

"Pipe!" He Hollered

By Bill Baab

SIDEBAR TO: THE NOT-SO-DRY STORY OF DIVING, INTO AN AUGUSTA, GA. WELL.



Edgefield District pipe discovered by Eric Nygard in privy. (Courtesy of Edward Moody)

Eric Nygard found himself in the depths of an 8-foot-deep, wood-lined pre-Civil War privy in the heart of downtown Augusta, Georgia during an early spring day this year.

He was a member of a party organized by Karl Harrar, an electronics engineer from Aiken, South Carolina. Harrar is famous for developing a portable ground-penetrating radar system the longtime collector of antique bottles and pottery uses to pinpoint locations of outhouse holes and trash pits of yesteryear.

The system had located two previous privies on the lot dating to the late 19th century and a few bottles from that era had been found. A few weekends later he had found the much older third privy jammed against the foundation of an adjacent building. He earlier had learned the lot was the site of a 19th century hotel.

So Nygard had found himself at the very bottom of the privy, scratching in the dirt in search of more artifacts deposited during the 1850s. All the bottles excavated were pontiled, including a pair of Clark & Company iron-pontiled mineral waters from Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

Suddenly, from out of the depths, Nygard shouted "pipe!"

"I thought he meant he'd found a water or sewer pipe," Harrar said.



Salt-glazed bottle said to be early French ink (Courtesy of Karl Harrar)



Unusual 2-1/2-gallon churn found in pre-Civil War privy. (Courtesy of Karl Harrar)

But it turned out to be an alkaline glazed clay pipe whose bowl sported facial features. It is believed to have been made by a master potter residing in the old Edgefield, South Carolina District a scant 30 miles away. That area was called "Pottersville" was founded by renowned master potter Abner Landrum during the 1820s who also was credited with developing the alkaline glaze process.

Pipes for smoking made in that district are considered rare by collectors and usually bring four-figure sums at auction.

During research for this story, other

pipes were brought to my attention, including three excavated some 25 years ago behind one of the earliest homes of Macon in central Georgia by my friend and fellow collector Jim Grantham. One was a fancy molded clay example, the others featured facial features and all are illustrated with Nygard's example (he won it during the post-dig picks) with this story.

Tony Carr of North Augusta also found a whole pipe and the remains of another while digging several years ago in the Miles Mill pottery site in Edgefield County near Trenton, S.C.



Ornate clay pipe (right) with face among trio dug in Macon by Jim Grantham. (Courtesy of Jim Grantham)



Here's the face pipe dug by Jim Grantham in Macon, Ga. (Courtesy of Jim Grantham)



Tony Carr found this pipe near Trenton, South Carolina. (Courtesy of Tony Carr)

