Where Do Warm Waters Halt?

A paper by Douglas Meyer

The Fenn Treasure is reportedly worth over a million dollars hidden in the Rocky Mountains by art dealer and author Forrest Fenn. Some have suggested that value to be over two million. When asked why he created the treasure hunt, Fenn said he “just wanted to give people some hope”.

As of February 2018 the treasure remains where he hid it about 8 years ago’. Forrest confirmed searchers have been within 200 feet of the treasure and many within 500 feet. The Thrill of the Chase and Too Far to Walk are books that chronicle Fenn’s life as an adrenaline junkie and the treasure hunt has attracted many searchers.

In 2010 he hid the chest full of treasure, containing gold coins, mostly American eagles and double eagles, along with placer nuggets from Alaska. Two weigh more than a pound each with hundreds of smaller nuggets. Also are pre-Columbian gold animal figures and ancient Chinese human faces carved in jade, Spanish 17th century gold ring with a large emerald and an antique ladies gold dragon coat bracelet that contains 254 rubies, six emeralds, two Ceylon sapphires, and numerous small diamonds.”

There is a Tairona and Sinu Indian necklace from Columbia that consists of thirty-nine fetishes carved from quartz crystal, carnelian, jadeite, and other exotic stones. Plus, two cast gold objects (jaguar claw and frog). A small silver bracelet that has 22 turquoise disc beads, an item Forrest would like to have back and is willing to pay the finder for it. Also an olive jar holding his autobiography is part of the find.

These items (along with some others not mentioned) are contained in a Romanesque Lock Box (dated to around 1150 AD) made of Bronze. The treasure chest is 10x10x5 and weighs 42 lbs. There is one thing in the chest that he has not talked about except to say, “I don’t want to talk about it. It is something saved especially for the person who solves the clues.” And from time to time Forrest has released new clues about the treasure’s location.

This paper is an effort to help folks evaluate the clues and develop a search plan. If folks pooled their resources the chest might be found in 2018. But of course the value of the chest and greed just might get in the way of that goal. Maybe just maybe the process described in these pages might help speed up the recovery of the chest. And we will discover the end of the story Forrest is telling us with this quest.
A Note to Mr. Fenn

Just Me,

I live in Louisiana, just outside New Orleans, in St Tammany Parish on the north shore of Lake Pontchartrain, an estuary that feeds the “Warm Waters” of the Gulf of Mexico. As you might imagine, our area is rich in history. In reading about you, I believe you have a special place in your heart for early Native American History.

Unlike your San Lazaro archaeological property, archaeological components in our area are unfortunately based entirely on the results of limited excavations. However, some Indian camping grounds and shell piles called middens still might have potential historical significance. Native Americans hunted and created mounds in this general area long before DeSoto ever made his Pasada or bloody trek from Florida to the Mississippi River in 1541. Like all Native American Tribes, many lost their lives, their native lands and those that survived were relocated by the invaders.

The archaeological Claiborne and Cedarland Mississippi sites were mostly destroyed by construction in the 1960’s (Port Bienville). Current thinking is the Claiborne and Cedarland sites represent the remains of the coastal villages occupied during the Late Archaic (circa 3000-1500 B.C.)

One interesting local area which might result in early Native American artifacts and possibly pirate spoils, is an area called the Isle of Pearl or Pearl Island. If you have read William Bartram’s travels he describes in his book “Pearl Island”. This area is identified on currents maps as high ground and as high ground a likely camping area. This area also has one unusual physical characteristic that would make identifying “locations” easier if one were so inclined to bury items for future recovery. This site would also have easier access to Lake Pontchartrain and our history also describes the Honey Island Swamp area as a pirate haven. The property is privately owned with little to no development. If you were thirty years younger I would suggest you might want to check this area out.

Hopefully I haven’t bored you with my opening dialog, but wanted to make a small statement on the bases and perspective of my evaluation of your poem and treasure quest. I have found your Treasure Quest to be an enjoyable distraction from life’s many challenges and your clues can create numerous possibilities with different chains of thoughts. As I am in my mid-sixties I have no plans to join the field search, but that is not to say I wouldn’t if my grandchildren were to say, ‘Grandpa let’s go look’.

Speaking only for myself, the search isn’t about the treasure value, but about discovering the true meaning of the nine clues and your thought process developing these clues, as they relate to this special place. Along with what you wanted found in addition to the chest, there are many lessons to be learned here.

With the chest in hand I would love to see the finder drive to your house, ring your bell and return the chest to you saying, ‘I think you left this in the Rocky Mountains’, turning around and returning to their home. For me, money is not my life’s driver. My father told me, do work that you love to do, and work hard, surrounding yourself with the best possible people, (as there is no such thing as a self-made man) and the money will follow. The value inside the chest means more to you, than it would ever mean to me. For me selling the contents for currency just wouldn’t be right. As I am not an active searcher, I have no horse in this race, but think it would be cool if the find was returned to you or used to remind folks of this quest of discovery. There would be value to me knowing what you would do if in fact the chests and contents were returned to you.
Just for fun, I am sharing my thoughts on the “solve” with you first, then I plan on offering them (this paper; free) too others. I have read that you might find this type of dialog (my paper) to be too lengthy to read, do know I appreciate your valuable time and hope you might find this of interest.

The Rocky Mountains are a beautiful place and in my early years a place my wife and I enjoyed exploring, both in the winter and summer. I admire you for creating this additional exposure to this beautiful area and particularly the focus on family adventure.

My prospective on how to evaluate the clues, is just that, my prospective. Folk can use as they may or just disregard, it’s been fun to speculate, but for me added fun is to share one’s theories and why. I would hope after the chest has been found, you will share the true meaning of the nine clues and your thought process developing these clues, leading searchers to this special place.

