

FAMOUS SWIFT MINE IN KENTUCKY.

Interesting Article Concerning This Much Sought After Deposit of Wealth.

To the editor of the Big Stone Gap Post:

Elk Knob, Lee County, Va., April 23.—After seeing so many allusions to the famous Swift and the Swift mines in the newspapers lately, I wish to add my mite. I was born on the south bank of the Ohio river, where the Big Sandy empties into it, and where the city of Catlettsburg now stands in the year of 1830. In my boyhood and early manhood, I often heard of the famous Swift and his mines, and of parties who were out, or had been out, searching for the deposit of silver, which it was said that Swift had mined.

The search was made in all the eastern counties of Kentucky; not one of them but has had its thoroughly organized searching party since the year 1800, which is the year that Swift returned from his ill-fated expedition. The search was made in Eastern Kentucky for good reasons, if you will notice Swift's statement and confession. Swift himself died at the point where Catlettsburg now stands, at the log cabin house of Rafe Catlett, then the only house in or near that region. Swift was an old man and died about 1802, A. D., and under very peculiar circumstances, as you will see by his statement or confession, which was written at his dictation and sworn to and signed by him in the presence of several witnesses. And his autemortem statement made by his direction and signed and sworn to by him is the basis of all the Swift legends of rich deposits of silver ore.

Swift, at the time of his death, was totally blind, and had been so for months, and realizing that he would never see again and that the time was close at hand when he would have to depart this life, he made the following statement of how he came to be blind and where the silver ore was located, as near as he could give it:

"In the fall of 1800, I and a companion (giving his name) started from the mouth of Big Sandy River, ostensibly on a hunting expedition up the Big Sandy River, but in reality to visit a rich deposit of silver ore which I had previously discovered, for the purpose of coining the silver into dollars and halves, as much as two mules could carry, which we took with us for that purpose. We went up Big Sandy River on the right hand, or Kentucky side, about 70 miles, then we turned to our right, or westward, up a tributary, which flows into Sandy from the west. We went due west up that tributary for 12 miles and there, on the left bank, in a bluff, with rocks overhanging it, we mined the silver and coined two kegs full of dollars and halves. We coined it out of the pure silver with no alloy. We loaded our mules with two kegs and started to return to the mouth of Sandy.

"On the second day I (Swift) decided to kill my companion and take possession of his silver and mule and report that the Indians had found us and had succeeded in killing my companion. Accordingly I ascended a hill to reconnoitre, in order to see if anyone, Indian or white, were on our trail or knew of our presence in that vicinity. After ascertaining that we were all alone in the wilderness, from that point of vantage, I shot my companion and descending, scalped him, to make it appear that Indians had slain him. I took possession of the mule and his load of silver, and after traveling some distance, and knowing that I was within a day's travel of the mouth of the river, I decided to bury the silver and go on in and report that the Indians had killed my companion and after hunters had visited and buried his remains, I would return and dig up the silver and take it to some other point where I could enjoy it to the fullest extent.

"So I stopped at a certain

point and buried the two kegs of silver and rolled a flat stone over the place, and to identify the place when I should return I cut the figure of a horseshoe on the top of the stone with a cold chisel which we had in our outfit. Then due west of the horseshoe so many feet (here he gave exact measurements) on a beech tree, on the south side of the tree, I cut the figure of a half moon and a star. On a poplar tree which stood only a few feet from the beach, I cut the figure of the horseshoe again and three stars in a triangle.

