

Some Interesting Facts about the Display Case Artifacts

This educational display case contains artifacts left behind by early inhabitants of the City of Centerville and Washington Township. I unearthed the individual artifacts described below, which date from the 1890s to 1940s, using a metal detector. After cleaning, researching, and preserving each artifact, I assembled them into this display case which was then donated to Centerville-Washington History. Remember every artifact has a story to tell, if we're willing to listen.

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1. 1914 Barber Dime: In August 1914 author H.G. Wells was prophetic in coining the phrase "The war that will end war" to describe World War 1. Wells lived until 1946 which was long enough to realize his prophecy was wishful thinking.

According to *A Sense of Community* approximately 51 men from Centerville-Washington Township served in World War 1. Among those was Marine Private Earl Haines Pine who fought in 5 battles and was awarded the French Fourragere for exceptional valor in combat. There were also Captain Charles Slagle, who served in the Medical Corp, and his son Private William Slagle.

2. 1896 Indian Head Penny: While the Ford Model T is generally regarded as the first car that made travel available to middle-class Americans, Henry Ford's first automobile - the Quadricycle - was first test run a dozen years before in 1896. It featured an ethanol-powered 2-cylinder engine, 4 bicycle tires and was capable of traveling up to 20 miles per hour in 2nd gear. Ford sold the Quadricycle for \$200 which enabled him to build the empire that "put America on wheels"!

Closer to home a young man by the name of Charles F. Kettering began studying electrical engineering at the Ohio State University in 1896. During his lifetime in Dayton, he was awarded 186 patents. Some of his most memorable inventions include the all-electric starting, ignition, and lighting systems for automobiles, ethyl gasoline, and Freon once used in refrigerators. However, he also invented portable lighting systems for farms, solar energy apparatus, and an incubator for premature infants. By taking a trip to nearby Carillon Park, you'll be able to walk inside Deed's Barn, where Kettering and the rest of the Barn Gang developed the self-starter for vehicles. Forever the forward thinker, he was quoted as saying, "One fails forward toward success."

3. Mystery Warrior (c. 1930s-40s): Countess people, including Dr. Lance Greene, an experienced Field Archaeologist at Wright State University, are scratching their heads over the identity of this lead artifact. Depending on which way you hold it, there appears to be 2 legs, 1 foot, a torso with a sash belt, and shoulder with part of an upper arm. Initially Shirley Fritz at C&J Connection in Centerville thought it could be a Japanese or Chinese warrior lunging on two sturdy legs. Then after turning the piece, she revised her theory to standing on one leg and kicking with the other.

A hollow underside with flat edges suggests it was made to lie against something or perhaps hung on a wall for decoration. That characteristic distinguishes it from other lead characters I've found which can stand upright and probably made at home by children using the Gilbert Molten Lead Casting Kit (sold between 1931 and 1942) or similar. Perhaps one day in the future a Centerville-Washington History patron will be able to identify it. Until then its identity remains a mystery.

4. "Headquarters of the (American) Revolution" medal (c. 1898): While this handsome medal commemorates the centennial of the first meeting of the (Deputy) Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Massachusetts held on March 13, 1798 at the Green Dragon Tavern in Boston, the BIGGER history story here is that tavern was known as the "Headquarters of the (American) Revolution". Besides being a meeting place for the Masons, secret meetings were held in the basement by The Sons of Liberty among other patriotic groups. In fact, it is where the Boston Tea Party was planned and Paul Revere began his famous ride to Lexington to warn the Patriots that "the British are coming". Actually, eyewitnesses claim he never said that – but if you want to know what he really said – you'll need to research.

Before making a pilgrimage to see the tavern be aware it was demolished in 1832. As a consolation you can see an impressive Masonic Temple in the Greco-Roman style standing majestically on Dayton's Grafton Hill overlooking the Miami River.

5. Montgomery County dog tag (c. 1921): How the dog tag on the left, issued in Montgomery County, was found on the grounds of where School House #3 once stood, is a bit of a mystery. Was the dog's owner the teacher or student there? Was it a stray looking for attention? Or perhaps the tag was simply lost years after it was issued when the school was converted to a residence? While found in poor condition, when purchased it looked similar to the Lorain County (OH) tag on the right.



6. 1903 Indian Head Penny: 1903 was a banner year for 3 Daytonians! On February 18, *In Dahomey*, the first African American musical performed on Broadway opened at the New York Theater. The lyrics were by none other than Daytonian Paul Laurence Dunbar.

While most people know of the Wright Brothers' first historic first successful flight on December 17, few realize they made an unsuccessful attempt 3 days before. The Wright brothers' scientific approach to their work enabled them to succeed where many others had failed. Luckily for the world they persevered!

7. ELCO Padlock (c. 1890-1930): Considered "every man's lock" by none other than Mr. Robert Dix who is President of The American Lock Collectors Association, this clam shell style lock and those like it were available in 5 & 10 cent and hardware stores. Considering that they were sold in a large quantity it is noteworthy that they have become collectable today. ELCO, a trademark of the Eagle Lock Company, was established 1833 and at one time was the largest trunk and cabinet lock maker in the world.

Located in Terryville, Connecticut, the company was at the forefront of padlock security and at one time had a manufacturing line of over 2,000 different kinds of locks. After experiencing phenomenal growth during both the First and Second World Wars, it became an attractive takeover target for large firms looking to create subsidiary industries. In 1943, the company was sold; however, it continued to operate under its original name and location until 1975 when it closed.