As for my arm chair evaluation, I believe even if the general location is discovered, one would have to be there to discover the chest’s final location. With me sitting in my chair in Louisiana, I will find nothing, but this process might help others. I for one am never too old to learn something new each and every day, improving my thought process. Constructive Criticism is a form of Continuous Improvement. Take what you may find as value and discard or shelve the rest.

As you have suggested the search is supposed to be fun. Recently, due to an accident, you offered the following on 6/20/2017.

“When I said the treasure was not hidden in Utah or Idaho it was my plan not to narrow the search area further. But in the light of a recent accident, and in the interest of safety, I feel it necessary to alter that plan. The treasure chest is not under water, nor is it near the Rio Grande River. It is not necessary to move large rocks or climb up or down a steep precipice, and it is not under a man-made object. Please remember that I was about 80 when I made two trips from my vehicle to where I hid the treasure. Please be cautious and don’t take risks. My guess is that in the last 7 years more than 250,000 people have searched for the treasure without suffering any serious injuries. I invite you to add your name to that list. The search is supposed to be fun.”

Thank you for those comments. Under the circumstances they were made, I am taking away from those comments; the chest is not hidden by water (covered), “nor is it “near” a major dangerous river, (the Rio Grande River”), as an example; the Arkansas River could be just as dangerous as the Rio Grande. And I am assuming “near” to be less than a mile.

There is an old saying that to “assume” makes an “ass out of you and me”. (ass-u-me) I would think more of me, than you! I believe your point is, don’t go where an eighty year old wouldn’t go.

With this paper I would hope that if folks pooled their resources, the chest might be found in 2018. Then you might tell us the true meaning of the nine clues, your thought process developing these clues, as they relate to this special place and what you wanted found in addition to the chest.

But of course the value of the chest and greed may get in the way of this goal. Maybe just maybe the process described below might help speed up the recovery of the chest. Again another assumption on my part.

Best regards,

Doug Meyer
Slidell, Louisiana, 70458
Process of the Solve: The Poem!

The poem is divided into 6 sections, each section serving as a chapter in this quest. Forrest has said, “The path would not be direct for those who had no certainty of the location beforehand, but sure for the one who did.” Like any story, each chapter will add details that would be important to the overall story; these details might not be a direct line, but will add value.

Forrest has also said, if you knew the geographic location of each clue it would be a map to the treasure. As you travel through the poem create a map of possibilities, I like to say I am putting these in my bucket of possibilities to create my map. Understanding the values of the author is a key, if the values of “your solve” do not line up with the values of the author, I would suggest a different path, don’t put them in your bucket.

The poem is just a part of the story that is being told. As you travel through the poem you will be creating a story of your “Thrill of the Chase”, trying to understand the story Forrest is telling. It could possibly be that the first part of the poem is like the introduction of a book that speaks of hints that will be discovered in the story being told.

As the location of the chest had been predetermined, the story shall lead all of the actors to its resting place. A place where the author would like his bones to rest. There is a reason why this location was chosen and a story to be told. As you process the poem, be mindful of what you might find as key elements of the poem, they are key elements of the story. Having a solid knowledge of these elements will be important, as Forrest has suggested. Read the poem over and over again and again.

For me the most important clue in finding the general location is, “begin it where warm waters halt”. I don’t want to mess with Forrest’s poem, so starting at the beginning honors the values of the author.

Section One: An Introduction to the Story??

As I have gone alone in there
And with my treasures bold,
I can keep my secret where,
And hint of riches new and old.

An interesting beginning to the poem. What could be the key elements (clues) to the story to be told? “As I have gone alone in there”, When someone is going “in there” it usually is a specific place. A place where Forrest would like his remains to rest. I would imagine one would also find a “marvel gaze” (discovered by reading and re-reading the poem over and over) in such a place and a place that hints of “riches new and old”

A place that might provide a history lesson with breathtaking scenic vistas, a place that unveils the mysteries of a Mighty River and geological wonders. A place with archeological finds of early man and Native Americans. A place that delivers the values of the author. Who wouldn’t want there remains located in a place like the picture below? A truly “Marvel Gaze”.

![Marvel Gaze](image-url)
A Note of Consideration: Maybe a place at one time, or even in one’s life time, that had been a difficult place to reach, where you would have to be bold to go in there. Then expanding the “In there”, would not be “In a mine, tunnel, or cave or under a manmade item.”

“Gone alone”, he delivered the box to its resting place alone; by himself. He made two trips from his car to the hiding place and it was done in one afternoon. Just maybe one trip to see if anyone was in that location, carrying half the load and the second trip with the other half and then to hide the chest?

A Note of Consideration: “Some of the searchers have been within 200 to 500 feet of the hiding location. Since he drove alone to the location, there might be a parking area within 200 to 500 ft. of the resting place. He also said it was not on a “path”, so look for signs away from a path that could be traveled by an eighty year old man. He has also said that he “walked less than a few miles (whole trip of hiding the chest and treasure). For me I would suggest looking 200 ft. to one half mile (2640 ft.) from where you would park a car. Just remember an 80 year old man would have to walk that distance carrying possibly 21 lbs. each trip.

“And with my treasure bold”, he delivered the box, (Bold) openly in full view, with confidence (a possible place with minimum human traffic) Chest is 10x10x5 inches and made of Bronze, chest and contents weigh 42 lbs.,

A Note of Consideration: In speaking of the chest; so you will be looking for something that you could see from 5 to 10 feet, maybe covered by rocks and or some other natural material. Since the treasure is in a bronze chest, it might also be interesting to use a “thermal imaging device”; the heat signature of any exposed metal (bronze) will stick out like a sore thumb. What the eye might miss the device might see. (It is also not necessary to move large rocks or climb up or down a steep precipice, and it is not under a man-made object.)

“I can keep my secret where” This is the key; A “where” Forrest wants his remains to rest. A special place that maybe few people are aware of, a secret place, a sacred place, maybe a place that has not been discovered by large numbers of the general population, but maybe a place that should be.

