

Off The Beaten Path

Sometimes you see something that may not fit with what you usually collect, but for some reason, the item calls out to you. People who are more conservative with their money may be able to fight off the call, while others move to make the item theirs. In a few occurrences, the person may luck out and get something they want for a small amount. Others are not so lucky. All have a story.

The following items are some things that I purchased at reasonable prices which called out to me. The first is my favorite. I was attending a convention in east central Indiana a few years back. An older gentleman was sitting at a table with a bunch of ball hats for sale. I was not really interested in ball hats, but was talking to him to see what else he had. He said he had retired from the Oklahoma Fish and Wildlife Department where he did considerable work removing beaver dams with explosives. He sorted through the hats and found one from his work. It has a beaver standing upright on its back legs wearing a hardhat with a stick of dynamite in one of its hands.

I knew because of the uniqueness, I had to have it. It is one of my favorite items and I do not really remember what I paid for it. It will usually get a chuckle out of people when I show it to them.

Another of my favorites is the Little Trapper book. I would like to be able to say that my mother gave it to me when I was young, but, in reality, she gave it to me within the last five years. It was published in 1950 so it is in good shape for its age. It is a book for a little kid, but I still like the image on the front.

Another item I like to collect is unique fur including different colorizations including albino, black, red, cinnamon and other unique furs. I have two mounted albino raccoons. One I got from a fur buyer and the other one I caught in 2011. When I saw it in the 220 body gripper, I thought it was something else. When I picked it up, I knew it was a raccoon and knew I would get it mounted. I also have three cinnamon raccoon furs, several black raccoons, black beaver, a red coyote and two muskrats with white dots on their backs caught from the same bank hole. Of these furs, I caught the black raccoons, but everything else, I got from fur buyers. I also have the only badger that I have ever caught tanned. I lived in Iowa when I caught it. The largest beaver that I have caught is also tanned. Looking back now, I wish I would have gotten all my first catches tanned.

I have lived in Indiana for fifteen years. For the first thirteen years, Indiana did not have a season for otter even though they were plentiful. In those thirteen years, I unintentionally caught seventeen otters in raccoon, beaver and muskrat sets. They were all dead when I checked my traps. I turned them all over to the IDNR to study and I hope they helped to get an open otter season.

The first otter season in Indiana was during the fall of 2015 and the spring of 2016. The limit was two per trapper and I caught my limit in one day. During the second open season last year, it took two days to get my limit, but they were both caught out of the same pond. Since they were the first ones I could keep and

are not worth much, I have gotten all four tanned. I plan to get the ones I catch this year tanned as well. I probably just jinxed myself saying that.

When I wrote my book "Adirondack Dick", I learned that Dick Wood was a smoker. While reading through hundreds of articles for that book, I found that Dick specifically named three different kinds of tobacco he smoked. He probably smoked plenty of other kinds of tobacco. The three kinds were Velvet, Edgeworth and As You Like It. I collected a tin for each brand. They look out of place as they are displayed with my trap collection. But when someone asks, I just explain why I collected those three tins.

I also have a couple of unique glass bottles. One is Ole Polecat Straight Whiskey. The glass bottle was intentionally formed to make it look like the bottle withered due to the skunk smell. At least that is why I think it is like that. Maybe it is truly an incorrectly formed bottle.

To a trap collector, these items may not be of that much interest. But, for whatever reason, I get the most enjoyment out of them. They are different and did not cost an arm and a leg. True, not all of them are antiques, but all can be tied to trapping in one way or another. And best of all, one can be tied to using explosives.

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