

A 4th of July Dig came in with a bang and went out with a BOOM BABY!

By Rick Weiner

A year and a half had passed since I enjoyed a decent privy dig. The days of back-to-back loaded outhouse pits have pretty much evaporated from my activity list. The last memorable dirt dive was right before “The Covid” took control of our daily lives in 2020.

I tackled this one with Damian Righi, a.k.a. “Mr. Rings.” I swear he likes metal detecting better than bottle digging but he will never admit it.

I wrote a story for *Antique Bottle & Glass Collector* about this dig called “2 pits before lockdown.” I remember going to the Baltimore bottle show a week before this privy dig took place. We just made the show by the skin of our teeth. There were no mask mandates and very little washing of hands. That was a year and a half ago. This year the Baltimore Bottle show is canceled! I can’t recall how many years we have been making the trip to Baltimore but this is the first time the show was axed. I guess the Covid still has its hooks in us even though it seems like the world is getting back to “semi-normal” again. Whatever that is.

The Shupps Grove “outdoor” bottle show has eased some of the pain caused by the cancellation of the Balto show by having three consecutive shows this year. We attended the first one in April 2021. The second is coming up this Saturday, July 17th and the third is in September. Bottle shows are a great way to catch up on each other’s digging adventures and life in general. Throughout the year most of us “out of towners” talk on the computer, in bottle chat rooms, and forums. Also if you want to add a nice bottle to your collection, there are many great vendors at Shupps to accommodate you. When I go to Shupps’s Grove I rarely buy bottles. Not because I don’t have the money but because I would rather invest in one of the Grove’s famous cheese-steaks instead. If I see something that screams out “take me” I will give it a new home. I always have fun at these shows. First, it’s a social event; the bottles are just an extra. For me anyway.

The time in between bottle shows for me is spent dreaming about a good privy dig. I don’t just lay around in a daze daydreaming

of blue sodas barely covered in that dark use layer ready to be plucked out, I dream about the green ones too! and everything else that goes along with privy digging! I always have it in the back of my mind how much fun it was when I was digging with my buddy Paul 11 years ago, pulling out those cobalt gems like I was plucking them off a table at a bottle show. The bottle gods had our backs in those golden days of digging. I used to be a permission magnet back then. It seemed like no matter who answered the door it would be a yes. Many times Paul would look at a person and say “no way he/she will say yes” and I would disagree, “So what if he looked like an ax murder I’m going to ask anyway”. Low and behold Mr. Ax said yes and turned out to be a hell of a nice guy. He was also a little league coach for kids. We ended up getting 4 loaded privies in his yard that day, and some of the best bottles in my collection. So the moral of this story is never judge an ax murder by his cover, he may have good bottles in his yard and he might say yes!

The golden days of privy digging also had its ups and downs. Since I still have all of the pictures of my hay day adventures, when I start feeling a little low about not getting into any good digs currently, I boost myself up by posting “old digs” like the “Cobalt Hole.” The Cobalt Hole had 35 cobalt blue iron pontil sodas in it. It also had 15 green “Khol & Beans” iron pontils. The new members of my forum 19thcenturybottlediggers have never seen these pictures and swoon over the number of colored sodas coming out of one privy. It feels good to give hope to new diggers. On the other hand, the older members will keep me honest and razz me by saying “that’s old news” when are you going to post some good recent finds. I am glad for digging what I have in the past. God blessed me to make that happen but they are right, I wanted to get into some older pits again. I missed the feeling of unearthing a nice colored soda from an old privy or any old bottle for that matter. These days I have been digging dumps here and there to pass the time. I do not enjoy the ash dumps much anymore. Most have been dug over by people for years. That is depressing to me. There is nothing like hitting that un-dug “old” outhouse. Even if there are only a few keepers in it. The feeling of going down through those layers and knowing you were



The start of the monster stone liner.

