

**MY ANSWER TO THE QUESTION:
WHY DO I THINK TREASURES ARE
BURIED ALONG PEACE RIVER?**



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DECEMBER 2013 AT THE AGE OF 88**

My Answer to the Question: Why do I think treasures are buried along Peace River?

I think treasures are buried along Peace River because I believe the stories I have been told. I'm going to tell this story as an answer to the question why I think treasures are buried along Peace River.

A family named Gomez was living on the island of Madeira, south of Italy. In the year 1825, they had a baby whom they named Juan. His name was Juan Gomez. When Juan was seven years old, he went with his family onto a ship sailing to America. Many people wanted to start a new life in America. Juan, being a child, went with his parents on the Spanish ship sailing to America around 1832.

When the ship got close to Florida, the pirates attacked it and robbed everybody. Everything of value was removed from the ship and the passengers killed. The pirates spared the life of a teenage girl, who happened to be Juan's sister. She then begged them not to kill Juan. So the pirates took her

and young Juan back to their pirate ship. Juan stayed with them on that ship for 10 years.

Juan was still living on the pirate ship when a navy ship attacked it in the Gulf. A cannonball hit Gasparilla and cut him in half. The pirates wrapped a blanket and chain around him and threw him overboard in Charlotte Harbor, which is near Peace River. Arguments and fights broke out about who would be in charge. The Indians also started attacking the ship with flaming arrows, setting it on fire.

Juan, a seventeen-year-old young boy, saw his chance! He went to Gaspar's cabin, where he had been the cabin boy for ten years. Because it was his

responsibility to keep the cabin clean, he knew where the treasure maps were. He went to the closet and grabbed the roll of maps in the oilskin bag. He threw them over onto the bank, jumped overboard, and grabbed the roll of maps. He then walked 75 or 80 miles to Tampa, Florida. It was there he boarded a ship and traveled back to Spain.

After Juan got back to Spain, he was a sailor on ships for many years (according to what he later told my uncle). He then had his own ship and crew for many years. Once he got old, he couldn't have charge over a crew of men anymore. So he quit being captain of a ship. He began hauling cattle from Punta Rossa to Cuba,

which was the Florida market for cattle at that time.

There was another boy up in Douglas, Georgia. Born November 14, 1874, he was named Joseph Fales. However, everyone called him Joe Fales. He lived there until he got to be a pretty big boy. He then went down to Nocatee, Florida. There he met a girl named Julia Corbitt. He met her at Joshua Creek Baptist Church, which was southeast of Arcadia.

They were married at this church when Julia was twenty-one years old in 1903.

Joe was already working as a cowboy for a ranch in the middle of Florida.

Sometimes they would have to drive a herd of cows to market to sell. Because they had to go over to Cuba, they drove the herd of cows to Punta Rossa. At Punta Rossa they were loaded onto a barge that an old Spaniard named Juan Gomez was running. Once they got the cattle loaded, they went on the boat and got acquainted with one another. Joe and Juan would have coffee together every time Joe went down there. They had been friends for several years, and Juan had asked Joe all about what he did, where he lived and hunted, and so on.

One day when Joe was visiting, Juan went over to the closet and pulled out a big roll of maps in an oilskin bag that he

had kept for 75 years. He told Joe that he was past 90 years old, and he wanted to tell him the story of his life when he was a young man. Juan told him that he was born in Madeira and came over on a ship that was captured by pirates, and stayed on the pirate ship for ten years. He also told him about how Gasparilla was killed and about how he had taken the maps and returned to Spain when he was a teenager. He told him, "Now we buried these treasures all around different places and made maps of where they were buried. Six of these are right there where you tell me you were living and hunting around Nocatee. So I'm giving you these six maps to help you locate the treasures, and you can go dig

them up. Everyone except me is dead. I was just a boy, while the others were grown men. They had to swear never to tell anybody where the treasures were buried at, but nobody will know that you know now.”

Juan proceeded to take six maps out of the big roll he had, and he spread them out on the table. He rolled the rest of them up and put them back in the oilskin bag in his closet. Uncle Joe thanked Juan for giving him the six maps. He took the maps back home and told his wife Julia (who was my mother’s sister) all about what Juan Gomez had told him about the treasures and where each of them was buried. May Bell was ten years old

at that time. She was standing on one side of the table. Charlie, who was eight years old, was standing on the other side. They couldn't read the maps because they were written in Spanish, but the pictures were there. They knew the whole area anyway. Uncle Joe wasn't interested in digging the treasures up. Aunt Julia tried to get him to dig

them up. However, he put the maps away in the trunk.

