

## **The Secret – by Byron Preiss (Bantam paperback, 1982)**



Background on the book from <http://thesecret.pbworks.com/w/page/22148559/FrontPage...>

“Many armchair treasure hunt books have been published over the years, most notably *Masquerade* (1979) by British artist Kit Williams. *Masquerade* promised a jewel-encrusted golden hare to the first person to unravel the riddle that Williams cleverly hid in his art. In 1982, while everyone in Britain was still madly digging up hedgerows and pastures in search of the golden hare, *The Secret: A Treasure Hunt* was published in America. The previous year, author and publisher Byron Preiss had traveled to 12 locations in the continental U.S. (and possibly Canada) to secretly bury a dozen ceramic casques. Each casque contained a small key that could be redeemed for one of 12 jewels Preiss kept in a safe deposit box in New York. The key to finding the casques was to match one of 12 paintings to one of 12 poetic verses, solve the resulting riddle, and start digging. Since 1982, only two of the 12 casques have been recovered. The first was located in Grant Park, Chicago, in 1984 by a group of students. The second was unearthed in 2004 in Cleveland by two members of the Quest4Treasure forum. Preiss was killed in an auto accident in the summer of 2005, but the hunt for his casques continues.

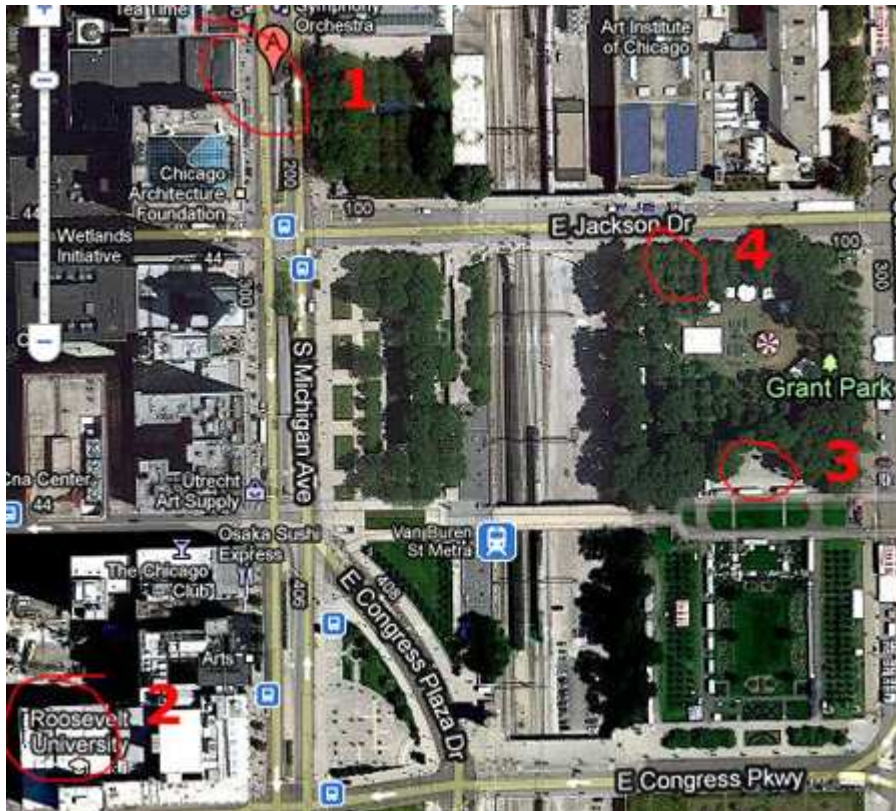
*The Secret* is long out of print, but copies can be obtained easily online (try [abebooks.com](http://abebooks.com) or [bookfinder.com](http://bookfinder.com); the book was jointly authored by Sean Kelly, John Pierard, Byron Preiss, Ben Asen, John Jude Palencar, Ted Mann, JoEllen Trilling, and Overton Loyd). Most of the book has no connection whatsoever to the treasure hunt. Of primary importance are the 12 paintings and the 12 verses, as well as some front-end material that provides a back story.”

Twelve boxes (or “casques” as they were called) were buried, but only two have been found. The first one was discovered by a group of students in 1984, in Grant Park in Chicago. This is how it worked.



