

Limestone Rock Assayed \$532

Prospector Returns to Maravillas Without Guide to Hunt Lost Mine

BY J. FRANK DOBIE.

It was over a year before McCall got back to the Maravillas and to the hill where Solito, pounding his fists on the rocks, said "Forty - five feet down, pure gold." He went alone this time, carrying enough provisions in his T-Model Ford to last a month. He did not try to drive farther than Black Gap, where he got a pack burro. He loaded on a light bedroll, grub, and tools, and, rifle in hand, drove the burro, Mexican muleteer style, to the spring at the mouth of the Maravillas, where he made camp. His main object was to familiarize himself with the lay of the land and find out who owned Solito Hill.



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From survey maps in the State Land Office at Austin and from other sources, he had learned about the tangle of titles over parts of the Big Bend—a tangle that still helps lawyers and surveyors make a living. About 15 miles below the mouth of the Maravillas — but a considerably

less distance from Solito Hill—Reagan Canyon cuts into the Rio Grande. On up above the Maravillas, Boquillas Canyon starts in. The first surveyor of the region was "a Frenchman" who started in at the mouth of Reagan Canyon, moving upstream with his section lines. The sections were surveyed off a half mile wide, with river front, and two miles deep. About the same time, or a little later, another surveyor started in at the mouth of Boquillas Canyon, laying off sections downstream. Only a bee can go straight in that country. Many section lines were run on paper instead of on the gnarled and crumpled land. As was inevitable, some surveys overlapped. Sections of land that show on maps of the Big Bend have turned out to be non-existent on the ground. The state owns mineral rights on alternate sections.

FIVE-WEEK CAMP.

McCall took in only about 80 cartridges. Before he got out—he wished he had taken more—and he did not have to use many to keep in meat. A few months ahead of him, some American hunters had crossed the Rio Grande, looking for bigger bucks, been stopped by five Mexican rurales (rangers), and killed them. Americans were not welcome on that stretch of the Rio Grande. For men who can ride

horseback or walk and endure that harsh land, crossing the Rio Grande of the Big Bend, at places where it is not canyon, is a rather personal matter, government regulations being more theoretical than actual.

McCall stayed for five weeks, during which time he did not see another American. When he came out, he came in the night, crawling for about 2½ miles on his hands and knees, sounding out for rattlesnakes ahead of him with a sotol stalk. It was the season of the year when the thermometer goes to 120 or above. He swore never to go back in summer.

Arriving at Black Gap, he found the ranch house, never anything but a subdivision station, deserted and no provisions in sight. Somebody had taken the coils from his Ford car, leaving it no more useful than a stickhorse. He was weak from hunger. He spent one of his remaining cartridges on a jackrabbit. After recuperating for three days on water and jackrabbit meat, he set out afoot for Marathon. On the way he met a man in a T-Model who took him to town, where he got coils for his own car, and brought him back.

MINING LEASE SIGNED.

He knew the lay of the land now, but who owned the minerals under Solito Hill? After 18 months of investigation and parleying, he leased mining rights on a section of land from Mrs. Josephine Bullis, widow and heir of Gen. John L. Bullis—the man, then a lieutenant, to whom Solito's mother had given him and who had died in San Antonio in 1911.

The complexities of life—that's one way to put it—kept McCall from returning to the search of gold for some time. In 1931 he took along two men who wanted to prospect. All they did was hunt deer while he spent most of his time getting a new axle for the broken-down car and carrying it 18 miles afoot. On this trip, however, he learned that two men had been taking rocks out of a cave right at the place in the canyon where Solito had pointed, saying "We went in there." His theory is that a flood from a cloudburst—probably the only real rain in years—had exposed the opening to the cave.

The next time McCall went back, the opening was closed again. He figured that an earth-

CONVAIR LISTS DESIGN 'FIRSTS'

Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Corporation's contribution to aviation progress is best measured in its products. Equally important, however, are advancements in the design, development, and methods of manufacturing aircraft. Among them are these:

First use of steel tubing in aircraft construction in the United States went into the TW-3 trainer, first airplane produced by Consolidated Aircraft Corporation after the company was founded in East Greenwich, R. I., May 29, 1923.

time he went to East Texas for a spell and gambled on a wildcat well that missed oil. The prolonged illness of his mother further delayed him.

In 1934 he managed to interest Dr. Brinkley of Del Rio in mining with beef, taking their pay in coffee and .30-30 cartridges. They spoke of a gringo who had been down on the Rio Grande alone in 1926 and had done some shooting.

