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Whazup DOG?



Only the First Ever Organized Colonial Relic Hunt!



Article by Teresa Harris

Photos by Charlie Harris

Pennsylvania weather in March is unpredictable at best, and this year was no exception for the first annual "Top Dog" Colonial Relic

the participants were told more about the site that they would be hunting, which only increased their excitement. The anxious hunters likely drifted off to



This late 1700's house stood intact on the Ulmer property until the mid 1980's, when a careless tenant let the potbelly stove overheat, burning the structure beyond repair.



Ruins of yet another 1700's structure located elsewhere on the property. Once again, a 20th century fire was the culprit that brought the historic building to the ground.

Competition Hunt, which was slated to take place in Bucks County. The event organizers were on pins and needles as every weather forecast predicted a different outcome for hunt day. A major snow storm had hit the region only a week earlier, and there were still traces of snow on the ground just the day before the hunt.

The event got underway Thursday afternoon with seminars, door prizes, presentations and the hunt pre-meeting. Here



Two detectorists fight the underbrush, hoping to recover a little bit of America's Colonial past at the 2007 Top Dog Organized Hunt.

sleep that night with visions of Reales, coppers, George Washington buttons and other colonial goodies. There were no sugarplums in these sleeping heads, but there were plenty of dreams of Colonial artifacts.

Friday dawned cool and overcast as the hunters took to the field for an orientation meeting and brief synopsis of the local history presented by landowner Gerald Ulmers daughter, Claudia Macik. The participants represented a cross section



With no shortage of signals to dig, Jeff Beaty gets an early start only seconds after the 2007 Top Dog relic hunt officially began.



Fresh from the ground, the reverse of this 1849 Large Cent makes it clear there is a lot of detail left. It was found by Dennis Bjorklund.

of the USA, with hunters from across the nation. Even England was represented!

Despite the eagerness to begin hunting evident on the participant's faces, they stood at attention in the sodden field, hanging on to Claudia's every word. Soon enough the hunters were off, and finds started to come in almost at once, with a well worn early 1700's half Reale being dug by Duard Fox just feet from the starting point. Almost in the same hole was a beautiful early flower button in very nice shape.

By 11:30 A.M. the skies had opened up, but despite the rain, spirits stayed high, as hunters slogged through the mud and mini lakes created by the now steady rain. A good supply of early artifacts helped make the



Little did Mike Harvey know that he had made the find of the lifetime when this picture was taken. It was only later at the judging that he was instructed to sit down for the news: It was a rare 1694 Elephant Token, given to prospective settlers to entice them to come to the New World. Oh, the token's book value? A mere \$25,000.

miserable conditions much more tolerable.

One of the oldest finds was a token with the date "1694" plainly readable on the face, found by Mike Harvey. Later identification of this find as a very rare New England Elephant token was the key to the finders high place in the final standings. But even without the trophy or cash prize, this token was truly the find of a lifetime.

A quantity of interesting and historical finds were recorded from the first day of the hunt, including a number of early King George and state coppers and Large Cents, the snake portion of a snake buckle, buttons, and the occasional newer coins, such as Indian-head cents and a few silver dimes. There were a number of later silver coins found, but as the cut-off date for coins to be eligible in the total point tally was 1909, they weren't turned



Engraved "JW" on the smoothed side of an 1854 quarter, this Love Token was dug by Mike Harvey. Such jewelry made from coins were very popular during the mid 1800's. It was judged the 3rd best find of the hunt.

in for scoring.

Saturday morning turned out to be quite a bit nicer than Friday, despite the weatherman's prediction of even more rain. Sunny skies greeted the participants as they made their way onto the fields once again to do battle with the relic gods.

Saturday's hunt produced a nice mix of finds, as hunters strolled about the 500+ acres of corn field, pasture and hay fields. Cooks Creek also wound its way along the southern edge of the property, providing a boundary for the hunters, as well as a trail and water source for the inhabitants who had originally lost the goodies that the present day hunters were finding.

One of the better finds of the day was a very nice 1854 seated liberty quarter that had been made into a love token, found by Mike Harvey. Many "junk" iron objects were found as well, such as horseshoes and plow points, testament to the many years of farming on the property. These were later

hauled away by the bucketful by the event organizer, an added bonus for the property owner.

