

STRANGE BUT TRUE STORIES

THE MYSTERY OF THE LOST DUTCHMAN MINE

The Superstition Mountain is located east of the city of Phoenix in Arizona. It is actually more than one mountain. In fact, it's 242 square miles of rough terrain. And it is here that the famous Lost Dutchman mine is said to be located.

But beware! Many people who have come to this rough region to hunt gold have never been seen again!

When the Spanish first arrived here in 1540, they were looking for gold. The local natives assured them that the mountain held much gold. But then they added that the Thunder God lived on the mountain. He would destroy anyone who trespassed on his sacred ground.

Sure enough, when the Spanish tried to explore the mountain, some of them vanished mysteriously. And the bodies of

the men who were found had their heads cut off! The terrified survivors refused to go back to the mountain.

Three centuries passed.

In 1845, Miguel Peralta, a member of a well-to-do family in Sonora, Mexico, actually found the gold. Peralta returned to Mexico to gather men and supplies so he could set up a mining operation.

This angered the Apaches. In 1848, they decided to drive Peralta and his men from the area. Peralta learned of the coming attack. First, he hid the entrance to the mine. Then he and his men loaded up the pack mules with as much gold ore as they could carry.

Sadly, they were too slow. The Apaches attacked, driving the men and the animals over cliffs and into ravines! For many years after, gold hunters found the remains of burros and leather packs still brimming with gold. But none of them could ever find the mine itself.

The next person to find gold in the

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Superstition Mountain was Dr. Abraham Thorne. In 1865, he traveled to Arizona to live and work among the natives. He made many friends as he cared for the sick and injured.

After five years, the natives came to him with a proposal. To thank him for his good deeds, they wanted to show where he could find gold. He would have to agree, however, to let them blindfold him on the 20-mile journey.

Dr. Thorne agreed. When the blindfold was removed, he saw a heap of gold nuggets piled against the canyon wall. It almost looked as if it had been put there for him. He picked up as much as he could carry with him. But he never returned to search for the mine.

Next came the "Dutchman," Jacob Waltz, who was actually German. He was already a grizzled old prospector when he arrived in Arizona to hunt for gold. Then he met Jacob Weiser, and the two men teamed up, hoping to strike it rich.

No one knows for sure where they got their map to the mine. Some say it was in return for saving the life of Miguel Peralta. He was a descendant of the man who'd first discovered the mine.

At some point after that, Jacob Weiser disappeared. Did the natives kill him? Or did his partner, Jacob Waltz, do him in?

Waltz would leave Phoenix for long periods of time. When he returned, he'd be carrying a bag of rich gold ore. He never told anyone where he found the gold. And he always managed to get away from anyone who tried to follow him.

In 1891, a Mexican widow named Julia Thomas befriended Waltz. He promised to show her the secret mine, but then he suddenly died. Under his bed was a sack of rich gold ore.

More prospectors began searching for the mine. Dozens of fake maps, books, and pamphlets—all supposedly giving the location of the lost mine—were produced.

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Many people lost money buying these fake guides—others even lost their lives.

Some men were killed by natives or died in accidents on the mountain.

Other deaths are more mysterious. A few of the prospectors seemed to have simply disappeared—just as the Spanish explorers did in 1540.

Some victims were skeletons when they were found. Some had their heads cut off, and others had bullet holes in their skulls.

Is Superstition Mountain haunted? Are the ghosts of murdered gold hunters protecting the Lost Dutchman mine?

Perhaps the Apaches had it right all along. If the mountain does belong to the Thunder God, it seems he will destroy anyone who trespasses!