



History Program

U.S. Army Intelligence Center and Fort Huachuca
Fort Huachuca, AZ 85635-6000

(520) 533-3638, FAX (520) 533-5736

All That Glitters: The Jones Gold Story



"Those yellow bars were this long," says Robert Jones of Dallas, Texas. He briefs two friends on the treasure he says he found 18 years ago in Fort Huachuca's Huachuca Canyon. Army authorities cooperated in the search by loaning some equipment and granting permission to dig on the site. U.S. Army photo.

On January 19, 1959, a World War II veteran drove up to the Main Gate at Fort Huachuca. Former Pvt. Robert Jones had journeyed from his home in Dallas, Texas, with two companions, an eighteen-year-old dream to fulfill, and an incredible story to tell post officials.

He had, he said, served at Fort Huachuca in 1941 with the 25th Infantry. In June of that eventful year, he and a friend, Pvt. Robert Mayes, took advantage of some weekend free time to hike up into Huachuca Canyon. Following the Huachuca Creek stream bed near an old spring house, Jones felt the earth give way beneath his feet and the cave-in dropped him some thirty feet into a darkened aperture which led to a walled room stacked high with what Jones could only identify in the dark as heavy metallic bricks.

Private Mayes pulled him from the pit with branches and vines and Jones returned an hour later with a rope and flashlight. With the help of the light, Jones determined that the room's floor-to-ceiling contents were white and red gold bars stacked like cordwood.

He covered the hole with a rock and marked the spot with initials on a large nearby rock. The events on that June afternoon indelibly marked the course of Jones' thoughts for the rest of his life. And his story, which soon received nationwide publicity, quickened the pulse of thousands of treasure-seekers.

But not everyone was ready to believe him. Given the task of monitoring the search, Fort Huachuca's Inspector General, Col. Eldridge Bacon, began an investigation to verify points in Jones' tale. The other man at the scene at the time of Jones' alleged discovery, Private Mayes, was killed during the fighting in Italy, so there could be no collaboration from that quarter. Colonel Bacon did manage to locate Jones' old First Sergeant in Los

Angeles. In interviews in both Los Angeles and Fort Huachuca, First Sgt. Matt Verble verified many points of the story but stated that he did not have an exact recollection of the incident. Jones produced two affidavits from former Army friends who said that they were present when Jones talked about finding gold in the canyon. He said he broke off a chunk of gold and took it to an assayer in Douglas who allegedly gave him \$890.00 for it. The assayer denied the story, as he might have been expected to do, since it was illegal at that time for private citizens to own or buy gold. There were vaguely remembered stories of Jones throwing a large and expensive beer party about that time.

The hierarchy at Fort Huachuca was not eager to pursue the search because initial digging had found nothing, a water supply for the post was located underground in that area and they were afraid of disturbing it, further excavations would be expensive, and they were doubtful of the truth of Jones' story. The IG had concluded in his report, "The intensive effort made to support the statements of Jones have met with complete failure, and no support has been found. It is my opinion that in his entire story Jones is a victim of his own imagination and that the gold as alleged does not now nor ever did exist on the site pointed out by Jones."

But despite his recommendations that no further digging be conducted, other attempts would be made to find the fabulous cache of gold that now shined in the national consciousness thanks to the reams of newsprint devoted to the story and a

March 14th feature in Life magazine. The gold that Jones described was stacked along the walls in two piles, each being twenty feet long, four feet high, and eight inches wide. Col. Eric Osborne, who was stationed at Fort Huachuca during the initial searches and who was an advisor to the quest effort, has estimated that the minimum amount of gold so stacked would be 5.34 tons and the maximum would be 10.68 tons. Although not impossible, this is a considerable and bulky amount to haul away. Using 1985 gold prices, the minimum value would be \$58 million.

