

METAL DETECTING STORIES

Church Yard Hunting

The Following Story Appeared in Treasure Search Jan/Feb 1988.

Editors Note: The following story is being published exactly as we received it. The author was unaware of his very rare [Pony House](#) token until our staff spotted the find and notified him. In response, he wrote back saying "Thanks for the information on the token, as it really made my day. I found it in March of 1985 while hunting with my partner Sam Bellanca in Myerstown, Pennsylvania. It was four inches deep. I've had it in a 2x2 holder ever since but never got around to researching it. The site we hunted was an old school/church turned into a nursing home. Although the home was brand new, the huge buttonwood trees surrounding the place were a dead giveaway as to the real age of the site." The author's action in this manner once again prove the worth of a very good rule...keep all finds, except obvious junk items, until they can be identified.

Being a member of the United States Army does have its advantages when it comes to metal detecting and making new friends. Having lived in Salt Lake City, Utah; Delta Junction, Alaska; Huntsville, Alabama; Reading, Pennsylvania and El Paso, Texas; I've had the opportunity to coin shoot in new environments and make many friends along the way.

One friend in particular that always comes to mind is [Sam Bellanca](#) of Reading, Pennsylvania. I was stationed there as an Army recruiter when I first met Sam. I was out coin shooting a field next to an old Army Reserve center, which just happened to be directly across the street from the oldest college in Reading (1856), when Sam walked up and introduced himself. He lived right down the street and just wanted to see if I was finding anything. Sam is retired from a railroad company and works part time as a carpenter and coin shooter. We traded stories for awhile and decided to go out together the following weekend.

That Saturday Sam was knocking on my door at 8:00 in the morning, and off we went with metal detectors and coffee in hand in his little yellow Ford. We decided to hunt only [old church sites](#) that were built before 1900. Since Sam grew up in this area he knew where to look. First stop was Myerstown, at a church built in the 1700's. Pennsylvania has lots of old churches in the country; just drive around and look for white steeples. Permission was granted and we both started hunting out front. After thirty minutes of finding absolutely nothing we moved to the side of the church. We immediately began finding coins. Down at the five-inch level were a lot of oyster shells, so I believe this was the original surface. Wheat pennies were very common, and Indian head pennies began appearing along with buffalo and Liberty-V nickels. In the silver department we found Roosevelt, Mercury and Barber dimes. I found a [Standing Liberty Quarter](#) dated 1929 that later was graded as MS-61. We recovered some silver Washington quarters but no halves. We also found a nice 10K heart shaped diamond ring which read as a pull tab and down three inches on the meter. It pays to check out these kinds of readings. Some of the Indian head pennies would also read as pull tabs, but when the depth meter says "three to five inches" you had better dig!

Next stop was New Jerusalem. We found another old church originally built in 1840 with new sections added to it. Since the front and right side were tarred, we hunted the left side. Things were going fairly slow at first until Sam yelled over that he just dug up a Mercury dime. Then I got a signal that read "penny/dime" at four inches. I dug down four inches and hit solid rock! Rechecking the hole confirmed there was a target present. I pried the rock up with a screwdriver and there lay a 1911-S Barber dime! You just never know. A few minutes later another detector response resulted in finding a [1909 Barber half](#) with full "Liberty" in the headband. Not bad for an area 100 feet by 100 feet. By now it was growing dark so we called it a day. Sam dropped me off at home and we made plans to go out again the following Saturday.

The week went by fast and Saturday morning we headed toward Bally to an old Mennonite church built in 1897. It just made our cut off date. The grounds around the church only produced clad coins with an occasional wheat popping up. While taking a break we noticed the grave yard next to the church had about a 20 foot grassy area on one side of the rock wall surrounding the grave yard. The other sides were now tar roads. It looked like a good place to park a horse and buggy, so Sam and I decided to give it a try. We had barely gotten started when Sam came over holding a beautiful 1897 Barber dime. It looked like it was just lost yesterday. I was working the edge by the road under a tree when up popped a 1909 Barber quarter. It was well worn, but they sure look pretty when they break the surface. After finding a few Indian head pennies (one an 1869) we headed for new horizons.