How deep will she go

the first person there since the 1800s and then finding that first colored soda it's an explainable feeling. I am 62 years old now so I have slowed down some. One day bottle digging will come to a halt for me. But as long as my health allows it, I will keep unplugging those old outhouse holes from the past. With the help of my younger friends of course. I can take care of shallow ones myself if I have to, up to 6 feet. But once the pit is over my head it's time to call in the troops.

The other thing that can take the place of "your own" lack of local privy action is going on road trips and digging with out-of-town guests. You are still digging a privy but you don't have to do any of the leg work to get it, you just need to show up and dig. Don't get me wrong, it is fun and exciting on road trips because you will be finding bottles that you normally won't find in your hometown. But I like to get my own permissions and do the research that gives me a sense of accomplishment and makes the whole dig feel more rewarding. Especially when it turns out to be a good one! Some people never get permission and never will but they are good mussels on the dig. I guess everyone has their good points. Like the old saying goes "What have you done for me lately"

While I am on the subject of road trips. I was recently reminis-

ing about a permission Badger and I went on before the pandemic hit. Dave F and sons Seth & Josh invited us up to Wormleysburg near Harrisburg Pa. It was a long drive. It's even longer when you have to listen to Badger for 3 long hours. It's all good though soon we would be hearing the clinking of glass and praying for a good one to roll out! The site we were digging that day was an open lot. Directly across the street was the mighty Susquehanna River. A beautiful view on a beautiful day. On the lot, an 1880s house was demolished some years ago and Dave is the one who helped with the demo operation. He hit a privy with the big Cat backhoe in the process and decided to ask for permission from the owner to excavate it. That is one of the perks of being a demolition man/bottle digger: you get the first crack at the permission. After we all got done telling our recent bottle digging stories and tall tales, "especially Dave F" his were the tallest tales of all. We all got into action. At first, I thought we were going to get to use the monster backhoe to dig, but that was just a passing dream. But all was not lost, Dave did have a "skid loader" that he was using to dig out old planks of wood from the pile of rubble that used to be the 1880s house. That was his second business, he sold planks from old demolished homes and barns.

As we assessed the area that was supposed to be the outhouse pit I starting pulling an old green garden hose out of the crack in the



sunken hole. Not to worry, this was at the very top, a lot of new trash is often caught up in these semi-open pits over the years mostly due to people who just don't give a crap and dump garbage where they please! As the hole was beginning to take shape we found the walls and made our way down. Someone yelled out, "why are we digging by hand when we have a machine"! And on that note, Dave gave us the "hold on a second" sign. He had two more beams to move and stack. Soon he was moving dirt for us. The blacktop was removed first then the ash and dirt fill layers were revealed. Dave dug down as far as he could but there was only so much a machine can do digging a privy. Soon the human machines had to take over and start making their way down to the use layer, aka the layer of old glass goodness! Bucket after bucket was removed and soon a sign of life from the past revealed itself. Josh yelled out "I got an embossed med" it was a good sign for things to come. The dig went on for a few hours and in the end, we had a good number of bottles and weird "Nick Knacks" sitting on the large track of the earth-mover machine waiting for the pick. At least the beast machine served a purpose other than digging that day. Everyone went home with something cool. If I recall the best bottle was an amber anchor flask. That is what this hobby is about. Friends adventure and bottles! In that order.

Back home I was still privy-less. One Saturday while I was digging at Badger's dump, I realized that I was not going to get any permission to dig privies while I was on my butt wallowing in the fluffy white ash dump that was dug for 40 years. Yeah, I did say that a million times but it's the facts. So I packed up my digging tools and

hit the streets. It was time to knock on doors in a town where I had much luck in the past. This is not a fun thing to do but it must be done if you expect to dig outhouses. When I go out and do this task I need to have a positive attitude. But that is hard to acquire sometimes because I hate rejection. Doesn't everyone? If you fall prey to those feelings, back to the white mountains you go! When I walk up to a door I make sure I have my magazine with Damian and me on the front cover, a picture book with some bottles I dug over the years, and a game plan on what I am about to say. Being on the front cover of a bottle magazine helps ease the suspicion that I am a swindler trying to take advantage of an unsuspecting homeowner for unknown reasons. I was on a mission, a mission to try and relive the old days of privy digging. It was hard to start over when so much time has passed, I felt rusty and uneasy but it had to be done if I wanted to hold one of those brilliant blue cobalt blue sodas in my hand once again.



