

THE ORIGIN OF THE LOST DUTCHMAN MINE STORY

by Tom Kollenborn (c) 1979, 1999

The Superstition Mountain has served as a beacon to the treasure hunters and the curious, attracting them from around the world. Fortunes have been made and lost in the search for the Dutchman's Lost Mine, however the mine has never been found. Some claim the majestic beauty and tranquility of the region is the only treasure man will find in the Superstition Wilderness Area.

The mine was named after an old prospector mistakenly called the "Old Dutchman." Jacob Waltz allegedly discovered a rich vein of gold in the Superstition Mountain region east of Phoenix.

Hermann Petrasch was probably one of the most persistent seekers of the Jacob Waltz's gold. You might say Hermann Petrasch was the "father of all modern Dutch hunters." Hermann and his brother Rhinehart began their search with Julia Thomas in the summer of 1892.

Carl Gottfried Hermann Petrasch was born in Hennersdorf, German on the 24th of April, 1864. Hermann arrived at the Port of Entry, New York, New York in the spring of 1869. He had left Germany with his father Gottfried when he was only five years old. Hermann accompanied his father to the town of Whatcom, Washington. Herman's father traveled widely throughout the West, first Washington, Montana then Colorado and finally to Arizona. Hermann Petrasch lived in Arizona almost sixty years and most of those years were spent in and around the Superstition Mountain area. Petrasch did not apply for United States citizenship until October 1938.

Hermann Petrasch arrived in Arizona shortly after the death of Jacob Waltz, of Lost Dutchman Mine fame, in October of 1891. He came to Arizona at the request of his brother Rhinehart. He wanted Hermann to assist Julia Thomas and him in the search for Waltz's gold mine in the Superstition Mountains. Rhinehart claimed Julia and he had the clues to locate Waltz's gold mine.

Rhinehart Petrasch had been residing in Phoenix for some time and helped Julia Thomas with her business. Some historians believe Rhinehart became a close associate of Jacob Waltz in his final days at Julia Thomas' residence on West Jackson Street in Phoenix. Rhinehart learned a few meager clues during this period. Waltz mumbled out several clues during those final days, but most were to Julia and not Rhinehart.

As the end became apparent for the "Old Dutchman" he called Julia and Rhinehart to his side and gave them the final clues to his rich gold mine. This would have been fine, but Julia and Rhinehart had been celebrating a bit much and their minds were a little foggy. This they would later regret when they were wandering aimlessly in the mountains east of Phoenix.

After the death of "Old Jake," Julia and Rhinehart tried to put the pieces together. Their first decision was to find another partner they could trust. Julia accepted the idea of inviting Rhinehart's brother Hermann into the partnership. Hermann was living in Colorado at the time.

Early during the month of August 1892, shortly after Herman's arrival, the three began the organization of the expedition. Julia bought a team, wagon, and camping gear. Later they would find out the wagon and team was a mistake. The group departed from Phoenix on August 11, 1892 with little fanfare. At the close of the first day the party was camped along the Salt River south of the old Maryville crossing on the river. The second day they traveled eastward across the desert toward the western facade of Superstition Mountain arriving in the area south of Bull Dog Peak somewhere. At this point they realized the team and wagon would be useless in the mountains. They abandoned the wagon and decided to pack the team. The next morning they packed up the horses and started toward the northwestern end of Superstition Mountain in search of "*La Sombrero*." According to Hermann Petrasch they camped in Needle Canyon just north of Weaver's Needle for three weeks. Spirits were high among the three when they began their search, but the torturous summer heat began to take its toll.

Toward the end of the third week the expedition collapsed from exhaustion, lack of food and water. The search for the Waltz's mine was abandoned and three returned to Phoenix defeated and unsuccessful. A local newspaper, the *Arizona Weekly Gazette*, noted the expedition with the following excerpt on September 1, 1892, "A Queer Quest, 'Another Lost Mine Being Hunted By A Woman.'"

This prospecting venture reduced Julia Thomas to financial ruin. She and the Petraschs were in a somewhat destitute situation with no source of income or a place to reside. Julia soon departed company with the Petraschs and married a farm laborer named Albert Schaffer on July 26, 1893.

At Schaffer's encouragement Julia produced maps with what information she could remember. She became very resourceful and began producing excellent maps illustrating how to locate the lost gold mine of Jacob Waltz. These fraudulent sheets of paper were probably the first maps to the Dutchman's Lost Mine.

It is also quite apparent Julia Thomas gave Peirpont C. Bicknell an interview about the Lost Dutchman Mine. Bicknell chronicled the mine in a *San Francisco Chronicle* article on January 13, 1895, making reference to most of Thomas' clues.

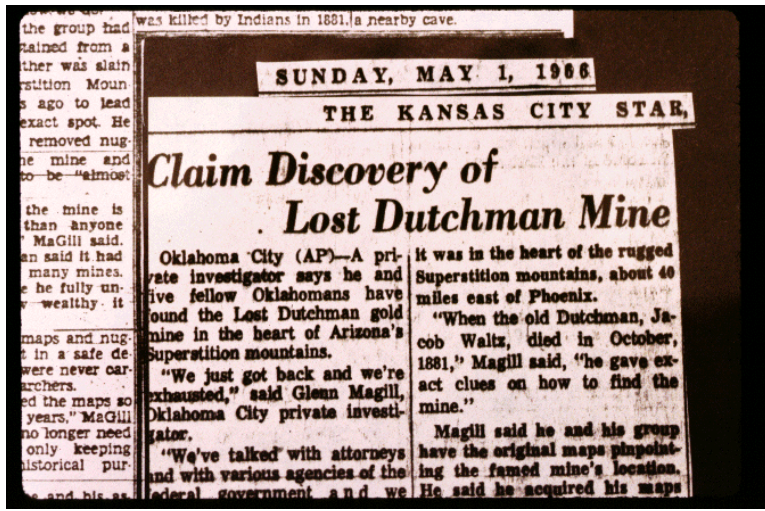
The abandonment of the Petraschs by Julia Thomas left them on their own. Rhinehart worked around Phoenix for a while and eventually moved to Globe. Rhinehart worked as a caretaker at an archaeological ruin in Globe for many years before committing suicide on February 5, 1943. Rhinehart was known as "Old Pete" around Globe and Miami.

Hermann had many jobs working for different cattlemen around the Superstition Mountain area. He was an excellent carpenter and worked at the old Reavis Ranch for the Clemans Cattle Company in the 1930's. He eventually settled near the bank of Queen Creek near the Martin Ranch. The Martin's looked after the old Hermann for many years. Hermann had a host of friends including my father. Newspaper reporters, authors and magazine writers visited him from time to time. Many wrote articles about Hermann and his search for the old "Dutchman's" mine.

My father and I visited old Hermann Petrasch in October of 1952. He said he was ailing a bit, but was still willing to talk about the Superstition Mountain and the fabulous Lost Dutchman Mine. Herman passed away on November 23, 1953. The awful irony of the Petrasch-Thomas episode is that their journey into the Superstitions in that blistering hot August of 1892 had led them directly through the area where the Black Queen and Mammoth mines were discovered later that year. Julia Thomas and the Petraschs were not successful in finding any gold, but four other men were. It was in April 1893, after a flash flood the famous Mammoth Mine was discovered. This mine produced two million dollars in gold bullion when gold was worth twenty dollars a troy ounce. Some believe the Mammoth Mine or Bulldog Mine was the source of Waltz's bonanza ore. The legend continues today.



Mammoth Mine & Mill, Goldfield circa 1896-97



another claim of discovery of the LDD



Hemann Petrasch, circa 1930
Photo SMHS