Next stop was an old church in Doylestown. It was situated on a busy intersection so headphones were a must. The church was built in the 1700's and had lots of grass on three sides. We received permission to hunt and got started right away. The first thing we noticed was the absence of trash and new coins, as if someone had already been there. The first coin I dug was only three inches deep. Would you believe a [1797](#) draped bust large cent! And then another! An 1807 draped bust large cent in excellent shape. We found two Liberty seated dimes, 1840 and 1891, plus one 1841 half dime and a nice walking Liberty half. Sam even found a 10K class ring under some low hanging bushes because he thought it looked like a nice place to sit down. We won't even mention all the Indian head pennies we found, but one large cent we uncovered is noteworthy. It was an 1810 classic head, in very poor shape but still identifiable.

By now you should have gotten the message...that churches are the place to find the older (but not always deeper) coins. I always tell Sam that there is at least one Indian head penny at every church built before 1900. So far I've been right (or just plain lucky). The Doylestown church was the last time Sam and I got to hunt together. The Army transferred me to Fort Bliss, Texas (El Paso) where I've been for the last two years. That's another story. Now I am on orders for Germany...ROMAN COINS. Sam, get your detector warmed up; I'll be stopping by for a visit first.

Pirates

Jose Gaspar-

This is probably one of my favorite pirate stories. The tales are big and the legend still lives today in the form of an annual festival called Gasparilla in Tampa, FL.

Jose Gaspar, also known as "Gasparilla" was a Spanish naval officer that later found a life of piracy. It has been said that he amassed a fortune of over \$30 million dollars in treasure, and plundered over 400 ships from 1789 to 1821. His primary "playground" was the West coast of Florida down to Cuba, and he buried treasure all along the Florida coast. By one account, the area of Port Charlotte is to be one of his many hideouts. This area is made up of many small islands and a large bay (Charlotte Harbor). It is also said that other pirates such as [Jean Laffite](#), and [Black Ceasar](#) would sometimes frequent this area as well to join forces with Gaspar and his men. In December of 1821 at the age of sixty five, Gasparilla had decided that he would retire from his role as a pirate and that he and his men would split up all of the treasure. On this day he and the crew spotted what they thought to be a British merchant ship and chose to make one last attack. As they got closer to the ship it was revealed to all on board of Gaspar's ship (*The Floridablanca*), that the vessel they sought to take over was an American warship the *USS Enterprise*. A battle ensued and the *Floridablanca* was pummeled with cannon balls and was going down. Jose Gaspar had met the end of his reign. However, he was not going to be captured, he took an anchor chain and tied it around his waist, waving his cutlass high said "*Gasparilla dies by his own hand, not the enemy's*" he jumped into the water and disappeared.

There is no documented proof that Jose Gaspar ever existed, other than the information on him that was given by a man named John Gomez, who claimed to have sailed with Gasparilla. I believe that if Gaspar had captured as many ships as told, he would not have been one to choose a life in the "limelight", therefore not wanting any attention and smart enough to lay low from the pirate hunters. You can make your own assessment of the story, but as for me, I believe.

