

Man Buys \$3 Civil War-era Ordnance from Scrap Yard

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Asheville, North Carolina A Civil War-era artifact recently bought by an Asheville man turned out to be a live explosive. The Asheville Police Department (APD) Bomb Squad responded to a home in east Asheville after John Miller, who bought the 12-pound sphere item for three dollars from a scrap yard, grew suspicious of the device.

According to Miller, it rolled around in the back of his van for a few days before he decided to take a closer look. "I was getting a little nervous about it because I realized it wasn't a normal cannonball, as I assumed it was," he said.

Although the artifact appeared to be a cannonball, Joe Silberman, APD bomb squad commander said it actually was not. He explained, "It's a 4-and-2/3-inch bursting shell, or case shot. The way this would work, it was fitted with a fuse, it would be loaded into a piece of artillery, like a cannon, and it would be fired, and it would explode overhead on a battlefield," Silberman said. "If you harassed [it] enough or did certain things to it, like tried to drill into it or cut into it, it could have exploded."



The 160-year-old munition was safely detonated by the bomb squad. Silberman went on to explain that finding a bursting shell in western North Carolina is rare. Two of the most common explosives found in the mountains, he said, are grenades and blasting caps, also known as detonators or initiators.

Miller said he was relieved that he only lost a few bucks in the transaction. He said he likes to buy unique items and sell them at the Regeneration Station in Asheville but added he would never sell anything that could injure someone.

"I wouldn't have felt comfortable putting it for sale somewhere not knowing what it was," Miller said. "I think it was just best to have it disposed of, for the safety of all involved."

