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Westner & Eastern Treasures magazine**

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BIRMINGHAM'S GOLD

Gold! Every treasure hunter seeks it but the elusive "gold coin" is the most sought after in the serious coin hunter's eyes.

Mike Wardlow has been coin hunting since he bought his detector in June, 1986. Since then he has found several nice coins and a few gold and silver rings. But nothing can compare to the excitement of July 30, 1988 at a downtown park that was designed with the original Birmingham, Alabama city plan of 1871.

Work was started in October 1987 on a remodeling project to completely change the layout of the park. The old sidewalks were torn out and bulldozers scraped six to 12 inches off most of the park, piling the dirt into huge mounds on the northeast corner.

Word spread quickly among members of the Warrior Basin Treasure Hunters Association, of which Mike is a member, that the park was a good source of turn-of-the-century coins.

Mike's first hunt at the park yielded several Wheat cents and part of a gold pocket watch. In later hunts he found all the small denomination coins of the 20th century, Indian cents, Wheat cents, V nickels, Buffalo nickels, Barber dimes, Mercury and silver Roosevelt dimes, one Barber quarter, 1917-D type two Standing Liberty quarter in very fine condition and one silver Washington quarter.



Among the unusual finds was a 1903 Birmingham dog license and a token good for two and a half cents in trade at the Greenwood Cave Pool Room.

Saturday, July 30 started out with no specific hunting plans for the day. Around 10 a.m. Joe Box, a fellow club member, phoned. Mike agreed to meet him at the park at three that afternoon.

Upon arriving at the park they decided to start hunting on the freshly scraped northwest corner of the park. His first signal turned out to be a 1917 Wheat cent, his next find was a 1903 V nickel, found while searching the lowest point of a scrape.

After searching for 30 minutes Mike decided to hunt towards the northeast corner where the piles of original topsoil were located. Having been over the existing piles several times before, it was easy to notice what looked like a wheelbarrow's load of freshly dug dirt piled between two old piles. It was over this load of dirt that Mike swept his searchcoil and received a loud signal—an 1884-S five dollar gold piece.

Ed, who had been hunting off to Mike's side, had just come over with the same idea in mind, wanting to search the pile in which Mike had found the gold piece.

Mike showed Ed his incredible find and called Joe over to have a look. Needless to say, that dirt pile is the most hunted pile in the state of Alabama.

While Mike's gold piece may not be the most beautiful found by a treasure hunter, it will remain his find of a lifetime.