There were five distinct explorations of the site in Huachuca Canyon. The initial dig occurred when Jones first visited the fort and lasted for two days, January 20-22, 1959. Jones walked up the road from the spring house about 100 feet, sat down on a large rock and said, "This is it. Move on up." Manual digging to a depth of six feet failed to turn up the rock with which Jones had claimed to cover the hole in 1941. On the 22d a bulldozer was brought to the scene and it dug a crater from twelve to fifteen feet. Work ceased that afternoon when the hole started filling with water. Since no evidence was uncovered to substantiate Jones' story, Col. C. O. Brunner, the post commander, told the post engineers to fill up the hole and informed Jones that there would be no more digging as it would jeopardize one of the principal water sources of the post. Jones went back to Dallas.

The second project took place from September 16 to October 2, 1959. It is described in Colonel Bacon's journal:

On 16 September, through arrangements made by a local contractor, the C. H. Leavell Company, a well-drilling rig was moved to the site in Huachuca Canyon. The drill experienced considerable difficulty in progressing to a depth since the topsoil was composed largely of boulders and fieldstone. The first day a depth of perhaps eight feet was reached by the drill rig. On 17 September work continued until a at depth of approximately fourteen feet the drill bit suddenly fell free approximately five feet. Attempts to continue the drilling beyond this free fall proved to be very slow and laborious, since apparently a rock shelf had been reached. This, in essence, was exactly the situation described by Jones although at a lesser depth. Discussion with the drill rig operators, both of whom had long experience in this field, revealed that they had never seen any such a drop before in their experience, and that it must indicate the presence of a void. Jones was quite certain that this was in fact the room which he had described even though the depth was not the same. It then became apparent that there could be no solution to the problem except to dig down to this depth with a clamshell in order to observe what actually took place.

The drill was then moved back off the site, and on Friday, the 18th of September, the Post Engineer brought to the site a crane rigged with a clamshell, a D-8 dozer, and

several small pumps. An excavation was started by the clamshell at a site immediately below the hole drilled by the rig. This hole was marked by a ten-foot length of casing. During the course of digging by the clam, at a depth of approximately twelve feet, water was struck and the composition of the soil changed from a rubble, earth-filled type to a yellow clay structure composed primarily of decomposed granite. It was at this stage that water was hit and the pumps brought into operation. As the hole progressed below the depth of twelve feet, considerable difficulty was experienced in the sloughing of the banks around the hole and the problem in disposing of the water. The water encountered was not ground water but was a subsurface run-off which confined itself to a channel along the top of the decomposed granite plug. As digging continued down to the eighteen- to twenty-foot level, it became apparent that the void through which the drill bit fell was in fact a water-eroded cavity in the decomposed granite, and that no room nor cavity of any sort was uncovered. At this point, the casing which marked the original drill site was removed, and the clam moved over approximately four feet to this location and enlarged the hole in that direction. Reaching a depth of approximately twenty feet at this location revealed the exact same type of ground formation as was previously noted.

At this point in the excavation the site was visited by the commanding general, Maj. Gen. F. W. Moorman, who examined the site, talked briefly with Jones, and indicated his desire that the excavation be continued to the originally named depth of thirty-two feet to prove or disprove Jones' story for all time.

Excavation then continued with the clam as before, with as many as four pumps being operated to keep the water level within working tolerances. The time period discussed here has been from Friday, 18 September through Monday, 28 September, work having progressed, in addition to normal working hours, on Saturday 26 September.

On reaching a depth of approximately twenty-four feet, it became apparent that further progress was not practical using the clamshell, since an apparent ledge of rock had been uncovered at this depth. It was then decided that we would drill to a depth of at least eight feet beyond the bottom of the excavation to determine if any voids existed at this depth. While arrangements were being made to obtain a drilling contractor, excavation continued with the clamshell and by Thursday, 1 October, a depth of approximately twenty-six feet had been reached in the pit. During the entire period under discussion, the site was visited frequently by members of the press, radio, TV, and a great deal of publicity—both national and local—developed from this

