

Gator Surprises Diggers at Dump in Georgia

By Bill Baab

AUGUSTA, Ga. – When digging for antique bottles, you’ve got to expect the unexpected.

But an 8-1/2-foot alligator? Come on!

On September 30, 2012, I unlocked the main gate leading onto the former Augusta Mill Supply Co., property which sits on a late 19th-early 20th century landfill.

Driving in, the first thing my wife, Bea, and I saw was the alligator stretched out on the parking lot’s warm asphalt. We couldn’t believe our eyes.

Property owner Mark Branum and his general manager, Scott Walker, arrived within a few minutes and explained that he had been called to the property after midnight the night before. Some passers-by had spotted the gator and called the law.

Branum had called the Georgia Department of Natural Resources where a spokesman said a licensed trapper would arrive the next day. So Branum shut the gate on the gator and went home.

About 11 a.m., the day of our dig, Agent Trapper John Gillis and his wife, Denise, arrived and a few minutes later, they’d snagged the gator around the neck with a noose. Gillis was able to bind the jaws and place a towel over the creature’s eyes. That helped calm it down.

Next, they hogtied all four legs and then measured and

sexed it. It was 8-1/2 feet long and turned out to be a male.

One of our stronger diggers, Bob Riddick, of Lexington, S.C., helped Gillis lift it into the back of the trapper’s pickup truck. The experience made Riddick’s day and later I presented him with an 8x10 color photo of that scene.

How did the gator get into the fenced-in area? The gate is closed over the weekend.

Turns out the security cameras on the property next door had spied the surly saurian, but the property owner hadn’t said anything. As for getting onto the property, there were several gaps between the bottom of the fence and the ground, each wide and deep enough for it to crawl through.

So as the trapper’s truck drove off, I said, “See you later, gator!”

But Mark Branum hopes not.



VIRTUAL MUSEUM OF HISTORICAL BOTTLES AND GLASS

It is time to make the Virtual Museum a reality. We are now ready to move forward with the design development and eventual implementation of the FOHBC Virtual Museum of Historical Bottles and Glass.

The FOHBC Virtual Museum will be established to display, inform, educate, and enhance the enjoyment of historical bottle and glass collecting by providing an online Virtual Museum experience for significant historical bottles and other items related to early glass. The Virtual Museum will be a digital expression of what one might find in a real ‘bricks and mortar’ museum. There will be galleries, exhibitions, resources and support functions to enhance the visitor experience. The museum will contain, but not be limited to, images of subject bottles and glass, a written description of those subjects with dimensions, and if available, the history of the bottles along with an estimation of rarity. The museum will grow and be expandable.

Look for a letter from the FOHBC in January 2013 asking for your generous support.