

this. On the other hand, Dr. Maher seemed to think that any items over 50 years old in rivers belong to the state. Perhaps a more realistic age would be 500 years or more.

Another objection is to "hand fanning" as the way to search for items in rivers of Alabama. This would work fine if talking about items on bedrock covered by loose leaves or light silt. However, the overburden of just a few years could be several feet deep and should not be considered the permanent bottom of the stream. Hand fanning just will not work.

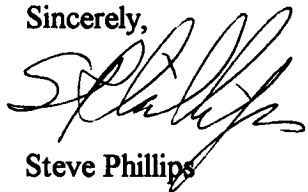
Gold prospecting is a hobby that would be affected by the new rules. Placer gold, or gold dust as referred to in the act, is not of historical interest. Some of the rivers of Alabama have placer gold in them and prospectors who look for this should not have to contact the Historical Commission to ask permission to look for and find gold.

You and I are both Southerners and that alone means we like to be independent. We do not want too much government, whether local, state or federal. The rights and privileges of American citizens are dear and should never be given up easily or without clear and worthy reasons. Individual divers should not have to ask permission from the state for recreational relic hunting. However, a commercial operation is a different story. Permits could be issued for operations such as salvage of shipwrecks.

I want to thank you for being so courteous and helpful to myself and Erskine Mathis. We hope some of our experience can be of help to you and we can eventually agree on some friendly guidelines that will preserve history while encouraging the thousands of individuals who may find something of interest, to share that knowledge with the people of the state for the benefit of everyone.

Please keep me posted as the act moves forward and about future hearings so myself and other interested parties can attend. If there is any way I can help, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "S. Phillips".

Steve Phillips