"FLIM-FLAM"

I remember my father telling me that when he was young all the children living in the Dry Creek area of Marsh Fork District in Raleigh County, WV, spent many hours hunting for Wilson Smith Abbott's buried treasure. Although no treasure was found, our family still has Indian arrowheads and other artifacts found while Dad was searching for the allusive treasure.

Listening to the old timers spin tales, the favorite story was that of Wilson Abbott, the first area County assessor (1861), who collected the local taxes. Wilson Smith Abbott was a Deputy Sheriff of Fayette County, Va., now Marsh Fork District of Raleigh Co., WV, at the beginning of the Civil War. Wilson settled (1838) and claimed the whole of Dry Creek, living at the mouth of Dry Creek. He had just collected the taxes when the Civil War broke out. At this time there were roving bands of robbers among the confusion throughout the county side. Because of this he was afraid to deliver the tax money he had collected to the county Sheriff’s Office. Wilson placed the money of gold and silver coins in a strong box and hid it while waiting for more favorable conditions before taking it to the Sheriff’s Office at Fayetteville, Va..

At this point fiction overcomes facts to the curious. My father, a descendant of Wilson's brother, St.Clair Abbott, like other children and adults, believed the old folk's fictitious tale.

Fiction:

Wilson buried the strong box on his farm where he could see its location from his porch. In this way he could keep watch over the treasure without actual going to it and thereby revealing its location. He died one night without revealing its location to anyone. Believing this to be true, some 40 years later many people, not only children, searched for the treasure of gold and silver coins.

Facts:

Some time after collection the taxes, an official looking man came to Wilson's home with three Confederate soldiers as his personal guards. After producing official looking papers, he announced that he was sent by the State of Virginia to collect the taxes that local Sheriffs had collected and were unable to deliver to Richmond. Believing this to be true, Wilson gave the tax money to him in exchange for a receipt.

Some months later, the State of Virginia sent a State Official with guards to collect the taxes from the local Deputy Sheriffs. Realizing he had been flim-flamed, Wilson could only produce a receipt.

The State of Virginia sold Wilson's home and farm to recoup as much of the tax money possible. After the sale of his farm, Wilson and his wife, Mary, lived with their son, William, until both died. Wilson and Mary are buried in the Cooper–Bone Cemetery at Dry Creek, WV.

Wilson Smith Abbott, born 1798 in Monroe County and died 1874 at Dry Creek in Raleigh,
Covington C. was married to #1 Martha J. Carnifax and #2 Mary C. Sheaver. Julia Ann married #1 Adam Toney and #2 Lemuel Calfee Jarrell, Jr. William H. married #1 Mary and #2 Evaline Nesbitt “Eve” (Workman) Ballard.


William H. Abbott’s first wife, Mary, surname is unknown by me. William H. and Evaline Nesbitt “Eva” (Workman-Ballard) Abbott are buried in the cemetery at the mouth of Dry Creek, sometimes called the Burnside Cemetery. William (24 Dec. 1830 Pipestem-5 Feb. 1917 Dry Creek) was a 1st Sgt. in the Union’s 7th W.Va. Cav. Co. H. Eva (5 Feb. 1836-9 Aug. 1914) was the widow of James Blackburn Ballard (died of disease 5 Nov. 1862 at Gallipolis, OH while in the Union’s 7th W.Va. Cav. Co. H). Eva was the daughter of Andrew and Louise T. (White) Workman. William and Eva were married on Sept. 25, 1866 and had no children; each had children with their first spouses. Someone, I assume their “dumb-ass-children”, removed his Civil War Union tombstone and replaced William and Eva’s with cheap matching tombstones. They then placed William’s Civil War tombstone leaning against a cedar tree near by.
Burnside Cemetery, mouth of Dry Creek, WV
William H. Abbott’s Union headstone against the tree.
William and Evaline Abbott’s graves in foreground.

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I invite comments, corrections, additions and variations to this bit of southern West Virginia history. You are welcome to copy the contents of this report in part or whole.

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Mouth of Dry Creek Cemetery
Eva N. Abbott     Feb. 5, 1836  Aug. 9, 1914

Ceba M. Burnside  1875  1947
Lewis Burnside    Sept. 5, 1874  Nov. 13, 1956