Uncle Joe and Aunt Julia got sick and were sick for a very long time. A neighborhood woman took care of them

during that time. When they finally got well, Uncle Joe went to look for his maps, but he couldn't find them. He went to the neighbor woman and asked her if she had seen his maps. She said, "No, I burned a lot of trash and papers while I was there." So she probably burned them. Uncle Joe never saw the maps again.

However, Uncle Joe remembered things about some of the maps. One day he recognized a spot on the map where one of the treasures was buried. He had his gator rod with him, so he went out in that creek bottom and started punching around with his rod. He hit the treasure! He put his gator rod on it and left it there. Later, when he was walking in the

woods with Aunt Julia, he said, “That treasure I told I found – it’s right over there with the gator rod sticking on it.” She went over and took hold of it and pulled it up and down. She could feel it in that treasure chest down in the ground. She told Joe, “Let’s go dig it up. We could use this.” However, Joe didn’t want to do that. He just wanted to go hunting. She finally convinced him to do it.

Joe got after some of his friends to help him dig up the treasure, and they all laughed at him. They thought he was crazy. Finally he found somebody that agreed to help him, and they were going to dig it up on Sunday morning. But the night before, Saturday night, there was a

party going on. These three men from three different families got bored enough and said, "Let's go dig up crazy Joe's treasure. He told me right where it was at and left his gator rod on it." They did go down there that night and dug up that treasure. When Uncle Joe got down there the next morning, he didn't find anything but a hole and the place where the chest had been lifted up out of the ground. He didn't get any part of that treasure and never located any of the other treasures.

After Uncle Joe died, his son Charlie (who had seen the maps and knew this was all real) got to looking for the treasures. Lots of other people that they had told them about were also looking

for the treasures, including my daddy. My daddy went with a group of men on a boat. A man that lived on the west side of the river had a boat, and he would take eight or ten men on his boat and go up the river with them to a spot where he told him the treasure was supposed to be. Daddy said he got off the boat and went on shore. He saw holes dug all out in the swamp. Daddy and his coworker friend, John Nipper, decided that wasn't the right place because someone would have found it. They needed to get a little further over somewhere.

Daddy and John came back in the car one day and pulled off the road into the woods to park the car, before they got to the man's house. They began walking

south on the west side of the river. However, they stopped before they got to the man's house because they didn't want to be seen. They turned around then and started going north on the west side of the river about noontime. When one of them stubbed his toe, they looked and found what seemed was a round brass knob that ships have on a rail. They scratched in the leaves and found four more brass knobs in the ground. When they looked up in the trees, Roman Numerals were carved in the trees higher than they could reach. The trees were numbered off to the north, south, and west. All of the numbers were big enough to see but not to reach. It was late in the afternoon,

and the swamp had bears and panthers in it. Daddy and John were not woodsmen anyways, so they just wanted to get out of that place and go back home – then come back later to find the treasure. They never found it again. Our later treasure hunting was in search of the Roman Numerals, hoping to find the brass knobs.

When Daddy would tell us about it, we asked him how far the brass knobs were from the river. He said they were about a stone's throw. We asked him what was on the other side. He said there was a lagoon on the other side about a stone's throw as well. The lagoon was about a stone's throw across and three times that long. I had heard him tell the story

several times. What happened was Daddy and John walked across the lagoon to the car and never could find the brass knobs again.

My brother Orbidue returned home in 1950 from eight years of service in the Navy. After midnight one Saturday night in 1951, my brother came over to my house and woke me up. He said there was company over at my daddy's house next door. He wanted me to come over there and hear what they had to say.

Charlie Fales had come up from Homestead just to get my daddy to tell him about finding the brass knobs and seeing Roman Numerals in the swamp.

Someone had told him about the story. He drove all the way up to Sarasota to hear about it. His brother, John Fales, had moved to Sarasota and was building wooden boats. He came up to see John and both of them went over to Daddy's house to hear the story

My brother and I both listened as well, but we were never really impressed by the story. However, after Charlie heard the story, he got very excited about it and wanted to know if Orbidue and I wanted to go treasure hunting with him. We agreed, and that was what started our treasure hunting with Charlie Fales.

