

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

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In a history-rich American city like Pittsburgh, important pieces of our past are often unearthed right in our backyards.

A backhoe operator excavating the site of Pittsburgh's Allegheny Arsenal recently unearthed hundreds of Civil War-era cannonballs. The contractor alerted the bomb squad and precautions were taken to keep Lawrenceville residents near 39th and Foster streets safe from the 150-year-old artillery projectiles.


Historians long have suspected the existence of cannonball caches beneath the old Arsenal site at 40th and Butler streets, a location locals today know as Arsenal Middle School and the Rite Aid pharmacy.

Established in 1814, the Allegheny Arsenal produced cannonballs for Commodore Matthew Perry's fleet battling the British on Lake Erie during the War of 1812, and later became one of America's principal ordnance innovators and manufacturers of ammunition for small arms and artillery in the years before and during the Civil War.

From 1861 to 1865, the sprawling complex of shops and laboratories on the banks of the Allegheny River turned out millions of rounds

of musket ammunition and a wide range of shot and shell for the horse-drawn field artillery needed by the Union armies to battle the Confederacy. So great was Pittsburgh's wartime production that some historians refer to it as the "Arsenal of the Union."

In the coming months, researchers at the History Center hope to gain access to and study the recently unearthed cannonballs, as they represent a rare opportunity to learn more about our region's history.

Stay tuned for more on this important discovery and see examples of Allegheny Arsenal artillery projectiles in the History Center's *Pittsburgh: A Tradition of Innovation* exhibition. 

Established during the War of 1812, Allegheny Arsenal's entrance featured bronze British cannons (foreground) captured at the battle of Saratoga in 1777 and pyramids of stacked cannonballs (foreground and background).

Heinz History Center



This 24-pounder shell, with its pewter Bormann time fuse screwed halfway out, was excavated at the Allegheny Arsenal site and impounded by the Pittsburgh Bomb Squad.

