

# Metal Detector Is Magic Wand, Helps Pastor Build Up College Fund

Blackwood — A college education fund for five children and one foster child of a local minister is being built up through the use of a metal detector that is unearthing thousands of valuable items.

"It's both a fascinating hobby and a method of sending the youngsters to college," says the Rev. John J. Costas, 43, for the past seven years pastor of First Presbyterian Church on Church st. here.

"AMONG other things, use of the detector at long abandoned dumping sites in out-of-the-way places such as old hamlets in the pinelands of South Jersey has brought forth hundreds of antique bottles which now are valuable.

"The detector buzzes on a piece of metal, and when I dig I begin to uncover the bottles," he said. "I have about 1,000 of them, and they're worth about \$3,500 today."

Mr. Costas said that they're chiefly medicine bottles, and that about one of every 400 persons was addicted by opium in the latter part of the last century before the government banned opium in medicine.

"ALMOST every medicine contained opium or alcohol," he said. "But when opium was eliminated, users of the medicine didn't go around looking for another source. They didn't have the psychological hang-up that accompanies true addiction. They didn't miss it."

Mr. Costas began his treasure hunting seven years ago after he visited a friend in New Gretna who also had unearthed many valuable items with a detector, the present ones a vast improvement over the mine detector used during World War II.

"I've found thousands of coins, hundred of pieces of jewelry, including 66 gold rings, nine containing diamonds, and 130 silver rings," the minister said. He sells the items to individuals or to smelters.

Where does he search? The most profitable areas are beaches, lakesides and at old homesteads and abandoned houses, he said.

"SEARCHES at abandoned houses, and at old but still occupied homesteads are the



**ANTIQUE BOTTLE** is displayed by the Rev. John J. Costas, 43, of Blackwood, who plans to send six children to college by selling items discovered by a metal detector.

most fascinating," he said. "Back in the old days, people would bury their money, hide it under a window sill, or behind a wall. In many cases, it's still there.

"If the house is occupied, I make an agreement with the resident to divide any find then make my search." His most rewarding find was at a house near Lindenwold when he dug up two large piles of coins, all dated in the 1800s.

But I find the bottles the biggest delight," the minister said. "One is an original mold bottle for medicine dated Jan. 28, 1754, which I found near New Gretna."

HE SAID one bottle was marked, "Bumshead's Worm Syrup: One Bottle Will Kill 100 Worms; Children Cry for More." Another bore the impression, "Booz's Whisky, Manufactured in Philadelphia." Mr. Costas said this is where the word "booze" originated.

Mr. Costas's hearing has become so keen that he can foretell when he is going to dig up gold, silver or copper. "The biggest nightmare comes when you swing over a buried cigarette pack," he said. "It all but smashes your eardrums."

Mr. Costas served the towns of Tuckerton and New Gretna before being transferred to Blackwood. "All members of the family have first names starting with the letter 'J' although there's no special purpose behind it," he related.

He and his wife, June, are the parents of James, 16; John, 15; Judith, 14; Judson II, and Janet, 10. The foster child is named Patience, 15, and we can't change that," he said.

"If my luck holds out, they're all going to college from money, bottles, and jewelry still hidden under the ground."