Damian digging into the tough river stone cap

In this game, you have to be happy with what you get, but I always try and go for the houses that are built between 1850 and 1880. The last choice is 1880. The reason for this is if you get permission to dig an 1850 era house your chances of getting a good "old" pit are pretty good (if no one has dug it before). When building the main house they had to dig the privy right away.

After all, they needed a place to go right away! In my experience, an 1850 home has at least 4 privies in the yard. The original pit most likely lasted at least 15 years. When its time was up they dug a new

hole close to the original, usually 6 or 7 feet away. They kept on digging new pits every 15 years or so until plumbing came into the house. The older the house, the more privies there should be. This also depends on when city water came into play. The scenarios I explained are for wood-lined pits. The wood will rot over the years and new privies must be built. Most cities and towns had rules and regulations due to contamination in the ground. This does not always pertain to stone and brick-lined privies. These bad boys never rotted so they could use them over and over. They dip (clean) them and keep using them into the years. So it is not unusual to find 30 years' worth of glass floating around these well-built time capsules. Most people who had higher incomes had stone and brick liners. This especially holds water in my area. Other places around the globe could be different.



Steve waiting for the go to pull up more fill

Another Saturday rolled around with no prospects of privy digging on the horizon. Times were tough and I needed a plan. I knew if I did not at least make an effort, I would be digging at "Badger's dump" complaining about ash down my pants.

It is fine if you enjoy it as Badger does but I lost my taste for it and wanted to get back into the privy digging game. That meant it was time to get off my butt and knock on some doors! I remembered walking around a part of town that I didn't frequent a lot. I was checking out this very old church and rectory that looked like it was abandon for years. Sometimes I like to roam around old cemetery's looking at the gravestone dates. I enjoy the look, the craftsmanship, and some of the cool sayings on the old stones. Similar to the way I like the look of old crude bottles. Some people say it's morbid, I say it is a form of reliving history. It is also the quietest place in town! I put the address of the church on my phone hoping to get a hold of someone who might permit me to dig the rectory. Who knows maybe the nuns were drinkers and the pits were loaded with colored beers! A digger can dream, can't he?

When I was finished at the church I left my truck and I started to walk down the next street. I spotted some houses on the next block that looked like federal-style 1850ish row homes I like. I quickly did a check on my phone and to my surprise, there were 4 houses with built dates of 1850! I did not waste any time, within a few minutes I was standing up close and personal with a bullfrog door knocker. The frog was the least of my worries, soon someone would answer the door and I would have to explain why I wanted to dig up his backyard for bottles. Just saying that out loud sometimes gives me the heebie-jeebies but it has worked many times before. Soon I was standing face to face with an older fellow wearing a black baseball hat that read "getter done" that was a perfect hat for a privy digger trying to get permissions! So I laid out my knowledge of privy digging on him, showed him my magazine and pictures of bottles, and waited for the answer. I am always on the fence when I ask for permission so whatever the answer is I try and accept it. If it's a no, on to the next prospect. If it's a yes then "weeee-haaa"! This time it was a "Weeee-haaa"!

I got permission! There was only one stipulation, I had to wait a month to dig the property. The guy went on to tell me he had insurance people coming to do some estimates on the house for some work and he didn't want the yard dug up at the moment. I didn't have a problem with that, I waited longer than that trying to get other permissions. I even set him up with a remodeling friend of mine to help him with a cheaper rate on construction work he needed for his house.

I had a month to try and get other permissions and try to build my digging clientele. Well not exactly a whole month, more like a few weekends and some Mondays, I had a part-time job that cut into my digging time. But I had to keep trying to get into a good yard whenever I could. Even if I didn't get any solid hits, at least I tried.