Metal Detecting Tips

1. Keep your coil flat and low to the ground, otherwise you will lose depth.
2. Make sure you properly ground balance your detector.
3. Always use headphones.
4. Sweep slowly. Modern computerized detectors need a little time to lock up on the target to provide accurate readings.
5. Use as little discrimination as possible. Excessive Discrimination will cause reduced depth.
6. If you have TONE ID learn the tones for the kinds of targets you are hunting.
7. Overlap your swings. If using a round coil overlap by 50%. If using an Elliptic or DD coil overlap slightly.
8. Hunt when the ground is wet. You will get better depth and it is easier to dig. CAUTION: Occasionally the ground can be too wet and you will get false signals. Sometimes turning down the sensitivity or gain will help.
9. Practice, Practice, Practice - pin pointing and digging small, neat holes.
10. Always take an electronic pin pointer with you. Some of the new vibrating pin pointers work really well.
11. If you are just looking for quantity of targets choose a school yard over a public park because of the sheer numbers of people there day in and day out.
12. Use Nickel Metal Hydride (NiMh) batteries rather than Nickel Cadmium (NiCad) because they do not have memory. They can be charged at any time.
13. Keep your Tetanus booster up to date. You never know what is in that hole. It could be a rusty nail, a piece of glass or something worse.
14. Wear gloves to keep your hands clean and protected.
15. Join and become active in a local metal detecting club.
16. Instead of wearing a coin pouch get a pair of military fatigues. They are heavy duty and have several large pockets that can be used for treasure and trash.
17. Don't forget to search each edge of a sidewalk. Coins often roll here and get lost.
18. Wear construction knee pads. They give you some insulation and protect your knees from small stones.
19. When cutting a plug either leave one side connected or cut an irregular shape so it can be replaced exactly as removed.
20. Use a golf towel or dishcloth to put the dirt on. It can easily be put back into the hole leaving no trace you were there.
21. To find potential sites go to the LOCAL HISTORY section of your library. They usually have newspapers going back many, many years. Don't forget a pad and pencil.
22. When you make your test garden MAKE SURE you remove ALL IRON before planting your targets. This can not be stressed strongly enough.
23. Don't be afraid to ask permission, even on posted property. More

Where To Detect?

My own yard

Multiple school yards and school playgrounds

Multiple town parks, swimming pools and ball fields

A lake and dam complete with swimming beach

Multiple Churches from the 1800's

A scout camp

Roadside stops used by local farmers to sell their produce

Miles and miles of sidewalks

Firemen's field day sites

A drive in movie

Winter sled riding hills

Fishing places

Old farms and houses

Revolutionary and Civil war related sites

Outdoor concert areas

Racetracks

Parking meters

Ski resorts

Vacant lots and dirt parking lots

Railroad stations

The Erie and Black River Canals complete with Locks and Towpaths

Lovers Lanes

Hiking, ATV and snowmobile trails

Construction sites

Sites where dirt from our 1800's streets have been dumped after new construction

Old county fair grounds

City and county courthouses

Abandoned houses, foundations and property

Under bridges

Boat launch areas

Liability Forms

I recommend getting written permission every time you hunt on private property and especially if the land owner questions liability if you hurt yourself. I am not a lawyer but it seems to me that the following forms should meet your needs. You keep the top one and give the bottom one to the landowner.

Permission to Metal Detect on Private Property

I, _____ agree to allow **(type your name and address)**, to use a metal detector to search for and recover buried relics, coins, gold, and other artifacts located on my property at _____ . It is understood that recovery includes the digging of small holes which will be repaired as nearly as possible to the original condition. This permission shall remain in effect until such time that I revoke it in writing.

Property Owner

Date

Liability Waiver Form

In consideration of permission to use a metal detector to search for and recover buried relics, gold, coins and other artifacts on the property located at _____ and owned by _____ . I, **(type your name)**, agree to release from all liability for personal injury or property damage that I may suffer as a result of the owners negligence while on the owners property only during the period and at the time of such search. This release shall be binding and forever discharge _____ , his/her heirs, executors, and administrators, from all actions, causes of action, claims and demands for, upon, or by reason of any damage , loss, injury, or suffering which I may sustain while engaged in metal detecting on the owners property.

(type your name & address)

Date

Silver Coin Cleaning

The following is a method of cleaning Silver Coins that is probably the best way possible to preserve the value of your find. Use at your own Risk!! It is only being provided to you on this page so you can see how someone else does it. (That's the disclaimer) Neither the author of this page or the author of the following procedure makes any guarantees or will be held responsible for any damage done by using this procedure.

This is a walking liberty half dollar piece with a badly tarnished area. The following procedure works for Larry Beatson who graciously made this procedure available to everyone.

