

SMITH, DONA CLEERE

INTERVIEW

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Field Worker: Zaidee B. Bland
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Interview with Mrs. Dona Cleere, now Smith.
Altus, Okla.

Pioneer

A LEGEND

by

Dona Smith,
South Altus, Okla.

This is a legend of buried money and I have heard it so many, many times through this western country that I hardly know whose name to place at the head of the story. I use Dona Smith because she claims to have some kind of a sight that says the treasure has never been found, while a good many people in the district where it was supposed to be buried think that the two robbers, who got away, only to be caught later, and who served 20 years in jail, came back and recovered the gold.

Sometime between 1870 and 1880 a bank in west Texas was robbed of \$80,000 in gold. There were five masked men who did the work. They escaped into the bad lands of Texas or "No Man's Land". It was a treeless tall grass plain. Texas Rangers gave chase and two of the men were

killed outright and a third was wounded. He and the remaining two hid in one of the holes in the grassy country and could not be found. These gyp sinks or holes were so numerous in this district and the grass so high that the search was abandoned.

There was no place to obtain food or even water that was drinkable. The wounded man died and the two remaining robbers, exhausted from hunger and thirst, cached the gold, which was in sacks, in the cave, placing the body of the dead man to guard it, then concealed the mouth of the cave by placing more loose rock near the entrance, got on their ponies and rode north out of the country; and the legend of buried treasure has been handed to every settler who has ever homesteaded in a radius of a hundred miles of Eldorado, Oklahoma.

Young people from that time until now take spells of hunting the treasure. Some 40 years ago a country school gave a picnic and the boys and girls went into these broken hills to spend the day, hunting Indian relics. There are a great many broken arrow heads and pieces

of pottery found in these broken hills. I imagine the Indians really came in there to make pottery, for this gyp when powdered and mixed with water makes a very hard vessel of any shape or design one might desire. The boys between 10 and 15 years of age cared nothing about treasures but wandered around playing ^ehid and seek, black bears, etc.

Two boys ran quite a way from the crowd and hid in a cave where they were sure they would be hard to find. Getting tired of waiting to be found, one said to the other "Dare you to go farther into this hole than I will." These boys: Ed Powers, 14 years of age, and Marvin Walton, 12 years old, turned their faces into the hill to explore and the first thing they did was to stumble over a bundle of old clothing and fall. As they picked themselves up and their eyes became accustomed to the gloom, horror of horrors, they had stumbled over the skeleton of a man and his skull was grinning up at them a little to one side and there was some ghostly looking pillows or something and one of them was bursted and a lot of yellow rocks or something was running out and just then from among this yellow mound, a huge rattler

raised his head and blurred or buzzed at them and they fled for their lives. As they ran, they pledged each other that they would not tell about the skeleton for fear of being laughed at. Several years after when the boys did take notice of the legend of the buried gold, they were sure they had stumbled on to the cave accidentally. But find the cave, they could not, for the country at the time of their adventure was not settled enough for them to have any land marks to go by and there are enough of these sinks that look so much alike that they spend a lot of time looking and other people do too.

I think I could tell of a dozen caves, each one of which people believe was the one, but there is always a light that appears and a voice that forbids further search just when one thinks they are about to find the buried treasure. The gypsies keep their own counsel and are silent.

The boys (men now) in this story are still living and Mr. Walton may be seen on the streets of Duke most any Saturday. His address I think is McQueen, Route 2, Oklahoma.

I think Mr. Powl's address is Olustee, Oklahoma.