

ROSS, ELIZABETH

CHUNK OF SILVER.

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155

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156

In most of the neighborhoods in the present Cherokee County have been heard in long past years many an interesting story concerning hidden treasure and silver deposits. Occasionally a story pertaining to the alleged finding of gold has been narrated, but usually silver has been principally mentioned. Two of the silver stories are yet remembered in the Park Hill settlement. One is given here.

Long ago, in the period of the forties of the last century, there lived in a somewhat out-of-the-way section of the neighborhood an old man who was referred to as "Uncle Billy" Melton. This early-day resident, having retired from active pursuits on account of his advanced years, liked to stroll about the woodlands in the vicinity of his home. Accompanying the old man on his leisurely strolls was a dog, which like other members of his kind, was interested in trailing and chasing rabbits.

One day when the weather was pleasant, presumably in the late fall season, "Uncle Billy" Melton was walking along in the vicinity of a small and rugged bluff near a small stream of water. The dog, who

-2-

had been nosing about in the bushes, suddenly began barking excitedly and a rabbit quickly came into view, closely pursued by the dog. As a matter of safety the rabbit took refuge in a crevice in the face of the bluff.

Walking slowly, "Uncle Billy" arrived at the bluff, where the dog stood barking and gazing into the crevice. Thinking that he might dislodge the rabbit, the old man procured a long dry stick and thrust it into the crevice. He failed to cause the rabbit to emerge and be caught by the dog, but did rake out an obstruction, which at first sight appeared to be nothing more than a piece of loose stone. But the sunbeams fell upon the object and the oxidized surface interested the pioneer. The weight of the chunk was considerable for its size, and after closely peering upon that which he had first thought to be a piece of stone, "Uncle Billy" felt a degree of excitement when he realized that he held in his hand a piece of solid silver. He gave up further attempts

-3-

to capture the rabbit, to the disappointment of the dog, and returned to his home. Soon the story of his find spread throughout the neighborhood, but no other specimen was sought or found. The laws of the Cherokee Nation strictly forbade prospecting for gold, silver, or lead. The Cherokees had been forced to leave their original nation, it was said, largely because the precious metals had been found among their mountains. Consequently, no examination was ever made of the crevice from which the chunk of silver was drawn by the aged Mr. Melton.

In course of time "Uncle Billy" disappeared from life, members of his family removed to distant sections, and the years rolled along. But in comparatively recent years efforts have been made by various persons to locate the crevice into which the rabbit ran many years ago, but always without success. Those who have strenuously sought to find the spot are convinced that a great deposit of silver exists beneath the mass of rock in the face of which is the crevice, but so far

-4-

the crevice has not been found. Possibly gravel and sand washed down by the stream have filled the small opening, so some have believed.

The late Reverend Walter A. Duncan, gave information as to Billy Melton. In 1844 Mr. Duncan was private secretary for Chief John Ross, and saw and heard many things of interest.