A month of dead ends has gone by as normal. I was excited to go back to the secured permission. I figured since I hooked him up with my friend for the work on his house I would be in like Flynn. When I showed up at the house with my digging buddy Damian, we got all of the probes from the truck and went right to the back yard and literally found two pits in 15 minutes! It felt good pushing that metal rod into that crunchy abyss after all this time. It was like a spiritual experience of sorts. But our serenity bubble was about to burst! The old man's son came out of the back door in a semi rage and said "Stop don't dig anything!" and then proceeded to drop his breakfast sandwich on the ground! We were beside ourselves with confusion. It turns out Mr "Getter done" was senile and the son owned the house. He was taking care of dear ole dad. Dad permitted us to dig and did not even remember us being there. To make things worse, we just probed out 2 great spots at an 1850 yard and we had to abandon ship! Sometimes these things happen in the permission game. You just have to bite your lip dust yourself off and move on. That is exactly what we did. Damian had to go visit his mother and I just kept on pounding the streets for potential digs.

I was a little pissed, but more determined. I always carried a list of places where I have never tried getting permission before. Today was a good day as any to use it. I started by wandering through the narrow crooked alleys. I love this town and its history. I glanced up at a yard we had dug 10 years ago and instantly started daydreaming of that day. It was a good pit. ST drakes bitters, a Hazleton coal region blob top, and many good local bottles. We also found almost a full skeleton of a horse in the privy!

The memories were vivid. As I walked down to the next block I came upon one of the best digs we ever did in that town. I stood on the back of the Victorian slate steps and looked down into the yard. Another dig took place 10 or more years ago. I could still see a slight sinking spot through the lush grass where the privy was dug. We pulled out 35 1850s cobalt iron pontil sodas from this one! I had to snap out of the reminiscing stage and get into

the present permission-getting mode. I whipped out the ragged list and got into action. Without hesitation, I walked up and gave the first door a rap. Surprisingly the door swung open on the first knock. "Hi I am a bottle collector/digger I "never use the word digger first" it scares them away. I am a writer for a few bottle magazines and...." Boom I was cut off right there! "I'm sorry we are renters" Ah the lovey renter. Another gamble that comes into play. Renters have permitted us in the past but sometimes the outcome is not very pleasant, so I stopped asking renters. If the landlord comes to the property unexpectedly, you will have a lot of explaining to do, and I'll leave it at that. I roamed around and knocked on more doors in the same area for a good hour and realized I was pretty far away from my truck. So I decided to grab a slice and a soda at my favorite local pizza shop. I would fuel up and rest and then make my back to the truck. I figured I would try my luck at another old section of town before heading home.

Back at the truck as I was heading out, I took a wrong turn and had to backtrack a little because it was a one-way street. As I cut through a parking lot to correct myself I realized I was at a small business where I had asked a guy 8 years ago if I could try and probe for privies at some of his properties. He was a landlord and he owned many old houses in this town. Needless to say, the answer was no back then. I was hesitant as I walked up to the metal door that I knocked on in the past. The sign on the door read "knock to enter" flashbacks of rejection almost pulled my hand away from the door like it was electrified but I just remembered, I was "pissed & determined". I gave the metal door 2 raps with my wedding ring and waited, no answer. As I started to walk away feeling a bit depressed the door swung open with a squeak. I saw the same fellow as I did 8 years ago. He invited me in. I looked at him and said, "remember me"? There was a short silence, and then he said "no should I"? I just went with what I had and pointed to my shirt. "Antique Bottle & Glass Collector" and with that, it all opened up! He said "oh yeah the bottle guy!" I blurted out without hesitation "would you mind if I checked out a few of your places for privies"? Sure he said with a smile and went on to give me a list of old homes on the oldest street in the town! I was excited and shocked, to say the least, but I played it cool. As the old saying goes "if at first, you don't succeed try 8 years later" I could not help thinking about the guy that said no to me earlier that day. If it wasn't for that guy I would not have started walking the neighborhoods, and I would not have gone down that one-way street only to find myself in the parking lot of the permission that never materialized years ago. I am a firm believer in "things happen for a reason"