search. On Thursday, 1 October and Friday, 2 October drilling was instituted, and a depth of eight and one-half feet was reached below the bottom of the excavation dug by the clamshell. This resulted in an actual exploratory drilling to a depth of approximately thirty-four feet which, accepting Jones' dimensions and location of the underground room, would have carried us at least three feet below the ceiling of the alleged room. No cavities, voids of any sort, were disclosed by this drilling. On reaching this depth with four test holes, the holes were loaded; and at 1330 on 2 October a charge of thirty sticks of dynamite was exploded in these test holes. No cavity of any sort was disclosed by this charge. Instead, what appeared to be a rather thick ledge composed largely of quartzite was discovered. The quartzite being shattered by the blast, some additional water developed. Operations then continued with the clamshell removing the rubble from the blast until at approximately 1550 on 2 October the decision was reached that further digging would be uneconomical, and therefore the project was closed. Jones was notified of this decision and agreed that he had said that he would be satisfied if we went to a depth of thirty-two feet on this site. He also said that he knew the room and the gold were in this site and if we would only go a few feet further, he was sure that we would find it. He was informed that

this would not be done. Since we had fulfilled our part of the bargain, he was expected to fulfill the bargain on his side. This he reluctantly agreed to do, and left the post Friday afternoon....

In summary, the location and depth specified by Jones were explored by use of the equipment previously described, and it is concluded that the room which Jones alleges he fell into in 1941, and the gold which he saw there are not in fact at the location specified.

Allowances have been made here for possible fill on the site of the excavation since 1941, but with the eight foot margin of safety previously mentioned, it seem impossible that such a room existed at this site.

Based on a study of the terrain, both surface and underground, it is concluded that while Jones is still certain of his story, it would be nearly an engineering impossibility for such a room to have existed.

This conclusion is shared by Lieutenant Gerhard and Lieutenant Stawecki, both of this command, and both graduate geologists; Mr. Paige of the U.S. Geological Survey; and Mr. J. G. Reid, Jr., Chief Scientist of the Proving Ground, all of whom were consulted on the engineering and geological aspects of this operation.

Jones continued to press for further digging and offered to bring in his own contractor. Colonel Brunner's answer had a note of finality: "In reply to your letter

of 20 April 1960, please be advised that no further permission to search for the alleged treasure will be granted. Any further search for this alleged treasure would seriously interfere with the mission of the United States Electronic Proving Ground.”

Post officials considered the matter closed. But Jones persisted and by mid-October 1962 had received permission for another search from President Kennedy’s military aide, Major General Clifton. He contracted with Mahan Bros. Construction Company of Prescott, Arizona, for \$10,000 worth of work. He had meanwhile secured an agreement with the Treasury Department for a fifty-fifty split. Work began on February 12, 1963, and lasted until March 15 when the money ran out. They had no better luck, bringing up only rocks and water. With a well driller and a core driller they checked at random spots in the surrounding area with no results.

A fourth exploration was made along the west bank of the creek in 1968 by the Chicago mining firm of Atkins and Hale. Little was recorded. Nothing was turned up. Again the Army considered this to be the final search, determined to deny permission for any further digging. Jones died in 1969, his dream unfulfilled.

In 1975 the Quest Exploration Corporation obtained permission from Washington for the fifth search for Jones’ Gold. This was to be the most comprehensive and scientific treasure hunt ever undertaken at that point in time. The president of Quest, Charles A. Kenworthy, explained how he became interested in the

project. “I had read a lot of articles on the Huachuca treasure in Life and other magazines, and when I first got involved with Stanford Research Institute, I began digging through my files for a treasure that would lend itself to newly-developed electronic search methods. Huachuca seemed to be ideal. The search area was a small one, and the evidence of the likelihood of treasure actually being there was good.”

Quest’s contract with the government called for two phases. Phase I, a twenty-day scientific search period, began on May 16, 1975. The Quest Corporation contracted with the Stanford Research Institute (SRI) to do the tests that would determine if there was anything there that would justify Phase II, the actual removal of the treasure.

On the morning of the 17th the area in Huachuca Canyon was staked out in a grid-shaped pattern and elevations were measured to the accuracy of 3/8 of an inch. A survey was made with metal detectors to find metal near the surface. The area proved to be strewn with old water pipes.