After someone finds the chest the “where” should attract thousands of folks, and his name will be attached forever to this location. Just me, a where might be the summer hunting grounds of the early American Paleo Indians and / or possibly a geological formation that would be close to parking and off a path? A “where” rich in history, maybe even in an image of an old photograph.

Don’t go “where” an eighty year old man couldn’t go. A location above 5,000 ft. and below 10,200 ft., this location would be special. Again understanding the values of the author would be key.

“And hint of riches new and old”. The hint, riches new and old. A location where new and old riches could be found. Mining districts in the Rocky Mountains and or early historical Indian hunting areas where artifacts might be found. (Arrowheads / Sacred Sites) Do not rule out the riches of nature. I would think the more one finds of riches in the area the better. We are told the chests location could be on private and or public lands. Both could create chest ownership issues. Maybe this issue might be resolved by the “one thing in the chest that he has not talked about except to say I don’t want to talk about it. It is something saved especially for the person who solves the clues.”

A Note of Consideration: In speaking of public and private lands. There are private lands located in the Rocky Mountains; Lots of old mining claims could also hold “new riches”. Public or private land; mining claims would be classified as “patented” or “un-patented”. It’s also a practice to allow foot traffic across mining claims and most mining claims are located within government owned areas. The issue with mining claims, some are not easy to get to. There might be new mining claims, dating back to 2009, and recreational mining.
There is also recreational private land ownership in these areas, farms, ranches, fishing clubs and others. Not really sure if the find would be on private or public lands, having one’s bones buried, would fit private land, while spreading ashes, it doesn’t matter.

Private lands are recorded, if you have narrowed down a location, you might want to check and see where the private and public lands are in that area. When researching an area you might find private land owned by a “Blind Trust”, surely Mr. Fenn would not use his own name on the title.

With that, another consideration in your location is to locate a surveyor’s mark, a blaze (discovered by reading and re-reading the poem over and over) on these claims and or private land where government lands meet private lands. The regular corners of land surveys are marked by fixed monuments and could be a pile of rocks. The claim/private property lines could be marked upon the forest trees by blazing and hack marks; a blaze is a smoothed surface cut upon a tree trunk at about breast height. The bark and a small amount of the live wood tissue are removed with an axe or other cutting tool, leaving a flat surface which forever brands the tree.

The size of the blaze depends somewhat upon the size of the tree, but should not be made larger than the surface of the axe blade. A blaze five or six inches in height and from two to four inches in width is usually ample, this practice maybe restricted on public land.

It was also not unusual for early expeditions to carve their initials or names into a prominent trees and or rock (boulders) near their camp; therefore you might find early blaze markings. My favorite however is; throughout traditional Ute ancestral lands, pictograph art works and hundreds of culturally scarred “sacred” trees have been identified. Be mindful of historical events that might have happened in your general search area.

How many times have people strolled past a spot with no idea of its significance? You may see what looks like an impossibly twisted tree, with “U”-shaped branches and scarring. Which could be the mark of Ute cultural tree, relics of the tribes that called this region home before white settlers arrived? These sacred trees are of several different types: (1) the Peeled Bark, or Medicine Trees, (2) the Bent or Prayer Trees, (3) arbor glyphs or Message Trees, and (4) burial markers or Burial Trees. I would think one should be familiar with these sacred trees and their location in your search area.

For me, I believe Forrest’s reference to “found the blaze” (again discovered by reading and re-reading the poem over and over) could be two fold, refers to the blaze of the search’s quest and /or a possible marker discussed above and then possibly archaeological monuments and or geological formations. More importantly the “where” should have a “marvel gaze”!

I would suggest, the first part of the poem should be used in evaluating your solves general location. Put all of the possibilities that you have discovered from this first section into your bucket of possibilities to create your map. Then when you discover your general location ask yourself, Does your solves general location address the clues above?

Section Two: Now to find the General Location.

This section will be key in discovering the location of the chest. All of your possibilities should be deposited into your bucket. As Forrest has said, there are many places in the Rocky Mountains where warm waters halt.

\begin{quote}
Begin it where warm waters halt
And take it in the canyon down,
Not far, but too far to walk.
Put in below the home of Brown.
\end{quote}
Forrest has made reference that the first clue is “Begin it where warm waters halt”.  

I would like to believe Forrest, with the words “begin it” would be referring to a quote attributed to Goethe, “Whatever you can do or dream you can, “begin it”, boldness has genius, power and magic in it.”

In your poem evaluation process to finding the general location of the chest, remember the following things Forrest has stated.

Forrest has said “There are few words in the poem that are not useful in finding the treasure, and it is risky to discount any of them. Do not over simplify the clues. There are many places in the Rocky Mountains where warm waters halt, and nearly all of them are north of Santa Fe. “Look at the big picture”, there are no short cuts. f” Forrest states Waters not Water.

Forrest has also said, if you knew the geographic location of each clue it would be a map to the treasure. f We are building our map with the possibilities we discover and putting into our bucket.

And said, “The path would not be direct for those who had no certainty of the location beforehand, but sure for the one who did.” f We are looking at the possibilities not as a direct map, but to create our map.

And said, “There isn’t a human trail in very close proximity to where I hid the treasure. f”. We will be looking for a path that isn’t a human trail.

And said, “The first clue in the poem is ‘Begin it where warm waters halt’. That’s the first clue. If you can’t figure that clue out, you don’t have anything.” f This is of major importance, where do warm waters halt?

And said, “What surprises me is that so many ignore the first clue in the poem. Without it all the searcher has is the memory of a nice vacation. Although many have tried, I doubt that anyone will find the blaze before they have figured out the first clue.” f Be mindful of the blaze, but you need to focus on where warm waters halt.

