

1949-11-24

1949, November 24

Mamie Jones

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/fay-webb-gardner-cleveland-county-early-days-column>

---

#### Recommended Citation

Jones, M. (1949, November 24). Cleveland County Early Days, The Daily Star. Fay Webb Gardner Collection, Gardner-Webb University Archives, John R. Dover Memorial Library, Boiling Springs, NC.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Series 1 - Personal Papers, Diaries, Scrapbooks at Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Cleveland County Early Days Column by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Gardner-Webb University. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@gardner-webb.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@gardner-webb.edu).

# In Cleveland County's Early Days

By MAMIE JONES

## BURIED TREASURE

About 1770, William Magness, together with his sister, Mary, and her husband, Col. John Roberts, (originally from Wales), came to this section and settled on what is now known as the "old Roberts dower land" five miles east of Shelby.

Their days having been fulfilled, Col. Roberts and his wife both died, leaving William Magness alone. William was quite wealthy and lived almost the life of a recluse with only his Negro slaves for company.

One of his slaves, Martha the cook, was the mother of Eli Roberts, well known Negro of earlier days. Some of his sons still living in this county; and it is thru these grandsons of Martha that the legend of the buried gold money has been handed down.

## POT OF GOLD

According to the story told by Martha, William Magness came into the kitchen one Spring day and told her to polish a large brass kettle. Next morning while she was cooking breakfast he came into the kitchen, got the kettle, and poured into it hundreds of gold coins, maybe \$60,000 in all. On this kettle he put an iron lid. He had two of his servants lift the kettle into the wagon which had been backed up to the kitchen door. He then drove away in the direction of the barn. When he came back some hours later the kettle was not in the wagon. He never told anybody what he did with the gold money.

About 1803, when he was 75 years old, William Magness was stricken with paralysis which affected his speech. He evidently knew he was going to die and tried very hard to tell his family where he had put the money. But no one could under-

stand what he said except "brass kettle . . . I buried it."

William Magness died and with him the secret of the hiding place of the gold coins. Since that day, many a man has sweated and dug, and dug and sweated in vain effort to locate the spot in the broad acres of William Magness where the gold was buried.

## PLOWED UP GOLD COINS

Not many years ago, during the lifetime of C. C. Roberts, Jr., who inherited the land, a plowman unearthed several pieces of gold money, and this caused a renewal of the digging efforts. But so far as is definitely known, the \$60,000 has never been found.

However, the two doctors who attended William in his last illness became surprisingly prosperous soon after the old man's death. Could it be that these two were able to understand the paralytic's halting speech better than the other members of his family and found the money? That is, if any gold was ever buried.

This story was told me by Mamie Roberts Thompson, a great-niece of William Magness. Somehow, the kettle was recovered and is in the possession of Mrs. Thompson.

## A LONELY GRAVE

Down near the Byers airport on the lands of Mrs. Chivous Byers, Sr., (adjoining the wide, level acres of Knox Hardin) there is a lonely grave in what Mrs. Byers refers to as "the cow pasture."

The stone which once marked this grave bore the name of James Rutherford; but this stone has been broken off and carried away. However, the grave itself remains a source of interest to curious—and maybe hopeful—one who come far and near to

try to find the spot where a mythical bag of gold is buried.

Mrs. Byers told me this story:

Many years ago (prior to 1832),

James Rutherford owned this large plantation. But the day came when James Rutherford was in great distress. He was indicted for perjury (that is, for giving false testimony in Court under oath). He knew the courts punished a man convicted of perjury by cutting off one, or both, of his ears.

## A BAG OF GOLD

On the afternoon before the day he was to appear at Court for trial he was seen, not far from where the grave is, with a bag on his shoulder and a pick in his hand.

Next morning he was found dead. Presumably he had committed suicide rather than suffer the humiliation of having his ears cut off for lying.

The rumor was spread that the bag he carried on his shoulder contained gold coins, and that he buried it not far from where the grave is located.

Mrs. Byers says that for years and years scores of persons have come from time to time and dug near the grave, hoping to find the buried treasure. Some of the seekers have asked permission, but many have dug secretly under cover of darkness. Just why a man planning to commit suicide would bury his money, Mrs. Byers says she does not know.

In 1832 or '33 the law requiring the cutting off ears for perjury was repealed.

(Copyright by Mamie Jones).