Once I had the list in my hands I was like a kid in a candy store. I had Carte Blanche to be on any property he owned! All I had to do was carry his business card and show it to anyone who asked what I was doing in the yard. I was in dreamland because I wanted to dig some of these homes 10 years ago but they were all were out of reach. The age of the properties ranged from the 1870s to the 1850s and I had a list of 10 homes! The chances of everyone being great were pretty slim but back in our hey day this town produced some great stuff for us so I was an optimistic digger today. I began my journey, looking at the house numbers on the list. I was house shopping for bottles! The first homestead I picked was one that always had me in awe back when I was digging the good stuff. I would look at it and imagine the lifestyles

of the people that lived there, the dirt roads, the oil lanterns that lit up the town at night, and the outhouses that stood in the shadows waiting for the future privy diggers to haul up the trash that is now treasure. As I walked up the thick Victorian slate sidewalks to the back of the property I had this feeling of nostalgia. This was not just any ordinary dwelling, some influential person lived here. Someone with big bucks! I would do the research later but for now, it was time to probe!

As I walked to the back yard my eyes were scanning the ground for dips and potential privy locations. I knew an outhouse could have sat anywhere, but I also knew the back of the property was my best bet. When I reached the end of the line I noticed the back area wasn't that big considering the size of the house. There was a large clapboard building that turned out to be a carriage/ Servant house tucked next to the alley. That structure took up a lot of space. The side yard had some distance but I would not look there unless the back did not pan out.

I decided to take a water break, it was very hot that day temps creeping near 100. The steps to the carriage house were a good place as any, and the thick green moss that covered the steps made a comfortable seat. A big cherry blossom tree engulfed the whole area and gave me cool needed shade. As I sat there looking at the huge 1869 3 story building I noticed the house next door. It was the same size as the house I was at. But it didn't have quite the same structural value as the one I got permission for. I was curious about this place so I texted my buddy Mr landlord. I gave him the number and he came back with "that's my house, it's on your list" can the day get any better! Another one to check out down the road. God was definitely with me that day.

My water break was over and I had to get on with the probing. I stood up and visually scanned the yard again. As I walked forward my leg kind of buckled and knocked me off balance a little. Normally I would contribute this to my arthritis, but not this time. Would you look at that! a sink right in front of me! With the probe in hand, I jammed it into the center, down it went! Could it be that easy? I stuck the rod in a few more places, then I hit something hard. Was it brick? Was it stone? The tip of the probe told me it was stone. A lot of times people from the past filled privies in with what they had so it could be stone in the fill. My next plan of attack was to find the walls and see how big this thing was. I also needed to find out what it was lined with. As I said, It could be brick or stone, and I forgot to mention wood. 99% of all the privies we dug in this town were wood-lined. I began on the outside sticking the probe in on an angle. With the first thrust, I hit a solid stone. My wrist encountered a bad shock wave. I moved around the pit and hit the same, more stones and all seemed large. If my calculations were correct this thing is approximately 6 feet across! I had off on Mondays from my part-time job so I decided to make a trip down to the yard and do a test plug to try and find out a little more about this monstrosity.

When I returned I did the same processes with the probe. I have ADD so it is not unusual for me to probe 15 times before I start to dig. Even though I knew where I wanted to start digging, to begin with. Better to be over probed than under probed I always say. When I finely got down to moving dirt I noticed the fill was solid black. That is a good thing, no clay makes my day. The



Here I am at the very start of the dig. Who knew.



Down at the bottom the good stuff is starting to pop!



Looks like we have a blue peeker!



Beautiful Bennington Wax Sealer



A fancy Perfume hits the light



Love the transfer ware, especially this early stuff!