There are many different methods of electrolysis. This is the one that works for me. I even use this method on spanish reales that I find. I think it is one of the safest IF USED CORRECTLY! This method of electrolysis actually expels most of the salt & minerals absorbed by the silver. You'll need the following items:

- A plastic bucket--I use a one gallon bucket
- Some very heavy stainless steel wire (about the same thickness as a coat hanger)
- Some sort of plate or even a knife blade (I used a butter dish at first)
- A few (maybe three) plastic clothes pins.
- A power supply--I use an AC adaptor with 120 volt AC 60 Hz 2watt input and 9volt 100milliamp output. (Too much output power will cook your coins quickly, and only in one spot.)
- Two alligator clips



Make a small hole in each side of the bucket, about a half inch down. Place the wire through and bend each side so it won't come out. Then you bend the knife blade, butter dish or whatever you have (it has to be stainless steel!!) so it will be down near the bottom of the bucket . A bit of it has to stick up enough so you can hook a wire clamp to it . I drilled a hole in each end of my clothes pin and fashioned a piece of wire into a hook at the top, and on the bottom (with the same piece of wire) bent it so when a coin is clipped in it's grasp it touches the wire. Attach the alligator clips to the wire ends. Now you can put some water in the bucket so that when the clothes pins are hung on the wire and the coins are clamped in the jaws the coin just gets covered by the water.

If I remember right the negative terminal gets attached to the butter dish or what ever you have in the bottom, and the positive goes on the top wire You must look for small bubbles coming off of the coin. That will signal the right connection. Don't let the wire touch the water, only the stainless steel. If the dirt and residue start to cling onto the butter dish then you are ok, if not, switch wires. I use two teaspoons of soda ash in the



water to speed up the process. The soda ash is the same kind as used for spas to increase the pH. NOT BAKING SODA! This is a fairly slow process. Don't try to rush it! But don't leave it unattended for long! You will need to turn the coin every few minutes. You should take the coin out and rub it between your fingers with a paste of baking soda and water. If you have a coin that you think could be worth a lot of money, HAVE IT CLEANED BY A PROFESSIONAL, don't take any chances! Good luck!

Gold Facts and Information

The following is a random group of facts about gold and what I think will be useful gold information.

Other Names for Gold: Oro, Tesoro
Periodic Table information:
Symbol=Au
Atomic Number=79
Atomic Weight=196.96
Melting Point=1337.33 degrees Kelvin
Melting point= 2,063 degrees Fahrenheit
Specific gravity is 19.32
Tensile strength=19,000psi
Hardness=2.75 on Mohs scale
Is one of the "Transition Metals"

Gold is measured in many ways but for some reason this precious metal is weighed in a system of measurements called "Troy Measurements". Troy measurements are such that one pound (lb) is divided up into 12 Troy Ounces and each Troy Ounce is divided up into 20 units called Pennyweight (dwt). Therefore, you must be careful when talking to someone about a quantity of gold. Make sure that the ounces you are talking about are the same ounces you are thinking about. Here are a few conversions to help you convert to other systems of measurement of mass.

One Troy lb (pound)=12 troy ounces
One troy oz=20 pennyweight (dwt)
One troy oz=480 grains
One troy oz=33.3 grams
One pennyweight = 24 grains

Formula to convert grams to pennyweight
____ grams X .600606 = dwt

Formula to convert grams to Troy Ounces
____ grams X .03003 = troy ounces

Other conversions that might help



one mg (milligram) = 1/1000 g
one g (gram) = 1000 mg, 14.4 gr (grains)
one k (kilogram) = 1000 g, 35 oz, 2.2 lbs.
one gr (grain) = .65 g (grams)
one oz (ounce) = 38.35 g
one lb (pound) = 16 oz, 454 g, .45 k

Metal Detecting and Related Topics

Tip #1

Always use headphones when metal detecting. Small variations in tone will go unnoticed when drowned out by background noise.

Tip #2

Anytime headphones are used, and your hunting anywhere there is the POSSIBILITY of poisonous snakes, wear sturdy leather boots and snake chaps. Nothing will ruin a great day of metal detecting worse, than ending it with a nasty snake bite.

Tip #3

Use a small, strong garden pick for digging down to targets, and attach a strong magnet to the digging blade. This will grab onto ferrous (iron) targets and expose them quickly, so a minimum amount of time is wasted.

Tip #4

To search an area known for having a lot of nails and other ferrous trash, rake the area first, pulling out most (or all) of the nails. Make a magnetic rake out of a 4-prong garden rake and cow magnets (available at any feed store). Attach the magnets with small hose clamps.

