

One of my customers informed me of a way the club could help an elderly man who lives southwest of Otsego. It seems that this gentleman's wife decided to take control of the family's purse strings about sixty years ago. Over the last sixty years she salted away around fifty thousand dollars and kept it hidden from the family-- not in a bank, on the property! The last time that she accessed the money was last August. She was in her eighties when she passed away in their home last September. She had been suffering from heart problems and other ailments. It was hard for her to get around.

A search was made inside the house by the family, but the cache was not recovered. We notified the club members to meet on a Sunday afternoon at Pro/Stock Detectors at 2:30, and I showed up about that time. I could not believe what I saw! My parking lot was filled to overflowing! Some folks had to park in the K-Mart parking lot next door! We then followed my customer, to the site about eight miles away. We had a caravan of cars and trucks about two miles long!

When we arrived at the site I was surprised to find a house that was only about twenty years old. The home was located on about twenty acres of beautiful land sheltered by dozens of tall pines. There were four buildings counting the house- a pole building, a cement block root cellar, and an old outhouse imported from who- knows- where. Thinking that we may be possibly searching for a plastic Tupperware box with only paper money, many of our bottle diggers bought along probes. The property had a large area that served as her garden as well as a little potting shed. We fanned out with our metal detectors and searched the vast open areas. Those of us who had probes searched the areas that were close to the aluminum-sided house where metal detectors would not reach.

I have learned that there are places that are more likely than others to be hiding spots. These are the areas that would hide any sign of digging activity; areas like inside dirt-floor buildings, flower beds, gardens. . . there were several locations like that. One part of the large pole barn was a dirt floor tractor port, and it was well hidden from spying neighbors. The root cellar was also was dirt-floored. We probed and detected these areas with no success, but I deeply feel that the money is there.

Growing tired of the long Michigan winters, the couple was watching a TV program about Florida when the wife said, "We should buy a little place in Florida." With his broken English the husband asked "Where would we get the money?" She then told him about her secret stash of forty- five to fifty thousand dollars!

So, where is the money now? Many think is hidden in the house. We may never know.

I believe that there are many lost stashes like this. Sometimes they are recovered by accident decades later . . . here's an example.

One day I received a call from a man who lives near Holland Michigan. He said. "You don't remember me, I purchased a metal detector from you several years ago." He went on to say that he doesn't even recall what happened to the detector. He has been so busy over the last ten years building his very successful business, that he hasn't had the time to play. His business has been buying and developing property.

Two years before he made his call to me, he had purchased some beautiful country property to build his own dream house. The land had the remains of an old fallen down farm house and barn built in the mid-1800's as well as a third building that served as a tool shed or possibly a chicken coop.

After completing his beautiful new home and landscaping it, he decided to clear the remaining foundations and rubble where the old homestead had been. Since he was a contractor with heavy equipment, a bulldozer was chosen to take care of cleanup chores.

The old chicken coop was sided with some solid, gray, weathered, barn-wood which was too good to destroy, so every board was carefully removed and saved. This meant dozens of trips in and out of the old structure. Even the framing lumber was found to be very solid so it too was salvaged. The very first job for the bulldozer was to push the chicken coop's field-stone foundation away and level the small knoll the structure was built on.

When my wife, daughter, and I showed up to search the property, the man explained, "Al, I was pushing the rock and rubble into a pile. When I pulled the 'dozer into reverse, I looked over my shoulder, like I always do, and what I saw stopped my heart! It was like all the air was sucked from my lungs! The ground was covered with hundreds of silver dollars"!

The old dutch farmer who had originally built the place, had gone into the tool crib and dug a large hole and lined it, like a vault, with red brick. He must have been converting his farm profits into silver dollars and placing them into old half-gallon Mason canning jars- - lots of them!

My job was to search the property for any other caches. The property owner had already cleared the property with a brush hog before we had arrived. After several hours of searching in very humid ninety degree weather with a two-box detector, I found nothing more. The only good reading I received was when I searched the open basement of the old house. Once a typical Michigan dirt cellar, at some time it had been crudely cemented over. The signal I received came from the middle of the basement floor, and it was found by using a conventional detector. A heavy sledge hammer was used to break up the concrete only to find an old leaf spring from a buggy.

After a week had passed the landowner reported to me his final count, there were just a few coins shy of 3,500! The newest coin was dated 1906, all silver dollars. Clearly the hoard was stashed with no intention of adding to, or taking any coins away--- not until the time was right. The old vault was covered with a 1/2 inch thick, heavy lid made of iron boiler-plate, as well as about 6 inches of dirt! While tearing down the old building the property owner walked over the vault countless times without any clue of what was just below his feet!

I'm told by the old timers that there is no better alarm system than a flock of chickens! Any kind of intruder, man or beast, will get the chickens riled! Often the chicken coop would be placed within view of the master bedroom so that when the chickens became unsettled the farmer, not only could hear them, but possibly even get a look at the situation! And who knows, maybe he could even discharge a couple barrels of rock salt --- or lead!

As we left the site that evening, exhausted, I stopped our car by the road and looked over the area. I wondered how many people have passed buy this property over the last decades? People who did not have a clue of the buried treasure only 200 feet from the road! And how many old caches did I pass on the way here?

They are out there, folks!