

Trees and Treasure

I usually spend my Saturdays somewhere along the Mississippi River, swinging my metal detector and digging in cane fields or battle fields looking for War of 1812 or Civil War campsites and relics.

This first day of December I was working on my second cup of coffee and wondering where I should head to when my phone rang. It was an excited Charlie London calling to tell me the crews digging holes for the new oak trees were turning up bottles and pottery shards as they dug. That's not surprising since decades ago the city used the area along the bayou as a dumping ground for trash to fill in marshy areas. Charlie suggested I take a quick look so I grabbed my metal detector and headed out. By the time I got there three trees had been planted but two were awaiting placement in their holes.



A quick look at the excavated dirt showed hundreds of pieces of broken glass, bottle necks and fragments, brick and pottery shards all clues the relic hunter looks for to indicate a good site.

The tree planting crew would be heading my way soon so I had only a few minutes to swing my detector over the dirt piles.

Trees and Treasure

The first relic to pop up out of the ground was a brass Lion's Paw, followed by half of a lady's hem weight, a brass escutcheon, half a musket ball and an underwear button.



At first I thought the escutcheon may be a foreign coin with a hole in the center but it turned out to be a piece of Eastlake hardware, most likely for a drawer pull or knob. The lead hem-weight was used to hold ladies skirts down and men's frock coats as well. The brass Lion's Paw is found as "feet" on umbrella stands, cache pots and andirons. It is hollow brass and was filled with lead to give it weight. The underwear button is interesting it has the words "Artistic Paris" on the face which suggest it may have adorned a lady's undergarment long ago. And why one half of a musket ball? Well, these were often cut in half or flattened as were other lead bullets during the Civil War to be used as "game pieces" or "poker chips" by enterprising soldiers.

Back at home I cleaned them all up and now I have some nice relics to give to Charlie for display at the next neighborhood meeting.

Trees and Treasure