And said, “The most common mistake that I see searchers make is that they underestimate the importance of the first clue. If you don’t have that one nailed down you might as well stay home and play Canasta.” f It can’t be more clear, again focus on where warm waters halt.

And said, “Most of the searchers are very bright and make intelligent comments, either by email or on the blogs, but there seems to be more attention paid to the blaze than to the first clue. Perhaps that’s why the treasure hasn’t been found.” f Now let’s find the treasure!

**Now the Evaluation!**

**Begin it where warm waters halt.** To me this is the most important clue in finding the general location. How does Forrest narrow down the search area, but include all states within the area? Some possibilities are more obvious than others, but where you begin will be key to finding the chest.

**Warm waters …** There have been lots of discussion regarding warm waters, trout Streams, geothermal springs and numerous others. Forrest has said, “There are many places in the Rocky Mountains where warm waters halt, not hundreds or thousands, but many. Many is a great word for its ambiguity. You needn’t know the actual number and you’re still fine to say many. It lets you speak without knowing, or focus on the main idea without getting lost in the details or disclosing too much information. But, still, how many is many? There may be “many rocks” in my bucket, but it is a very different number than the “many rocks” scattered across the creek bottom.
Define your warm waters possibilities, and put them in your bucket, then look at each one as you travel through the poem. It should be a smaller number than all of the warm waters possibilities located in the Rocky Mountains.

Forrest has said, “Look at the big picture”, there are no short cuts. F

Let’s look at the biggest picture of “Warm Waters”!

“As Forrest was stationed in Biloxi Mississippi, most folks have heard about the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico and how important they are in regards to our global climate, as the warm waters from the Gulf of Mexico are moved by the Gulf Stream northward along the eastern seaboard.

Note of Consideration: The Gulf Stream is one of the most important currents, as it gathers all of its water from the warm tropical waters of the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. As such, it keeps sea surface temperatures warm, causing the areas around it to be warm and more hospitable. Some reports suggest that without the Gulf Stream, temperatures in England and northwestern Europe could drop by 4-6°C. As Forrest has suggested, look at the big picture, could the GOM be a possibility of Warm Waters? Also, note the reference is warm waters and not warm water.

Halt, the waters (as they come from different locations) in the Gulf of Mexico are a heat reservoir and a part of that system (circuit) is the currents and rivers that feed the GOM. Where does the flow of these rivers halt (stop)? At their source, high in the Rocky Mountains, right before they begin.

I find this an interesting play on words. Where warm waters halt is where they begin. Where the flow down river begins, would halt at the beginning, a point where the water would start to flow. During the winter, zero flow. Rain, snow melt, to a creek, to a river, flowing into the GOM continuing in those warm waters GOM circular flow. The only place GOM flow would stop is at the source where the waters begin.

Viewing the GOM as a heat reservoir and the rivers that feed it, these rivers and creeks would be considered a part of this heat circuit, begin by finding the Headwaters in the search area of the major rivers that would feed into the GOM. You will find that “There are many places in the Rocky Mountains where these warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico would halt” (Start). To get a better picture look at the Mississippi-Missouri and Rio Grande Rivers Watershed.
Note of Consideration: Warm Waters defined as the GOM would substantially reduce the search area. Looking at the map above, any location west of the Continental Divide would be eliminated, if in fact the warm water reference is the GOM. Look at the branches of rivers in the search area that feed the Mississippi River, (Arkansas River, the Missouri River) and let’s not forget the Rio Grande, even though he said “nor is it near the Rio Grande River. “When Forrest said the treasure was not hidden in Utah or Idaho, it was his plan not to narrow the search area further. From the map above you can clearly see all of the other states within the search area would fit the GOM “warm waters clue”, but not Utah and Idaho. Maybe just maybe there was a good reason for his statement.

Forrest has said the chest is not near the Rio Grande but that is OK, as I believe the find will not be on these major rivers, but on one of the tributaries as the poem directs.

Continuing forward with the Poem Evaluation I will be presenting an example of building a map based around the warm waters clue. With my example, I will be only putting one (1) warm waters location (GOM) in my bucket. You may have other warm waters locations in your bucket, trout streams, geothermal springs and numerous others and /or other warm waters (GOM) rivers. As Forrest has suggested, There are many places in the Rocky Mountains where warm waters halt. In my example I will be using the Rio Grande as my Warm Waters Halt location.

“And take it in the canyon down”, Starting at the defined headwaters of the major river that feeds the GOM, follow the flow, And take it in the canyon down, stay in that flow to the canyon down, “Not far, but too far to walk”. So you would need to identify a canyon that this flow would travel through, which isn't too far from the headwaters, (Rio Grande headwaters in my example) yours maybe another “warm waters halt location that would have a canyon down, but it would also be too far to walk for some. And then after the canyon down, put in below the home of Brown. I would also think this location of the “home of Brown” would also be “Not far, but too far to walk.

You just might find the home of Brown to be connected to the first or second tributary after the canyon down location. So now look for the home of Brown. If you find the home of Brown on this river, this would change your scope to put in below it. Suggesting putting into this river flow might create a very dangerous situation. In the next line, “From there it's no place for the meek”, which might suggest this to be an acceptable option; I don't believe Forrest would suggest putting yourself in this danger. In my example the home of Brown would be up the creek in one of the tributaries that feed into the main flow. (River). At this point what would be the home of Brown? Look for things that might be considered the home of Brown. Also lots of discussion regarding the home of Brown, Brown Bears, Brown Trout, Brown Creek, and many others, put your entire home of brown possibilities into your bucket.

Note of Consideration: So you would be looking for a tributary of the river, after the canyon, not far, but too far to walk, to put in, that is below the home of Brown. I am using the Rio Grande in my example below; again you may find other tributaries of other rivers that feed the GOM, and / or your warm waters halt solve.

