

## Some Interesting Facts about the Display Case Relics

This educational display case contains relics left behind by early people who occupied some of the stone structures for which the city of Centerville and Washington Township are known. Individual relics described below, which date from the early 1800s to the mid-1960s, were unearthed by Alan Price using his metal detector. After cleaning, identifying, and preserving each relic, he assembled them into this display case which was then donated to Centerville-Washington History on the occasion of Centerville's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of incorporation in 2018 so that museum visitors and patrons can learn more about the local history. As area residents celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, they can draw upon the early pioneer spirit to help them build their future. Remember every relic has a story to tell, if we're willing to listen.

Alan S. Price

June 6, 2018

**1. Glass & Aluminum Button:** Clear glass buttons with metal backs first appeared in the late 1800s during the Victorian era. *Few people today realize that when aluminum was first manufactured during this time that it was more valuable than gold or silver.* Unfortunately, this button although similar to those in the 1800s, was likely manufactured after the end of W.W. II and before 1965. By the mid-1960s, plastic buttons became more popular as they were more durable in automatic washing machines.

**2. Keyhole Escutcheon:** This rather common looking rectangular-shaped keyhole escutcheon was the first find at 6320 Mad River Road. Dating it is difficult – but due to its primitive appearance it was most likely manufactured in the 1800s.

**3. Chrysler "The Forward Look" Token:** "The Forward Look" token from the Chrysler Corporation was part of a marketing campaign starting with the 1955 model year. The reverse side includes brands such as the now defunct Desoto.

**4. Harmonica Reed Plate:** Finding reed plates is fairly common when metal detecting around old homesteads. What sets this reed plate, found at 650 East Alex Bell Road, apart from all others found is that it is much wider. No manufacturer's name or mark could be found to help identify or date it – but it is still worthy of being included in the display case.

**5. Conoidal Bullet:** It is difficult to precisely date this bullet, but it most likely was made in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. During this period bullet technology improved rapidly. Around the 1830s-40s some Europeans were developing cone-shaped conoidal bullets. In 1842 the U.S. Army began experimenting with conoidal bullets. During the Civil War, variations of conoidal bullets along with round balls were commonly used. This bullet, found at 6320 Mad River Road, is believed to be hand-smelted as it has a non-circular base and thus was never intended to fit in a cartridge. Given that the tip is not deformed like other bullets that have struck an object, this bullet was probably never fired.

**6. Black Onyx Cufflink:** This sterling silver and black onyx cufflink, found at 23 South Main Street, was made in Mexico. Because two-thirds of the maker's mark has been worn off, it is not possible to precisely identify the manufacturer – but it could be Plateria FarFan of Mexico City. Likewise, dating is difficult. After examining hundreds of photos, not one match was made; however, the modernistic appearance suggests the 1930s-50s.

**7. Kutmaster(?) Pocket Knife:** With the 2 blades rusted shut and together it is not possible to verify the manufacturer of this pocket knife. Comparing it to others on the internet, it shares more traits with the Kutmaster brand than any other. First, the stag handle has coarse indentations. Second, the rivets are at both tips. Third, is the general shape. While it is not possible to date this knife, Kutmaster has been around since 1910. Therefore if the knife was manufactured by Kutmaster, it dates to 1910 or later.

**8. "Beauties of China" Pottery Sherd:** Identification of this sherd was made possible by the name of the pattern and manufacturer appearing on the reverse side. This example of 'flow blue' ware was made by Mellor, Venables & Co sometime between 1834 and 1851. Many thanks to the homeowner at 23 Maple who found this sherd while tending their garden.

**9. Fence Post Finial(?):** The poor condition inhibits positive identification of this relic. One possibility is that it is a fence post finial made by the original owner, Elisha Jones, who worked as a blacksmith in a shop located next to the house, partially on Lots 3 and 4.

**10. Griswold Stove Damper Fragment:** The Griswold name is legendary as a manufacturer of cast iron stoves and cookware. This fragment, which looks just like a piece of iron junk, was identified because a small portion of the company logo appears on it. Because the logo changed every 10-20 years, it made it possible to date the fragment to the 1920s-30s.

**11. Barclay Cowboy Figure:** This lead toy was found at 650 East Alex Bell Road. Retaining some of its original orange paint made it possible to identify the manufacturer as the Barclay Company who made this figure sometime between 1932 and 1941. Lead toys were very popular in the 1930s-40s and could be purchased at a local dime store such as Woolworths. However, due to rising popularity of using plastic in toys, Barclay ceased operations in 1971. Neither the property owners nor the son of the previous owner recognized it. Taking its place in the display case, it is an orphan no more.

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This educational display case contains relics left behind by early people who occupied some of the stone structures for which the city of Centerville and Washington Township are known. Individual relics described below, which date from the dawn of time to 1943, were unearthed by Alan Price using his metal detector. After cleaning, identifying, and preserving each relic, he assembled them into this display case which was then donated to Centerville-Washington History on the occasion of Centerville's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of incorporation in 2018 so that museum visitors and patrons can learn more about the local history. As area residents celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, they can draw upon the early pioneer spirit to help them build their future. Remember every relic has a story to tell, if we're willing to listen.

