

ROSS, ELIZABETH.

BURIED TREASURE.

#6139

129.

"BURIED TREASURE"

If ever there was a section of country that might win the prize for the number of treasure tales there abounding, that region is about Tahlequah, where, if one believes the stories, buried money may be found at almost every cross road.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars, say inhabitants of Tahlequah and adjacent sections, have been hidden along the beautiful Illinois river and in the green hills that slope down to its banks. Scores of men have spent long and weary months seeking for the fabulous wealth legend says is there. Undaunted by failure, they labor on....."their own dreams at length deceive them. And oft-repeating them, they believe them."

Especially intriguing to those who go forth to seek hidden treasure are the sites of old homes, of which there are quite a number in this portion of northeastern Oklahoma.

Massive, vine-covered and venerable, there stands as if in memoriam of long-departed pioneers, in the extreme southeastern section of the historical Park Hill locality, a chimney of brown sandstone. When it was

built and by whom, no one now can tell. To those with an eye for the picturesque it is an interesting landmark, but to the treasure seekers it is a marker, one that has a place in their records, rudely scrawled or written. Somewhere within sight of the old chimney, as the stories go, there is hidden great stores of gold and silver coins. Once these coins were a portion of the wealth possessed by "Uncle Billy" Stinnett and his wife. Just across a small mountain stream, on a bench of an overlooking height, is the forgotten grave of old "Uncle Billy," who came to this section in 1828, 109 years ago. His store or trading post was established near an old road which led up from a ford of the Illinois to the prairies lying westward.

There were only two in the family, the old man and his wife. Much money came in through the trading post, but one day the old trader fell ill and soon disappeared from among the living. His wife succeeded to the store and money and was spoken of as a rich woman. She, too, was advanced in years and was so crippled by rheumatism that she was unable to walk and spent the days in a huge chair, for she was very large. Pitying her lonely condition

perhaps, a fine young man of the neighborhood kept dropping in, and ere long there was a wedding, the young man succeeding to the vacancy left by the departure of "Uncle Billy." Soon the old lady died and the young husband was duly grieved but forebore not to take possession quickly of all (as he thought) of the old wife's worldly gear. The young husband soon disappeared and was seen no more in this locality.

Now it seems that there were those who did not believe that old Mrs. Stinnett found all the coins her first husband had accumulated. It was rumored he deposited a goodly portion in the earth and failed to say just where it was buried. Furthermore it appears the old lady acted in similar manner, to the end that her young and second husband failed to get his clutches on all the hard money once the property of his wife. At any rate the impression prevailed in past years, and yet prevails, that somewhere in the vicinity of the old Stinnett home, or perhaps nearer to the vine-covered chimney, there is much hidden wealth. A mysterious light seen on the darkest nights of winter is believed to indicate that the long-buried Stinnett money is somewhere west of the old chimney, but all efforts made

to find these thousands have failed.

In connection with the vine-covered chimney it is related that "Grandpap" Melton, who was an aged individual back in 1844, made a most wonderful find. The Melton home was not far from where the old chimney stands, and feeling the urge to take a stroll in the woodlands one pleasant October afternoon, "Grandpap," walking cane in hand, issued forth. The old man's dog went along and dog-like began chasing rabbits. Finally one of the long-eared creatures was chased into a crevice in the face of a small bluff and the dog began barking and whining. The old man proceeded to the bluff and after securing a long stick began poking into the crevice. He found that the crevice opened into a cavern of considerable size and while thrusting the stick about encountered an obstruction and raked out, not a loose stone, as he at first supposed, but a "chunk" of solid silver as big as a "cocoanut." The laws in '44 forbade prospecting or mining for gold, silver and copper and consequently nothing was done.

The "Cherokee money" has been the object of many strenuous searches. According to the story, there was hidden in the earth the sum of \$50,000, belonging to the

Cherokee Nation and it has never been retrieved. Four men, it is said, were entrusted with hiding the money which was in kegs. The kegs were duly hidden and during the progress of the Civil War, which was already in its early period, three of the men fell in action. The fourth escaped injury and came out in good health, but even as he considered returning to the vicinity of Tahlequah he was attacked with fatal illness. He tried to tell the location of the treasure but failed to make himself clearly understood and in consequence the money yet awaits some lucky fellow, who, through its possession will be made quite wealthy. Somewhat recently an old fellow whose faith in divining rods was great, asserted that he intended to "lift that there Cherokee money from the ground" at no distant date, and would not be stingy, for he would divide with the Cherokees. According to this fellow's statement the Cherokee money amounts to \$80,000 instead of \$50,000, but he may have included interest.

This money is variously located. Some think it hidden near the banks of the Tahlequah creek, a half mile south of the old capitol. Others think it lies a short distance in the rear of the capitol - the present Cherokee county

Courthouse - and others say it is buried out in the Park Hill neighborhood. Scores of holes have been dug in and about Tahlequah and Park Hill, but no one has located the treasure so far.