



**GREATER CHICAGO
INSULATOR CLUB
NEWSLETTER**
Rick Soller, editor



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Club Hunt of the Wheaton Prairie Path

The weather now seems to be mild enough for a club hunt and, since the next show is in Wheaton, hunting the Illinois Prairie Path (Wheaton Prairie Path?) seems like a good idea. To that end, if you are interested in searching along the bike trail that used to be the right of way of an interurban rail line, meet on Friday, April 6, 2018 at 10:30 a.m. in the parking lot of St. Andrews Golf and Country Club located at 2241 Illinois Route 59 (also called N. Neltnor Blvd.) in West Chicago, Illinois. The golf course is about a block north of Illinois Route 64 (North Ave.). The Prairie Path runs right past the golf course and we can coordinate where to go from there. Let me know if you plan to join the hunt, give me a call (847-970-1686) or email (com574@clcillinois.edu) since the hunt may get cancelled if it rains. I'll have my phone on me on Friday too in case you get delayed or lost.

It has been a while since the club last had a hunt so some members may not realize the kind of insulators that were used on the line. Most sought after are Fred M. Locke multipart with multiple patent dates incuse stamped. A few years ago, I finally found a whole one, valued at several hundred dollars. Parts of them ranging from fist sized pieces to whole sections have been recovered with collectors like Mike Spadafora looking for these to reconstruct a kitsulator. Fred M. Locke marked pin bases were used on the line and about a dozen of these were recovered during a club hunt. Glass CD 160s, transpositions, and modern Hemingrays have been found. A couple strings of blue J-D suspensions were spotted in a six foot pool several years ago but no one wanted to go skinny dipping for them. There are also non-insulator artifacts like six foot metal pole braces and grounding rods along the line.

If I were going to spend a week hunting the line, I would want to bring a pack mule to hold everything I might need. If you find a piece sticking out of the ground, it's always a good idea to rake the area to look for other pieces or whole insulators. A hay rake or a claw-type rake works best. You may have to dig the insulator out of the ground so a shovel or a bulb planting trowel is convenient. Roots have had 100 years or more to grip the insulator or grow through it so a saw or an axe may be needed. A few poles are still standing so the saw may be used to get at the teetering treasure atop the tree high pole. I always bag my finds and mark where I found pieces in case I search the area in a future year and find more pieces that have been pushed to the surface of an insulator I am trying to put together. If any pins are in good shape or you find a pin base still on a pin, you might need a wrench to get the pin off, a hack saw to cut the pin off, or a regular saw to cut away the surrounding wood.

Hiking through the bushes is hard work, especially after a winter of inactivity, so bring lots of water. An energy bar might be a good idea too. Bringing gloves would provide protection for your hands from the pickers. Mosquitos should not be a problem so bug repellent probably won't be needed. Long pants and comfortable shoes are a necessity. Remember that however far you walk; you have to walk back that same distance.

Illinois Prairie Path Cleanup

A hunt along the Illinois Prairie Path (what I call the Wheaton Prairie Path) takes on some urgency given a recent item in the March/Spring 2018 Illinois Prairie Path Newsletter. The newsletter indicated that they are looking for volunteers to clean up trash and debris on the path. The cleanup will take place on April 28, 2018 beginning at 9 a.m., rain or shine. The whole path is subject to this cleanup based on the clipping from the newsletter below.

To me, however, “debris” means pieces of Fred M. Locke porcelain multiparts & pin bases, CD 160 baby signals, transposition insulators, blue J-D suspension insulators, and other glass insulators used on the line. In addition, not all insulators may be in pieces. A few years ago, I recovered a whole Fred M. Locke multipart in a beautiful tan glaze that was worth several hundred dollars. Before that, during one club hunt, pin bases were found. During another hunt, strings of blue J-D suspensions were spotted underwater in a depression about 8 feet deep.

I plan to contact all the coordinators listed below and let them know that we would appreciate it if the insulator pieces were left alone or, if removed, to keep them separate and save them for us so we can inventory them. Perhaps we might even be able to construct a kitsulator from the pieces.

Our goal each year is to clean up as much trash and debris on the Illinois Prairie Path and Great Western Trail as possible.