Dr. Roger Vickers, Senior Physicist, Radio Physics Lab, SRI, headed the electronic search. Because the underground water in Huachuca Canyon made the use of a radar sounder impractical, tests were carried out with a resistivity meter, an instrument that took readings every five feet down each line of stakes. A computer correlated the readings and produced a subsurface picture of the entire area. The scientists were certain that if a tunnel or treasure chamber existed, it would be shown unmistakably on their charts.

Meanwhile, a micro-gravity meter was brought in to pinpoint the treasure room. It would show lessened gravity in an empty chamber or increased gravity in a room full of heavy metal. The instrument is extremely sensitive and can pick up vibrations from a car driving over ground as far away as a mile.

Using the sophisticated computer back at Stanford, charts and overlays were made to produce a complete picture of all of the underground anomalies. According to Kenworthy, the charts showed what appeared to be an old shaft going down at an angle thirty-eight feet deep into a large chamber-shaped anomaly 20 feet wide, 8 feet 9 inches high, and nearly 30 feet long. "You can imagine our excitement," Kenworthy said. "This came pretty close to Jones' description of the shaft and treasure chamber."

To probe this and other holes beneath the earth, the team drilled three-inch core holes to the heart of the anomalies and then inserted a special probe that would register the presence of any metal within two and a half feet. The large chamber proved to be filled with silt and fill material that may have flooded the chamber when the Army used dynamite in 1959. No gold.

Kenworthy concluded that he felt that this chamber was the one that Jones described. "The entrance to the shaft itself was 50 feet from the rock where Jones' initials were carved, and about 175 feet from the old spring house. Jones once said the location of the shaft entrance was 50 feet from the old spring house and 200 feet from the rock. But if he carved

his initials backwards on the rock, isn't it possible that over the years he got the two distances transposed in his mind?"

In a letter to Quest that was passed along to the commander of Headquarter, Fort Huachuca, Dr. Vickers drew his conclusions.

We have reviewed the data from the drilling program in combination with the results of the surface survey of selected portions of Huachuca Canyon and have a number of conclusions to report.

Firstly, we feel that the surface survey was very complete in nature and represented the best combination of sensors that could be used for the detection of underground cavities in the difficult type of terrain found in Fort Huachuca. The survey was considerably more dense than is customary with the resistivity data points being taken every five feet, and the microgravity and magnetic data taken every ten feet. Thus we feel that if Jones' cavity were in the surveyed area there is no chance that we did not obtain several data points over it.

Secondly, the combination of sensors used allow, in principle, anomalies from subsurface boulders, trees, etc. to be separated from those arising from cavities. Due to the extremely rough nature of the subsurface, this was not always the case, and some areas were investigated even though perhaps only one sensor showed an anomaly. Thus we feel confident that all the significant

anomalies were covered.

The sensors used were the latest available, and as you know in the case of microgravity represented the only sensor of its type available within the United States. The sensitivity of these instruments was more than adequate to register the anomaly from a cavity of the size described by Jones.