Sapphire blue Kanuss & Lighten-waller. 1860s



Back of F.Seitz iron pontil.Easton Pa



Rare J. Marbacher Iron pontil Easton Pa



Cobalt J.Wise Allentown Pa

hole I had dug was only about a foot and a half deep. I must have picked the right spot because soon I had a pile of old pumpkin brick, a double collared squat soda neck, a hand full of glazed pottery, and that pile of flaky oyster shells sitting on the grass. What did this all mean? At the time absolutely nothing. But as I started to dig down and across the privy I saw that it was undug. Soon I would find out that the packed fill in this pit would go from one end to the other. That is what a privy digger wants to see! This hole was definitely un dug by any other human in our time. That is good news, No privy pirates! The stuff I had found was what they tossed in when the privy was filled in the 1800s. That was a good indication of the age of the outhouse. It was time to open this baby up end to end and pray as we make our way to the bottom!

A week would pass and I was ready to get this project underway. Damian came to help me start shoveling dirt, and there was lots of it. This thing was packed tighter than a tick with big layers. The first layer was just a solid crumbling clay about 3 feet thick. It was tough to get it out but it gave me comfort knowing these were untouched virgin caps. Once the clay was removed it was time to tackle the next mass. That would be a medium-sized river stone and dirt cap! I don't know how much of that we bucketed out but my back told me it was a significant amount! We spent a good part of the day digging down and speculating on how deep it would go? It becomes a guessing game of sorts because we never know what is going to be on the bottom. The only way to find this out is to dig to the bottom! I always throw my Captain obvious logic out there, it helps with the morale. It could be loaded with bottles or it could be empty. But we dig despite not knowing. The only way I will fill a pit in is if I know it was 100% dug by another digger. A Gator aid bottle or a burger King wrapper will make the fill-in happen a lot quicker! Sometimes we find a lot of old shards tossed in near the top and no layers of fill, everything is mixed. No layers in a privy is a key sign to look for, take heed! If you can not read the bad signs you will end up digging bad privies. Most likely ones that someone else had already

dug. And that my friend is not a good feeling.

We had a lot of this stone liner to dig but were making good headway. I had planned on hitting it hard the following week-end. My crew would consist of Damian Aka Mr. Rings, Badger, and my self but things did not work out that way. Damian's new job had called him in suddenly and that left us one man short. I suggested to Badger that we call "NY Steve" to come and fill the gap. That is if he wanted to join us. Steve was a good 3 hours away. The phone call was made and Steve was on board with it. I didn't think he would turn down an opportunity like this. But like we all know, anything can happen and that's just the name of the game. He could be making the long 3-hour trip home totally bottle-less.

Damian and I had dug 6 feet into this privy. I had set up the pulley system during the week to save some time when we were ready to go full bore. It was getting too deep to haul buckets up with just a rope and pure back mussels. Especially for this old digger, I did enough of it! I knew this was going to be a tough one but we were ready.

I arrived at Badgers' house at 8 am. Steve called and said he would be there shortly. He had stopped at Cracker Barrel for breakfast? Steve asked if we wanted anything I said yes "A bottle sandwich with use layer sauce let's go we got a pit to dig!" When Steve arrived we all packed in my truck and headed down to the site. The chatter on the way down was the typical wonderment of what will be the outcome of the dig. I always try to be the voice of reason. (Again) "We have to dig to the bottom and hit mother earth" that is the only way we will truly know the outcome! And with those words of wisdom, we had arrived at the dig site. We didn't waste any time, we grabbed all of the tools and gear off of the truck and headed to the back of the huge brick home. When Steve and Badger saw the gigantic stone privy they couldn't believe it! We were all excited about what was about to take place.

I was the most excited. I knew the history of this house because I had done extensive research before we even broke ground. The home was that of James. W Fuller. A very influential man of his time. He was the second-largest income earner in the Lehigh Valley from the 1840s through the 1860s. He was a big wig at the infamous Crane Iron-works. The Iron-works employed 98% of the town from the 1840s into the early 1900s. He also was a horse trader during the civil war. So this man definitely had the means to build and maintain a massive stone privy.

While I was in the yard myself setting up one day I would in vision big night parties, dimly lit by oil lamps with people wandering around the yard aimlessly, drinking, smoking clay pipes, and having fun. The outhouse was set in the back and some of the tipsy guests would toss their empty's down the thunder shack hole. I envisioned someone standing where I was standing back when the outhouse was just a dirty necessity. I often wish I had a video that goes back in time to witness my daydreams of the past. But for now, we had the next best thing, the digging of a time capsule!

