

## LOST GOLD MINES OF OKLAHOMA

Some years ago while spending a winter's sojourn in the home of my friend John M. Lloyd of old Bennington, Indian territory, I heard the following story from Rev. W. J. B. Lloyd, a missionary among the Choctaw Indians, who was then an old man nearly seventy years old.

Lloyd said, in substance:

"Twenty odd years ago while holding a camp meeting for the Indians in the mountain regions of north McCurtain county some Indian friends came to me and said: 'We have found two mines of gold and you may share them with us.'

"We got together, twelve full blood Choctaws and myself, and made a compact of secrecy pledging our words that we would never tell a living soul the location of these mines.

"On going to the nearest mine with one of these Indian friends, I found a vein of pure gold filling a fissure or crevice in a ledge of out-cropping rock at the head of a small mountain gorge or canyon.

"During the following years we chipped this gold off as we needed it, but never more than enough to meet our actual wants. Finally it was cut away to the point where we could no longer reach it without blasting away the rock and that we were not prepared to do at that time.

"Simeon Cusher, or some others of the secret band filled the cavity or crevice with small stones and gravel and concealed the approach with boulders intending to return at some future time, blast away the obstructing rock and take out the rest of the gold. But that was never done. On abandoning this mine we turned our attention to the other, some fifty miles distant from the first.

"This vein was buried so deep beneath the surface that we decided to sink a shaft to reach it. This we began doing in our crude way without the aid of an engineer.

"In some way that I never knew the story of our operations reached the ear of the Interior Department at Washington. The department declared this a violation and an

order came to us through Governor Allen Wright to stop. This we promptly did.

"This shaft was filled and carefully concealed and was never opened again. We scattered away, only three of us are now living and all are old. No, we can never tell, even our own sons, for that would violate our pledge and betray the confidence of our dead comrades."

Lloyd was next to the last of the thirteen to die, only one surviving him. Of the three last, he was buried at Bennington, one at Beach, and another near Antlers.

The secret of these lost mines sleeps in the thirteen scattered graves of those whose words were worth more than mines of pure gold. A prospector of Valliant, Okla., recently told the writer that he had spent several months searching for the hidden shaft; that he had found a few small, scattered nuggets of gold; but the secret of the shaft baffled his closest search. Such is the true story of the lost gold mines of Oklahoma.

Joe Lloyd, a son of Rev. Inland Lloyd, who worked with W. A. Durant in the School Land Dept., in the Capitol Building, Okla. City can verify this story.

B. L. Phipps