If you or your club/organization is interested in taking part, please contact one of the cleanup coordinators listed below. We look forward to another successful year of stewardship shared by all who are users of the IPP (Path) and GWT (Trail).

Aurora Branch/Naperville - Ken McClurg
McClurg@wideopenwest.com or 630-209-2969

Elgin Branch/Oliver Square, West Chicago -
Sabrina Lau sabrina.Marie.Lau@gmail.com
630-345-2359

Elmhurst - Doc Jevitz docjev@sbcglobal.net or
630-918-6588

Glen Ellyn - Christiana Cabrera ccabrera@glenellyn.org
or 630-469-5203

Lombard - David Gorman gormand@villageoflombard.org
or 630-620-5765

Website at: IPP.org

Maywood/Bellwood - Marcius Scaggs
marcius32000@sbcglobal.net or 773-615-3925

Villa Park Pride Commission - Theresa Bauer
tchan.bauer@gmail.com or 847-207-9788

Warrenville - Susan Degnan suelite97@yahoo.com or
630-940-4255

Wheaton - Christine Richardson cesber@gmail.com or
603-930-2200

Winfield - Erik Spande erik.spande@comcast.net
or 630-871-6640

The Great Western Trail - Don Kirchenberg
FrndsGrtWstnTrl@aol.com or 630-853-7650

Archaeological Dig at Jackson Park

The Sunday, March 25, 2018 (p. 9) Chicago Tribune reported that some 1893 Chicago World’s Columbian Exposition artifacts have been found at the Jackson Park location where the new Obama Center will be built. Upon reading this, a part of my brain lit up as I remembered that the CD 181 “Pluto” was used in the underground tunnels at the exposition. Maybe some of them were found by archaeologists who studied the location or perhaps some would be dug up during excavation for the center.

The article indicated that IDOT undertook the study and the Illinois State Archaeological Survey (ISAS) dug into seven sites in the 553-acre Jackson Park area and produced a 237 page report. The report is apparently posted online in advance of a public meeting to be held

Thursday, March 29, 2018 at the University of Chicago. The report was written by Clare Tolmie and Paula Porubcan Branstner of the ISAS. I have found several newspaper articles and web pages mentioning the report but have not found the report itself yet. Emails to a few leads have been sent but I am still waiting for a response.

I did get a response from one of the authors with a link to the report. The email indicated that no insulators were found in the report but the report did note that a porcelain insulator was found in one spot. I'm not waiting to hear of items found are available for viewing somewhere.

Cleaning Insulators with Bleach

A November 21, 2017 article in the *New York Times* explained some interesting properties of bleach that are relevant to collectors of insulators, especially porcelain insulators with cracks. A reader wanted to know if bleach actually cleaned the stains or a cracked dish that was soaked in bleach or were the stains just hidden. Mary Nyman, a professor of chemistry at Oregon State University, provided the answer. She indicated that bleach is sodium hypochlorite which consists of sodium, oxygen and chlorine. "Of these three elements," she wrote, "the chlorine is really hungry for electrons" since it doesn't have enough of them. Food stuck to dishware is basically hydrocarbons and are great sources of electrons.

We all know that food is not what is stuck to the sides of our insulators. I usually think of it as soot so I googled the question, "is soot a hydrocarbon" and found the answer to be yes, soot is a mass of impure carbon particles created from incomplete combustion of hydrocarbons.

The article continued with a chemical explanation of what happens during the reaction between the bleach and the hydrocarbons. "The chlorine grabs the electrons from the hydrocarbons, the oxygens and chlorides get bonded to the carbons, and this makes the food stains water soluble, but just enough to unstick them from the dishware," Dr. Nyman said. As a result, the stains come unstuck and can be washed away.

The article concluded by noted that when food particles get stuck in cracks, it makes the crack more visible but, when the food is released by the bleach, cracks are not so visible anymore, although they are still there.

For porcelain insulators that are broken, bleach may help clean the surface before gluing the insulator back together. For porcelain insulators with lots of crazing, perhaps the bleach will help clean the cracks. For glass insulators, bleach may be one more weapon in the cleaning arsenal of collectors.

