THOSE OLD SPANISH GOLD MINES* 1

For the past week or more there has been considerable said about a discovery made by Wm. Bethers and Henry Boren up Daniels Creek of what was reported to be an old mine, which at one time, years ago, was worked by Mexicans or Spaniards from what is now known as New Mexico and Arizona.

To satisfy our own minds, if for no other reason, a Wave representative set about during the week to hunting up the particulars, and what he unearthed in the shape of hearsay and facts will be found following. But before giving the result of the trip of investigation up to the scene of the excitement, we will give the story as near as we have heard it about certain Spanish mines that are supposed to have yielded an abundant supply of precious metals in times gone by:

All early settlers in this valley are familiar with the story that at a time some eight or ten years before the first settlers arrived here, there existed valuable mines in the surrounding mountains which had been worked by Mexicans. The story goes, as told us by an old settler recently, that an old Mexican living in Arizona, had told a former resident of this valley many years ago about how Mexicans, when he was a mere lad, used to return to their homes in the fall and winter with a long pack train of burros heavily laden with golden riches, which they had taken from mines located in what was agreed by all to be this valley. The old Mexican described the mines as being about 30 miles from a body of water, (Utah Lake), following up a canyon until up the first stream which emptied into the river that wound its way through the canyon into the body of water. He told how the miners had been murdered and driven from their treasure by the Indians, which had been the cause of no more work being done on them. The miners had taken refuge from the bloodthirsty Indians inside.

*From The Wasatch Wave, Heber, Utah, February 12, 1897.

1For a brief reference to “Lost Mines,” see “Old Trails, Old Forts, Old Trappers and Traders,” by Herbert S. Auerbach, in the Utah Historical Quarterly, January-April, 1941, page 17. As to the Lost Spanish Mines, we wonder if their chimerical state of existence allows them a date or a place! Father Silvestre Velez de Escalante while travelling northward in what is now Southwestern Colorado, August, 1776, says: “(9th) (The San Joaquin River) rises in the western part of the Sierra de la Plata, and flows through the same canyon, in which are said to be open veins of metal; although when some years previous parties came to examine these mines by order of the Governor, Don Tomas Velas Cachupin, they could not say for certain what metal they contained. According to the opinion of some who lived in this section, and from reports gathered from the Indians, they concluded it was silver but giving the name to the Mountain Range.”

(11th). “We were not able to visit the mines of the Sierras, although one of our companions who had visited them on a former occasion, assured us they were but a short distance away.”—The Catholic Church in Utah, by W. R. Harris, pp. 132-3.)

Considering the remoteness of the “mines” from settlements, the methods of travel and transportation in that early day, and the character of the implements the “miners” were accustomed to using and could transport long distances, Escalante probably had no misgiving as to the depth or extent of the excavations. It is hardly likely the “mine” referred to consisted of especially extensive excavations or tunnels such as modern miners dig in mining operations.—J. C. A.
the tunnel which they had dug, but the latter finally induced them to come out on a promise of peace, when at the opportune time the most of the "Greaser" miners were murdered and their bodies thrown into the mouth of the mine, others escaping to tell of the fate of the victims of misplaced Indian confidence. This story was also told, it is claimed, by Indians in the early days, and has been the cause of many months of diligent search by numerous pioneers for the hidden treasure; one man, Isaac Ross, returning for that special purpose, after having moved back to Missouri. But none of them ever found any trace of this much sought after wealth, and its whereabouts always remained a mystery.

But now comes the rumor that the supposed mines have been discovered after being hidden for fifty years or over, and here are the grounds upon which such probabilities are based:

After finding Messrs. Bathers and Boren at their homes on Daniels Creek, the writer took up a long and tedious march under their guidance to the spot in question. Just one hour and twenty minutes were taken up in the ascent from Boren's ranch up the dividing ridge between Daniels and Center Creeks, at an angle of what seemed forty-five degrees, to the newly discovered mine about two miles distance and almost on top of the Wasatch range. Here we found a tunnel which has been driven about twenty-five feet into the solid rock following a vein of ore from the surface, which is reported to return very good assays in gold. This tunnel is the result of labor at odd times during the past year of the two men. Northwest of this prospect is another which has only recently been known to exist there, although it has every appearance of being there for years past. How far this tunnel enters through the solid rock into the side of the lofty mountain remains yet to be found out, as the work of cleaning out the dirt and rock that now fills it up has only been completed far enough to enable the prospectors to determine its course and dimensions.

A short time ago there was still another mouth of a tunnel accidentally stumbled onto, lying southeast about 75 yards of the other two, and on a direct line. This also was filled up with loose dirt and rock but very easy digging, as a pick is seldom used. The work of cleaning this tunnel out is being given the most attention at present, about twenty feet of which had been accomplished when the reporter was a visitor there, leaving a hole through the solid rock from three to four feet wide and from five to six feet high, so far as explored. As stated above, the work of cleaning out the tunnel is done mostly with shovels, laying bare the top

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2Asa C. Bathers owns and operates a service and tourist supply station on highway 30 at the head of Daniel's Canyon, on the Daniel's-Strawberry Summit, about 18 miles from Heber. — J. C. A.
and sides of solid stone, which plainly demonstrates that the imple-
mants of man have been used in the first excavation.  

The foregoing are some of the reasons advanced for thinking 
that these tunnels might at one time have been the source from 
which the Mexicans in former days replenished their larders, and 
another circumstance which is also used in this connection, is a 
large granite rock which stands perpendicular in the ground about 
half a mile distant down the ridge from the prospect, and is cov-
ered with peculiar looking hieroglyphics cut into it with apparently 
an instrument after the style of an ordinary punch. The rock is 
of a wedge shape being about a foot thick on one side and tapers 
down to about two inches thickness on the other; it stands about 
five feet high and is about four feet wide. The characters upon it 
can only be translated by those accustomed to such signs. One of 
the figures is of a man with hands thrown up as though suddenly 
surprised; another is what we would call that of a burro or pack 
mule; another a half moon, and there are a number of others, 
while perfectly visible, we were not able to decipher their meaning.  

Messrs. Bethers and Boren, the owners of the find, argue that 
these hieroglyphics have been put upon this rock as a guide for the 
persons who formerly worked the mines to go by in returning to 
them after several months absence, as would of necessity been the 
the Mexican theory is true. A careful watch is constantly 
kept by the men engaged in cleaning out the tunnel for bones of 
the murdered Mexicans who were thrown therein, but none have 
been discovered as yet of that character. Whether or not the 
gentlemen have found any lost mine is a matter that will unravel 
but that they have found prospect holes of some description, made 
by human hands, is a positive certainty, and we hope that devel-
opments will open up to them a bonanza, whether Spaniards first 
discovered it or not.

There are no mines in the neighborhood today, though the rich ore deposits in the 
Park City region are in the mountains across the valley to the north, some 25 miles 
distant. It is worth noting also that while the inference is that Mexicans may 
have found "rich" diggings herabouts, there were no Mexicans in Utah when the 
Mormons came in 1847, and no Mexicans came afterward, except the few engaged 
in the Indian slave trade. There was more money in the Indian offspring than 
in their ore mines.—J. C. A.

Practically every part of Utah has revealed its rock writings, hieroglyphics or 
petroglyphs,—the sign writings of the prehistories. The origin and meaning were 
unknown to the native Indian tribes, and authorities on archaeology usually agree 
that these rock writings cannot be "read" or interpreted, and that they probably 
have no great significance.—J. C. A.