

Treasure: *From an Old Paper*

by J. W. Henson

The following was transcribed as best I could from an old paper that I found in some of my Mother's belongings after her death. The map that was with the papers had been originally sketched on a piece of brown kraft paper bag and was badly deteriorated.

JWH.

by Lucy E. Henson

March 1945

I moved into the Collegedale community in 1938 while John C. Thompson was president of Southern Junior College. Mine was an isolated homestead among the Tennessee hills. One day, during this time for I can be no more specific as to the date, I was working in the kitchen when there came a gentle knocking at my back door. It was so soft that at first I thought it caused by the wind. When again the noise sounded, I went out to see what was happening.

On the porch stood Mr. Sarge Jones. He presented a ragged appearance that would not have made him welcome at some of the more toni homes in this secluded, backwoods community.

"I was just wondering mum if you might have a piece of dry bread and a glass of water that a hungry man might have?," he asked.

"Yes, I believe I can rustle up something. Now you go out to the pump and wash up right good and I'll bring you something out to the back steps," I replied. It was not proper to allow beggars into the living area of gentlefolk in those days.

I had eaten just half an hour before, so I was able to scrounge up a bowl of soup, and a couple slices of bread. Mr. Jones ate, devouring the offering in just a few wolfs. I returned with another bowl of soup and a piece of blueberry pie.

"Thank you mum!", he said with a grateful voice. "People around here think me to be a poor, good for nothing man. Well, it ain't so, it just ain't so, as the world will all too soon know. Many of these fine people who are too good to speak to me now will be coming around standing in line to shake my hand before its all said and done. I have just this week stumbled upon a great fortune. I was out in the mountains here about with my gathering sack. I had gone to the northward

looking along the ridges and hills for the morel. The weather has been wet this spring, and then it turned off sunny and warm for an April day. I was gathering mushrooms, sassafras roots, golden seal, and ginseng to lay by for the summer.

"Well you may know it, but I stumbled upon the entrance to an old mine. It was dark and damp around the entrance with ferns hanging from above so as to partially hide the opening. I had worked up quite a sweat from climbing and carrying my loaded sack. A cool breath of fresh air came over me from the mine, and I stepped inside to cool off.

"As I stood there I had a youth's urge to see back in the entrails of this dark cavern. It was just about seven feet tall inside, and as wide. I went back outside and found a piece of pine knot rich in rosin, and returned. Inside I lit the torch with a match and sheltering the glow from my eyes with my hand so I could see before me, I continued down the horizontal shaft.

"I walked what seemed a very long way, but I am sure it was not more than a hundred yards, when I saw where there had been a fairly recent slide of shale from the left hand wall, in a place that was wider than the rest of the tunnel. It had exposed some ancient timbers to my view.

"Returning to the forest outside I located a stout digging stick. Pushing the smoking torch into the moist wall within the mine I began digging. At length I uncovered some very heavy boxes made with hand hewn boards about 2" thick. They were made of chestnut wood and well preserved for the long years that they had been buried there.