"After finishing all this, I resumed my journey, for during the burial of the money and cutting of figures on the rock & trees, I had begun to feel very queer and sick and felt as if some one was peering from behind a stone or tree and watching every move that I made, and towards the last I often whirled around quickly in order to take my watcher at unawares, and thus catch a glimpse of his face. I could not get the idea out of my head at all, but fully believed and yet believe that some one was watching me, but feared to make himself known to me. So I hurriedly resumed my journey with the two now unladen mules, often looking back to see who that was following me. After I had gone what I took to be eight miles, I ascended a ridge to make observations and ascertain just which way I should go. And while gazing afar off for familiar land marks, I was stricken totally blind. I wondered as near as I could make it out, three days and nights, abandoning the mules to their fate. When, at last, I heard a rifle shot, I shouted aloud, for then I did not care whether the owner of the rifle was Indian or white. I did not fear the Indian on the war path near as much as I did that lonely darkness in the forest. After what to me, seemed an age, I heard voices coming to my rescue. I suppose they did not mind talking and making a noise as they advanced, as I was yelling to the top of my voice all the while."

"Here Swift gives the names of the hunters who found him and conducted him out of the lonely forest to the nearest house, which was that of Rafe Catlett. There he remained about two years before he died and during the time sent out party after party to locate the silver lode and to bring in the two kegs which had already been coined. He dictated "way bills," and drew maps as well as he could, but all in vain; to this day no one has been able to locate the "mine" or buried kegs, although the search is kept up by more people than you would at first believe, even to this day.

A thing of note in his confession, a part which I have not quoted, is that he and his companion after coining the two kegs of silver, hid the implements which they used to coin the money with in a small cave in the bluff just above the body of silver ore, against the time in the future, when they would return again and coin themselves another load of silver, and the implements consisted of a large ladle and two moulds for running dollars and halves, a file and some scraps of iron. And a curious thing is that in the year 1878, lightning struck the face of a cliff, near Olive Hill, in Carter County, Kentucky, and on the waters of Little Sandy River, in the region known as "the Cliffs of Sandy" and split off the cliff a great stone as large as a house and tons and tons of small pieces, and revealed a cave in the cliff in which was found moulds for coining dollars and halves, together with a large ladle, some rusted scraps of iron and human bones and some other relics, I've forgotten just what. Note that Little Sandy runs parallel with Big Sandy

and empties into the Ohio, some 20 or 25 miles west of the mouth of Big Sandy, and the point where the moulds and ladle were blown out of the cliff by lightning must be anywhere from the main stream of Big Sandy at 70 miles up that stream from its mouth. But note again that Swift says he and his companion ascended the Big Sandy for 70 miles and then turned up a tributary, which came in from the west, and ascended that tributary for 12 miles to the ore deposit. Now, 70 miles up the Big Sandy would put them just opposite the cliffs of Little Sandy, near the head of that river and the 12 miles which they estimated that they went up that "due west" tributary, if stretched out 25 or 35 miles, would land them very near where the ladle and moulds were blown out of the cliff by lightning, but on the waters of Little Sandy.

How we might suppose that they followed that "due west tributary" out the head and over on the waters of Little Sandy and did not notice their mistake, as it is a flat country in places near the head waters of Little Sandy. If you assume this to be true then lightning has surely revealed the location of the rich silver deposit. It may be so, for the people who found the moulds and ladle knew nothing of Swift's confession and had nothing by which they could connect them with Swift or any one else and this confession had not then been printed, and so far as I know, this is the first time it has ever appeared in print.

There is not a doubt about Swift dying in Rafe Catlett's cabin, and if he told the truth in his confession, I can't see how any one expects to find Swift's mine in Southwest Virginia, but I can easily account for the legend extending to Southwest Virginia and even into North Carolina. Swift was a horse thief as well as a counterfeiter, and in those days there was a well organized band of horse thieves and counterfeiters extending from the head waters of New river in North Carolina and perhaps much farther south, to the hanging rock in Ohio. The trail passed through the Moccasin Gap and by Pound Gap and down Big Sandy river to its mouth, thence down the Ohio to a point opposite hanging rock. Thence across the Ohio, and through that state to the wilderness of Indiana and Illinois, then the "far west frontier," and even beyond the frontier through some friendly Indian tribes in "Old St. Louis."

