

Hidden Treasure of the Spaniards

In the 1600s, the Spanish had roamed into the territory that is now Colorado. There is a local legend, and many versions of it, that Spaniards from that time buried some treasure near Mt. Princeton and made a map to it on the hide of an elk. In the 1800s, Ute Indians murdered these Spaniards and stole their map, which was in turn stolen by the incoming whites.

In 1937, the Salida Record printed a vague map showing the location of the hidden treasure that was buried by the Spanish. It includes a paragraph with instructions, translated here by my library amigo Bailey:

‘In a rounded valley like an apple, a cross is formed by a river and two washes. Looking upriver, follow the left wash $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to arrive at a small lake, to white water between the lake and the river. There are four trees forming a square. There are three rocks in different points, one marked with the sign of clasped hands and the other with a cross.’

With my sleuthing hat on: The image of the map seems to show that the treasure could be somewhere near Raspberry Gulch. The ‘Agua Blanca’ on the map could refer to either Chalk Creek, or to the white water of Cascade Falls. It is possible that Brown’s Creek drained into a small lake in the valley west of the Arkansas River 200-300 years ago, which would long since have dried up. And, of course, the tree landscape has changed as well.

Fast forward to 2013: New Mexico art dealer, artifact hunter, and self-described eccentric Forest Fenn buries a bronze chest containing over a million dollars in gold and precious gems somewhere in the Rocky Mountains between New Mexico and Canada. He publishes a book with a poem containing clues to where to find his hidden treasure. It contains some intriguing lines, and how they might relate to our location. Here are a couple of stanzas from the poem:

‘As I have gone alone in there
And with my treasures bold,
I can keep my secret where,
And hint of riches new and old.

Begin it where warm waters halt

And take it in the canyon down,

Not far, but too far to walk.

Put in below the home of Brown.'

Now, it's possible that Fenn was inspired by old treasure maps. The Spanish treasure map is not secret. It can be found referenced in some Colorado treasure hunter books. If he had gotten a hold of the Spanish treasure map from our area and used it in connection with where he hid his million dollars worth of gold, the treasure may be hidden here in Chaffee County.

And with my sleuthing hat back on: the 'warm waters' from the poem could refer to the hot springs near Mt. Princeton, and most obviously, the 'home of Brown' to Brown's Creek or Canyon. Additional clues have also been revealed: the treasure is hidden at an elevation higher than 5000' and it is not hidden in Idaho or Utah.

Always get landowner permission if you're going to dig. The full text for Forrest Fenn's poem can be found online at oldsantafetradingco.com.