As with most chemicals used to clean insulators, there are a number of safety precautions. I found this list on the internet. When handling relatively concentrated chlorine bleach right out of the container, always:

- Wear eye protection such as wrap-around safety glasses and/or goggles to avoid getting the bleach in your eyes.
- Wear rubber household gloves or nitrile gloves to avoid skin exposure.
- Wear clothing that will cover your skin in case of spills. At a minimum, wear a long-sleeved shirt, pants, socks and shoes. If you want additional protection, chemical protective aprons and disposable protective suits are available from pesticide safety or industrial safety equipment suppliers.
- Open the container and mix out of doors or in a very well-ventilated room to avoid a buildup of vapors, which can cause eye and/or respiratory irritation.

- Wash your hands vigorously with mild soap and water before you use the bathroom, eat, smoke or use smokeless tobacco.
- Shower and wash yourself thoroughly with soap and shampoo at the end of the day.

If exposed to the concentrated material:

- **Eyes:** Hold the eye open and rinse slowly and gently with water for 15 to 20 minutes. Remove contact lenses, if present, after the first five minutes, then continue rinsing the eye. Call a poison control center or doctor for treatment advice.
- **Skin or clothing:** Take off the contaminated clothing. Rinse the skin immediately with plenty of water for 15 to 20 minutes. Call a poison control center or doctor for treatment advice.
- **Swallowed:** Have the person sip a glassful of water if able to swallow. Do not induce vomiting unless told to do so by a poison control center or doctor. Do not give anything by mouth to an unconscious person.

When working with bleach diluted with water and/or soap, remember to:

- Continue to protect your eyes and skin by keeping them covered.
- Make sure the area you are working in is very well-ventilated. If possible, use fans to exchange inside air with outdoor air and leave windows or doors open for the maximum dissipation of vapors.
- Wash your hands vigorously with mild soap and water before you use the bathroom, eat, smoke or use smokeless tobacco.
- Shower and wash yourself thoroughly with soap and shampoo at the end of the day.

These are some additional issues to consider when working with bleach:

- It will fade colors in clothes and slowly break down cloth fibers.
- It is corrosive to bare metals.
- Vapors can cause people who have compromised respiratory systems (for example, those who suffer from asthma, allergies and/or COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)) to experience serious discomfort or even acute distress that may require medical attention.
- A toxic gas will be released if bleach is mixed with other cleaning agents, especially ammonia. An explosion can occur if sufficient quantities are mixed.
- Follow all applicable safety precautions and use the instructions on the product label.

DuPage Collectable Expo

The show at the DuPage County Fairgrounds is shaping up nicely. Over 80 tables filled with insulators, bottles, and lightning rod balls have already been sold and a few more are pending.

Flyers have been placed in numerous area antique stores. Russ Frank, in particular, seems to be enjoying his retirement as it seems he has been to about 30 of them so far, leaving the postcard-sized, multi-colored show announcements at each one. Thanks also to Arlen Rienstra for putting some around in his neck of the woods. Bob Stahr placed an ad in the Crown Jewels and got the show announced in bottle magazines. Insulators.info picked up the information from the CJ ad and listed the show on that web site. Bob posted show information on several sites on Facebook. Rick Soller promoted the show at a meeting of the First Chicago Bottle Club and included show information in sales listings on eBay. Both Rick and Bob put announcements on Craigslist. Hopefully, all the promotion will result in a good crowd at the show.

Shows offer a number of advantages to collecting that are not available through other venues like eBay or Facebook.

1. Shows can result in big cost savings. Unlike on eBay, you can usually bargain with a dealer. Most dealers are willing to come down in price, especially if you are buying several insulators. You also don't have to pay postage costs at a show. Ten insulators purchased on eBay could cost around \$100 just to get them shipped to you. Triple that figure if the insulators are overseas. Dealers are especially willing to make deals at the end of a show when they contemplate the work needed to pack everything up and take it home. At this point, some dealers will offer deep discounts or make offers for entire tables of insulators.
2. Shows allow you to inspect the merchandise before purchase. I know some eBay sellers that don't provide descriptions of damage, they just take photographs of the insulator from several angles. Even with the ability to enlarge photographs, glare and distortions in the photograph plus bubbles, fizz, and junk in the glass can hide a ding or a crack. Being able to feel the insulator allows you to really know about possible defects. One person's mint insulator may not be your mint insulator. On the other hand, a ding to one person may be normal nibbling along a mold line or chipping of a hole in a spool made during manufacturing.
3. Shows allow you to make personal connections. Once dealers know what you are looking for, you become one of the first ones they think of when they come across another related piece. Personal connections also give you a chance to learn the story behind the insulator. Where was it found? How did the dealer acquire it? Most importantly, making friends is easier at a show and that is part of what makes the hobby fun.