Swift and many others undoubtedly traveled that trail often, and of course strewed the news of his silver mine all along the trail, and, perhaps, as Uncle Dick Horton explains, to account for the quantities of silver which he obtained by murdering the poor emigrants who set out from Wolfe's Hills and the settlements on the Holston, for the "old settlements" in the "dark and bloody ground." Many of that gang of outlaws' important stopping places can be pointed out along that trail to this day. And a few places where members of the gang met violent death at the hands of the vigilance men or the honest settlers of the country, which their horse thieving and counterfeiting trail lay through. One such last resting place of a noted member of the gang, which, according to Uncle Dick Horton is to be seen today on Callahan's Creek, not many miles northwest of Big Stone Gap, and is known as the grave of Alexander Goens, and I suppose that there are old men yet living in Wise County who can tell you all about the killing of Goens and the finding of a large amount of counterfeit money in a hollow cane, which Goens carried as a walking stick.

There are many romantic tales told by the first settlers along that trail connected with the organized success of Swift and his counterfeiters. The noted lawyer, Harvey Burns, of Southwest Virginia, used to tell of an experience he once had with the members of the

Southern Railroad Will Controll Output of a Large Area of Coal Land in This Section.

There is no question now but that the Southern Railroad has arrangements perfected whereby it will enter the coal fields of Wise County and Eastern Kentucky.

We understand that the Southern is back of the Black Mountain Railroad Company, the company building a line of road from near Pennington Gap to Interment, through Crab Orchard by way of Imboden, and when this road is completed it will be controlled by the Southern.

The Southern has arrangements with the Virginia and Southwestern (if indeed it does not absorb that road) to use its line to Moccasin Gap, from which point the Holston Valley railroad is preparing to construct a line down the Holston river to the Southern road near Rogersville. There is little doubt but that the Southern is back of this project also and that this line will be constructed with Southern money. This will give that road a short and direct line from the coal fields to its main line at Bull's Gap, Tenn.

It is known that the Southern has been figuring on getting into the coal fields of this section for several years and the main point the Southern is aiming for is the coal fields on Clover Fork in Harlan and Letcher Counties, Ky. This will be reached by driving a short tunnel through Little Black Mountain either at Trace or Morris Gap, which will place it on Clover Fork, one of the richest and most extensive coal fields in all this section.

More than two years ago the Southern made a survey up the Valley from Pineville, Ky., in the hope of reaching the Clover Fork country, but that route proved to be a very expensive one and it was abandoned.

About a year ago the Black Mountain Railroad Company was organized and work was commenced at once, though no one dreamed that the Southern was back of the project.

When the road is completed the Crab Orchard and Kentucky coal and coke will be brought out by way of Interment and over the V. & S. W. to Moccasin Gap and thence south to the main line of the Southern at Bull's Gap, Tenn., as above stated. This will put the Southern in a position to compete with any of the trunk lines coming into this section and will do more to help the development of this country than any thing that could occur in the railroad line. It will prove of inestimable benefit to Big Stone Gap, as this place will unquestionably be the gate way to the vast coal and timber resources of Letcher and Harlan counties, Ky., and the coal and coke will naturally be brought to this place and made up into trains to be taken on to its destination. There is no doubt but the Southern will have extensive yards at or near this place for the purpose of handling the vast output of coal and coke from the fields they are now entering.

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EARTHQUAKE IN SAN FRANCISCO.

Fire, Following Quaking of the Earth, Lays the Beautiful City in Ashes.

THOUSANDS KILLED AND INJURED

Three Hundred Million Dollars of Property Destroyed and Thousands of People Homeless.

Five Hundred Bodies Recovered and Buried Immediately Without Identification—Abundant Relief Received From Other Cities.

San Francisco, Cal., April 19.—Earthquake and fire caused the greatest calamity California has ever known. In San Francisco alone it is estimated that from 2,000 to 5,000 persons have perished, while thousands more are suffering from injuries.

