

"A law passed in 1999 that prohibits the removal, distributing or collecting of artifacts found underground," Rouleau said. "These men were dredging the river bottom looking for these items."

Rouleau said a state archeologist at the scene dated the musket to a period before the Civil War.

The weapon would have been valued at several thousand dollars, Rouleau said, but the suspects somehow managed to break it.

"Now the price on it has dropped to between \$1,000 to \$2,000," he said.

The boat and all equipment on board was confiscated as evidence by the state. The artifacts have been taken to a lab for cleaning and inspection.

The suspect from California is believed to be the head of an outdoors channel on cable television.

The other suspect from Birmingham may possibly be linked to an antiques dealer who sells artifacts online.

The two men were taken to the Dallas County Jail on class C felony charges. They were later released on bond.

Rouleau said it is not illegal for someone to take artifacts, such as arrowheads, found above ground, but any digging for them requires a special permit.

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