

The Deceased Wife Pays A Visit

By Sam Denny

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early Smith County Fisher family.

The chimney was built by Ward Hickman, husband and father of the lone black family living in the area at the time.

About three years after Elizabeth's death, Wilson married Amanda Denny and they moved into the same house he and Elizabeth had lived in. One cold snowy morning the fire in the fireplace had burned out. To Wilson, the thought of getting out of bed into the cold room was dreadful. In a "bit of devilment" as he would put it, he suggested to his new bride that she should get up and start the fire.

She pulled more cover over her head and told him that was his job. He stated that if Elizabeth was here she would get up and start the fire. He decided he would call for Elizabeth. "Oh Elizabeth, do you hear me? Amanda won't get up and build a fire. Will you come and build a fire?" Suddenly, Elizabeth in a white flowing garment appeared on the stairs leading down from the attic. She didn't say anything, just stood there staring out across the room. Wilson ducked his head under the cover where he remained for several minutes before sneaking a peek to find Elizabeth gone. Only then did he dare to get up, keeping a sharp lookout for Elizabeth.

Wilson Denny was not a "teller of tall tales" nor had he been drinking any "distilled spirits." You can be assured he saw Elizabeth on the attic stairs.

Some folk would explain this as a hallucination or power of suggestion, etc. Whatever the explanation, it made a lasting impression on him, as he would say, "I never done such a Tom fool thing again."

Elizabeth Fisher, first wife of Wilson Denny (my grandpa) passed away in 1893. At that time they were living in a one room, with attic, log house located on the Long Branch farm they had bought a few years earlier. This log house, of which part of the house and the limestone chimney is still standing, was built by Civil War Veteran, Jefferson Braswell, on land owned by T.J. Fisher, a member of the

Sam Denny contributed "The Legend of Thompson's Bluff" in an earlier issue of Current Lines. We encourage anyone with interesting or unusual stories to contact Current Lines.

The Legend of Thompson's Bluff

By Sam Denny

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As you travel along state highway 141 from Lancaster to Center Hill Dam the massive limestone bluff crowding the west side of the highway is certain to get your attention. The sheer face of the bluff, over one hundred feet high, with threatening overhangs gives a slight feeling of entrapment. This is especially so when taking into account that the Caney Fork river is passing the east side of the highway leaving no place to escape.

When travelling this route during the spring or early summer you are treated to a wide variety of wild flowers growing from the crevices and small soil deposits. People interested in fishing view the clean water of the Caney Fork as a good place to try their luck. If you spend no more time near the bluff than a couple of minutes needed to drive by, you cannot absorb the full significance of this massive landmark.

Before the highway was built the road along the base of the bluff was no more than a single – lane wagon trail. Not only was more time needed to travel but people used it as an unofficial park or gathering place. The cool shaded base of the bluff provided a place to escape the heat of summer. It was a nice place for young people to take a Sunday stroll or have a picnic. The overhang provided protection from the weather and on rainy days young men of the community would gather at these spots for a card game or to sip on "corn squeezings." The bluff was also a good place for ambush. At least two unsolved murders took place along the road.

As you may summarize, a much used place such as this would have a name and in this case there is a legend behind the name. A few years back, if you asked the "old Timers" in the area why it was called Thompson Bluff, they would have replied that it was named after "Old Man Jake Thompson" and then proceeded to tell you the story. If you guess this was because someone by that name owned or lived near the bluff, you would in part be right, but there is much more to the story.

We don't know the exact time period but records show a Jacob Thompson and family in the area in 1840. There is no mention of this family in 1850. A few years later records show the bluff belonging to T.J. Lancaster. We can assume the mid-1800's as the time of occurrence.