In my example, following the Rio Grande headwaters, checking elevations, after flowing through the Rio Grande Reservoir, the flow enters Box Canyon. I am told Box Canyon in the 1950’s and 60’s was a secret trout fishing spot for many. Would this Box Canyon location, trout fishing, line up with the values of the author, to be included in the poem?

Following the river downstream through Box Canyon, again checking elevations, you will find a stream (creek) that feeds the Rio Grande, a tributary, Clear Creek. It is not far from the headwaters but it might be too far to walk.

Upstream on this tributary you will also find “the home of Brown”, (which would be a good sign), Brown Lakes. (About six miles as the crow flies) The picture below is Brown Lakes, beautiful place. The upper Rio Grande valley area, who wouldn't want there remains left there? One could also see with “marvel gaze” the Rio Grande Pyramid.

The upper Rio Grande valley was the early summer hunting grounds of the Paleo Indians and Clear Creek was created by the Clear Creek graben; during the La Garita Caldera which was the biggest volcanic eruption ever. Some also refer to this creek area as Clear Creek Canyon. Some might consider this early area as no place for the meek.

Although there seems to be nine specific clues in the poem, the poem “as a whole” could be extremely important. Forrest has said, “All that will be needed are the clues, some resolve, a little imagination..............”

Put in below the home of Brown. From this point of putting in below the home of Brown, Clear Creek and up to the home of Brown just might be the general search location of the chest, again remember the elevation restrictions, your home of brown just might be above 10,200 ft., but your put in location must be below 10,200 ft. I will be putting this general location into my bucket of possibilities.

In my example you will find, a tributary flow that might be near the chest, but the chest location will not be “near” (or “at”) the Rio Grande as Forrest has said. The home of Brown (Brown Lakes) is six miles from the Rio Grande.

Note of Consideration: In my example, this area where Clear Creek flows into the Rio Grande and up to Brown Lakes is along Silver Thread Scenic Byway SH 149. The road parallels the upper Rio Grande as it passes through Rio Grande National Forest. SH 149 winds through the mountains for 21 miles (34 km) before coming to the historic mining town of Creede, in Mineral County Colorado. (The hint of riches new and old!) What is interesting about this general location is the story about Jim Stewarts lost treasure that was reported somewhere between North Clear Falls and Bristol Head. (1852)

This area I am told is worthy of any National Geographic filmmakers time and offers serene and tranquil confines in which to view the areas ever-eccentric wildlife. I am told this is an amazing place, high elevation, beautiful mountain meadows, amazing views and where trout fishing is just a part of it.

This general area was also photographed by William Henry Jackson. Again understanding the values of the author is a key; this area could also be considered “family friendly” and is in the second least populated area in Colorado, with minimal seasonal foot tourist traffic. Some of the camping sites only offer 15 camp sites and allow you to stay up to two weeks, no reservations first come first served. I am also told this particular camping location doesn’t really fill up. Welcome to the upper San Luis Valley and the headwaters of the Rio Grande.

In my example, and in my bucket, the general location in this solve would be where Clear Creek drains into the Rio Grande, maybe staring a mile up Clear Creek, to the home of Brown, Brown Lakes. Does this general location also fit within these first two parts of the poem and the poem, itself, as a whole? Again assess the values of the author; Forrest said it took him years to develop the poem.
The picture below is the home of Clear Creek, North and South, another Marvel Gaze, this time of Bristol Head.

Section Three: Now to Confirm the General Location and get closer to Chest.

In your solve, these clues below help define the tributaries that flow into the river. In my example of Clear Creek, let’s see if the clues line up and in your solve will they line up?

*From there it’s no place for the meek,*

*The end is ever drawing nigh;*

*There’ll be no paddle up your creek,*

*Just heavy loads and water high.*

“*From there it’s no place for the meek.*”

Suggesting if one were to walk and or travel on foot upstream it could be a struggle and / or why this area would be no place for the meek.

Also remember Forrest drove his car and walked to the chest location, as it was possibly an easy drive and then walk, doesn’t tell the real story about the location of the tributary.

Understanding the geology in the area I would think would be important. In my example, the Clear Creek graben, created by the calderas of the San Juan Volcanic Field could be viewed as “no place for the meek”.

The picture above is an example of the Glacier debris found in Clear Creek.
Also the Rio Grande glacier was formed by the confluence of ice flowing out of South Clear Creek Canyon, Crooked Creek Canyon, House Canyon, and Road Canyon. The Clear Creek glacier debris found in this canyon could also be viewed as no place for the meek.

The Rio Grande Glacier was fed by cirques on Rio Grande pyramid along the continental divide. It was over 30 miles long and occupied over 375 square miles, making it the second largest glacier in the San Juans. Remember Forrest took years to develop the poem, more than likely the clues are more than just the printed words.

Note of Consideration: Using my Clear Creek example, History stated the sheer ruggedness of the San Juans kept Mineral and Hinsdale Counties off most of the published maps until the late nineteenth century.

The entry point from Clear Creek into the Rio Grande is along highway 149. This byway provides a history lesson as it spirals upward, treating travelers to breathtaking scenic vistas. The road was named the Silver Thread to honor the vast silver industry (The hint of riches new and old!) that thrived along this road. Highway 149 unveils the mysteries of the Mighty Rio Grande, the geologic wonders of this region and the archeological finds of early man and Native Americans.

To get to this location, and possibly another “In there” clue”, one would have to travel this highway 149. This road was once a footpath worn into the earth by Ice Age Man. Thousands of years later, the Ute Indians kept using these trails to reach hunting camps, hot springs and their sacred Wheeler Geologic Area. In the 1850’s the Indians were overwhelmed by homesteaders and miners and were relocated to the southwest corner of Colorado. Their ancestral paths were widened and improved to become the Del Norte-Antelope Park Toll Road and then highway 149.

