Theodosia and Her Locket
Tom Linton

If I were a cat I would probably have been killed by now --- cause I have a very keen curiosity. Something I came across regarding the burial site of The “Mother of Texas” Jane Long, set it off. There was this Karankawa Indian down near the mouth of San Bernard River who turned up with a gold locket.

Not that Karankawa Indians were rarities around the mouth of the San Bernard River in the eighteen twenties --- perhaps even with gold lockets. However, this locket was unique to say the least.

This gold locket belonged to Theodosia Burr Alston, daughter of Aaron Burr, wife of the Governor of South Carolina and passenger on a boat that departed Georgetown South Carolina on 31 December 1812. This boat, the Patriot, with all its crew and passengers disappeared without a trace.

Where did they go and how did that locket get to Texas? This really got me going like a bloodhound.

Thus far I have found evidence of Ju-Ju black magic in the Carolina low country, piracy on the high seas (with a couple of folks being hanged for said same), Key West wreckers and refuge with Lafitte on Galveston sought.

HOW IT ALL STARTED:

On the 20th of December 1812 there was a meeting held in a tavern near the docks in Georgetown South Carolina. The decisions made by the three men who met there set in motion one of the great sea mysteries of all times --- the disappearance of the pilot boat Patriot and all onboard. Many ships can be included as having had a similar fate but none had so famous a passenger as did the Patriot --- Theodosia Burr Alston. She, the only child of the infamous Aaron Burr and wife of the Governor of South Carolina, Joseph Alston, along with the boat and all on board vanished without a trace but a few tantalizing clues as to its fate.

The meeting in Georgetown was between a local blockade-runner known only as Cap’n Le Blanc and two deck hands from the Patriot. They met to plan piracy on the high seas. The plan intended only to gain them the cargo of the Patriot that was thought to be so carefully concealed.

Le Blanc operated out of Charleston and Georgetown South Carolina as a blockade-runner during the War of 1812. He was said to have been involved with Jean and Pierre Lafitte in their early days in the Caribbean. He had been in and out of Charleston and Georgetown for several years. No one trusted him but sought him out when there were shady deals to be done. That is what caused Jean Desfarges and Robert Johnson to arrange to meet with him on that December night.

Desfarge and Johnson had been hired to help in the refitting of the Patriot to make her ready to sail for New York and with the understanding they would be taken on as crew for the trip. In the course of their work it appeared to them that steps had been taken to hide some of the Patriots cargo, this caused them to seek out Cap’n Le Blanc.

When the Patriot put into Georgetown for repairs she had a 50-man crew ---- a huge crew for a vessel of its size--- presumably musketeers and surplus crews to man ships taken as prizes in its privateering undertaking. The Patriot had returned after 56 days at sea during which time she was reported to have “--- burnt, sank and destroyed 9 vessels (History of the American Privateers & Letters-of- Marque During Our War with England in the Years 1812, ’3, and ’4, George Coggeshall, 1865).

With this much time at sea and with this many ships subdued it is highly likely that the plunder from these encounters did in fact reside in the recesses of the double-hulled area amidships of the Patriot.
The recording of the materials taken by licensed privateers was recorded at the War Office in New York. Desfarage and Johnson would have known of this requirement. This coupled with the fact that the Patriot had not been to New York since it conducted its 56 days of privateering caused them to decide that a meeting with Cap'n LeBlanc could be to their advantage.

The removal and storage of the Patriot's two cannons below decks was explained to them as an attempt to show the English ships blockading the East coast ports at the time, that the Patriot was a vessel merely seeking innocent passage.

The same reason given for painting over the name of the Patriot also could be accepted as a subterfuge for the purpose of passage through the blockade.

However, the double walls of the hull amidships of the vessel were not mentioned nor explained by either the Captain of the Patriot, William Overstocks nor the Sailing-Master Samuel Coon.

On 22 December 1812, Mr. Timothy Green wrote to Aaron Burr from Georgetown, S.C. Green’s letter was to inform Burr that he had engaged a passage to New York for his daughter in a pilot-boat --- the Patriot. He stated that he was able to make this very fortuitous arrangement because the vessel, which had been out privateering, had come in to Georgetown for refitting before departing for New York --- and that they would sail in about eight days.

Timothy Green was a friend of Burr’s who Burr had persuaded to go and accompany Theodosia on the voyage to New York. He was asked to perform this service for his friend Burr because as he stated in his letter to Burr on 7 Dec 1812 that Theodosia’s husband, Governor Joseph Alston “--- seemed rather hurt that you should conceive it necessary to send a person here, as he or one of his brothers would attend Mrs. Alston to New York. I told him that you had some opinion of my medical talents; that you had learned your daughter was in a low state of health, and required unusual attention and medical attention, on her voyage ---.”

Governor Alston and Theodosia sailed down the Waccamaw River from their home, above the confluence of the Greater Pee Dee and Waccamaw rivers, Oak Plantation.

He saw to her boarding the Patriot and watched, as he described in a letter to Aaron Burr, “--- as the vessel rounded the point of North Island.”

Thus began the journey of Theodosia and her locket.

SOURCE MATERIALS
I have drawn on several well researched and documented sources in my attempt to develop a, hopefully, plausible theory of how the locket got to Texas.

5). “Theodosia the First Gentlewoman of her Time” Charles Felton Pidgin.
7). Personal communication, Henry H. Anderson, Jr. 186 Jerry Browne Rd., Mystic, CT.

And where I could not find documentation I tried to use the famous axiom of Sherlock Holmes, “When you eliminate the impossible, whatever remains--however improbable--must be the truth.” --Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In other words I have tried to create a set of events that may have been “probable” given the document facts surrounding the time and place.