Finely we were pulling buckets. We knew by the size of this stone monster we would be here a while. And the only way we would

accomplish that task is "one bucket at a time" The weather was iffy that day. It was calling for strong thunderstorms to roll in by the afternoon. I came prepared though, I brought along my blue "pop-up tent". After about an hour and a half, we got through the second clay cap. We thought that layer was tough until we hit an even bigger river rock cap, that seemed like it went on forever! These people took pride in filling in their crap holes! I guess if you have the money you might as well do it right. Two hours would go by, Steve was in the hole, he sent up the last bucket of dirt and stone and was ready to come out when we heard a loud "holy crap"! Right under the stone layer by the wall lay a bottle. This bottle was the start of crazy things to come! Steve reached down chanting "I think it's blue I think it's blue" he held it up to the light. Sure enough, it was blue! A "Knauss & Lichtenwallner" double collared squat from Allentown Pa. and a scarce one at that. The company was only in business for a year. It was Steve's first blue soda. We were all stoked. My reaction was "get on the ladder and get out of the pit" I wanted to experience that great feeling again, it's been a while. As I climbed down the ladder I thought about all the hard work I had put in trying to get permissions in the last few years. I felt in my gut that my persistence was about to pay off. When I got off the ladder and my feet were



Another colored soda!



Red iron pontil the old stuff is poppin!



Nice Flint glass tumbler



Colored Allentown & Easton sodas.



Sodas & Meds



Early Open pontil Ink



Love the early Marbles



Steve, Badger and me after the pick.



Pontil "Greek" med nice ans wavy



A mob of milk glass. Mostly G W Laird Perfumer N.Y.



The Marbacher



Steve and Badger looking through the treasure

*What a way
to end a dig.*



F. Seitz, Easton Pa. RARE



Early umbrella ink very dark glass



Some of the good ones back from the past, clean and catching some rays

planted firmly all I saw was a nice dark ashy loam. I knew the hard part was done now and it was time to have some fun! I pulled out my hand scratcher and started to move a big pile of fill to the left of where Steve hit the first blue soda. Within minutes, 2 double collared tops appeared out of their resting spot! The question was would they be intact? With a little finagling, I popped them both out together, and oh yes they were whole! Another blue K&L and a green Seitz Bros. I was happier than a pig in an outhouse! I knew this was going to be an insane ride to the bottom! But when would the bottom come? I once dug an 1865 24 foot brick liner that had a 10-foot use layer with 700 bottles! But today no matter what the outcome, we would try and have fun, and relish the day because digs like this don't happen very often. Soon I had a pile of colored sodas and embossed meds lined up next to me. I know Badger was getting itchy up top looking down seeing all of these great bottles being uncovered. He did enjoy looking through the piles of fill for marbles and knick-knacks but pulling out 1860s bottles had that beat! Soon Badger was on his way down to take his turn in the capsule.

I was getting hungry so we decided to order two large pizzas from the local Italian shop. There is nothing better than getting a fresh pie delivered directly to the outhouse! We needed a well-deserved lunch. Badger decided to stay in the pit so Steve just lowered 2 slices down in the bucket. A little ash never killed anyone I suppose. I wrapped it up the best I could. It was hard for us to eat because good bottles were popping out left and right. I was pulling up buckets with a pepperoni slice hanging out of my mouth. This day so far was just awesome! It doesn't get any better. But you never know.

