

Homeowner Finds Cannonball

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Newport Rhode Island The owner of the John Bliss House, a farmhouse built in 1680, by John Bliss on land deeded to him by his father-in-law, Rhode Island Gov. Benedict Arnold was digging in the yard in preparation for a new barn when he found what he described as a "shiny metal object".

Upon further investigation, homeowner Ryan Miller identified the item as a Civil War era cannonball. He contacted the Newport Historical Society, which referred him to the Naval War College Museum as well as the Varnum House Museum. "I spoke with some of the historians, and they thought mostly like it was a solid shot, solid metal," Miller explained. "But there was a slight chance it was a hollow shot that would have been filled with gunpowder."



Not taking any chances, Miller called the police, who promptly arrived with a bomb squad. "I was expecting to make an appointment, but things escalated quickly and 20 minutes later, Newport police was there blocking off the street and the bomb squad was two minutes behind them," Miller said.

Members of the bomb squad took the cannonball to the basement of the house and used a portable X-ray machine to determine it was, in fact, a solid shot and not a hazard. That certainly was a relief for Miller and his family.



The cannonball is 5.5 inches in diameter and 23 pounds, which "lines up with what the British had in Newport," Miller said. American soldiers often used 18-pound shots, according to one of the historians to whom he spoke. He was reportedly allowed to keep the cannonball since it was inert.