

WALTZ'S GOLDMINE

By Tom Kollenborn © 2000

Since the death of Jacob Waltz more than 100 years ago, the story of his gold mine has become nothing but controversy. With this article, I am going to attempt to present the facts as best as I know them.

The old "Dutchman" Jacob Waltz died on Sunday morning, October 25, 1891, about 6 a.m. at the residence of Julia Thomas in Phoenix, Arizona Territory. The circumstances associated with his death are as follows:

Julia Thomas and Rhinehart Petrasch were attending to Waltz during his final hours. Waltz was struggling to breathe early on that morning as pneumonia and silicosis complicated the old prospector's breathing. Thomas and Petrasch were awoken by his struggle to breathe and knew the end was near. They rushed into the street to look for a doctor. Why both of them left Waltz's side in a moment of crisis is not known. As they exited the house, Richard J. Holmes and Gidon Roberts were walking up the street. Julia asked Holmes to look after Waltz until they returned with the doctor. When Thomas and Petrasch arrived back at the house with the doctor, Waltz was either dead or succumbed shortly thereafter.

Holmes immediately explained the situation to Julia Thomas. He said Waltz had given him the materials in a candle box beneath his bed. Holmes gathered up his newly acquired possessions and left the Thomas' residence. Holmes' acquisition of Waltz's candle box outraged Julia Thomas. According to Holmes and Thomas the box contained about forty-eight pounds of high-grade gold ore. It was estimated the gold contained within the candle box was worth about \$4,800.

Julia Thomas accused Holmes of being a thief. Roberts swore Waltz had given the candle box to Holmes. The local courts did not see it Thomas' way and Holmes ended up with the candle box of gold ore. This created a schism between the Petrasch and the Holmes families and this schism has survived for more than a hundred years among storytellers of the Dutchman's lost mine.

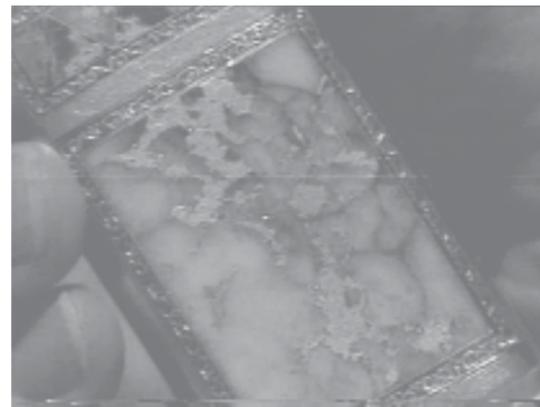
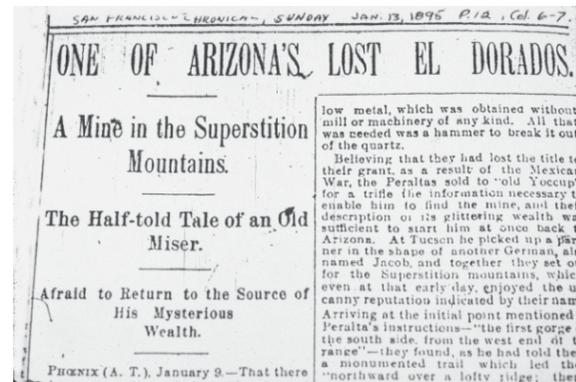
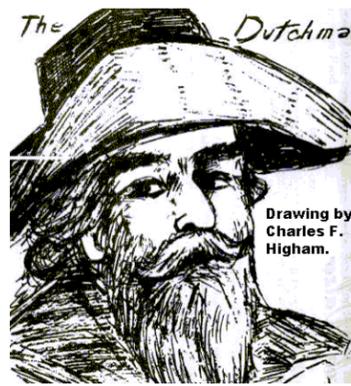
Holmes sold the forty-eight pounds of ore to Goldman Mercantile in Phoenix. The Goldman brothers sold most of the gold to the San Francisco mint. Joe Poterie, an assayer at the Vulture Mine, once examined some of the ore. He said it was the richest bonanza ore he had ever studied closely. He said it was far richer than the Vulture Mine or Rich Hill. William "Bill" Cage also examined Waltz's ore and agreed with Poterie about the richness of the ore.

The Goldman's sold a few samples of the ore to the Smiths, Rosenwies and Jacobson families. Richard J. Holmes ended up with a gold matchbox. This gold matchbox was handed down to his son George "Brownie" Holmes and this treasure eventually ended up in the hand of a local resident. Some of the Smith specimens were handed down or sold to the first owner of Knoxberry Farms near Anaheim, California. It is believed this was the source of Robert L. Garman's samples of the Dutchman's gold. The samples acquired by the Rosenwies family were made into a beautiful matching necklace and bracelet set. Troy's Gallery of Scottsdale eventually acquired this set.

Reading this brief account of what happen to the gold beneath Waltz's death bed would certainly convince many people he had a rich gold mine somewhere in the mountains of Arizona. Oldtime prospectors were often known to keep a cache of high-grade ore to carry them through a time need. This was not an unusual practice for such men. The possession of such a rich cache would have been no verification Waltz had a rich gold mine in the Superstition Mountains. It would only indicate he saved his richest ore for a rainy day. Often these caches were hand-sampled to increase the gold content and discard the gangue.