Charlie Fales started treasure hunting after his daddy died. He knew about the

treasure his daddy had his gator rod on, but someone else dug it up . Later on, he heard about a man who knew where some treasure had been dug up. Charlie contacted that man and drove him up to Nocatee. The man told him that he couldn't tell Charlie where it was or draw it on a map, but he could show him in person. They went to the same creek bed where Uncle Joe put his gator rod in the treasure. The man walked back towards the river and stopped. He began to tell Charlie about a story he had heard when he was living with his uncle. His uncle and another man had come down to the creek and dug up a treasure.

About a year later, Charlie ran into another man with almost the same

story. Almost the same thing happened. Charlie picked him up and took him to the same creek bed in Nocatee. The man took him down to the spot where the two other treasures had been dug up and started walking towards the river – except it was much closer to the river than the other two were. He told Charlie a story very similar to the other man’s about a treasure being dug up. That let us know there had been three treasures dug up in that one little creek bed that drained the pasture land on the west side of Peace River. The little creek was half a mile south of Nocatee Bridge on the west side of the river.

When we were treasure hunting, we only knew about the treasure Uncle Joe

had put his gator rod on. Charlie didn't know about the other two stories until many years after we had stopped treasure hunting in the early 1950s. After we found out about the other two treasures, I got to wondering why the pirates put treasure up in the creek beds. There was about two feet of water in the creek when the tide was high. However, when the tide went down, the creek would be dry. I was thinking about that one morning around 3 AM when I couldn't sleep. It came to me: If the pirates had put treasure in a small boat, they could go up the creek at high tide and tie the boat off. Once the tide went down, they would get out and bury the treasure chests in the creek bed. When

the tide came back in, the water washed off all signs that anything had been buried.

Why did the pirates bury at least three treasures in the same creek bed when there were other creeks up and down Peace River? It let me know that the pirates might have been burying all their treasures in the creek beds between Punta Gorda and Arcadia....any place where the tide came up and washed the creek bed clean. The government had told the Navy to get rid of the pirates any way they could by sinking or killing them. The pirates were bothering all the merchant ships and killing the people. Because of this, the pirates did not go out in the Gulf and bury treasure along

the shore. They went up Peace River every time. Juan Gomez had a whole roll of maps in the closet that showed where treasures were buried. Uncle Joe only got six of the maps. It's very possible that there are many treasures buried in the creek beds between Punta Gorda and Arcadia.

When I was nine years old in 1934, we had been over to Wauchula and were coming back home through Parish. There was a long stretch between Parish and Palmetto. We were on the north side of Manatee River, so we were going straight west. When we crossed the creek at Rocky Bluff (the east edge of Ellenton), Daddy told the whole family about a story he heard from a dragline

operator. Daddy was a dragline operator too. They were mining minerals that they made oil dry out of. It dried up oil on the concrete. One creek runs into the Manatee River.

Anyways, the story was about a dragline operator that was digging the dirt out of Rocky Bluff and building up the shoulders of the dirt road that went all the way from Palmetto to Parish (301 Highway). They were going to pave the road for the first time and were building up the banks of the creek high enough that they could build a bridge there and not have to drop down close to the water. This made the road more level. While the dragline operator was digging, he dug into a treasure chest. He saw it

when the bucket lifted it up, and stuff started spilling out of it. He just let the bucket drop back down to the ground and told his men, "The drag line just broke down. We'll come back next week to work some more." That gave him a chance to go gather up the stuff he had seen.

Later I got to thinking there could be one or two more treasures buried along the same creek at Rocky Bluff. Someone needs to take a metal detector and walk in that creek at low tide to see if they can find something. Also, because there weren't metal detectors in 1934, there could possibly be more treasure that spilled out that that man didn't find.

If you went down in the creek or along the shoulders of 301, you might find something that he missed. It was probably gold or things such as rings, dress pins, bracelets, or anything of value. It would be worth spending a little time looking for it.

This story you have just heard is my answer to question: Why do I think treasure could be buried along Peace River? Because of everything I have just told you, I *really* do believe treasures are buried all between Punta Gorda and Arcadia in shallow creeks that have low tides. Juan Gomez told my Uncle Joe. Aunt Julia told my mother. I heard my mother tell the stories often. My cousin Charlie, Uncle Joe's son, also told me. I

am now glad to be able to tell this story
to you because it is part of Florida
history.