This Toll Road linked the supply station of Del Norte to the mines in Creede, Lake City and over Stony Pass to Silverton. These dirt roads were gradually paved, making travel safer and faster. In 1968, Highway 149 was paved between Creede and Lake City, except for a portion of highway in the Santa Maria area. This last portion was paved in 1982.

Today, Highway 149 (The Silver Thread Scenic Byway) still acts as a haunting reminder that this road not only winds up toward the sky- it winds back in time. To physically get “in there” one would have to travel highway 149, with the “hint of riches new and old”, and highway 149 makes this area today family friendly. But at one time was “no place for the meek”.

The end is ever drawing nigh; I like this clue, the end is “ever,” at all times; always, “drawing,” the art or technique of representing an object, nigh, being on the left side. As you travel up clear creek the object, the end, would be on the left. As Clear Creek branches off take to the left. It is also interesting to note this path leads you to the home of Brown, Brown Lakes. At this point of following the creek left, I will put this possibility into my bucket.

Note of Consideration: I am sure there are numerous other considerations, but I find more meaning in the above than say “near and or almost there.” As we get to the end of the poem the clues should mean more than the obvious. At this point I will be putting three possibilities into my bucket. Brown Lakes and South Clear Creek, left path, and the right path: North Clear Creek.

There’ll be no paddle up your creek; I like this clue also, now the creek belongs to me, “up your creek”. Which reinforces the decision to stay left? Making the decision to stay left, I now own that creek.

But as you travel up Clear Creek, which was described as the “put in below the home of Brown”, “up your creek” might be another tributary, creek, that flows into Clear Creek, because you would have to find it, making it yours, therefore I am putting both of these options into my bucket. And as you travel up your creek there will be no need for a paddle. What is important here is the glacier left long valley trains of
glacial debris, boulders, “heavy loads”, and beautiful waterfalls, “water high” along the Clear Creek Graben, North and South Clear Creeks.

Adding, “there’ll be no paddle”, suggesting water transportation would be out of the picture and /or a dry creek maybe up a Clear Creek tributary. Again putting both into my bucket.

“Just heavy loads, up Clear Creek, glacial debris and you will come to Boulder Creek, “And water high”, South Clear Creek Falls and North Clear Creek Falls. The left, South Clear Creek Falls the right, North Clear Creek Falls. If “the end is ever drawing nigh”. Nigh also meaning “near”. Both of these paths would also go into my bucket.

The third option would be the “put in” puts you on Clear Creek stay left on South Clear Creek and then look for another creek, “your creek” where there would be no need for a paddle. What makes this an interesting consideration is this creek might be a seasonal “dry creek” but you would still find heavy loads and water high up this creek.

Note of Consideration: In evaluating these three options and looking again at the last line “just heavy loads and water high”. Heavy loads could suggest large rocks or large boulders, as an example, putting in at Clear Creek, upstream you will find Boulder Creek and further up Clear Creek, to the left, you would find South Clear Creek and Falls. And if nigh means “near”, to the right you will find North Clear Creek and the Falls. Heavy loads, first and then water high second, might suggest the location of the chest is between these locations. You should also find large boulders along these creeks and no paddle required up these creeks. And you will also find areas that an eighty year old man shouldn’t go.

The pictures above are of South Clear Creek Falls, “water high and no paddle up your creek”, South Clear Creek.

The map below shows Clear Creek, Boulder Creek, South Creek Falls, (which is out of the picture) and where the two falls are identified is where South and North Clear Creek meet. Notice the four wheel drive and passenger car roads identified on the map. Extensions of the map show numerous roads and parking areas.
The third option taking South Clear Creek, further upstream you will find a number of creeks feeding South Clear Creek as South Clear Creek travels to Brown Lakes. I would add these to my bucket of possibilities.

The map below shows four additional creeks that flow into South Clear Creek. Adding these locations to my bucket.

The picture below shows the same area where two of these creeks appear to be seasonally dry. “There will be no paddle up your “DRY” creek.” You will also find heavy loads and water high, maybe not as pronounced but in the area.

Remember Forest drove to the location where he hid the chest and has made the comment “if you are walking long distances in search of the treasure, you’re walking too far.” And “Nobody is going to happen on that treasure chest. You’re gonna have to figure out the clues in the poem and go to it.”
We now have a general location, now would be time to revisit the poem and verse key words that directed us to these search locations within the general location and start creating our map.

I believe the remainder of the poem helps pin point the final location. This review is more of a sanity check, do the clues line up with the solve thus far? Understanding the values of the author is a key, if the values of your solve do not line up with the values of the author, I would suggest a different path.

Section One
As I have gone alone in there
And with my treasures bold,
I can keep my secret where,
And hint of riches new and old.

Section Two
Begin it where warm waters halt
And take it in the canyon down,
Not far, but too far to walk.
Put in below the home of Brown.

Section Three
From there it’s no place for the meek,
The end is ever drawing nigh;
There’ll be no paddle up your creek,
Just heavy loads and water high.

With a general location one should pull out the maps for this location, forest service maps, topo maps, county maps, and even tourist maps. You might also want to look for camping areas. Look for private property and public property lines. Also look for pictures that other folks might have taken in this general location, new and old. You might find some of these pictures that might align with the values of the author and spot a blaze or what might be considered a blaze.

This review might also help identify areas where an eighty year old man might go or might not go. Maps should aid in developing an area search plan. Look for roads and parking areas in this location, hiking paths defined and possible paths undefined. These might be close to where the chest will be found.

As Forrest has said, “If you are walking long distances from your car in search of the treasure, you’re walking too far. He has also said that he “walked less than a few miles (whole trip of hiding the chest and treasure).

Remember “Some of the searchers have been within 200 to 500 feet of the hiding location. Since he drove to the location, there might be a parking area within 200 to 500 ft. of the resting place. He also said it was not on a “human path”, so look for signs away from a human path that could be traveled by an eighty year old man.

