

FOUL ANCHOR  
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*Buried Treasure*

Tale of Spanish Doubloons

from news column of J. Frank Dobie, Valley Evening Monitor, McAllen, Texas  
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"At a meeting of high school history teachers of Western Tennessee in Memphis, my introducer was J.L. Highsaw, who was reared in Delta County, Texas, and is now principal of the rather noted technical high school of Memphis. He told this story.

"In the summer of 1931 he was at a summer resort hotel in Florida. After supper he went out to look at the sea under a full moon, to listen to the lapping of the waters and to have long, long thoughts. To a silent man who paused near him he remarked, 'I wonder if any of the old tales about pirate gold from the Spanish Main buried along the Gulf Coast could be true.'

The stranger introduced himself and led him to his wife, his son, and his son's wife a short distance away. 'Son,' he said, 'take this key and go to our room and get the leather bag.'

The young man was gone a few minutes and came back with a small leather bag that looked heavy. 'If you will allow me to pour the contents of this bag into your straw hat, I will show you something,' the stranger said.

Mr. Highsaw wore a stiff straw hat. The stranger untied the leather string around the leather bag and emptied it into the hat. 'There are one hundred and forty four of those Spanish doubloons,' he said. 'Bury your hand in them. Feel them. Hold them up in the moonlight.'

Then he explained. A few years back when his son got married, the father and mother gave the young couple a tract of land at the mouth of a Florida river and built them a home. While the house was being completed, the father and some workmen began digging a well by the old hand method. Good water is close to the surface on the Florida coast. When the workmen were down about 20 feet, their spades struck something as hard as granite. They knew that the earth in which they were digging contained no boulders, and for a minute were very much puzzled. Then the hard thing was uncovered. It looked like the lid of an iron chest. It was bolted onto the chest. The earth was rapidly excavated from around the chest, and it was lifted out. A cold chisel had to be used on the rusted bolts to remove the lid.

And there in the box, lined with satin, was a storage of Spanish doubloons, dry and untarnished, some of the gold as bright almost as when it was minted. The pieces bore dates back to the time of Francis Drake, but most of them were of the early Eighteenth Century. There were 3760 of the gold doubloons. The finder took a sample to the United States Mint in New Orleans. He was told that the mint could not buy them; that they were subject to claim by the Spanish government. The officials indicated, however, that they bought gold bars.

The finder took out 144 doubloons to keep as souvenirs and for heirlooms, and had the other 3,556 doubloons melted into bars. He sold these for \$48,000. 'Where ever we go,' he said, 'we take this leather sack of the 144 doubloons. You need not wonder any more ~~about~~ if any of the tales about pirate gold of the Spanish Main are true.' Despite all the treasure stories I have written, I have never seen a Spanish doubloon that had been dug out of the earth.

## *Buried Treasure*

Notes on the Highsaw Gold doubloon story.

Found while digging a well near the mouth of a Florida River where stranger lived.

It was 20 feet down in iron chest, lined with satin.

Consisted of 3700 Spanish gold doubloons.

Bore dates back to the time of Francis Drake (Philip II period )

Most of them were early Eighteenth Century ( Philip V period. 1700 to 1746)

Finder took sample to New Orleans Mint. ( The mint closed in 1909, so it looks as if they were found before that date.)

Mint said they were subject to claim by the Spanish Government, but mentioned that they bought gold bars.

Finder took out 144 pieces and kept them, melted 3,556 into bars and sold the bars for \$48,000.

As usual the whole story is fairly vague as to time, dates on coins, etc. The finders did what they usually do in fear of law suits, claims etc, melt the coins so they lose their identity and sell them as bullion.

There is about \$16. worth of 22 carat gold ( 916.6 fine) in each doubloon and any coin dealer would pay gold value for any doubloon. Any rare ones or examples in mint condition might bring up to \$100 each even from a dealer. So when the finder sold the coins as bullion by weight he sold 3206 ounces Troy or 267.16 pounds of gold. An iron chest might weigh anywhere up to 100 lbs for a small one or even more. The chest would be worth considerable as a relic and it would seem as if the coins were sold to dealers that the finder might have got \$9000. or even more than he did.

If the finder is toteing around 144 pieces or about 10 pounds of them, I am very sorry that I never met him in my travels as I would like very much to make a study of dates, mints etc from them. How strange it is that none of the owners seem to look up the ANS and find about what they have got.