

THE MYSTERY OF BARKENTINE CREEK

Many are the stories of ship's treasure buried somewhere on the Texas Coast, but one story tells of ship's treasure buried miles inland on the prairie in Refugio County.

It was a Spanish barkentine, a three-masted ship, which had sailed from Veracruz bringing a cargo of gold and silver coinage to the port of some struggling province. In September of 1822, she ran into a hurricane and apparently sought protection by turning into the mouth of a creek. The storm blew her far upstream, then out onto the plains. No humans, dead or alive, were found with her.

Soon after the storm, a Comanche party happened onto the wreck. They removed eight jars of gold coins, but when attacked and pursued by a band of Karankawas, they hid the jars somewhere between present-day Refugio and Austwell. An aging Comanche returned to look for the gold in the 1850s, but if he found it, he never told anyone.

In the second half of the 19th century, the rotting hulk on the prairie became something of a tourist attraction until her timbers were used to build a ranch house. Nothing remains now of the old Spanish vessel, except the name of nearby Barkentine Creek.

Townsend, Tom. *Texas Treasure Coast*. Austin: Eakin Press, 1979, p. 6.
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