

Buried Treasure

by Pinkney Gage

Wood in Stock of Gun Proves Its True Value

"How am I to know this is a Civil War gun? All these patents mean is that it wasn't made earlier."

There was an overtone of belligerence in the collector's voice—the kind some men adopt when they are about to try to beat down a price.

"You're right about the patent dates," said Fred smoothly. He picked up the revolver and traced the dates on the cylinder. "But these Smith & Wesson Army Revolvers had serial numbers, and this one's 9073."

Fred broke the action of the .32 calibre, rim-fire six-shooter and started to point out the number.

"I know, I know," the collector said impatiently. "But that doesn't mean this was an Army revolver. After all, these were sold to civilians, too."

"Correct," Fred replied, "and now, if you'll excuse me for a moment, I'll get something that should convince you."

I picked up the revolver. It had a six-inch, octagon barrel of nicked steel. Along the barrel rib was the legend "Smith & Wesson, Springfield, Mass."

"There," Fred said, laying out two blocks of wood beside the revolver. "These two blocks are correctly stamped with their names. One is rosewood, the other walnut. As you can see by comparing them, the wood in the revolver's stock is walnut."

"And it's supposed to be rosewood," said the collector. "They used rosewood for this gun."

"Except for those that were made specifically for the Army," Fred replied. "After all, the government was hard pressed in the Civil War and had to cut expenses."

"How much?" the collector asked, the belligerence gone from his voice. Without a protest, he paid the \$80 asked.

There was a smirk on Fred's face as the door closed on the collector. I asked why.

"The price was about \$20 too high," Fred said.

FIRST-DAY MAYFLOWER COVER BRINGS GOOD PRICE

The janitor of the building rolled forward into Frank's plush office as if he were a member of the firm.

"I found a beauty last night, Frank," he said.

"Did you?" asked Frank.

"Let's see it."

Though their business was obviously no concern of mine, I walked over, too. After all, if the eruption of a mere janitor could drive me so effectively from the consciousness of an old friend, it was high time to find out why.

"As you can see, it is certainly one of the more important first-day covers," the janitor said. He was about to add something more, but suddenly aware of me, he broke it off short and glared.

Frank glanced up. "He's all right, Nick," he said. "Gage is one of us."

After the introduction was over, Frank handed me the envelope. It was of the large manila type, and there were three stamps on it: a one-cent green showing the Mayflower, a two-cent carmine rose picturing the Pilgrims landing at Plymouth Rock, and a five-cent blue depicting the signing of the compact.

The stamps were cancelled and the name and date of cancellation was clearly given as Boston, Dec. 21, 1920.

"It's yours for \$35," Nick said.

"A good deal," Frank said. "I pay him the full catalogue price, less 15 per cent, for anything he finds, and it amounts up to a good bit in the course of a year."

COPPER 'MEDAL' FOUND TO BE RARE CLINTON CENT

It was a copper medal, not a coin—or so I thought—and I didn't buy it.

There was another reason, also. The name of the man whose bust appeared on the piece was George Clinton, whereas the only important Clinton I could recall hearing about was De Witt, famed for his part in building the Erie Canal.

Obviously, I reasoned, a medal with the name of George Clinton on it couldn't be very important. All of which goes to show how dangerous, at least how unprofitable, a thing is a little knowledge.

George Clinton, uncle of De Witt, was one of the more extraordinary men of the Revolutionary period. He was a brigadier general during the war, a member of the second Continental Congress, seven times Governor of the State of New York and twice Vice President of the United States, being the only

man to die in that office so far as I knew.

Amazed at that information, I thought it would be a good idea to look up the medal. I had come across. After all, it might turn out to be a coin, one of the various state coins put out before the United States Mint was founded in 1792.

It was a state coin, the Clinton cent. Here's how to recognize it. There's a bust of Clinton on one side, facing the right. His name surrounds it. On the other side are two female figures supporting a shield surmounted by a bird. Below the shield is the date 1787 and below that is the word EXCELSIOR.

The piece is an easy one to remember. Especially since its value is from \$250 to \$300, depending on condition. Unfortunately, I have never seen one since.

(Released by McClure Newspaper Syndicate)

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NOT responsible for debts other than my own. Jerome Hawkins.

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