

Tale of the 'Buried Gold'

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Nodaway County

By Donald Corrough

The "buried gold" legend still goes on, and hunters keep searching for the "keg of gold" buried at a tipped rock near Arkoe.

The story of the buried gold relates back to Dr. Perry Talbott, who was born Feb. 5, 1827, in Fairfield County, Ohio. After graduating with honors from Sterling Medical School in 1849 at Columbus, Ohio, he came to Nodaway County early in 1850, remaining here until 1852, when he followed the gold rush adventurers to California. He returned to Missouri in 1853; however, no information about his gold findings is available.

In 1854 he was married in Page County, Iowa, to Belle McFarland, and of this union were born 12 children, reared with lack of affection and discipline, according to neighbors.

Talbott, a typical man of the border, handy with guns and cards, rode his gray mule to tend the sick. Active in politics, he served a term as state representative, was a promoter of the Greenback movement, and was the author of political material and a manuscript for which he had received the patent and publishing rights. A surgeon with the Union Army during the Civil War, he maintained an office in Maryville.

He built a house, one with seven gables, that was copied after Hawthorne's "House of Seven Gables." It was through Dr. Talbott's efforts that the town already established at Bridgewater was moved to the present location of Arkoe when the railroad moved north. Arkoe, located one mile north of Bridgewater, was granted the right-of-way for the railroad in 1874.

It was platted by Talbott, Scott, and Snively on Sept. 15, 1874, and was named Arkoe by Talbott from his reading of "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea."

Doctor Is Shot

One night after attending the county fair at Maryville, the doctor returned to Arkoe to attend a sick child at the Whit Leighty home, three miles south of town. After he returned home in the darkness, he was discussing the patent for his manuscript publication. As he was removing his shirt in the presence of his wife, and son, Albert, a shot rang out! The bullet struck the doctor's thumb and middle finger, passing through his chest and grazing the leg of his wife, Belle, then lodging in the plaster and wall. The doctor said, "I have been done in by a political enemy." He then proceeded to write his will before he died the following afternoon.

An inquest ruled he had been killed by an unknown assassin.

After much detective work by Sheriff Henry Toel and others, a lengthy trial was held. Two of his sons, Albert 21, and Charles, 17, were convicted of killing the

doctor. They died in a double hanging held near Beal Park in Maryville on July 22, 1881.

No clear motive was ever established, but many stories were circulated. Among them, that it was a political enemy who had shot the bullet . . . that it was a boy whose leg he had amputated during the war . . . that members of his family killed the doctor because of his mean ways . . . and that he was shot by someone greedy for the nail keg full of gold which he was rumored to have buried near a "tipped rock" somewhere around his home or farm.

The doctor and his sons were buried on a high hill on his farm that is now owned by the Donald Corroughs.

In 1905 when men were moving the house of seven gables that was the Talbott family home, \$150 in gold pieces were found. This increased the interest in the buried gold story.

Hunters Seek Golf

Letters from treasure hunters throughout the United States have been received by the present owners since the early 1940s. About 200 treasure hunters have visited the farm, with almost every type of device used for locating metal beneath the top soil.

One early detecting device was a chemical, the exact formula never divulged, in a gallon glass jug. The hunter using this method found many pieces of old iron, as have most of the seekers.

Most of the hunters discuss with the Corroughs the splitting of the treasure before starting the search. Offers vary from 60-40 to 50-50 divisions. Occasionally a written agreement of the split is offered.

Two men from White Sand, N. M., constructed their own detector, and on two occasions visited the area, searching all available places, including the burial plots of the doctor and his family. A broken axe and a horseshoe were their only rewards.

Only a few women have accompanied their treasure-seeking husbands. Often the women are more interested in finding rocks above the ground than rusty metal beneath.

Probably the only real trouble makers were two persons who were instructed, as all were, "not to dig inside any of the present buildings." Although warned to stay away by Corrough, they continued digging a sizable hole inside a barn. Only when Sheriff John Middleton was called did they depart, leaving the hole to be filled in by the owner.

Like the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow, Doc Talbott's "keg of gold" remains a reality in the minds of some people who still drive hundreds of miles for permission to attempt to make their dreams of finding easy money come true.