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**1. "Dot and Grass" Pottery Sherd:** This Dot and Grass pattern sherd was found at the Asahel Wright Museum near the parking lot curb buried approximately 8" deep. Dating to the 1820s-1830s, it is no small wonder it survived all the excavation associated with the nearby parking lot.

**2. Suspender Buckle:** Found bent in half, the construction of this brass suspender buckle suggests it was manufactured sometime between 1850 and 1880. Unfortunately the absence of a maker's mark or patent date prevents further identification. Despite risk of breakage, the buckle was gently unfolded into its present shape. Fortunately only one small crack appeared in the metal. It is amazing that both fragile prongs remain intact – which is remarkable given that many from that era are found broken off. Even more remarkable is that they move – just like when the buckle was being worn.

**3. 1943 Walking Liberty Half Dollar:** This impressive coin was found at 8820 Sugar Creek Point. Like all 90% silver U.S. coins, it came out of the ground as silver colored as the day it went in. Absolutely stunning!

**4. Syrup Bottle Lid:** When exposing the corner of this lid in the back yard of the Walton House Museum, it appeared to be another beverage can. However, upon holding it, its weight felt heavier than aluminum or steel, and is likely made of pewter which was and still is used for coffee pots and other types of hollowware. The bird-shape finial and etched rows of vertical parallel lines suggest fine craftsmanship and make it possible to match this lid with one appearing on a syrup bottle with a patent date of July 16, 1872. When found, the lid was in terrible condition with a lot of lime deposits fused into the surface of the pewter. Many hours were spent trying different gentle cleaning methods as not to cause further damage. Ultimately a thin screwdriver (1/32" wide) was used to scrape away most of the stubborn lime deposits. While not entirely clean the decision was made to go ahead and preserve the remaining metal to prevent further corrosion.

**5. Manoil WWI Soldier:** This lead soldier was manufactured by the Manoil Company sometime between 1935 and 1941. Inexpensive lead toys like this were very popular in the 1930s-40s and could be purchased at a local dime store such as Woolworths. Neither the property owners nor the son of the previous owner recognized it. Taking its place in the display case, it is an orphan no more.

**6. Sash Brooch:** This delicate brass sash brooch was found 14" deep in the back yard of 89 North Main Street where a farm lane once connected the rear of the stone house to Normandy Lane. The C-catch on the reverse side makes it possible to date the brooch to between 1850 and 1910. C-catches were not very secure and by 1890 jewelers began experimenting with ways to more securely hold the pin in the catch – thus creating early safety catches. The dark patina on much of the surface is nature's way to protect the brass from further corrosion. In areas where the patina has come off, the golden color shows how the brooch looked when being worn over a century ago.

**7. Tombac Button:** This plain looking button, found in the back yard of the Walton House Museum, is most likely the oldest *manmade* relic in the display case. It is possible to date it from the 1700s to early 1800s based on the "cone w/ wire eye" shank. By the late 1830s, single piece buttons like this were being replaced in favor of the two-piece variety. Because it was common to re-use buttons from one garment to another through the mid-1900s, it is not possible to determine when this button was lost. Given its relatively small  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch size it was likely used as a shirt or blouse button.

**8. Coal:** Coal, which was formed from swampy forests that lived during the Carboniferous Period (359.2 to 299 million years ago), is the second oldest and arguably the most important relic in the display case. In addition to heating area homes up to the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it fueled the Industrial Revolution in the United States and Western Europe. Due to the abundance of coal in eastern Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia, the cities of Cleveland and Pittsburg became huge steel producing centers.

**9. High-quality Flint:** Both Indians and early pioneers to the area prized high-quality flint. Although this piece may have been too small for Indians to make arrowheads and tools, it is a good size to fashion a flint used in a flintlock rifle. Upon close examination there are 2 small conchoidal depressions. Look closely at the lower right corner to see one. Because flint is hard, these depressions usually do not occur naturally. More likely they are the result of percussion striking. High-quality flint is not native to western Ohio nor was it carried here by glaciers. Rather it was transported here by man.

**10. Lead:** As an element in the Periodic Table, lead wins the prize for being the oldest relic in the display case. Although it has been around since the dawn of time, the first known use of lead by humans dates to about 7,000 BCE in the Middle East. Prior to the discovery that lead is toxic to humans in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it had many uses. For example in plumbing and the manufacture of pewter plates, cooking pots and cups. In fact, the syrup bottle lid in this display case probably contains a small amount of lead. The flattened surface of this piece suggests it may have once been used next to a brick perhaps to prevent rain from entering the home. Although lead has been phased out of many of its previous uses, it remains the metal of choice for bullets, the storage of highly acidic substances (i.e. lead-acid storage batteries found in automobiles), and shield against different types of radiation (i.e. those found in X-ray machines and nuclear reactors).