

# Local Writer Explores Legend Of The Treasure Of Pond Island 1970

By Gary Anderson

The search for a lead keel took two young men to the haunted Pond Island in Casco Bay in the summer of 1952 and led one of them, this writer, even deeper into an old family mystery. The keel came from a sailboat that broke loose from Charles Gomez's boat yard in a late summer easterly. Since the hull was found on Pond Island, it was assumed that the agony of her destruction had occurred on the natural barrier of the northern ledges. The legend of haunted men and dogs on the Island has come through the belly of time and out of the mouths of mystified and sometimes terrified fishermen.

John Darling lived on Pond Island for many years and dug extensively for a hidden treasure. He was technically a ward of the town who worked to help himself by fishing and laboring on nearby Orr's Island. He seemed to be happy on the Island and didn't come ashore without a reason. After about twenty-five years he suddenly left, bag and baggage, never to return.

He insisted that a headless dog had visited him one night and spoke to him. What the dog said was never repeated and no amount of coaxing could induce Darling to divulge the context of the conversation. He died taking this part of the mystery to the grave with him, and leaving behind a prodigious number of holes accrued over the twenty-five years that he lived there.

That the gold exists is not part of the mystery, for you may go to the Maine Historical Society in Portland and view this statement: "Our ship was chased by a British frigate, and fearing capture took refuge in Casco Bay. Here Capt. Lowe buried his treasure consisting of three copper kettles each of which would hold a bushel and a number of smaller kettles. These kettles contained gold and silver bullion and over \$100,000 in coins and jewels, on different points on the island."

The statement is from a reformed pirate, forced to work for Lowe or die, and the treasure is from the Don Pedro, a Spanish ship from Mexico going to Spain. Check on it, I have. To this day people go to the Island to dig, causing the Island to look like a battlefield, holes everywhere, some even

from the days of John Darling himself.

The kettles were buried on Pond Island; they were buried on different points on the island."

How, you now ask, does this tie into an old family mystery? Let us tie the sinister knot! In the summer of 1930 Lillian Doughty of Chebeague Island, a paternal great aunt, told her family one morning that she had dreamed of the pirate Lowe, and that he had told her where he had buried his treasure, how to get it, and who she could take to help her.

They were amazed at the detail and limitations that he had revealed to her, but did not take it seriously even though the location was very well known and very close to her sister's place. Her sister was my grandmother. However, the dream repeated itself, exactly, according to my aunt, as the first presentation. This quite understandably terrified her and it took some doing to convince her that it was only because she had thought so much about the first dream that the second one had occurred.

As far as I can determine she had quite a respite, before the third and last dream occurred. Her husband had died, and she had never tried to find the treasure, and he had been the only one that could have accompanied her. She related that she was permitted to take a direct relative with her to the site, and that this was to be the last visit he would make.

As far as her immediate family knew she never had the dream again, and I might add that her story was never doubted by anyone who knew her. Niles Wallace, now deceased, visited the site in the summer of 1937 with a summer person. Wallace, whom I knew very well, told me that it was on a most pleasant day early in the afternoon when they landed and that they immediately went about the business of finding the exact spot as related to my aunt.

Shortly, one of the most intensive summer storms that he had ever witnessed swept over them, with the usual torrential rains and accompanying lightning and thunder. He recalled that, since the storm was so near and things so generally uncomfortable, that his guest urged him to postpone things until a more favorable time, a request to which he gave immediate attention. He

never tried to find the treasure again.

Many of my family know of this location but I will not divulge it here as property damage could result. All without exception believe that it is useless to look for the money, but I will say that in the summer of 1950 I visited the site with a close relative and found a bracelet made of silver or German silver, with a Portuguese coin soldered to it.

This bracelet was taken to Bath by my grandmother and studied by a jeweler. I thought it rather interesting that he could not identify the substance that held the coin to the bracelet. This bracelet disappeared utterly, without trace and has never been seen again as far as I can determine. My grandmother had custody of it and it disappeared before she died, and when after she died, the house was torn down board by board, it still never came to light.

On a beautiful Friday afternoon we landed on Pond Island to make camp, planning to make an all-out effort on the low tide in the morning to locate the lead keel. As soon as we touched shore I took the bow line and started up over the ledges to make the boat fast for the night. Imagine my astonishment to find at my feet the severed head of a large black dog! It was a dog, of that we were certain, it was not a seal

## Pond Island Mystery

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as some have suggested. We had both shot and examined seals at close range. Seals eyes are large, liquid, nearly all pupil and always black-brownish in color and appear to be lidless. These were of conventional non-descript color and the teeth were definitely canine as were the exposed ears.

Instantly I thought of the stories of fishermen being warned away by strange forms. These in three cases involved a dog, black, apparently headless. Two of the three men are still living, though I hesitate to name them. We dismissed this as a coincidence of the wildest kind, though we were both apprehensive; but after the manner of young men, were unwilling to admit it to each other. Besides we were armed and so set out immediately to set up camp and explore the island.

I feel that this narrative is long enough to warrant two installments, forgive me if this departs from the norm, but I tell the story as a special favor to John Morgan of Cundy's Harbor, a favorite uncle and great raconteur of legends. And are not legends here forever? And do not uncles pass too soon?

Next week: A sleepless night and an early dawn flight.

### Back Tracking.

The treasures that are all too much taken for granted on the Islands of Casco Bay are the lobsters and fish that abound there, the shell