The atmosphere at the Awards Banquet that night was summed up with a single word uttered by Jim Good (one of the guest speakers). "Magical." We all enjoyed a fine home cooked meal provided by the ladies auxiliary in the local fire hall in Riegelsville Pennsylvania, and after we had satisfied our appetites, the awards and recognitions began to flow.

Joe Kenas had built a "treasure chest" and suggested the idea of hunters donating treasures to be put into it. Now, that was a beautiful idea! Since Thursday afternoon at registration, the chest had been building with donations. I'm talking about a treasure trove of tokens, rings, jewelry, old coins, pocket knives, cash, and gold coins... it was a quantity of treasure beyond anything that I've seen before. If you donated a treasure to be included, you received a string of tickets, increasing the chances for winning.

Troy Galloway was the lucky winner of the treasure chest. "Magical" was indeed the correct word for the evening, as this had to be the best treasure chest ever given away at a hunt. Other prizes given away were several metal detectors, a one-pound silver ingot,



Jim Good recovered this fancy sash buckle. It probably dates to the mid 1850's.



This button, dug by Dennis Bjorklund, sports an unusual "flower" design in its face.



Even though it dated from the early 1900's, this shotgun, found by Jim Spieles, created a lot of stir at the hunt. The reason is obvious: 6" of one of the barrels has exploded, probably from trying to fire the weapon when clogged with mud.



Although he turned away from the camera to avoid recognition by the paparazzi, we're pretty sure that this is *American Digger's* own Charlie Harris getting a little hunting time in between the judging and the monsoon rains. Charlie was one of the distinguished panel of judges for the competition. Although they were allowed to hunt, the judges were ineligible for competition.

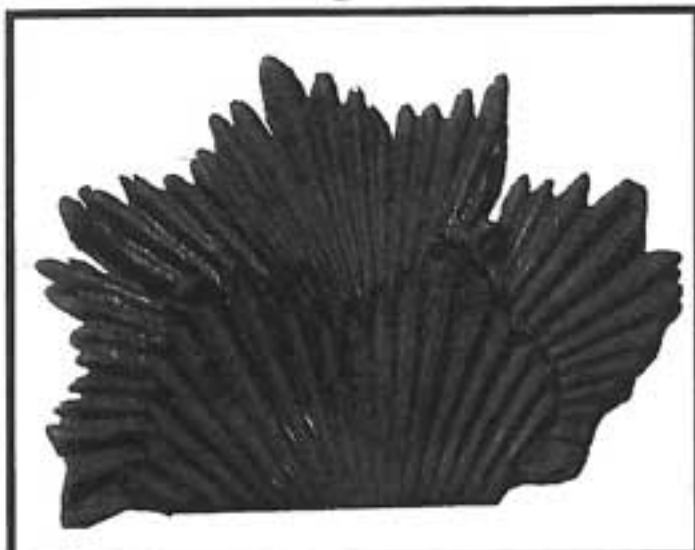
Photo by Teresa Harris



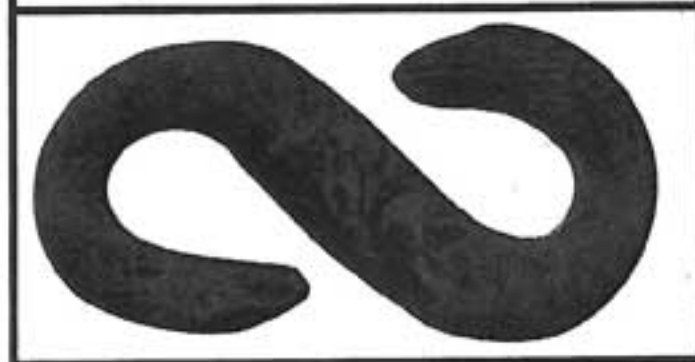
Brass crocket bells, such as this one found by Ed Burke, were used during the 1700's for both Indian trade and also as livestock bells.



For those who like old coins, this hunt was a dream come true for some lucky diggers. The 1849 large cent (shown on the left above) was dug by Dennis Bjorklund, while the other coin is a 1786 Georgius III Rex Hibernian copper. It was found by Mark Gerrick.