It is said Mr. Thompson was a successful, frugal man. He was obsessed with accumulating money to the point his family was destitute. At the time, gold coins were the primary legal tender. There were no banks in the area, so those who had some extra cash kept it in a secret place. Mr. Thompson elected to hide his gold in a crevice of a large boulder positioned near the edge of the river about mid-way of the bluff. This

boulder, about the size of a dump truck is at a very deep part of the river known as the "Thompson Hole."

To maintain secrecy, only one other person (presumably his oldest son) knew of the hiding place and Mr. Thompson would visit the place only at night. One night he failed to return home. The next morning the son went to the boulder, there sat Mr. Thompson's shoes, but he was no where in sight and the bag of gold was gone.

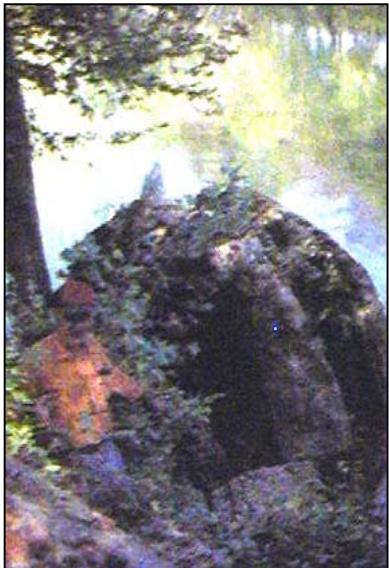
Three theories were advanced as to what happened.

One, while counting and fondling his gold, he had removed his shoes to rest his feet on the cool rock. Someone had followed him to the place, bashed him on the head, rolled his body into the river and took the gold.

Two, while cooling his feet in the river he slipped and fell, knocking himself out, his body and the gold went into the river.

Three, he accidentally dropped the bag of gold into the river, removed his shoes to enable swimming, then drowned trying to recover the gold.

In either case he apparently had time to cry out. It is said that for many years afterwards, when travelling along the bluff road at night with a breeze blowing, you could hear the voice....."Myie goold.....myie goold!"

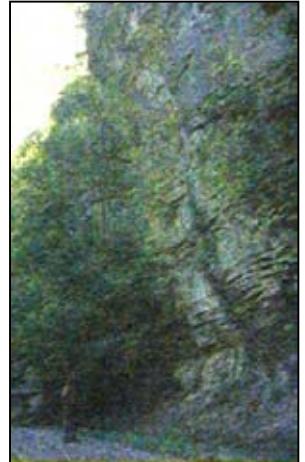


Sam Denny stands beside the boulder where "old man Thompson" hid his gold.

*See Chapter 4 & 5, Wilson Denny, for complete family listing.

With two of the three theories placing the gold in the river, you can be assured many attempts were made to find it. This was in the form of diving and use of crude dragging equipment. At first there was some effort of trying to find the body, but as time went by it became obvious that the gold was the object of the search.

Neither the body nor the gold was found. Perhaps present-day treasure hunters with their modern equipment may want to give it a try. If the gold is found it would clear up at least one of the theories of the "Legend of Thompson Bluff."



Thompson's Bluff once extended over the road.

I Remember When: One More Way to Make an Error

Sam Denny, LS

While doing the field work on a tract of land to be conveyed to a young couple, the wife requested that her name appear first on all documents pertaining to the survey. I assured her that I would comply.

So, when completing the title block of the drawing, I entered, "PLOT PLAN OF SURVEY FOR JANE DOE, ET CON JOHN DOE, or so I thought.

I had just returned from delivering a set of signed and sealed prints of the tract when the phone rang, it was the young lady and did I get an ear full. I quickly unrolled the original and sure enough there it was.

Perhaps it was something I heard on the TV in the background while working on the drawing or maybe it was something I read in the paper just before I sat down to work. I will never know for sure but for some reason I had entered on the drawing not ET CON but EX CON. I broke some sort of record getting a new set of prints delivered. The exchange was completed and I was on my way about ten minutes before the husband got home from work.

Submitted by Sam Denny, Lancaster, Tennessee.

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