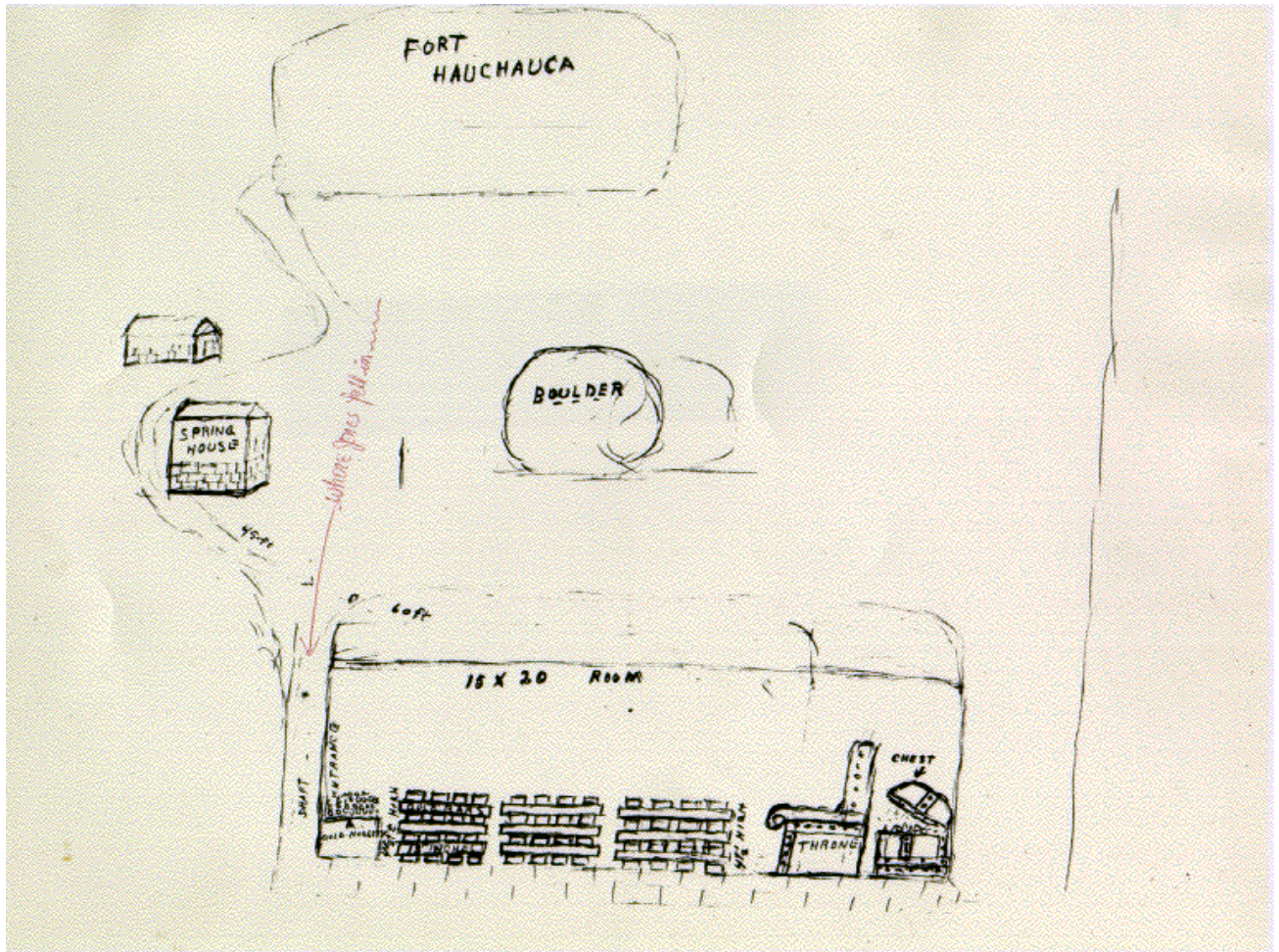
In accordance with your wishes, expressed early in the program, every attempt was made both during the survey and drilling phases of the search to leave the terrain undamaged and with a minimum of disturbance.

Apart from one minor area in the West Road, the only area which was considered to need drill holes in order to determine the nature of the anomalies was the East Road area approximately fifty feet from the old spring house. From the drill holes put down in this area we were able to construct a fairly good picture of the subsurface, and to eliminate the area as a likely spot for the Jones cavern. There were layers in the region that appeared to be water-filled voids, and these were checked with a down-hole metal detecting probe. The extra holes that were drilled closer to the east embankment showed the same stratigraphy, and led to the conclusion that the "void" areas are part of a natural formation and not a tunnel as might be supposed from the earlier drilling results. During

the drilling, extra traverses were run with the resistivity unit to check the possibility of a natural or man-made cavern connecting up with the deep extremity of the "void" stratum. No evidence was found to support the existence of such a cavern.

Therefore it is our conclusion, after discussing the data with our colleagues here at SRI, that neither the surface nor the drill hole data give any indication that a cavity such as that described by Private Jones exists within the area surveyed. It is our further conclusion that no future surface surveys are liable to improve upon the data already obtained for that area using instruments that either exist now or are known to be under development.

Was this to be the last and conclusive search for gold? The shimmer of untold wealth does not pass easily from the mind's eye.



A map drawn by Jones showing the location of the spot where he discovered the treasure trove.