

**"Constance"**  
**A Story in Two Chapters**  
By Mike Stansbery

Chapter 1

It was a beautiful July Sunday morning in Globeville, Colorado when Constance skipped into the kitchen and sat down at the table to watch her mother prepare breakfast. Her two brothers were still getting dressed, but Constance was so excited about the thought of going swimming that morning she had gotten up earlier than usual and was already in her swim dress and bathing cap.

"Take that cap off Connie", her mother said somewhat impatiently. "It will be hours before we go out to the lake. And take your ring off too. You know how close you've come to losing it already."

Constance's thoughts flashed back to her 8<sup>th</sup> birthday, just last November, 1916, when her grandmother Rose had given her the little gold ring with her name engraved inside and the fancy initial "C" on the top. It was, as far as she could remember, the only ring she had ever owned.

"Well", she thought, "There *was* that plastic ring with a flower on it that I got out of the box of Cracker Jack when I was 6, but that wasn't a real ring. This is a real ring!"

Even her friends didn't have a ring like this one, and she never passed up an opportunity to show it off. Even though she had shown her ring to all of her friends many times, Constance just couldn't resist showing it off every time she had the opportunity.

"Look!" she would exclaim to her girlfriends as she slipped the ring off her finger, "It even has my name inside! See? C-o-n-s-t-a-n-c-e." She would spell it out as if it were the first time they had ever seen it.

"Connie, your father is in the barn hitching old Butch up to the buggy."

Her mother's voice startled Constance.

"Go tell him his breakfast is ready. As soon as we finish breakfast, we'll head on out to the lake. Hurry on, now!"

By now it was one o'clock in the afternoon, and the ride to Parson's lake had been hot and dusty. The buggy had barely come to a stop beneath the stand of cottonwood trees when Constance and her two brothers scrambled out, making a beeline for the cool, beckoning water. The lake was crowded, both on the beach and on the old wooden pier, which extended a good 40 yards out into the lake. No sooner had Constance splashed her way out to chest-deep water than she spotted Millie, a friend she had not seen since school had let out in May. Excitedly, she made her way over to her friend, slipping the ring off her finger as she struggled to move against the water. "Millie! Look at the ring Gram gave for my birthday. See? Inside it says "C-o-n-s-t....."

## Chapter 2

There are at least several hundred people in the Denver, Colorado area who regularly enjoy the hobby of treasure hunting with a metal detector. Of those, there are probably no more than a dozen or so hardy souls who extend their search for treasure into the lakes and streams along the front range of the Rockies. My friend Len and I are two of those hardy souls, and on a cold, snowy day in March of 2001, we found ourselves hunting the cold waters of Parson's lake. My wife, Judy, had researched this spot a few years earlier, and suggested that I give it a try. It had been used, she discovered, as a swim beach from before the turn of the last century to some time around 1960.

Len and I had hunted Parson's lake many times since Judy had done her research, but this time, the water was, for some reason unknown to us, lower than we had ever seen it, exposing the pilings of the old pier, which had been removed decades earlier. We realized that this might be the only opportunity we would ever have to reach areas of the swimming area that were previously too deep to search. We had donned our wool socks, jeans, wool shirts, rubber miner's gloves and waders, and were searching together as we had so many times before.

As I slowly worked heretofore unsearched areas of the lake bottom, I gazed at the old bathhouse on shore, and could easily imagine, even on this windy, snowy day, how it had looked more than a century earlier. I could visualize a horse and buggy up there under that big cottonwood tree, the horse dozing in the shade, his recent passengers splashing in the lake water; a couple enjoying themselves over a picnic lunch spread out over a red and white checkered blanket, but never taking their eyes off their kids in the lake for too long a time; a young dandy and his girlfriend, dressed in their Sunday finest, in a rowboat out on the main part of the lake. Yes, I could see all that and more. My thoughts made me wish I could have been there – back then – in a simpler, slower, more innocent time.

“Beep!” The sound of my detector quickly drew my attention back to the present and the task at hand – finding treasure. I pushed my long-handled scoop down into the dark, dirty sand and gravel mixture and slowly raised it to the surface. The smell of the concoction that presented itself to me was not pleasant. Decades of lake use by ducks and geese had made

the swim beach unfit for swimming or any other use which would involve contact with the water.

I checked the hole again with my detector. No sound this time. The target was in my scoop. I submerged the scoop to just below the surface and started a slow fore and aft motion to sift out the small rocks and sand. A multitude of “chance” targets began to be exposed – a broken top from a Coke bottle – a marble – a colored fragment from a china cup, and several rocks of various sizes. I carefully plucked these items from the scoop, being careful not to let the broken glass cut the fingers of my miner’s gloves. Finally with only a few of the smaller rocks remaining, the target, a small ring, finally appeared in the bottom of the scoop. The ring was discolored; so much so that I thought it might be brass rather than gold.

“Nope, that’s gold! Probably 10k,” said Len later that evening as we examined our finds at his kitchen table. “10k gold gets black like that after long years in the muck of those old swimming beaches.” Jane, Len’s wife, eyed our piles of “treasure” suspiciously, hoping, I’m sure, that we would remove the stinky mess from her table as quickly as possible. Taking a closer look at the ring, I could see that it had a fancy initial “C” on the top and some engraving on the inside. Using Len’s magnifying glass, I was able to confirm that the ring was 10k gold. As I inspected the inside of the ring, I spoke the engraved letters aloud as I read them, “C-o-n-s-t-a-n-c-e”.

It was about a 30-minute drive home from Len’s place, and I couldn’t take my mind away from that little gold ring. Like most all the items we treasure hunters find, especially those like this little ring, there is certainly a story. Though I have been able to find the owners of

many lost items over the years, most are not traceable. If only this ring could tell it's story.

For me, one of the hardest things about finding long lost items such as these is the realization that I will never know the story behind them – will never have the opportunity to return them to their astonished owners. I wanted to know the story behind Constance's ring. I had to know it. I just *had* to know!

For the next several days, I continued to think about the ring. I knew I would have to do *something* or I'd probably wonder about it forever. It was as though all the curiosity and wonder I'd ever experienced about the hundreds of lost personal items I'd found over the years were all bundled up in this one little ring. Suddenly, I knew what I had to do.

The next Sunday evening, after Judy had gone to bed, I sat down and began writing.

“It was a beautiful July Sunday morning in Globeville, Colorado when Constance skipped into the kitchen and sat down at the table to watch her mother prepare breakfast.”

A great feeling of relief came over me. Constance's ring would, finally, tell its story.

