

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 1830s to 1980 or later, 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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December 7, 2024

1. 1847 Large Cent: The land where the Spring Valley Academy is today was once owned by long-time resident and Quaker Samuel Sears. What are the odds that the one historically significant artifact found on the property was minted in 1847, a year of both great tragedy and joy for him and his family? In January, his toddler daughter Martha died at age 3. Then in March, his son George got married.

On November 17, 1862, Samuel's home burnt to the ground. Per a newspaper article appearing in *The Daily Empire* the following day, his family made it out alive – wearing just their night clothes. He was not insured. But he is described as a “well-to-do farmer” and obtained the means to build another house and furnish it.

2. Watch Winder Key (c. 1830s-1884?): Ever see a snake swallow its own tail? Well, look closely at this watch winder key and you will (hint: see blue box in close-up picture).

Watch winder keys were used to wind pocket watches prior to the invention of the crown by Adrien Philippe in 1842. While keys didn't immediately disappear from use when crowns appeared, this key likely dates from sometime in the 1830s to 1884. The original School House #4 was built nearby, and it was probably destroyed during a tornado in April 1884. That was the when the most human activity occurred in the area.

3. Lincoln Logs Lead Figures (c. 1930s-40s?): These lead figures of a travelling physician (left) and railroad engineer (right) were once part of a Lincoln Logs set. Lincoln Logs were invented sometime around 1916–1917 when John Lloyd Wright was working in Japan with his father, the renowned Architect Frank Lloyd Wright. The mold for the toy was based on the architecture of the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo, designed by the inventor's father. The foundation of the hotel was designed with interlocking log beams, which made the structure "earthquake-proof" and one of the few buildings to remain standing after the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake that crumbled Tokyo.

When he returned to the U.S., John organized The Red Square Toy Company and marketed the toy in 1918. Wright was issued U.S. patent on August 31, 1920 for a "Toy-Cabin Construction". The original Lincoln Log set came with instructions on how to build Uncle Tom's and Abraham Lincoln's cabins. Subsequent sets were larger and more elaborate. The toy was a hit, following as it did Meccano, Tinkertoys, and Erector Set. In 1999, Lincoln Logs and John Lloyd Wright were entered into the National Toy Hall of Fame.

4. Lead Arrowhead(?): Ever heard of a lead arrowhead? Me neither except for one that supposedly was found in Kansas during the 1930s along what had been the Oregon Trail. Perhaps this is the second!

That said, I don't think it was really meant to be attached to an arrow, as the force of gravity would pull it downward soon after being launched from the bow. So, although it has an arrowhead shape and beveled edges, I think that someone was simply in the process of re-purposing a piece of lead, perhaps to make it a pendant. While the ratty (and more interesting) side is face up, the reverse is smoother and has a pattern that looks like a small lit torch.

5. 1939 Silver Half Dollar: Despite this property producing more historically significant artifacts than any other in the 2024 season, the only old coin unearthed was this 1939 silver half dollar. Just as the U.S. was emerging from the decade-long Great Depression that year, these historically significant events took place at home and abroad:

- Nazi Germany attacks Poland on September 1. France, Australia, and the United Kingdom declare war on Germany.
- The movies *Gone with the Wind* and *The Wizard of Oz* premiere.
- Lou Gehrig retires from Major League Baseball after being diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS).
- Hewlett-Packard Company is created in Palo Alto, CA: "the birthplace of Silicon Valley".

6. Peters Target No. 12 Headstamp (c. 1887-1914): Pieces of modern shotgun shells are a common find. What makes this headstamp of a shotgun shell so unique are where it was found, purpose, and age. The headstamp was found on an abandoned roadbed that once connected a grist mill located just east of the Smith House at Bill Yeck Park to East Spring Valley Pike. Although it's stated purpose was for "target" practice, I can't imagine someone doing so on the narrow roadbed with steep slopes on either side. Because the phrase "Made in the USA" does NOT appear on the headstamp, it is possible to date it to 1887-1914. Peters manufactured a variety of shotgun shells in Kings Mills, OH from 1887 to 1934 when it was purchased by The Remington Arms Company.

7. Tag with Tetractys Symbol: While this tag is modern, the Tetractys symbol appearing on it is credited to none other than Pythagoras (570 – 495 B.C.) who was an ancient Ionian Greek philosopher, polymath, and the eponymous founder of Pythagoreanism. And for those who've taken Plane Geometry, who can forget the Pythagorean Theorem!

Throughout the ages, many meanings have been associated with the Tetractys including, but not limited to, the 4 classical elements (air, fire, water, earth), the 4 seasons, and spiritual associations. The next time you go bowling, notice that the pins are arranged in a Tetractys.