ROCK YIELDS \$532.

A prospector named Burnham—he prospected with a hammer—was camped at the Maravillas spring. He had a piece of limestone rock, sprinkled with dolomite or quartz and evidently containing gold. It was as heavy as iron and weighed perhaps 15 pounds. McCall offered him \$50 for it and showed him the cash. He refused and sent it to an assayer in New Orleans, agreeing to take half of whatever it was worth for an analysis. A day or two before McCall came out, Burnham received a check on a New Orleans bank for \$532. He died not long after this. He had told McCall that the rock came from the foot of Solito Hill, though he knew nothing of Solito's story. He had been prospecting for the Lost Nigger Mine.

McCall found no such rock himself, but a sample of outcrop in the canyon under Solito Hill assayed \$136 to the ton. He told his backer, Dr. Brinkley of Del Rio, that it would take \$30,000 to sink a major shaft and get the mine working. Brinkley, a sick man himself now, wanted to take in another man with money and leave McCall with only a one-third interest. McCall refused, and before long Brinkley died.

Solito Hill is still undeveloped. A good dirt road runs near it now. "If I owned all the gold in the Rocky Mountains, I'd still want to go in and develop this mine," McCall says. "It's on the most frontier spot left in Texas. Some things seem to be for certain individuals. I may be the individual for whom this gold is

Street by Any Other Name May Be Changed Anytime

PARIS, May 30 (NANA). — Things that change almost as often as French governments are Paris street names. Since the war 26 streets and 12 subway stations have switched names. Nobody knows when he'll wake up one morning to find he no longer lives in Avenue Carnot but in Boulevard Sausisson.

The result is confusion. Taxi drivers whirl madly for hours searching for streets that were there yesterday, but have vanished.

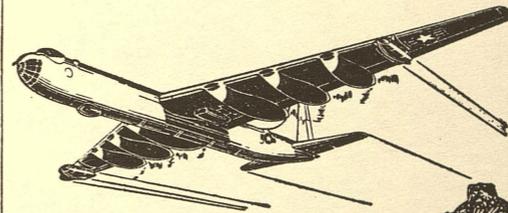
Said a municipal councillor: "You should hear some of the street names suggested. Sooner or later the widow of every obscure painter, hack poet or crazy inventor comes along and demands a street to commemorate her husband."

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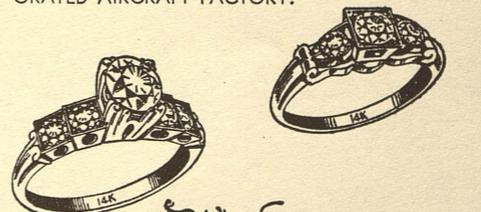
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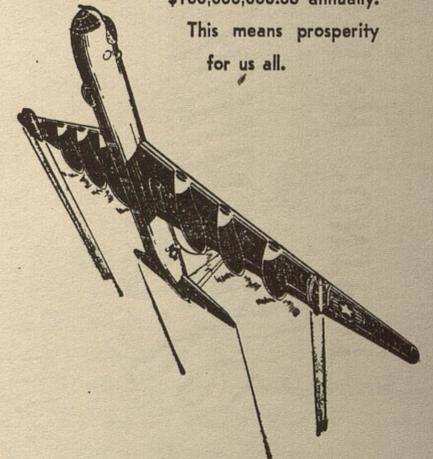
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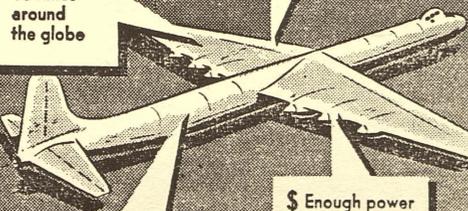
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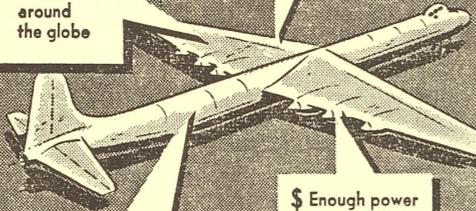
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The next time McCall went back, the opening was closed again. He figured that an earthquake which shook windows in San Antonio houses had brought down rocks in the loose formation along the canyon. About this

month for an analysis. On two before McCall came out, Burnham received a check on a New Orleans bank for \$532. He died not long after this. He had told McCall that the rock came from the foot of Solito Hill, though he knew nothing of Solito's story. He had been prospecting for the Lost Nigger Mine.

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