Where M and B are set in stone  
And to Congress, R is known  
L sits and left  
Beyond his shoulder  
Is the Fair Folks'  
Treasure holder  
The end of ten by thirteen  
Is your clue  
Fence and fixture  
Central too  
For finding jewel casque  
Seek the sounds  
Of rumble  
Brush and music  
Hush.

The verse describes various landmarks in the area of Grant Park.



*Where M and B are set in stone*

1 - The names of Mozart and Beethoven appear on the front of Symphony Hall.

*And to Congress, R is known*

2 - Roosevelt University on Congress Parkway

*L sits and left*

3 - Statue of Lincoln

*Beyond his shoulder*

4 Shows the position of the casque

“The end of ten by thirteen” referred to two lines of trees. “Fence and fixture” referred to this fencepost and wall fixture. The casque was apparently found between them. (That tree wasn’t there at the time.)





Several landmarks around Grant Park appeared disguised within the image, including the statue “Spirit of the Great Lakes”...



“The Bowman”...



The fencepost...



This is the picture and verse which are thought to relate to Milwaukee:



View the three stories of Mitchell  
As you walk the beating of the world  
At a distance in time  
From three who lived there  
At a distance in space  
From woman, with harpsichord  
Silently playing  
Step on nature  
Cast in copper  
Ascend the 92 steps  
After climbing the grand 200  
Pass the compass and reach  
The foot of the culvert  
Below the bridge  
Walk 100 paces  
Southeast over rock and soil  
To the first young birch  
Pass three, staying west  
You'll see a letter from the country  
Of wonderstone's hearth  
On a proud, tall fifth  
At its southern foot  
The treasure waits.



Three of the items the juggler is throwing are a **mill**stone, a **walk**ing stick, and a **key**, making “mill-walk-key” or **Milwaukee**.

This is confirmed by the building in the background, which has been identified as Milwaukee City Hall.



*View the three stories of Mitchell*

This could either be the Mitchell Mansion on Wisconsin Ave, or Mitchell Hall at the University of Wisconsin, both three storeys (“stories”).

*As you walk the beating of the world  
At a distance in time  
From three who lived there  
At a distance in space  
From woman, with harpsichord  
Silently playing  
Step on nature*

There are various theories about this, but let’s skip to the next section which is better understood.

*Cast in copper*

This is Lincoln Memorial Drive, the Lincoln Memorial being “cast in copper” on the Lincoln Memorial Penny.



(It's straightforward to get onto Lincoln Memorial Drive from either the Mitchell Mansion or Mitchell Hall.)

*Ascend the 92 steps*

*After climbing the grand 200*

This is the Grand Staircase at Lake Park.

*Pass the compass and reach*

*The foot of the culvert*

*Below the bridge*

The "compass" is North Point Lighthouse.

*Walk 100 paces*

*Southeast over rock and soil*

*To the first young birch*

You've now reached this point.



From Lincoln Memorial Drive, you've climbed the staircase (circled top) and walked past the compass to the lower Lion Bridge (first arrow). You then walk 100 paces southeast along the culvert that runs under the bridge from this point, which takes you back onto Lincoln Memorial Drive where it's thought there was a birch.

*Pass three, staying west  
You'll see a letter from the country  
Of wonderstone's hearth  
On a proud, tall fifth*

You're now heading southwest down Lincoln Memorial Drive. The "three" might have been birch trees, or something else – eg there's a "3" on a "30" speed limit sign.



The "fifth" is cryptic. The fifth sign of the zodiac is Leo. Solomon Juneau was a Leo, and the "tall, proud fifth" that you see next is his statue in Juneau Park.





The juggler in the image resembles Juneau as shown on this monument:



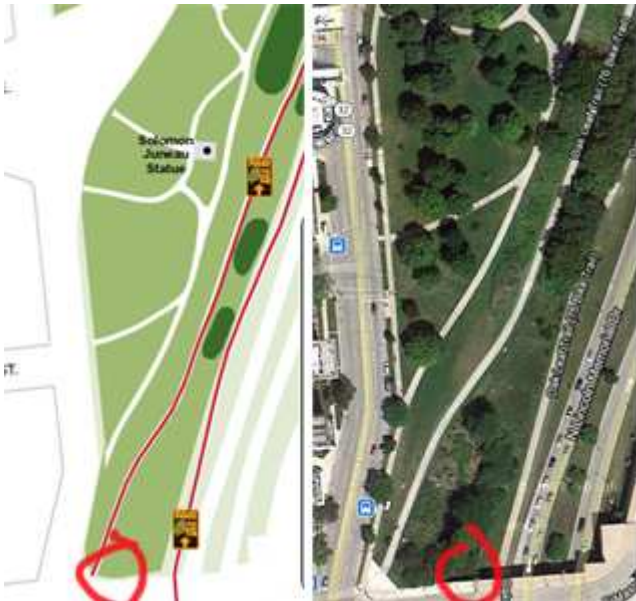
Note the general posture, and also the detail of the right hand. The background texture is also very similar.



*You'll see a letter from the country  
Of wonderstone's hearth  
On a proud, tall fifth  
At its southern foot  
The treasure waits.*

Each image corresponds with a nationality. This is known to be the German one, so the “letter from the country of wonderstone’s hearth” could be, eg, “s” from Deutschland which appears in the lettering Solomon Juneau on the statue.

Re: “At its southern foot”, “it” could be Juneau Park. This is the southern foot of Juneau park.



There are various features here that it might be possible to match with something in the image.



Eg, these poles...?



It's probably more likely to be somewhere on the other side of this wall though, in an area which is difficult to view via Google maps.



This is what was hidden, buried up to 3ft deep in a plastic container.



There's an article about the Cleveland discovery here:

<http://www.angelfire.com/dragon/egbert/secret.html>

Please let us know if this "casque" is ever found!

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Discussion forum at:

[www.quest4treasure.co.uk](http://www.quest4treasure.co.uk)

Here's an article about the Grant Park discovery, though it's not entirely accurate...

# Chicago pals unearth 'Secret' treasure

By Eric Zorn

**W**HEN BYRON PREISS wrote his book "The Secret" last year, he was counting on there being a few more people like Bob Wrobel, Eric Gasiorowski and David James in this world; people who would throw themselves wholeheartedly into a wildly difficult, nationwide hunt for buried treasure.

Preiss buried 12 ceramic casks in the far reaches of the 48 states and planted a host of clues to their whereabouts in a Bantam paperback published last fall. He expected the first treasure to be found within 30 days. The months rolled by, and no one cracked any of the puzzles. Some 700 people wrote to Preiss at his New York office claiming to have located the treasure. None had.

Then, early in the evening of one of Chicago's hottest summer days, Wrobel, Gasiorowski and James took a shovel, the book, a map and a few friends to an obscure corner of Grant Park and completed a six-month search by digging up the first of the ceramic casks.

In return for their travail, the suburban teenagers get to keep the cask, valued at more than \$500, and will receive an emerald worth approximately \$1,000. The remainder of the jewels will continue to gather dust in a New York City vault until the casks that go along with them are unearthed.

The Chicago treasure would still be in the ground had not a feature story about "The Secret" appeared in The Tribune late last year and inspired Wrobel, 19, to buy the book as a birthday present for James, now 18. The two knew each other from Walther Lutheran High School in Melrose Park and were part of a small circle of friends that played "Dungeons and Dragons," an elaborate fantasy game favored by those with high intelligence and a somewhat obsessive, escapist nature.

THE HUNT BEGAN for the young men in February when Gasiorowski, 16, the third member of the plucky trio, bought his own copy of the book. They were confronted with a confounding set of clues that at first seemed to make no sense whatsoever.

"The Secret" was an attempt by the author to duplicate the success of "Masquerade," a 1979 British book that combined a fairy tale with a



Tribune photo by Ron Bailey

Eric Gasiorowski (left) and Bob Wrobel used clues in "The Secret" to find a \$1,500 treasure in Grant Park.

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# Tough 'Secret' clues lead Chicago trio

Continued from first Tempo page

real treasure hunt and captured the international imagination. In the American version, Preiss planted hints in paintings and poems that helped comprise an elaborate, humorous folktale about "The Fair People," immigrant elves and gnomes.

The book has not been such a huge success as its European counterpart. One reason is the chilly reception accorded "The Secret" by critics. Another may be that there are so many different treasures to look for, no one of them is as tempting as the single \$50,000 bonanza of "Masquerade." A third reason may be that the puzzles themselves are very hard.

