

My initial wish list was modest. But it expanded very quickly. The list became an organic creature, evolving, growing longer and larger day by day. Yet despite the expanding scope of this wish list, it took me less than a full year to acquire the vast majority of all the items in this treasure. While inspired ideas for new and special items came ever more quickly, the discovery of most every type and quality of object I desired was almost frictionless. I can't tell you how often I added a new, rare piece to my wish list, only to have it appear available, seemingly out of nowhere, the very next day. It were as if an invisible hand was guiding my task, orchestrating each step from afar.

At the time, I still had no idea what this book would be like or what I might write. Yet an inescapable voice kept telling me it would be impossible to pen this manuscript without first mining the origins of each item in our trove. Once I had gathered most of the treasure items, I knew my next step was to research each object in depth. I got to work. But unlike acquiring treasure pieces, this research was way more intensive than I could have imagined, and I realized I needed help. So, I enlisted the aid of five researchers.

Studying the history surrounding each piece was like panning for gold. My researchers and I, with archival references in hand, waded out into a stream of time. Time, like water, turned over tens of thousands of pages of documents and left us with beautiful nuggets of wisdom. I was inspired. These histories were not just entertaining and captivating, but their stories shared what seemed to be universal truths about our human condition. Something of deeper value was here—ideas and understandings I wanted my children to know. This was substance worth sharing. I realized this book would be wasted if it were merely just a collection of clues for solving the location of hidden treasure boxes.

The objects in our treasure became my co-authors. Their stories created the structure of this book and provided the topics and themes of its chapters. And, yes, some of the clues to finding the largest treasure box are found within the histories of these treasure items themselves. So, if you decide to seek out our treasure's location, you can take solace in knowing that the objects inside the box have illuminated your way.

If you never search for this hidden treasure, that is fine too. I am still confident there is value for you in this book. The histories of the persons, places and circumstances linked to these objects have both educated and reminded me of many ways I can be a better treasure hunter. I am not alluding to the kind of adventurer that navigates the seas looking for chests of sunken gold. I'm simply referring to all those treasures you and I pursue within our daily routines, all those universal desires we share.

Some days I wonder if this entire project was serendipity. Or perchance there were larger forces at play. Or maybe there's a simpler explanation. It's possible my brain just could not conceive of what this book would become in that moment the seed of inspiration entered it five years ago. Whatever the case, I do know that something of great value was offered to me that day. This entire experience has already brought me so much joy, and I suspect there is much more yet to come.