



Left to right: William Peterson, C. W. McKee, and Dix Henecke, in the tunnel of The Mine with the Iron Door.

By Oren Arnold

**T**HE money hasn't yet wrecked the stock market or flooded the national treasury; nevertheless one of America's most famous lost mines at last has been found.

It was one of those things wherein "My uncle got this old Spanish map down in Mexico, see?" Usually the maps marked The Spot with a cross, but left you to guess just where the mountain was.

But doggoned if C. W. McKee and his pals didn't go out and locate the mountain a few weeks ago, and sure enough there behind some bushes the old mine shaft was!

It was the world-renowned "Mine With the Iron Door" which the Spaniards discovered nearly 400 years ago. Some of the ore taken there this fall assayed up to \$60 per ton, and ore at \$10 is profitable. But there is "supposed" to be 2,500,000 ounces of concentrated gold already mined and stored back in a sealed underground room, left there when the Indians ran the Spaniards off!

Now you can line up at the right, pass by the desk here and learn exactly where The Spot is, then start a wild scramble to get there and stake out your own claim. The mine is in southern Arizona near the village of Oracle, about 120 miles from Phoenix, the state capital. You take that second fork of the Skeleton Gulch trail, turn left there where old Alkali Ike shot down them four stagecoach bandits, bear gradually up the slope above Rattlesnake Arroyo and cut across the valley on the lower part of the Lazy J range. You can't miss it.

But seriously, folks, Mr. McKee is not fooling. Nobody was more surprised than he (unless it was Mrs. McKee), because he had been hunting for that mine since about 1923.

**F**IRST modern man to tap the riches there was Harold Bell Wright, famous novelist. He wrote a book called "The Mine With the Iron Door" and his royalties went into a high figure. But he never actually saw the mine. Mr. Wright has a desert home not far from Oracle, and always has been fascinated by the adventure lore of the Southwest.

Although C. W. McKee of Phoenix is the king pin of the new discovery, at least one easterner is in the picture too. He is Nathan Sturdy of Pittsburgh, Pa., a mining engineer who also is associated with the Smithsonian Institution, and he owns some of the land adjoining Mr. McKee's property. As Mr. McKee's friend of long standing, he will assist with his technical knowledge in the new development, Mr. McKee says.

Two other Arizonians are associated with McKee and Sturdy. They are William Peterson of Phoenix and Dix Henecke "of Arizona," the latter another prospector and veteran guide. Led by McKee, these men have pooled their money and energies for a long time in tracing down clues to the mine.

Even though the actual "iron" door is

# FOUND *the* FABULOUS "MINE WITH *the* IRON DOOR"



Many thousands of painted warriors came out of the mountains to rid their country of white men. . . . Then it was that the priests sealed their treasure room.

lacking, this is unquestionably the old mine referred to by that name, Mr. McKee declares, because all the clues check almost exactly, and because there is not even supposed to be another ore workings in this locality. The iron door name was not emphasized, as a matter of fact, until Novelist Wright used it in a story some years ago.

Actual discovery of the old tunnel was not dramatic. It came after a long process of elimination. The vast area—all government land, on which prospectors may claim mineral rights—makes a man appear microscopic. Erosion, growth of mesquite, ironwood, cacti and such, conceal and change old contours over the decades. But Mr. McKee and Dix Henecke explored down to one long sloping hillside which tallied in general outline with old maps and descriptions, and there found the old workings. Prospectors' intuition perhaps guided them as much as anything.

"I have acquired about 40 assorted maps and other markers pertaining to the mine," Mr. McKee tells. "Most of them came from California, among the old Spanish settlements, or from Mexico. A few are of little or no value, but some have been a great help. They make a connected story, after careful piecing and translating, and most encouraging thing of all is that the story checks with recorded history. Finding of the ancient shaft is further indication that the story is dependable."

**S**PANIARDS began working the mine, church history in Mexico reveals, in the earliest days of missions there. That was soon after Coronado the conquistador came through the Southwest in 1539. A mission was established near the present site of Oracle, and became known as the Spanish City.

But the Spaniards began to oppress the Indians of the vicinity, trying to enslave them and make them do the hard labor of mining. The red men resented the constant draining away of wealth from their land.

So, about 1680, the Indians called a pow-wow and decided to drive the Spaniards away. It was a timely move,

for the Spanish missionaries then were having political troubles at home and so lacked adequate military force.

The Indians swooped down first on a long train of burros and mules, killed the drivers and the few soldiers, scattered the ore concentrates which were very rich but valueless to them, barbecued and ate the animals.

The Spanish City itself was not destroyed for some time, because it was more adequately defended. But all gold shipments ceased, even if the process of mining did not. Expecting the travel routes to be opened again in time, the priests and helpers kept on extracting gold, concentrating the ore and storing it in the deep underground room until it could be moved.

For safety, location of the room was made known to only a few padres. They kept the records, and made some maps in a code of their own, made them as indestructible as possible, so that in event of death other missionaries and emissaries of the king could still claim the treasure.

The Indian uprising, however, extended through much of the Southwest. Many thousands of whooping, painted warriors, fired with a zest for killing, came out of the mountains to rid their country of white men.

Then it was that the priests sealed their treasure room. Traditions and legends say that the room was closed off with an iron door—whence the name of the mine—but that probably is just a surmise of later years. Records of the priests themselves and of others who had handled the gold shipments in old

California, said that the room was 80 feet back in the mountain, from the main mine shaft, and that the 80 feet was filled solid with rock and mud to protect the treasure from marauders.

Doubtless the Indians would have scattered the wealth, because they came down on Spanish City one dawn in great numbers. The sentinel on the rooftop awoke the village with clangings on his gong and loud shouting. Redskins were coming from everywhere, it appeared.

Men came running with their crude guns and their sabers, but before noon Death reigned supreme. Even the priests who had concealed the gold were murdered. Spanish City was wrecked.

Of course other persons knew that this treasure existed, and the information was kept alive among the Spanish families. Through Indian wars and other troubles, that part of Arizona was not settled again for many decades.

For a long time the crumbled ruins of Spanish City were lost, but they were relocated. Even then the mine wasn't found, however.

Many men came hunting, from 1880 on. Buffalo Bill Cody came down in 1914 and had a fling at it. A Californian known only as Black Jack made a determined effort to locate the mine, but died without success.

The bones of another man who was partly successful were found by Mr. McKee and his associates, however. This stranger actually got into the old tunnel, and it must have been years ago for his body had been eaten away by animals.