If the elevation is over 10,200 ft. do not go there. Stay away from anything that is viewed as dangerous and / or that would put you and your family in a potentially disastrous situation.

Now would be the time to begin your search for the blaze, if one believes the blaze is also a key. Google earth street view mode might help you identify smaller geological formations that could be considered a blaze, as you will have to be wise to find the blaze.

Place your search possibilities on your map creating your own story.
Section Four, Five and Six: Finding the Location where the Chest Rests.

Forrest has said, “There isn’t a human trail in very close proximity to where I hid the treasure. f.

As I believe the reminder of the poem helps pin point the final location. Let’s evaluate the remainder of the poem.

If you’ve been wise and found the blaze,
Look quickly down, your quest to cease,
But tarry scant with marvel gaze,
Just take the chest and go in peace.

So why is it that I must go
And leave my trove for all to seek?
The answer I already know,
I’ve done it tired, and now I’m weak.
So hear me all and listen good,
Your effort will be worth the cold.
If you are brave and in the wood
I give you title to the gold.

“If you’ve been wise and found the blaze.” Is Forrest just making a statement to the searchers? So could Forrest be saying, If you’ve been responding sensibly and shrewdly (wise) in this quest and have been discovering the meaning of the clues (found) and found the blaze a (path or marking), then “Look quickly down, your quest to cease” Look quickly down, you have come to the end.

Then he adds a “But”. But tarry (delay, wait don’t look down) scant (not quite a full measure of something) with marvel (are you filled with wonder or astonishment, something wonderful or marvelous) gaze, (to look at something or someone in surprise, admiration) and if you are, then look down and “Just take the chest and go in peace”.

All of this still doesn’t help one locate the blaze, but when you find it, it should be in an amazing location with a marvel gaze. Remember the values of the author; this place is where he would like his bones to rest.

Note of Consideration: with the statement above you would be standing at the location where the chest is hidden, that location would have a marvel gaze and would be below 10,200 ft. In my example using Clear Creek there could be a number of possibilities; here I will use just one as an example of marvel gaze.

Following Clear Creek to South Clear Creek (left) to one of the four Dry Creeks, no paddle up your creek, just short of 10,200 ft. you will find the location of the picture to the left.

One could argue a Marvel Gaze.

Taken by William Henry Jackson in 1874, Bristol Head, Antelope Park, San Cristobal Quadrangle, Mineral County, CO
And if one were also to add “gaze”; represented as seen from the side with the head looking forward, to the right of this view in the picture above, one would see a similar view of the picture below. The “Big Picture” above Bristol Head and the below the Rio Grande Pyramid, viewed from the same location.

Again one could argue a Marvel Gaze. Remember the values of the author; is this place where he would like his bones to rest? The location of the chest should have a Marvel Gaze, Just take the chest and go in peace.

“So why is it that I must go, And leave my trove for all to seek?” Now Forrest is asking a why question and then the next line he states, “The answer I already know.”

Since the quest centers on the Rocky Mountains, “I must go” reminds me of a John Muir quote, “The Mountains are calling and I must go.” For many outdoor lovers it’s a compelling quote, which may explain why it’s printed widely on mugs, t-shirts, posters and jewelry and paraphrased by today’s adventurers.

I think most will agree Forest developed this quest because he wanted to be remembered. Besides being remembered what does this “I must go” clues mean? He wants his remains to rest there? And he wants folks to discover this beautiful area. This is his story he is telling with this quest; which is possibly more important than the treasure.

“And leave my trove (a collection of objects, a valuable one, any valuable discovery and or a treasure of unknown ownership) for all to seek” (attempt to find something and or go to a place). I don’t think he is leaving a chest of unknown ownership as it has been described numerous times. But the quest should be a valuable discovery, maybe more than just the value of the chest.

Then he states, “The answer I already know.” Without the value, no quest, no discovery and no story being told.

Then he adds, “I've done it tired, (feeling a need to rest or could it be “tired” referring to wheels) and now I'm weak” (lacking strength or energy; or likely to stop working; or referring to a rest or camping area). Also be mindful of the Ute Sacred trees or resting locations. All of these possibilities I would put in my bucket.

Note of Consideration: “So why is it that I must go And leave my trove for all to seek? The answer I already know”, simply he wants to be remembered maybe more outside his center of family and friends. As time fades memories, some will leave their mark as William Henry Jackson did with his photographs.
Maybe this is a way for Forest to leave his mark. “I’ve done it tired, and now I’m weak”, in my example. The picture taken by William Jackson above is in the area where the chest could be, the blaze; the rock formation. Examine the picture; see the man in the lower right hand corner resting against the rock with one leg up onto another rock. Do you think the man in the picture “done it tired” and now he is weak? This picture is in the U.S. National Archives to be enjoyed by future generations. What better way to be remembered, hiding the chest somewhere in this picture, maybe close to the rock the man has his foot on. I will put this possibility into my bucket.

In my example there are a number of places in my search area that would have a Marvel Gaze, looking for pictures of these sites might help add one to find the blaze as my example of William Henry Jackson photograph. Remember you don’t need to move large boulders.

So hear me all and listen good,
Your effort will be worth the cold.
If you are brave and in the wood
I give you title to the gold.

“So hear me all and listen good”, the literal interpretation would be to pay special attention to the following; it will be worth the cold, you have to be brave, and you have to be in the wood, maybe to find the “blaze”.

“Worth the cold” might mean you would have to travel through a creek bed or just simply a Rocky Mountain higher elevation (colder), closer to 10,200 ft., than say a lower elevation (warmer) of 5000 ft. Is your blaze location at a higher elevation?

