

Little Lost Doll Surely Would Never Be Found

By Roberta Eskew, Friendship, Tennessee

My friend of more than 40 years, Mrs. Rose Frances Colvett Bruce, had a tiny doll given to her when she was a child.

What happened to that doll is part of a memory she relates as a member of the Crockett County Storytellers. Frances, so funny and lively at age 94, goes to the library to tell stories of her life and to encourage children to read.

Back in the winter of 1919-20, when Frances was only 7 years old, her family was living in town just for the winter in Alamo, Tennessee. The doll was a gift from her elderly neighbor, Mrs. Worrell.

As Frances tells it, “Mrs. Worrell, an invalid, really liked tea cakes, and when my mother made them for our school lunches, which was often, I would take a warm batch to Mrs. Worrell. I liked that job a lot. I’d sit in a straight chair next to her big rocking chair to visit, and on one of those occasions, Mrs. Worrell gave me a little doll. I treasured it, because I knew she must like me to give me such a wonderful gift.

“We moved back to our farm the first of March that winter. One spring day, my twin brother, Frank, and I were given the job of bugging potatoes, knocking bugs off with a stick into a gallon bucket and mashing them. I hated that job.”

What happened next and in the years to follow is included in this poem (below) written in the voice of Frances by her niece Virginia Dare Colvett Ford.

The Story of Frances Colvett Bruce’s Little Dolly

When I was a little girl, Mrs. Worrell gave to me
A tiny little china doll—she was pretty as could be.

Her hair was painted yellow and a crocheted dress she wore,
Her eyes were blue as blue could be, each day I loved her more.

I kept her in the pocket of my little gingham dress,
She went with me to church and school—as friends we were the best.

Then one spring day when Frank and I were buggin' tater vines,

My little dolly disappeared—“Oh, where is she?” I whined.

We searched for her for many days—but nowhere was she found,

I guessed she would be lost for good in that ole tater ground.

I prayed so hard that she'd return, but Mama said, “Don't fret,
“Some day she may come back to you, then you'll have no real regret.”

When Papa died, we sold the farm and moved to Alamo;

I had to leave my doll behind—oh, I did miss her so.

Soon Sammie Bruce and I did wed—we traveled far and wide,
We had one daughter, Leanne Jane—she filled our hearts with pride.

When Sammie died, I prayed and prayed, “Oh, Lord, where should I go?”

He said, “My child, I think you should move back to Alamo.”

Years down the road my doorbell rang, and much to my surprise,
There stood my good friend Lillian Hunt—I could not believe my eyes.

For in her hand she held my doll—I said, “Where was she found?”

She said her brother plowed her up in our ole tater ground.

Both arms were gone, as was one foot—her dress was missing, too,

Her yellow hair had washed away—her eyes no longer blue.

Oh, what a happy day for me—I could hardly hold back tears,

My dolly had come home to me after more than 60 years.

Rose Frances Colvett Bruce was so happy to get the little doll back.

The Colvett family had sold the farm to James Hunt, the brother of Frances' lifelong friend Lillian. When Frances moved back to Alamo after her husband died, she bought a house just two doors down from Lillian, whose family had been told the story about the lost doll.

It was a Sunday afternoon in the summer of 1980 when Lillian brought the doll over to Frances. “She said that James had plowed it up and, knowing it did not belong to either of his daughters, he thought it just might be my doll,” explains Frances. “I knew immediately that it was my doll, and I said, ‘He plowed it up in the field in front of the barn, didn’t he?’ And she said, ‘That’s right!’”