

Silver Bullets and Demons In Beaver Meadow

by Lynne Belluscio

I came across a fascinating story about buried treasure in Beaver Meadow, south of LeRoy. The story was printed in 1926 in the *LeRoy Gazette*. I have no idea who wrote the article. Several years ago, I mentioned it in one of these *Pennsaver* articles but thought it would be interesting to include some more details.

Beaver Meadow is the area, about two miles south of LeRoy off Route 19. At one time there was a salt mine in the area, but the salt contained too much iron and the mine closed shortly after the shaft was dug. There was a legend that there was a hidden treasure "placed there by inhabitants of a past age."

At one time a family by the name of Rathbone lived in the area and they built a house of brick from the local clay. The Rathbones believed that an ancient civilization had built a city on their farm. The inhabitants had been forewarned of a catastrophe and abandoned their city, but before the land submerged, they buried a huge treasure.

The Rathbones began digging. They said they discovered a huge strongbox, but it had been buried "under certain incantations and devilish ceremonies. For as soon as they attempted to move it, it would slide away. "So one day the father of the family came to the blacksmith shop of John Hascall in LeRoy and employed him to construct a rod of steel, sharpened at both ends and tipped with silver. On the middle of the rod were to be stamped the letters G O D. The rod was for the purpose of stabbing it into the box, dissolving the charm and holding the box in one place until it could be lifted out. The mother of the family believed that one of the neighbors was a wizard and to prevent him coming to injure the family, nailed a horseshoe over the door of the entrance to the house."

It was believed that the Rathbones were able to find and recover the treasure. But they left rather unceremoniously for parts unknown with no explanation. The neighbors went to Jeremiah

Hascall, the local Justice of the Peace and insisted on obtaining a search warrant. The constable arrived and he discovered a small cache of counterfeit coins and equipment to make it.

A few years later, after the Rathbones left, Colonel Benjamin Ganson bought the farm. Some people in the vicinity still believed that there was hidden treasure in the area and requested permission of the Colonel to dig on the old Rathbone farm. He agreed, and the digging began in earnest, but "perhaps because they supposed that the moon was the patron deity which guarded the treasure" they only dug at night. They also carried a musket charged with silver bullets "which could not be turned aside by any devilish device, and providing themselves with a good quantity of drink, that not only exhilarates but inebriates they prepared to renew

the operations and give battle to Satan if necessary."

They were digging with renewed vigor, when they looked up and saw a huge monster approaching. It was nearly 10 feet tall, with its arms outstretched "a most villainous looking countenance and three-cornered military hat on its head." The monster came within gun shot and "one of the party, whose nerves were steady enough to permit it, seized the musket and blazed away at the approaching demon ...".

The silver bullets had no effect "On came the hideous spectre in defiance of the silver and all other munitions of offence and defense without a pause. This was too much for human nature to bear: a panic seized the company and they made a worse than Bull Run flight. One man reached the Colonel's premises and tumbled

headlong into the door, as pale as a ghost and it was reported years afterwards that he never fully recovered from the effects of the fright."

Sometime later, a friend who was visiting Colonel Ganson, was shown part of the "demon's" costume. He suspected that the Colonel, who had survived a hail of bullets in the British War of 1812, had little fear of the silver bullets from the muskets aimed at him from the drunken treasure hunters.

The story of the buried treasure at Beaver Meadow never resurfaced, although it was said that the excavations of the eager treasure hunters remained for several years. I wonder what ever happened to the silver bullets?

