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## Searching for History with Jim Bailey

### 17th-century coin found in RI linked to famous pirate and slave ship



Top left: In-situ close up image of the Arabian silver coin found at Sweet Berry Farm in Middletown, RI.

Bottom left: The coin cleaned up. It is a 1693 khamsiya/comasee silver coin from Yemen.

Middle: An 18th-century depiction of Henry Every with the *Fancy* shown engaging the Mughal ship *Gaj-i-Sawal* in the background.

Above: The hole which produced the coin at Sweet Berry Farm.

On Sunday, February 13, historian Jim Bailey will offer a presentation at BVHS on the voyage and great escape of pirate captain Henry Every. An avid “detectorist” for over 35 years, Bailey’s recovery of a late 17<sup>th</sup>-century Arabian coin in Middletown, RI, led to years of research that ultimately connected the coin to plunder taken by Every and his men of the pirate ship *Fancy*. Publication of his work in a research journal of the American Numismatic Society in 2017 shed new light on the first

worldwide manhunt in history for one of the most notorious criminals of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Every captured one of the richest ships in the history of piracy – a large Mughal vessel off the coast of India in 1695. He later returned to England and vanished from the pages of history, eventually earning titles befitting his infamy - The Pirate King, The Successful Pirate, and The Arch-Pirate.

Bailey’s research into the coin he discovered and other 17<sup>th</sup>-century Arabian coins found in southern New England was covered

by the Associated Press in April 2021 and made worldwide headlines as an opening of the world’s oldest cold case. From the recovery of an obscure silver coin no bigger than a thumbnail, a secret from well over three centuries ago was finally revealed: Before returning to England, Every traveled to the American colonies in the guise of a slave trader and spent time hiding out in Newport, RI. When he sailed for England, he left behind nearly 40 of his

men seeking new lives of comfortable obscurity in the American colonies.

#### About Jim Bailey

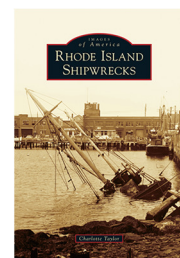
Bailey is a lifelong Rhode Islander from Warwick. He is happily married and has one daughter, one son, two dogs, and too much to do. His discoveries into the history of Every’s infamous pirating career is under development for possible book and film projects.

## Upcoming Events

**Most events are free.  
Everyone is welcome.  
Donations are gratefully accepted.**

**2:00 pm, Sunday, February 13:** Jim Bailey gives a presentation on the 17th-century coin he found in Middletown, RI and the discovery that it related to a famous “cold-case” pirate heist.

**2:00 pm, Sunday, March 20:** Charlotte Taylor, archaeologist at RI Historic Preservation and Heritage Commission, will give a talk about Rhode Island shipwrecks and the book she wrote about them (shown at right).



## ZAP the Blackstone Celebrates 50-Year Anniversary

By Francine Jackson

A 50<sup>th</sup>-anniversary celebration is happening this year, one that possibly few have heard of: ZAP.

One of the more beautiful and important parts of our region is the Blackstone River. This 40-plus mile waterway began about 15,000 years ago when a glacier carved a deep U-shaped river valley.

During its trek from its headwaters in Worcester to its end at Pawtucket Falls, the river drops about 438 feet, or over 9 feet every mile. This drop made the Blackstone a perfect choice for 19th-century industries to build along its banks. Water-powered wheels worked the machines in the buildings, making this part of the country home to over 100 mills, and one of the busiest industrial regions in the U.S.

Unfortunately, this industry also made the Blackstone one of the most polluted rivers in America: Heavy metals and dye cloths were thrown into the water, along with mountains of trash. Aquatic animals disappeared.

However, in 1972, a grassroots group of citizens decided the river had had enough and founded “Zap the Blackstone.” They formed cleanups that began to breathe life back into the waters. Not only did they do their best to stop those who

threw pollutants into the river, they also removed accumulated garbage.

We know now that all their work has slowly paid off, and that the Blackstone is safe for canoeing and kayaking, and other boating. Also, many animal species have returned, and the river itself is once again a beautiful tribute to those who began 50 years ago to try to transform an ugly part of the area to as pristine a waterway as possible. The Blackstone is not yet ready for bathing or drinking, but it is fantastic how far the river has come.

ZAP will be celebrating its 50-year anniversary this year, and there are plans to continue working with the Blackstone, to make sure it will never return to the conditions that made the thousands of volunteers want to do their part to ZAP the Blackstone in 1972. We owe it to ourselves this year to make a special attempt to be sure everyone is aware of the magnificent jewel we have in this part of our region. Let’s all do our best to ZAP the Blackstone whenever we can.

In honor of the first cleanup in September 1972, Zap the Blackstone is planning cleanups on August 27 and September 10. Read more about their activities at [zaptheblackstone.com](http://zaptheblackstone.com).



*Avery (Every) Sells his Jewels*, an engraving by Howard Pyle, which appeared in the September 1887 issue of Harper's Magazine. Illustrations and photographs on page 1 courtesy of Jim Bailey.

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