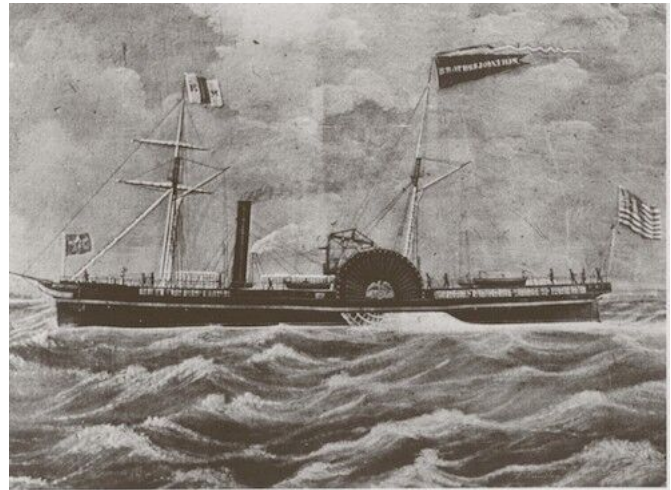


Brother Jonathan shipwreck mystery endures

July 25, 2023



One of America's most intriguing mysteries of lost treasure and human tragedy, endures. 158 years ago, July 30, 1865 the Brother Jonathan steamer enroute from San Francisco to British Columbia, crashed during a terrific gale on an uncharted rock eight miles north of Crescent City.

The Brother Jonathan was heading for Portland when the steamer struck the rock, later named Dragon Rock, fatally dooming the ship. Of the 244 passengers and crew aboard, 19 survived the ordeal on just one lifeboat.

Two other lifeboats were capsized during the escape. Help from the mainland could not penetrate the horrific storm surrounding the Brother Jonathan.

The tragedy was the worst sea disaster on the Pacific coast at this time of history. Besides the human loss, an estimated \$50 million (at today's value) of \$20 gold coins and gold bars went down with the ship.

For 125 years, the wreckage and the gold remained undisturbed, tantalizingly close to the mainland.

In 1993, the crew of Deep Sea Research (DSR) found the wreckage some two miles from Dragon Rock, where the Brother Jonathan disappeared into the Pacific abyss. The mission continued.

In 1996 the mini submarine observed a glint from near the wreckage site and investigated. Some 875 gold coins in near mint condition were discovered. Over time, salvors collected 1207 gold coins, primarily double-eagle \$20 gold coins. At a Los Angeles auction in 1999, 1006 of those coins fetched \$6.3 million. The state took a 20 percent tax bite from those proceeds.

Despite the recent efforts to retrieve the remainder of the gold coins and bars, most of the treasure remains near the wreckage. Salvors estimate 80 percent of the booty including the large safe remains undiscovered, “just miles off-shore.”

DSR set up a conservation lab operated by the Del Norte Historical Association on H St. Artifacts can be observed and studied at the Historical Museum.

Brother Jonathan cemetery and park on 9th St looks out over the vast Pacific in homage to the 225 human beings who lost their lives July 30, 1865.

Check out the Historical Museum at 577 H Street for additional information.