

ROSS, ELIZABETH

NATURAL CHIMNEY

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### Natural Chimney

A mass of rock arising some sixty feet in height near ledges of gray limestone at fairly short distance from the Illinois river, some five miles southeast of Tahlequah has long been known as the natural chimney. In years of the past people in vehicles or on horseback sometimes made their way through the timber and undergrowth for the purpose of gazing upon the natural chimney and in later times automobiles are frequently driven to the vicinity which is somewhat of a lover's retreat. There are many names of young people engraved upon the surface of this rock with sharp edged stones.

In connection with the natural chimney there was related a number of years ago a story to the effect that in a period long before the beginning of the Civil War a group of men who had committed robbery in a distant section of one of the southern states finally forded the Illinois river somewhere near the confluence of the Barren Fork with the Illinois. A pursuing party, so the story goes, had drawn sufficiently near at times to shoot down some of the members of the robber band but there were

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two of the band left and these two upon reaching the vicinity of the natural chimney, realized that they could not possibly escape and carry the heavy bags of gold coins with them. The pursuing party were close at their heels, so the remaining robbers decided to and did hide the gold in a hastily excavated hole over which they laid loose stones and thus obscured any marks which otherwise might have been left. The robbers then mounted their horses and being unimpeded by the weight of the treasure, rode rapidly away and made their escape.

Their pursuers failed to notice any indications that the treasure had been disposed of upon reaching the natural chimney and after vainly trying to overtake the robbers finally gave up the chase and returned to the section of the south from which they had come. Consequently, so the story runs, the gold was never found and remains to this day where it was hidden sometime during the period of the eighteen forties.

Within recent years there have been persons who have given considerable attention to the story and in consequence have visited the natural chimney and its

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the vicinity in hope of finding some clue which might lead to the discovery of the treasure, which is believed to amount to many thousands of dollars. Large and heavy stones have been upturned and picks and shovels wielded with vigor, not in the immediate vicinity of the "rock chimney," but at some distance away in the hope that the gold might be unearthed.

In the section of country in which the natural chimney stands some of the first settlers in what is now Oklahoma, once lived. Some of these earlyday residents were said to have possessed much wealth though how it was amassed no one knows although some of those people who have wasted time and effort in trying to find the alleged hidden gold in vicinity of the rock chimney seem to be of the opinion that one of the early settlers may have hidden the gold. But despite the searching and digging, some times in the sultry days of summer, no one so far has found the hidden treasure.