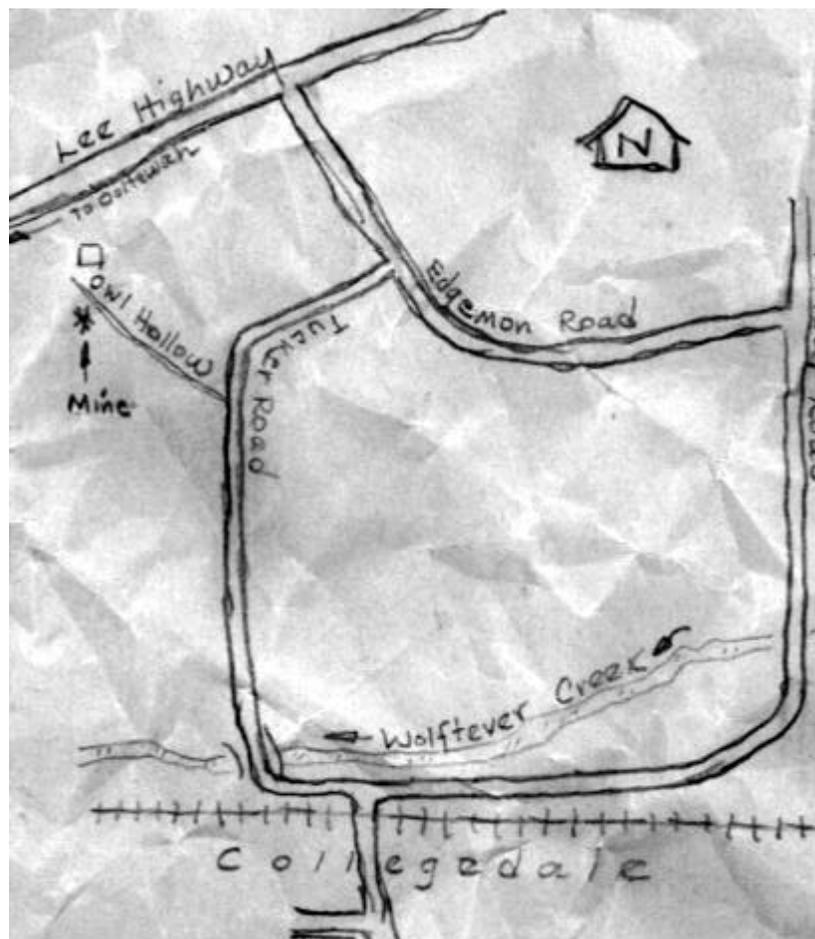
"Inside one box I discovered wealth beyond my most fantastic dream. My sack was so heavy that I could not bring home my new found wealth, so I covered it back and came home. I am going after it as soon as I get the strength, and start carrying it to my cabin. That will learn them fancy folk hereabouts. I know I can trust you to say nothing about my good fortune, for you have always been kind to me."

Well, it was less than two weeks that the old man was discovered dead in his cabin, having died of weakness and exposure. I knew that Sarge Jones would never talk to another in the Collegedale community about his newly found wealth, and also that in his weakened condition he had been unable to recover any of this loot, himself. It is still buried inside that old mine that he spoke of so mysteriously on that day many years ago.

The very next time I took the bus into Chattanooga I went to the TVA office and looked at a quadrangle map of the area around Collegedale. I figured that the mine would be within a range of one or two miles from the College. I also knew that it lay to the north, along a mountain in that area. At last my heart leapt for I saw a mine symbol, the crossed pickaxes, off the Tucker Road up in the Owl's

Nest. It was on the left hand side of the road as you went into the hollow. That would put it on the west side of the lane.

Where all this wealth came from is uncertain, for Sarge never issued an opinion, however I have a couple of theories. For years I have heard it said that at the time of the Cherokee Removal a band of Indians were known to have been in this area on some errand. The wealth of the Cherokee Nation could be there waiting for recovery. Another possibility is that two Movie Actresses made the old cabin in Owl's Nest their summer retreat. This could have been contraband from some money hidden there in the days when they used this place for their holiday getaway.



The old map drawn on a scrap of grocery bag

Being a single parent and all alone I was afraid to mention this to anyone. The government would certainly want a share of it if I were to find anything, plus there are those who would kill you for just such a map as I have drawn from the TVA map that I reviewed. I am reasonably sure that the fortune is still in the ground within the bowels of the earth there to the north of the little community of Collegedale. Some day it will all come to light.

March 21, 1997

As a kid I had been in that mine. We have been told that the Chattanooga Paint Company or the Lookout Paint Company of Chattanooga dug iron ore out of the mine to make paint pigments. I never went back more than 50 feet into the cave. Up on the mountain you could see where the mine had caved in at a distance of as much as a quarter of a mile from the entrance. I plan to research more about this before going into the mine looking for treasure. Recently Bob Bookout and I went into Owl Hollow to find the mine entrance. The road has been changed a bit and widened and the entrance to the cave is covered with earth so that we were unable to enter.

JWH III