

## Civil War Gold in Pennsylvania?

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A 155-year-old legend concerning buried federal gold has caught the attention of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The tale of treasure being buried in Dents Run in the wilderness of Pennsylvania has been met with skepticism from state officials and historians, but the story dates back to around the time of the 1863 Battle of Gettysburg.

The Union Army allegedly dispatched two wagons charged with delivering lucrative cargo from West Virginia to Harrisburg. To avoid Confederate troops, the wagon took a route through northern Pennsylvania. Different accounts exist for who stole the gold or why it went missing along the way, but the shipment was believed to contain 26-52 gold bars, each weighing 50 pounds. The haul would be worth up to \$50 million today.



*Finders Keepers group members, courtesy of Finders Keepers.*

The treasure-hunting group Finders Keepers insists it found evidence the gold was buried in a state forest at Dents Run. The group spent five years digging in a cave on state land, and two more years drilling atop the cave before going to the FBI. They showed agents how their sophisticated metal detector lit up when aimed at the spot where they believed the gold was hidden. The FBI hired an outside firm to conduct an underground scan using a device called a gravimeter. The scan

identified a large metallic mass with the same density as gold, which would be worth more than \$250 million if every ounce of it was gold.

Finders Keepers claims to have had an agreement with the FBI to watch the court-sanctioned excavation. Agents instead confined them to their car out of sight of the wooded hillside where a backhoe was digging. After six hours of excavation on the first day, the group was allowed up the hill. Work proceeded for another hour before an agent called an abrupt halt at 3 p.m., saying the team was cold, tired, and hungry, and it would be getting dark soon. The target depth was just three feet away, and whether the FBI actually left the woods is itself an open question.

At the end of the excavation the next day, the FBI escorted the treasure hunters to the snow-covered site. They stared into the pit, but saw not so much as a glimmer of gold dust, let alone the tons of precious metal the instruments had detected. However, neighbors have since come forward with accounts of late-night excavations and the presence of FBI convoys, fueling speculation the agency wasn't telling the whole truth.

One person who lived close by claimed to hear what sounded like a backhoe and jackhammer until at least 2 a.m., and the hillside remained brightly lit during the night. She also saw a half-dozen black sport utility vehicles (SUVs) back up to the bottom of the hill and rendezvous with several all-terrain utility vehicles (ATVs), but couldn't make out what investigators were transferring from the ATVs to the SUVs.

Another person who lives nearby stated she was getting her kids ready for school on the morning of the second day when she spied a convoy of FBI vehicles driving past, including two large armored trucks.

Kem Parada of Finders Keepers said, "After my years of experience here using equipment, there was something here, something here of value, some kind of precious metal. And whatever it is, it's gone now. And that's what I want to get to the bottom of, is what was in that hole."

At the conclusion of the FBI's excavation, the agency said "nothing was found", and court documents related to the dig are sealed. If Union gold had been recovered from the woods, the discovery of a historic and extremely valuable trove of federal property on state-owned land would have almost certainly started a court battle over who owns it, and whether Finders Keepers would be entitled to a cut.

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