“If you are brave and in the wood” I like this clue at the end, As Forrest traveled to the location in his car, from there, you will have to be brave and travel into the woods to find the blaze and chest. Is your blaze location close to where you would park your car and from there would you have to walk through the woods? Then again if you are a Native American Brave and in the wood, creating the Sacred Tree Blazes discussed above, maybe burial markers or Burial Trees. This would also fit “so why is it that I must go.”

“I give you title to the gold”. This could mean the chest is yours, or “title” could be a key word in locating the blaze. Private vs Public property and / or. (Earlier was discussed private or public lands.)

Note of Consideration: Using my example of the blaze location which was identified in the William Henry Jackson photograph, one would find this to be at a higher elevation, a parking area is close and you would have to travel through the “woods” along a fence line that is on public land, but there is a gate across the road. In looking at google earth you will see the area to park your car, it is a turn-around as this gate is on public land blocks access to the private land. That road is identified as 14 in the maps above, but is 141. It appears that numerous cars have been parked over time in this location as many folks may have followed this fence line to take pictures of this Marvel Gaze.

One would also have to be brave to travel this fence line as there is no forest service trail in this location and walk to this blazer from the parking area on 14 (141), not knowing where public land vs private land ends and starts, one might fear trespassing. This would also fit the Native American Brave and in the wood discussed above. Look for Sacred Trees perhaps a burial tree.

It appears an 80 year old man could make this trip. The blaze would be 6 to 7 hundred feet from the parking area on 14 (141). I believe that the William Henry Jackson photograph is on public land but the High Country Guest Ranch, about 161 acres borders this public land. One would also have to look for survey lines or a blaze along the property line. Once you get to the blaze location you will see the marvel
gaze, but one will also have to be brave here. The walkway would be 3 to 4 feet wide, which might be
scary for some. Remember there is no need to move large rocks or climb up or down a steep precipice.

Most folks making this trek to take a picture would be more interested in looking to find the best marvel
view for the picture. Therefore lots of folks could have passed by the hidden chest without realizing it
being hidden in the area.

Also a consideration might be the corner marker dividing private land from public lands which would be
easier to access from road marked 10 on the map. This location would also give one a marvel gaze. I would
put all of these in my bucket of possibilities.

You will also notice on the satellite map above a location marked Sacred Shrine. Someone has marked
this area with that description. I would add this location to my bucket. One might find a sacred burial
marker or Burial Tree in this location. This area would be accessible from an overlook area on highway
149.

The first picture above, (in the dialog) page four (4) was taken from this parking area. You will also see
the William Henry Jackson photograph blaze in the upper right hand corner of this picture.

Another “title” consideration would be, with the value of the chest, their might be a “title” consideration
that involves some of the private land, surrounding the chests location, two possibilities in my example,
(Brown Lake) the High Country Guest Ranch and Hemit Lakes private property. To have ones remains
buried would be easier done on private land than public land. I find it interesting the ownership
structure of these properties. If your solves location is in an area where you would find mining claims as
in the Clear Creek locations, (Lucky Strike 1 through 8) one might do some research regarding the claims.

Note of Consideration: In my dialog here, what I am using in my example is one of a number possibilities
where following the poem one could end up. For me following the poem to this general location could
result in a number of different paths, so I put all those paths into my bucket. For me a sacred Native
American Site, it would be hard for me to discount locations that have a Marvel Gaze not being
appreciated by Native Americans.

My example is just one path, when searching a general location area, put all the possible paths you find in
your bucket. The chest may be hidden at the end of one of these other paths. Look at all the different
possibilities, plan your search, explore the other possibilities in that area, who knows you might be 100%
right until you chose the next possibility, going left when you should have gone right.

In my examples of possibilities, I have mapped out other areas in the general search. Develop your
map and search all of your bucket possibilities. Remember “the path would not be direct for those who
had no certainty of the location beforehand, but sure for the one who did.” When you find the
chest you will be certain of the path you took. I believe to find the chests final location you will
have to physically be “In there”.

Conclusion:

Life is full of twists and turns and the paths we choose to take, like the uncertainly where life will lead us,
this quest presents different paths and the possibility of different outcomes based on the paths we take.
In this general area there are a number of possibilities and in looking briefly at the Arkansas River one
could find similar possibilities.

Use this quest as an opportunity for discovery and adventure, full of family fun and the sharing of the
Thrill of the Chase. Creating your own story of who, what, where, when and why.
My prospective on how to evaluate the clues, is just that, my prospective. Folks can use as they may or just disregard, it’s been fun to speculate, but for me added fun is to share ones theories and why.

Speaking only for myself, the search isn’t about the treasure value, but about the value of discovering the Rocky Mountains. Finding the treasure just might be considered a bonus.

After the chest is found I would hope Mr. Fenn might tell us all the true meaning of the nine clues and why this place is special. I would also wonder way Forrest choose to deliver his clues in a poem. Maybe the poem itself is a clue. Maybe just maybe, Cy Warman’s (1892) poem “And there is no Night in Creede” was the inspiration for Forrest to use a poem to deliver the clues for this Thrill of the Chase Quest.

The Rocky Mountains are a beautiful place and I admire Mr. Fenn for creating this additional exposure to this beautiful area and particularly the focus on family adventure. As for my arm chair evaluation, I believe even if the general location is discovered within 200 ft. of the chest, one would have to be there to discover the chest’s final location.

With the number of different possibilities within a search area increases the difficulty. The picture below is another photograph taken by William Henry Jackson in 1874, Antelope Park, San Cristobal Quadrangle, Mineral County, CO. It just might be in the location of one of the other possibilities in this general location. The right turn, when you turned left, what another marvel gaze.

I would hope that if folks pooled their resources the chest might be found in 2018. But of course the value of the chest and greed just might get in the way of that goal. Why did Forest put a million dollars plus of his own value in a chest, hide it in the Rocky Mountains for all to find? Maybe just maybe there are more important things in life than money.

Good luck to all searchers and don’t go where an eighty year old man would not go.

Doug Meyer

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