The existence of the Lost Dutchman Mine or the Dutchman's Lost Mine has never been verified, primarily because the mine has never been found. Several years ago a number of individuals were somewhat convinced the old Bulldog Mine could have been the Dutchman's so-called lost mine. There are some interesting accounts about two men who prospected for gold in this area during the winter of 1864-65. They claimed the discovery of a very rich outcrop of quartz bearing visible gold just west of Superstition Mountain. John Wilburn, another local author, was quite convinced the Bulldog was the source of Waltz's gold.

There are many characteristics about the Bulldog that would lead one to believe it could be the Dutchman's mine. The Bulldog had an eighteen-inch vein of quartz. The vein was rich with visible gold in white, reddish tinged quartz. Speculation still continues as to whether or not the old Bulldog was the Dutchman's Lost Mine. This past March, 2003, the entrance to the old historic Bulldog Mine was completely obliterated by heavy equipment. The old crosscut and shaft had existed for more than a hundred years and was one of the most historic mining sites in the area.



A matchbox made from an alleged sample of Waltz's gold. Photo courtesy of the Superstition Mountain Museum.

Recently, researchers have been able to trace Waltz's journey from Germany to America. In her book, "The Bible on the Lost Dutchman Mine and Jacob Waltz," Helen Corbin revealed for the first time in print Waltz's exact departure date from Germany at the Port of Bremen and his arrival date in America at the Port of New Orleans. Corbin also found documents to substantiate previous hearsay with fact about how Waltz traveled with the Peeples-Weaver party to the Bradshaw Mountains in May of 1863 from California. For more details on this information I would recommend you read Corbin's book.

There has been considerable discussion among Dutch hunters as to the source of Corbin's information. She was the first person to put the information in print, and this alone establishes her as an important contributor to the history of Jacob Waltz and the Lost Dutchman Mine. The original source of Corbin's information is not available, like many of the clues to the Lost Dutchman Mine.

The story of the Dutchman's Lost Mine is filled with mystery, intrigue and endless clues that lead nowhere in most cases.

If indeed the mine existed, why didn't Waltz tell his caregiver Julia Thomas? Oh, I forgot; he did! According to a newspaper account, Julia Thomas and the Petrasch brothers searched for Waltz's mine in August of 1892. Their trip into the Superstition Mountain region during the hot humid month of August was convincing evidence that Thomas and the Petrasch brothers believed Waltz had a rich gold mine in the area. But they found no mine nor gold for their effort.

Thomas and the Petrasch brothers returned to Phoenix broke and unemployed. At this point, William "Bill" Cage believed that Julia Thomas sold her story to Peirpont C. Bicknell, a free lance writer for the San Francisco Chronicle. Bicknell's story appeared in the San Francisco newspaper on January 13, 1895. Lost Dutchman Mine stories can be traced back to this newspaper article.

Cage also made another point very clear to my dad. He always said no one had really ever heard of Jacob Waltz until Bicknell's story appeared in the newspaper. The Silver King had boomed and died by this time. The Mammoth Mine at the Goldfields was producing bars of gold bullion for its Colorado investors. Lost mines and gold bullion were on the minds of many people during this period of Goldfield's boom. Bicknell's story about a lost gold mine was very acceptable for the period, and Bicknell took advantage of this condition with his story. As most of us now know, the Mammoth Mine failed by 1897, just about two years after Bicknell's story appeared.

Contemporary storytellers and Dutch hunters talk about surviving samples of Waltz's ore. They talk about comparison tests and the documents associated with these tests. There has been a tremendous amount of credence placed on the comparison of samples supposedly belonging to Jacob Waltz or those allegedly to have been found in the Superstition Wilderness Area. The stories and their source are based on faith. If facts are to be based on subjective information, at best then, objective information is generally lost. The question still remains, is everyone telling the truth? When an honest man accepts the story of another person and he bases it on trust. But this is still subjective information. Is this why nobody has ever found the infamous Dutchman's Lost Mine? Basically this has always been my thesis.

The reason I presented this question is because I have known good men and women who have spent a lifetime and a fortune looking for the Dutchman's lost mine and have not found it. Their only resolve being, "Maybe somebody else will find the mine someday and vindicate all of those who have believed in its existence." Ludwig G. Rosecrans may have said it best when he said, "There is a great deal of interest in the mine, but there is little substance."

Tonto National Forest representatives for most part unequivocally deny the existence of a rich gold mine in the Superstition Wilderness Area. The government basis its theory on extensive geologic research within the boundaries of the region.

I can only make this statement because my father began his search for the old Dutchman's mine in the early 1930's with the help of an old Arizona pioneer blacksmith named Bill Cage. Bill had worked the major mines of Arizona since the 1870's and was a highly respected individual.

Rather than being proof of the existence of a fabulous gold mine in the Superstition Mountains, just maybe the candle box of rich high-grade ore under Waltz's death bed was nothing more than an old prospector's cache for hard times.

