

# Seventh annual treasure hunt to be Oct. 18, 19

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Treasure hunting is usually a lonesome hobby.

Those people you see in parks and playgrounds, listening for a beep from the metal detector they hold just inches above the ground, usually work alone, or in pairs.

But in Jefferson County, treasure hunters have a way of meeting not only their local brethren, but those from all over the nation.

Called the Warrior Basin Treasure Hunters Association, the organization holds an annual "hunt" which attracts people from all over the nation, and Canada, too.

This year's Seventh Annual Deep South Treasure Hunt will be held Oct. 18 and 19 at Brookside Park. According to Andy Bobyarchick, club president, about 200 hunters will be scanning through the park for the third straight year.

What are the chances of finding something in a park used so often? Pretty good, because club members will "plant" treasure to be found, including a U.S. \$5 gold coin and silver coins with a face value of nearly \$100, worth 15 times that now.

THE HUNT IS billed by one of the treasure-hunting magazines as the last major hunt of the year. According to John Proctor, it will attract a lot of hunters from the North who are moving South for the winter.

Proctor said "It's surprising. They (the magazines) are telling everybody not to miss our hunt, because of the prizes and the hospitality."

Plans are already in hand to divide Brookside's park into separate areas for the different hunts. In addition to the coins, there will be a hunt for Civil War relics and newer coins, as well as a hunt just for children under 12.

Hunters get 30 minutes to find the treasure, planted a couple of inches under the ground. After all the events are finished, people can go back and try to find anything missed during the earlier hunts.

Among the celebrities at the hunt is expected to be Charles Garrett, head of one of the largest firms which make metal detectors.

"We'll probably have a record crowd for a hunt," according to Bobyarchick. The event provides good publicity for Alabama, and especially for the Town of Brookside, which has put quite a bit of effort into the hunt, he said.

"The main thing," Bobyarchick said, however, "is that we have fellowship."

THE CLUB emphasizes family participation in treasure hunting, which is one of the fastest-growing hobbies in the nation. That's confirmed simply by the sales of metal-detectors in recent years.

According to Bobyarchick, interest in treasure-hunting has mushroomed "because the price of gold and silver has gone up so much."

At the club's every-other-Thursday meetings, lessons are given on the right ways to hunt for treasure, remove objects and return the ground to its original condition. Meetings are held in the basement of Bobyarchick's home in Forestdale and the club lists about 40 member families.

NOW MORE THAN 10 years old, the club has provided some useful services and has also gotten involved in a couple of controversies.

When work was begun to develop the old Tamehill Furnaces into a state park, the club went through the area and found many metal artifacts from the days when the furnaces provided iron for the Civil War.

Bobyarchick has received some nationwide support for his proposal to allow well-organized, supervised hunts on old battlegrounds which are



*John Proctor, left, and Andy Bobyarchick plan layout treasure hunt*

low national and state parks. Detectors presently can't be used in these parks, said the president.

Perhaps the biggest flap came when club member Jeff White found some silver Indian artifacts in a field in Talladega County. He had apparently stumbled on an Indian burial ground, and the discovery sparked a controversy between archeologists and Crocks who claimed their ancestral burial grounds were being disturbed.

White's find, which included a headdress made of hammered silver coins dating from the mid-1800s, was claimed by the state Attorney General's office and is now in a museum.

MEMBERS HAVE turned up some other interesting things. One found a meteorite on the campus of the University of Montevallo recently. Another found a \$2.50 gold coin on a ballfield last year.

When the old swimming lake at Oak Mountain State Park was

drained several years ago, Proctor and Bobyarchick found more than 400 rings there.

Proctor's most valuable discovery came three years ago, when he found a ring which had been lost at Rushton Park in Birmingham about 75 years earlier. It contained two half-carat diamonds and a .85-carat ruby, and was appraised for \$3,000.

The ring's existence was well-known to treasure-hunters, but man stayed away from the area where Proctor found it because of the large amount of ore in the ground, which gave their detector false readings.

Bobyarchick said he's found small diamond rings and a lot of gold rings, in addition to Civil War relics. "I've got a Roman coin, but I don't know how much it's worth," he said.

Anybody who's interested in joining the club, or taking part in the Oct. 18, 19 hunt at Brookside, can call Andy Bobyarchick at 798-1336 or John Proctor at 822-5128.