The owner of the property was coming in and out of his house. He was checking on our progress. He wanted a few bottles because of the history involved with his house and the house we were digging behind. A lot of times no one wants any of the bottles we find but either way I comply with the homeowner's wishes because we would not be there if it wasn't for them. Steve was up, it was his turn in the pit, Badger had to get out because he was hungry, he dropped his pizza and he added a new topping "butt cake" A real privy digger would have eaten it! In minutes Steve was on to something of color! It seemed like everything was colored in this pit. That is why I love the older privies. No junky clear glass no fluffy ash cakes! As Steve picked away at the square bottom bottle, I chirped out an Idea I just had. Since this was such a nice wide privy and we didn't have to take many buckets out now, we can all dig together in harmony in the privy! All we had to do is pick a corner. Badger and I joined Steve in the pit. I lifted the ladder and jammed my short probe in between two rocks in the wall. Now the ladder was hovering above our heads. I'm glad someone is using their noggin. And the group dig began. The bottle Steve was working on finely popped out, it was a cool-looking piece of glass. A yellow "Mishlers Herb Bitters" is a fairly common example at bottle shows but who digs yellow bitters? I saw the fill changing under me. It was getting darker and denser. We had a decent pile of cool old bottles building in the middle of the pit. I popped out a "G. W Laied perfumer New York" it was milk glass. This was a dam cool bottle and I was happy with it. In one hour, there was a pile of 15 of the same bottle sitting in the middle! It went from a cool bottle to "Oh one of those" Not that I am complaining, it's just the progression of the privy. The woman of the house must have smelled great! We

also were unearthing a lot of great pottery. It's a shame most of it was broken but it usually is, people used the stuff until it chipped or broken then down into the sloppy abyss it went. There was also a lot of "worm-ware" and "Mocha ware" all cool stuff busted or not!

On my next swipe of the hand tool, I saw a bubbly green panel of glass. I had no idea what it was, I couldn't make it out right away. Then a handle appeared, then a spout. When I pulled it out everyone's eyes popped out of their heads! It was a light green open pontil master ink! Circa 1840s. Wow-what a beauty. Another one you don't see that often. I could tell we were getting close to the bottom. The theory that the house was built in 1853 was starting to become reality. At first, I believed both houses, the landlords and the one he rented out were both 1869. They were both listed as such on the Realtor sites. But the items we were starting to find in this pit were telling me this bottom should be the 1850s era! After the master ink, more pontiled goodies appeared. And that proved they were not just late throws. Soon we had some cool pontiled pharmacy s and miscellaneous tidbits to add to our bounty. Badger got out to pull a few more buckets up, that would give us more room to dig. Plus he was starting to smell a little so it was a God's send. I was having too much fun, I forgot Steve was still in the hole and threw a shovel full of use layer on his back. He didn't flinch. As we ripped into what was left in the privy like groundhogs digging a home we both shouted out "bottle!" at almost the same time! I got to work on mine and Steve on his.

When these bottles hit the daylight I couldn't believe my eyes! One was a green F. Seitz and the other a J. Marbacher both were red iron pontils! They were rare bottles from the early 1850s. I have dug many years dreaming about an F Seitz beer bottle. Fred Seitz was the father and founder of the Seitz soda & Beer empire starting in 1821. I finely had one in my hands! I looked at Steve knowing this one will go down as an unforgettable digging experience for him. For me also, and I have been digging since I was 14 years old. I decided to stick the probe in to see where we were. I knew the bottom was very close. I cleared out a spot and slowly pushed the rod down. There it was, rock-hard mother earth. It was the end of the line for us. When you can not get the probe through even one inch then you know it's all over. There was still a little bit of use layer left to go through. Maybe four or five buckets worth on one side. Steve and I decided to get out and let Badger dig the rest. We saw he was drooling, and felt bad because he was still looking for his lost marbles. He slid down into the pit for one last hurrah! But before he could even start digging he shouted up "oh my God a soda" we thought he was joking. But we should have known better to think anyone would be joking about good bottles in this pit! As we both looked down Badger was holding up a teal iron pontial soda! It was an 1850s Raub & Eckert from Easton pa another great soda. In the end, we had 9 blue sodas and a hand full of greens from the 1860s. Also, 3 rare sodas from the 1850s were pulled from the bottom and Lots of old great miscellaneous stuff. Definitely a good time had by all.

What a way to end a dig. This 4th of July dig came in with a bang and went out with a Boom baby! It would go down in the record books and be a hard one to top. Even for this seasoned crap hole digger!

