



For Immediate Release

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City unearths historic artifacts during downtown Old Woodward reconstruction project

A rail spike and two intact bottles are found while excavating during the transformative reconstruction of Old Woodward's underground infrastructure and above ground streetscape

BIRMINGHAM, MI, May 16, 2018 – Contractors for the City's \$7 million dollar Old Woodward Reconstruction Project have found several interesting historical artifacts as they work to replace the city's tired underground infrastructure and enhance the above ground streetscape for decades to come. The items found include an interurban rail spike and two glass bottles.

“These kinds of finds are exciting and bring us closer to the life along Old Woodward 100 years ago even as it undergoes its current transformation to a new chapter,” said **Leslie Pielack, Birmingham Museum Director**. “We have historic photos and accounts from the turn of the twentieth century, but these physical objects give us an up close look at everyday life.” The following information was discovered about the found items:

- **Interurban Rail Spike, found in the middle of Old Woodward south of Maple.** This spike was used to hold wooden ties in place for the rail line of the Detroit Urban Railway (DUR), an interurban/streetcar line in use from the 1890s until the late 1920s between Detroit and Flint. In Birmingham, it ran directly up the middle of Old Woodward (previously called Saginaw for the earlier Saginaw Trail). When the rail line was first constructed, Old Woodward was a dirt street. Later, brick pavers were laid around the rail lines (several have also been found during construction) to pave the road. These were removed when the road was paved in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Interurban spikes are smaller and lighter than standard railroad spikes.
- **Unknown Beverage or Utilitarian Bottle, 1890-1920, found at the southeast corner of Old Woodward and Maple.** It has features that suggest it was used for drinking out of, with a wide mouth and screw top, possibly for a locally bottled beverage (but it is not a standard alcohol or flask bottle). It could have been thrown or dropped by a passenger from the Detroit Urban Railway (DUR) street car line into a low area or muddy ditch that became covered over and then paved over.
- **Nesbitt's Soda Bottle, 1942-1952, found outside the Birmingham Theater.** Nesbitt's Soda (orange being the most popular flavor) was bottled in Los Angeles, California and is still available today. The label is fairly clear and shows the Nesbitt's design used from 1942-1952. Old Woodward was paved by then, so how the bottle got under the pavement is intriguing.

If you are interested in learning more about Birmingham history, visit the Birmingham Museum, located at 556 W. Maple Road, and go to: www.bhamgov.org/museum for more information.

City of Birmingham – A Walkable Community. Visit the city's web site at www.bhamgov.org.

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