Tip #5

Carry digging tools, nugget bottles, magnifying glass, and other accessories on a tool belt. Use a carpenter's single nail pouch on a 2" web belt. This can have additional hooks and loops attached to "customize" it for your own personal tastes.

Tip #6

Wear hard-cap knee pads. There is a lot of bending and kneeling involved in metal detecting. Hard-cap knee pads are well worth the few bucks you pay for them.

Tip #7

Don't coil the cable from the control box down to the search coil. Instead, tape the cable in a single line up the shaft to a point above the collapsible joint. Start the coil from there. As you swing the coil from side to side, a loose cable coiled around the shaft, and near the search coil, can give false signals.

Tip #8

Always use a protective cap on the search coil. Protective caps are cheap, search coils are not.

Tip #9

Carry water, or have water available in your vehicle, if your vehicle is close. You may not be physically exerting yourself too hard, but in the heat of the day, you will sweat out lots of water.

Tip #10

Unless you know the area you will be working in very, very well, take along a map and compass. Make sure you know how to use them. (See also [Land Navigation](#))

Tip#11

Once you get familiar with your machine lower the discrimination and you will find deeper and smaller targets. Remember to go slowly. Thanks from the land of the Bluenose.

Tip #12

Many years ago, I obtained a Garrett Groundhog, with disc settings... Naturally, I first opted to cancel out ANYTHING save for those valuable coins that I felt sure would now be LEAPING from the ground before me! Well, my six yr old son was following me with a \$29 bargain detector I'd bought just for him, and to my amazement, was pulling pennies, dimes, and nickels from the 'barren' areas I'd just passed. Also, I found that high

disc settings caused me to 'skim over' many otherwise nice finds, such as brass shot shell casings, some jewelry, and misc. hardware items that I also desired to find.. IN SHORT, please let me state, it is now my preference to dig twenty five 'junk holes' and find but one keeper, than to skip over not only junk, but perhaps that one special find of the day.....

Tip #13

Hi! Here's a suggestion for increasing the clad to copper ratio. Lets start by suggesting modern vlf/tr circuits are great for detecting the presence of round (disk-like) metallic objects (coins - rings). Unfortunately pennies fall nicely into this category. They really are nasty targets due largely to their "sweet" broad spectrum registry and of course their prevalence - most coin shooters would appreciate a detector with greater resolution/discrimination regarding copper content. This unfortunately is outside the abilities of the most expensive of standard coil type vlf machines. The inability to positively indicate the presence of nuisance pennies. My suggestion; using a standard coil type machine - mark all coin hits with golf balls - having done this to however many hits (20-30?) drop the detector and approach each designated location with a powerful hard-drive type magnet. Attempt to induce residual magnetism in the yet indeterminate target. This can be approached by employing a pinpointing type detector to guide one in the application of the powerful magnetic fields. Now removing the magnet from the area will allow for the ready detection of residual magnetism as registered on a gauss meter/magnetometer.

Tip #14

When digging a target use a dog Frisbee to put the dirt on. When done pour it back into the hole.

Tip #15

When you dig a coin and its dirty I put the coin in a m& m mini candy container and put 2 cotton gun patches on the top of it. Next coin do the same, then the coins won't get scratched.

Tip #16

A little tip that might help save some time from digging that piece of pipe or cable, wire. Ya get the idea. I sometimes hunt areas where houses have been torn down. When I come across a target that I think might be worth

bending over for, I'll swing my coil in a cross pattern, get a pin point, then swing the coil in a circle around the target far enough out so that you don't pick up the pin pointed target. If I get a tone on each side chances are it's long. This works well in areas where you know there to be trash such as pipe , wire, ect. Of course you might try digging a few times till you get the hang of it.

Tip #17

Protective caps are a great investment; however, they can get some dirt trapped inside of them which may hinder your signal if you hunt in a lot of mineralized areas.

Tip #18

Get a moderately priced detector. Detectors range from 99 bucks to 2,999 bucks. Spend about 300 bucks to get a decent detector. Any thing more, and you will not be able to understand all the features. Any much less than 300 bucks and you won't get most of the features that you will need to truly understand how to become a good detectorist. I have been there and done that. Listen up. I Love metal detecting. If you think your getting hooked, Email me.