

The Ghost Of The Dutchman's Gold Refuses To Die

by Tom Kollenborn (c) 2000

Phoenix was the center of a mystery that entwined together the apparently prosaic present and one of the well-known legends of early mining in Arizona territory near the turn of the century. Arizona abounds in tales and legends wild and fanciful told by storytellers over many a campfire and in many a bar room of fabulous wealth and lost mines. The tale of the Dutchman's Lost Mine is probably more familiar to Arizonans than any other.

The tale of the Dutchman has been told in one form or another from one end of the state to the other. One tale places the mine in the Mazatzal Range, near Four Peaks, another credits it to the Harquahalas, while others assert that the lost gold mine is located in the Superstition Mountains.

Some men claim there were three mysterious "Dutchmen" connected to the legend, while others tell of a lone miner and his burro. All agree, however, that the mine was of fabulous richness a true bonanza deposit. Some claim the Dutchman had a mulatto wife who resided in Phoenix and that she had a map to the location of his mine. Again, others claim he had a native American wife who led him to his rich mine in the Superstitions. Yet, official documents indicate Jacob Waltz, the Dutchman, was never married. It is this mine that so many men have searched for and yet the mine remains lost today.

"Did the mine ever exist?" would be an appropriate question. The following is an interesting tale.

Jose Perez was prospecting in the eastern portion of the Superstition Mountains in 1913 when he discovered a deep canyon. One day while riding down the rocky bottom of a rugged canyon whose sheer walls towered far above him, Perez noticed a slight indentation in a stratum of limestone rock, that appeared to be an entrance to a small cavern. Curiosity overcame him and he decided to investigate.

Perez found a small opening about two feet in diameter far above the canyon floor. The opening led directly into the mountain. He crawled into the opening for a distance of twenty feet when the cave suddenly opened into an immense chamber. This enormous chamber, in which a man could walk upright, led directly into the heart of the mountain. Perez used matches and a number of Agave torches to light his way into the cavern.

Deep in the cavern Perez found a large flat rock. On this rock Perez found several nuggets of high-grade gold placed in the form of a dagger or stiletto and above this on the rocky walls of the cavern were some crudely drawn cabalistic signs.

Perez left the cave and quickly returned to Miami, the nearest town for a man on horseback. He told his tale to Ray Thomas, Gila County Engineer, at the time. Thomas believed Perez and wanted to return to the cavern with him.

Next Week, Part II

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Perez, Thomas and a newspaperman returned to the site for a complete examination. When the three men reached the site they proceeded to investigate what Perez had reported.

Thomas later reported the cavern did lead back into the mountain for about two hundred yards, however there was no visible sign of mineralization. Thomas further reported there were signs of previous occupancy in the cavern. The mouth of the cave was so small and situated at such an angle that only by the greatest accident could it have been discovered from the canyon below. Thomas and the reporter returned to Miami and Perez went his lonesome way.

Several years later Ray Thomas discussed his trip with Perez to the cave. Thomas recapped the expedition to the cave in the following way.

"The entrance to the cavern was about 250 feet above the canyon floor in a thicket of Manzanita that would discourage a mother cow looking for her calf. How Jose found this cavern is beyond my imagination. Nobody would have climbed this cliff just to search for a cave. The actual entrance to the cave is so small it is dangerous to enter it. As we made our way into the cavern, we found several large chambers, one measuring more than forty feet in height with stalagmites of nine to fifteen feet and stalactites of 10 feet or more.

In one chamber, there was a massive flow of travertine drapery of some forty or more feet. Near this travertine flow were masses of calcite crystals that looked like a wall of diamonds in our subdued light source. The cavern, or at least that which we explored, extended back into the mountain some seven hundred feet. By no means had we found the end of this limestone solution cave. Poor health had prevented me from returning to the cave for further exploration. The cavern will undoubtedly become another wonder of this central mountain region of Arizona."

An old prospector by the name of Joe Modock stumbled across this cave in 1935 and claimed he found a diamond mine in Arizona's Superstition Mountains. His diamonds turned out to be calcite crystals.

This large cavern in the Superstition Wilderness Area will probably be explored one day and turn out to be another Arizona natural wonder. Until then, the secrecy of its location protects it from vandals.



Superstition Mountain is a treasure trove of stories of lost gold.



Searching for the limestone stratum near Haunted Canyon during a blizzard in the Superstition Wilderness.

Th entrance to limestone cavern is similar to this one.