Upcoming Shows

Wheaton, Illinois

Saturday, April 7, 2018

DuPage Collectable Expo held at the DuPage County Fairgrounds. Tables are \$40 for the first and \$35 for the second and subsequent table. \$10 if you want electricity. Contact Bob Stahr at 360 S. Kenilworth Ave., Glen Ellyn, IL 60137, (630) 793-5345, Bob@Hemingray.com or Rick Soller at 4086 Blackstone Ave., Gurnee, IL 60031, Com574@clcillinois.edu, (847) 782-8602.

Columbia City, Indiana

Friday and Saturday, May 4-5, 2018

Free Admission, Free appraisals, Free air too! at the annual Columbia City, Indiana Insulator, Fruit Jar, Bottle & Collectibles show to be held at the Whitley County 4H Center, 581 Squawbuck Road, Columbia City, IN on May 4 & 5th. Plenty of parking, RVs welcome (no hookups) Friday dealer setup noon -3 PM, Public 3-5 PM, Pizza 5PM, BRING SOMETHING FOR THE SHOW & TELL at 5:30 PM, Open House at the home of Josephine & Dave Ramp 6:30 PM. Saturday Dealer setup 6AM - 8AM, Public 8 AM until the last dealer leaves. First dealer table \$28, 2/\$48, 3/\$60, 4/\$75, 5/\$80, 6/\$85. For discounts on local hotels or for more info email GENE HAWKINS at: gene.hawkins@mchsi.com or call 574-377-0171.

Tama, Iowa

Saturday, June 2, 2018

The 21st Annual Hawkeye State Insulator Swap Meet will be held on Saturday, June 2nd at the Tama Civic Center from 8:00 AM-3:00 PM. The Civic Center is located at 305 Siegel St. in downtown Tama, IA, just two blocks West of Highway 63 on 3rd Street. Dealers can plan on setting up at 7:00 AM. There will be no cost to set up and lunch will be provided to those attending. This annual event tends to be fun and relaxed and draws a good variety of of dealers and friends from the Midwest. We again look forward to hosting and providing you another great time in the Hawkeye State! For additional information and table reservation, please contact DAVE SHAW at (641) 484 5463 or e-mail at dashaw@mchsi.com

Mount Brydges, Ontario, Canada

Saturday, June 2, 2018

15th Annual Southwestern Ontario Insulator Meet will be held Saturday, June 2, at the home of Henry and Hilary Nicpon near Mount Brydges, Ontario. There's a \$10 charge for a table, with the fee helping to cover the cost of food and beverages. Please RSVP by May 26th if you are coming. Info: TOM IANNELLI 519-641-0098 or email: tiannelli0098@rogers.com or BARRETT NICPON 519-670-8796 or email: barrett.nicpon@gmail.com

Kansas City, Missouri

Friday, June 22 – Sunday, June 24, 2018

The 2018 National Insulator Association Convention & Show will be at the KCI Expo Center located at 11730 N. Ambassador Drive in Kansas City, Missouri 64153. The Expo center show boasts of its huge 35,000 square feet of Glass & Porcelain Insulators, Hardware, Signs, Lightning Rod Balls, Battery Jars & Rests, Lamps, Bottles, Jars and much more! 175+ Dealer & Display tables, Friday: 9:00 am - 4:00 pm (NIA Only), Open to the public on Saturday & Sunday: 9:00 am - 4:00 pm, Dealers Wanted! For more information and/or a show packet: www.nia.org/shows/national or nwmoshow@dwagnerkc.com