catalog I thought the chances of returning it were good. That is before I discovered that the last family who owned the property sold it to Dayton Power and Light in 1959. After that, it is unclear if the home was rented. Even if it was it is unlikely a list of renters was kept, so there is no way to contact them now to see if one of them lost the ring. Thus the ring with the initials "TRC" on the inside of the band takes the prize for the youngest artifact in the display case.

Two-piece Domed Button: Upon brushing away the dirt from this dainty button – I became excited about the possibility of finding a small artifact that had been manufactured during BG Munger’s lifetime. Much to my chagrin, upon further inspection the body was determined to be PLASTIC which likely dates it to the 20th century.

R.H. Ingersoll & Bro. Pocket Watch Parts: Four pocket watch parts were uncovered where a massive tree once stood in the front yard. One of the two parts appearing in the display case lists patent dates in the 1890s, as well as the company R.H. Ingersoll & Bro. Interestingly enough, Ingersoll was in the *mail-order* business that sold the watches, and did not manufacture them at the start. Rather, in 1892 R.H. placed an order with the Waterbury Clock Company to purchase 1,000 “clock-watches” at a cost of \$0.85 apiece to be offered in the Ingersoll mail-order catalog at a price of \$1.00. They were a huge success which led to the phrase “The Watch That Made The Dollar Famous”. The Ingersoll Co. is credited with perfecting the mail-order & retail business. By 1901 they advertised that their watches were sold for \$1.00 by 10,000 dealers across the USA and Canada. Unfortunately in 1921 during the post WWI recession, Ingersoll declared bankruptcy and in 1922 was purchased by the Waterbury Watch Company.

G# Pump Organ Reed: In 1827 BG Munger leased land to the school board for School House #7. Maps from 1857 and 1869 show the school lot bordering Yankee Street to the southeast of the home. Although the school lot was purchased in 1924 and the school house disappeared shortly thereafter, on the 1938 aerial photograph, there is evidence of either stressed vegetation and/or debris from the demolition at this location. The widening of Yankee Street and building of the berm that runs parallel to the street since then made the likelihood of finding any historically significant artifacts related to the school remote. The exception *may* be this pump organ reed that probably dates from 1880 to 1920.

Door Knob: The plain iron door knob appearing in the display case is the one artifact that was likely used on the home while BG Munger lived there. A professional historian has stated they are pretty confident that the knob dates as early as 1830. It is the next best thing to BG Munger himself reaching out to you. According to “A Sense of Place” the interior of the home was extensively remodeled from the late 1800s to early 1900s. During this period, door knobs were usually made of brass and more ornate. Comparing this door knob to those currently used on the interior and exterior of the home – the differences are readily apparent.

Possible Vehicle Part: This curious oddity has defied positive identification since being unearthed. My initial guess was that it was some a door or window jamb. Another person guessed it was a clip yoke from a horse drawn wagon or carriage. Yet another thought it a wagon wheel brake block. A magnet was used to confirm there is little to no iron content. So that combined with the brittleness along some of the edges and that it feels heavier than expected, leads me to think it is made of “pot” metal and unlikely to stand up to the wear/tear wagon hardware. “Pot” metal came into existence in the early 1920s at U.S. automobile factories. Since this is well past the heyday of wagons, it still makes me wonder if it is a vehicle or window jamb, especially with the two holes to accommodate some hefty bolts. A prize awaits anyone who can show proof of identity!