The key to the Chicago treasure, for example, was recognizing lesser-known or disguised area landmarks sprinkled through one of 12 thoroughly bizarre paintings and matching those clues with the following poem in a series of poems:

Where M and B are set in stone  
And to Congress, R is known  
L sits and left  
Beyond his shoulder  
Is the Fair Folks'  
Treasure holder  
The end of ten by thirteen  
Is your clue  
Fence and fixture

Central too  
For finding jewel casque  
Seek the sounds  
Of rumble  
Brush and music  
Hush.

Chicago Tribune,  
8/9/83, Sec. 2,  
pg. 3(1)

OKAY. IT'S obvious to you in retrospect: "M and B" stand for "man and beast," and "set in stone" means a statue, a reference to the two 1928 Ivan Mestrovic sculptures of American Indians on horses that flank Congress Drive in Grant Park at South Michigan Avenue [even though the statues are not set in stone but, in fact, bronze]. "Congress" refers to the drive or the hotel and R stands for "railroad." "L" is for the statue of Lincoln in Grant Park. "ten by thirteen" are rows of trees behind him, "Central" is the Illinois Central railroad, "brush and music" mean the Art Institute and the bandshell. Find a "fence and fixture" in the vicinity and start digging.

Actually, Wrobel & Co. figured most of this out pretty quickly. They made a few wrong guesses at first, figuring that "L" stood for the lions in front of the Art Institute and wasting a few hours climbing around on them. But they wasted little time narrowing the search in a hurry to an area bounded by Jackson Drive, Columbus Drive, Congress Drive and the Illinois Central tracks.

They got out the shovels. In February they took the

## io to a treasure buried in Grant Park

Chicago Tribune, 8/9/83, Sec. 2, pg. 3(2)

long ride in from the western suburbs and dug five holes in the frozen tundra. No luck. They were sure they had the spot, so they sent off a letter to Preiss to ask if they were close or if, perchance, it already had been found.

Months passed. The letter never reached Preiss, and in waiting around for a response the boys practically forgot about their search. Finally in early July they called Preiss' office long distance. His secretary said there was no treasure buried in Chicago. But the boys were sure.

They called back the next day and asked to speak with him personally. They explained their reasoning in solving his riddles and told him where they were digging. "You have the answer," he told them. "I don't see why you can't find the right spot."

SOMETIME DURING the winter of 1981-82, Preiss, dressed in a modest, blue-collar disguise, had crept into Grant Park and planted the ceramic cask, protected by a plastic box, in a woodsy, secluded area a few feet from a cement retaining wall that runs next to Jackson Drive and close to a link fence that keeps the bums off the railroad tracks. The area now is pitted with reminders of the many holes that Wrobel, Gasiorowski and James chewed into the sod in July.

They were never once stopped by the police, though Gasiorowski says he once had to hide inside a hole he was digging to avoid the gendarmes, and all three attracted frequent attention from curious passers-by who

wondered just what these guys thought they were doing playing gopher on public property.

All they found on their digs were underground pipes. They called Preiss again to beg for the last little clue, which he finally sent them in the form of a snapshot taken at the burial site. The placement of the scarred earth in that picture was the last piece to the puzzle.

So, filled with a sense of celebration and anticipation, Wrobel, Gasiorowski, his mother and sister, some neighbors, a photographer and a lookout [James, alas, was visiting his grandparents in Indiana] trooped downtown one last time to claim their reward. Once again they pierced the crumbly Chicago soil with their shovel. Once again they dug deep: One foot. Two feet. Three feet. Once again they found nothing.

DANNY ROSENBACH, a friend and bit player in the drama, was standing in the hole wondering what could have gone wrong when he stepped back and knocked some dirt off the crater wall. Suddenly, on the southern face of the hole, there it was—the secret exposed.

"We went nuts," says Wrobel.

They're not quite sure what they're going to do with the money. Maybe they'll invest it until James finishes his upcoming hitch in the Army. Maybe they'll just split it three ways and be done with the whole affair.

But maybe they'll use it to finance another treasure hunt. "We've almost got another one figured out," says Gasiorowski coolly. "It's in Colorado. We've narrowed it down to a four-block area. . . ."