The dreadful earthquake shock came without warning at precisely 5:15 o'clock Wednesday morning. Its motion apparently being from east to west. At first the upheaval of the earth was gradual, but in a few seconds it increased in intensity. Chimneys began to fall and buildings to crack, tottering on their foundations. People became panic-stricken and rushed into the streets, most of them in their night attire. They were met by showers of falling buildings, bricks, cornices and walls.

Many were instantly crushed to death, while others were frightfully mangled. Those who remained indoors generally escaped with their lives, though scores were hit by detached plaster, pictures and articles thrown to the floor by the shock.

Scarcely had the earth ceased to shake when fires broke out simultaneously in many places. The fire department promptly responded to the first calls for aid, but it was found that the water mains had been rendered useless by the underground movement. Fanned by a light breeze, the flames quickly spread and soon many blocks were seen to be doomed. Then dynamite was resorted to and the sound of frequent explosions added to the terror of the people. All efforts to stay the progress of the fire, however, proved futile. The southern side of Market street, from Ninth street, to the bay was soon ablaze.

Despite the heroic work of the firemen and the troop of dynamiters, who razed building after building and blew up property valued at millions, the flames spread to the main thoroughfare of the city, where were located many of the finest edifices in the city, including the Grant, Parrott, Flood, Call, Examiner and Monadnock buildings, the Palace and Grand hotels and numerous wholesale houses.

At the same time the commercial establishments and banks north of Market street were burning. The burning district in this section extended from Sansome street to the water front and from Market street to Broadway. Fires also broke out in the Mission, and the entire city seemed to be in flames.

For miles along the water front buildings have been swept clean and the blackened beams and great skeletons of factories and offices stand silhouetted against a background of flame.

Ripe after block of banking houses were soon reduced to masses of red hot ruin, and it will be months before the money that was housed in their valuable vaults can be touched.

At Larkin and Sutter streets two men and a woman broke from the police and rushed into a burning apartment house, never to reappear.

San Francisco, April 26.—The city is desolated and the theme for the story of the last days of San Francisco emerges from the ruin. It seemed that the acme of its misery was reached at dusk, when flames burst from all sides of the beautiful Hotel Fairmount, the palace that, above every other structure, was apparently most strongly entrenched against the attack of the all-consuming fire. And surrounding that lofty pinnacle of flame as far as the eye could see to the south, to the east and far out to the west, lay, in cruel fantastic heaps, charred and smoking, all that remained of a prosperous city.

The metropolis of the western slope was in ashes. This has been another day of an uneven struggle of man against unconquerable elements of nature. Acre after acre has been ground into dust and ashes, despite the heroic perseverance of the firemen to limit the conflagration.

An attempt was made to check the cruel march of the wall of fire at Van Ness avenue, which crosses the city from north to south, where the retail stores and fine apartment

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APPALACHIA

Granted Franchise to Cumberland Traction Company.

At a special meeting of the town council of Appalachia on last Saturday afternoon, a franchise was granted to the Cumberland Traction Company to construct and maintain a street railway in and through that town.

At first it was thought there would be some opposition to the street railway project, but the Appalachians not only favored the scheme, but are enthusiastic over it and will do all they can to help it along.

The council also agreed to pay one half the construction of the bridge over the L. & N. tracks at the upper end of the big cut, to be used jointly by the street car line and the public. This is a splendid move and shows good forethought on

the part of the officials of Appalachia. The road now crosses the L. & N. track and grade, and as the tracks are frequently blocked with cars, delays and inconveniences are frequent. Besides the school children have these tracks to cross going to and from school, and the bridge to be constructed over the tracks will do away entirely with the danger and delays of grade crossing.

The Cumberland Traction Company means business and is going ahead as rapidly as possible securing right of ways and making all the necessary arrangements preparatory to commencing the work on the grading which will be commenced at the earliest possible moment.