

'Millions in Treasure' Buried in Henniker?



(Photo by Eric Sanforay)

By "DEAK" MORSE
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Commission

HENNIKER, Nov. 28—Some day, in the not too distant future, a great hearthstone may be lifted at Ocean Born Mary house here.

What will be found beneath it? The remains of a pirate captain, "a jeweled dagger on his chest?" A treasure in pirate's booty? The skeleton of the builder of the famed, now supposedly haunted old house? Or perhaps nothing but uninspiring Henniker clay?

L. M. A. Roy, owner for more than 30 years of the property, and for the past couple of years its sole occupant, says there is some possibility a motion picture will be done on the Ocean-Born

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Pirate Booty Still Sought

Huge Hearthstone May Be Cover For Treasure In Henniker

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Mary legend.

If that comes to pass, he says, it is likely the great hearthstone, estimated to weigh three tons, may be lifted from where it has rested for the better part of two centuries to be used as a prop—or possibly to satisfy curiosity. Lifting it won't be child's play. It is eight feet long, 32 inches wide and eight inches thick.

May Be Tombstone

"It is entirely logical to believe there is something of interest beneath it," the sprightly occupant of the "haunted" house says. Then he calls your attention to a hole about the circumference of five lead pencils in the exact center of the great stone.

"It was customary," he explains, "when houses like this one were built, to provide a burial place

grandest for miles around." Ocean Born Mary lived there many years, dying in 1814 at the age of 94.

Henniker people hold lightly, says Roy, stories that the house is haunted. He flatly says it is. "You get the impression he may not be so positive about treasure. 'I've got my health,' he says, "and money can't buy that." But he is very alert when individuals with mine detectors and divining rods have tried their apparatus around the place.

Tree Clue To Loot

Deeply religious, there is evidence that Roy listens closely to what psychics have to say. Some in Portland, Me., he revealed, tell him that "Ocean Born Mary comes here." There is treasure, she is supposed to have told them, "near an old tree." Roy said there has been much investigation at the base of the ruins of a very old tree close to the house, so when he got the "message" he asked for more details. "Back came word from the Portland psychics: 'She says it is not near the tree you think.'"

Roy is convinced that Ocean Born Mary keeps eternal vigilance over the place and protects those whom she likes. He recalls she and his mother were burning trash gathered from the many rooms of the house and burning it in a stove one day. His mother came across a tied paper bag

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"It was customary," he explains, "when houses like this one were built, to provide a burial place beneath the hearthstone. The hole was made to make it easier to haul the stone out at the time the corpse was to be committed to it. A stone the size of this one was certainly put there for a purpose. You don't suppose, do you . . . ?"

In theory, if a skeleton is found, it should be that of the builder of the home, Robert Wallace, six foot, eight inch, son of Ocean Born Mary, who was six feet tall herself. But there are those who say a pirate captain who "took a fancy" to her in Mary's infancy never lost his kindly interest in her, paid her repeated visits, left a huge treasure in these parts and, indeed, is buried somewhere in Henniker's wild, rolling hills.

The Ocean Born Mary tale goes like this:

Pirates Capture Ship

In 1720 a ship left Ireland for the United States. Passengers included young James Wilson and his wife, Elizabeth, and during the journey they became parents of a daughter. Some days later the ship was halted by pirates, the men were bound and systematic looting was begun.

The captain went below decks and visited a room which none of his men had happened to enter. He came across Mrs. Wilson lying on a bunk and demanded, "Why are you not on deck as you are supposed to be?"

She lifted a corner of a blanket revealing the infant cuddled in her arms.

"Have you named her?" the captain inquired.

"No."

"If you will allow me to name her, I will unbind your men and leave the ship unharmed."

Mrs. Wilson agreed, and the pirate bent over the child and whispered the word "Mary—the name of my mother." A tear is said to have trickled onto the hand of the tot.

Silk For Wedding Gown

The pirate kept his word and gave the mother a piece of brocaded silk of "marvelous fineness of texture and beauty of design," according to the story.

"Let Mary wear this on her wedding day," the captain said as he took his departure.

Ocean Born Mary is said to have indeed worn a dress made from the cloth when in 1738 she married Thomas Wallace at Londonderry. A number of persons have pieces of the gown and Roy has one which is framed.

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"What do you suppose is in it?" she asked and answered her own question with "nothing" worth while, I guess."

She was about to toss it into the flames when Roy said, "A feeling came over me and I stopped her in the nick of time. What do you suppose was in it? Two pounds of blasting powder! Now how do you account for that?"

Pirate's treasure may never be found at Ocean Born Mary house, but the home is a treasure in itself. There's great historic value to the many, many old items that have been in the house nearly two centuries. Much of the house is in poor repair, its exterior bleak and blackened with age.

A prospective visitor drove very slowly past it and observed:

"Well, if it isn't haunted, then no house ever has been and never will be. Me, I'm getting out of here!"