As expected, relatively few military items were found, but there were exceptions. The 1830-40's Shako hat plate (above) was dug by Jim Good, while shown below is a snake buckle (only the brass snake remains) found by Mike Harvey. It likely dates to the same era as the hat plate.



Years ago, Gerald Ulmer, the farm's owner, asked one of his employees to gather up a load of stones to be used for an upcoming farm project. Later, while they were sorting the stones for use, Ulmer noticed one rather odd looking large piece and inspected it closer. Engraved upon it was the name "Tyrone" and "D 6." Mr. Ulmer then realized that it was a slave's headstone. As many rocks were gathered from all over the farm, the exact location of the grave was never found despite intensive efforts. The headstone is now kept in a place of honor inside the Ulmer house. After a life of slavery and servitude, "Tyrone," who who died in 1806 (thus the D 6), at long last achieved recognition and equality, thanks to the modern day Ulmer family.

a five-dollar gold piece, three GPS units, two digital cameras, four electronic pin-pointers, and many other items, all designed to make almost any serious relic hunter very happy indeed!

I witnessed this wonderful group of hunters as they cheered each other on, shouting "Congratulations" as their fellow hunters won prize after prize. In a spur-of-the-moment decision the group agreed to give Kyle, the 5-year old grandson of Mr. Ulmer, the last metal detector up for grabs for him and his dad to enjoy in his growing-up years on that beautiful farm. After all, this hunt took place in the same historic county that made the Durham Canal Boats that George Washington



Yet another Colonial coin was this New Jersey penny. Dated 1786, it has "E Pluribus Unum" surrounding a shield. Mark Gerrick was the digger.

used to cross the Delaware River that cold Christmas Eve (which is still re-enacted each year.) No telling what Kyle will turn up here over the years! He's certainly in the right location.

It was now time to announce the Top Dog winners, both in Best Finds and Overall Points. While the top finishers are shown here on these pages, to list all the winners would be a daunting task. Besides, there were no real losers at this event.

Suffice it to say, there were a lot of smiles that night at the awards ceremony. The friendships, camaraderie, and closeness that developed within this hunt is



After the points were tallied, there was little doubt as to who was the "Top Dog" at this hunt. A very happy First Place winner Mike Harvey is shown posing with his trophy.

It's hoped that this will be an annual event, and plans are already being made for the 2008 Top Dog Hunt.

something I'll not soon forget. If all folks got along this good, the world would be a much happier place.

But all good things must come to an end, and before long the participants were saying their good-byes and heading home. Still, the memories of digging at this historical Colonial site and the new friends that were made will linger.

It's hoped that this will be an annual event, and plans are already being made for the 2008 Top Dog Hunt. Be sure to check out the contact information shown at the end of this article. Who knows? You might be next year's Top Dog!



2007 Top Dog Results

Best Finds:

- 1st: 1694 Elephant Token Found By Mike Harvey, AL (1880 \$10.00 gold coin prize)
- 2nd: 1830-40's Shako Hat Plate Found By Jim Good, VA (1886-S \$5.00 gold coin prize)
- 3rd: 1854 Seated Liberty Love Token Found By Mike Harvey, AL (1886-\$5.00 gold coin prize)
- 4th: 1717 King George Copper Found By Mark Gerrick, PA (1907-D \$5.00 gold coin prize)
- 5th: Early 1700's silver ½ Reale Found By Tony Banas, OH (1787 gold escudo prize)

Overall Points Winners:

- 1st Mike Harvey, AL (Prize: \$1200, Top Dog "Grand Master" trophy)
- 2nd Mike Gerrick, PA (Prize: \$600, trophy)
- 3rd Mark Sciance, NJ (Prize: \$400, trophy)

Prize Tokens

- 1st Dean Heisey, OH (1903 \$5.00 gold coin prize)
- 2nd Ann Falk, IN (1-pound silver ingot prize)

For information on participating in future Top Dog Hunts, visit [/www.mytreasurespot.com/forums/list.php?18](http://www.mytreasurespot.com/forums/list.php?18)

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