

# Woody the Woodchuck Showed Me the Way

*To where? A hidden bottle treasure in a rock pile*

By Peter B. Samuelson

It was early spring of 2020. The temperature was sixty degrees and the robins had recently arrived for the season. Things seemed to be in order except for the recent news concerning Covid-19.

I live in a small town in western Maine where the population is quite sparse. There is no post office or gas station and only one business (which is seasonal). However, there are many miles of old coach roads with many old cellar holes along the way. The total human population is just under 400. It is a safe place to live during a pandemic.

The plan for that beautiful spring day was to investigate an old cellar hole in a remote section of town. To access the site, I had to hike along an old town road which passed through a dense forest of mixed hardwood and softwood trees.

Along the way there is a beautiful, hand-split rock bridge that crosses an ice-cold stream most likely full of native brook trout. The bridge dates to about 1820.

Not far from the bridge is some open farmland and the remains of an old barn. Near the barn is what remains of an early 1900s \*manure spreader and 1920s snow roller. I wonder if Ralph Finch has either of these collectibles?

Nearby is the Harding cellar hole. From looking at the condition of the foundation rocks I determined that the house burned many years ago. The rocks are split and crumbed from the heat of the fire.



The Harding cellar hole full of 1940's and 1950's junk. Woody the woodchuck's burrow is to the far left.

Inside and out, the cellar hole had been used as a dumping place for trash for quite a long time. Most of what I could see was 1940s-50s junk. But what was under it?

Off to the side of the cellar hole I noticed that many of the foundation rocks looked out of place or pushed around. Perhaps there was more dump in that direction.

Suddenly my thoughts were interrupted by a strange noise in the woods. Much to my surprise I could see a tubby woodchuck heading my way with some sort of green leaves in its mouth. Just before reaching the edge of the cellar hole the critter dove head first into a hole between two large rocks.

All this commotion sparked my interest, so naturally I had to go over and peek into the hole to see what "Woody the Woodchuck" was doing. I couldn't see Woody at all. Instead, I saw something of greater interest.

Wedged among the rocks were pieces of rusty metal, broken bottles, old leather boots, and scythe blades. What a sight!

Apparently, this section of the cellar hole had been used from time to time as a dumping spot, probably during winter months when hauling trash off to the woods was a major hassle.

I still couldn't see the fat woodchuck, so I gave a verbal notice to the critter that I would be back early the following day





**PHOTOS (clockwise from upper left):**

Two common 1890s bottles and a broken Carnival glass item.

This copper hot water bottle was the first decent collectible to be dug from the dump.

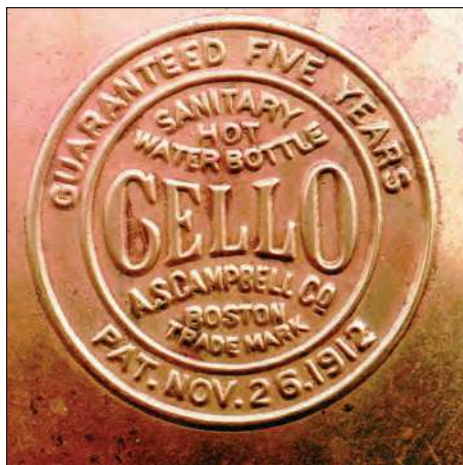
A close-up of the debossing on the 2-gallon ovoid jug.

"C.W. ATWELL / PORTLAND / ME". The last and best bottle dug from Woody's home.

A 2-gallon ovoid jug and an 18" chamfer knife from deep in the dump.

Missing its side-boards, the old manure spreader is resting peacefully.





The logo embossed on the hot water bottle.

with heavy duty tools to begin a major excavation of the premises.

The next morning, I arrived early at the digging site armed with a two-ton come-along and a crow bar and began the arduous task of digging through the rubble near the woodchuck's burrow. For the next few hours, I removed nothing worth keeping ... what a drag. I was getting pooped!

But then, ahead of me, I could see a copper-colored object wedged under some bricks. Carefully I pulled it free and was surprised to see that I had just dug a complete copper hot water bottle with an embossed company logo on the front. The logo included a "Patent Date of Nov. 26, 1912."

There was still much more rubble to dig through. And also, what happened to Woody the Woodchuck?

Continuing on into the pile of trash and rocks, I began to unearth broken pieces of early machine-made bottles such as inks and food flavorings. There was nothing here to keep, but with luck things could change as I went along. And after lunch things really did change, big time!

From under a large slab of house foundation came a most unusual handmade tool. It is a type of draw-shave knife called a chamfer knife. It was made by Higgins and Libby Co. in Bangor, Maine, about

1877. The tool was used to create a beveled edge on large barrel staves. The tool is 18 inches long and solid steel. What more could an artifact digger hope to find?

With lousy weather forecast for the next day or so, I backfilled my hole to keep intruders out and also to let Woody the Woodchuck enjoy his palatial estate all by himself.

Later in the week I was back at the Harding cellar hole with renewed energy and discovered a half dozen small 1890s household bottles and one busted Carnival Glass item. At least I was finding a little something for my efforts.

In this same area I came upon the remains of a nifty two-gallon ovoid jug from C. Crafts and Co., Portland, Maine. With a bit of patience and lots of epoxy, I made the jug stand tall for a photo or two.

It became very slow going for the next several days. Some huge rocks were more than I could move, so all I could do was scratch around them and hope to find something whole. This soon became a waste of time.

There wasn't much more for me to do except to try and dislodge some twisted metal that had been aggravating me for some time. Finally, with the aid of my crowbar, I managed to twist the metal around so I could see what was behind it. And was I in for a surprise!

There in the dirt lay two unbroken bottles. One was a sick Warner's Safe Kidney and Liver Cure, the other, a pontiled C.W. Atwell Portland, Maine with no damage and only some minor contents stain near the shoulder.

All I could think of at the time was to thank Woody the Woodchuck for showing me the way to some treasure. If things go well, I'll be back to visit with Woody in April of 2021.

*\*Editor's note: Ralph does have an image of a manure spreader; he says it's what motivates his writing.*

Excited to announce the Summer 2021 opening of the **Royal Crown Cola Museum** in **Columbus, GA**, home of Royal Crown's founder Claud A. Hatcher!

Looking for artifacts (signs, display pieces, etc.) from the following: Chero-Cola, Royal Crown Cola, Nehi, Diet Rite Cola, Upper 10, Par T Pack Ginger ale!

**Please contact Allen Woodall at 706-332-6378.**



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