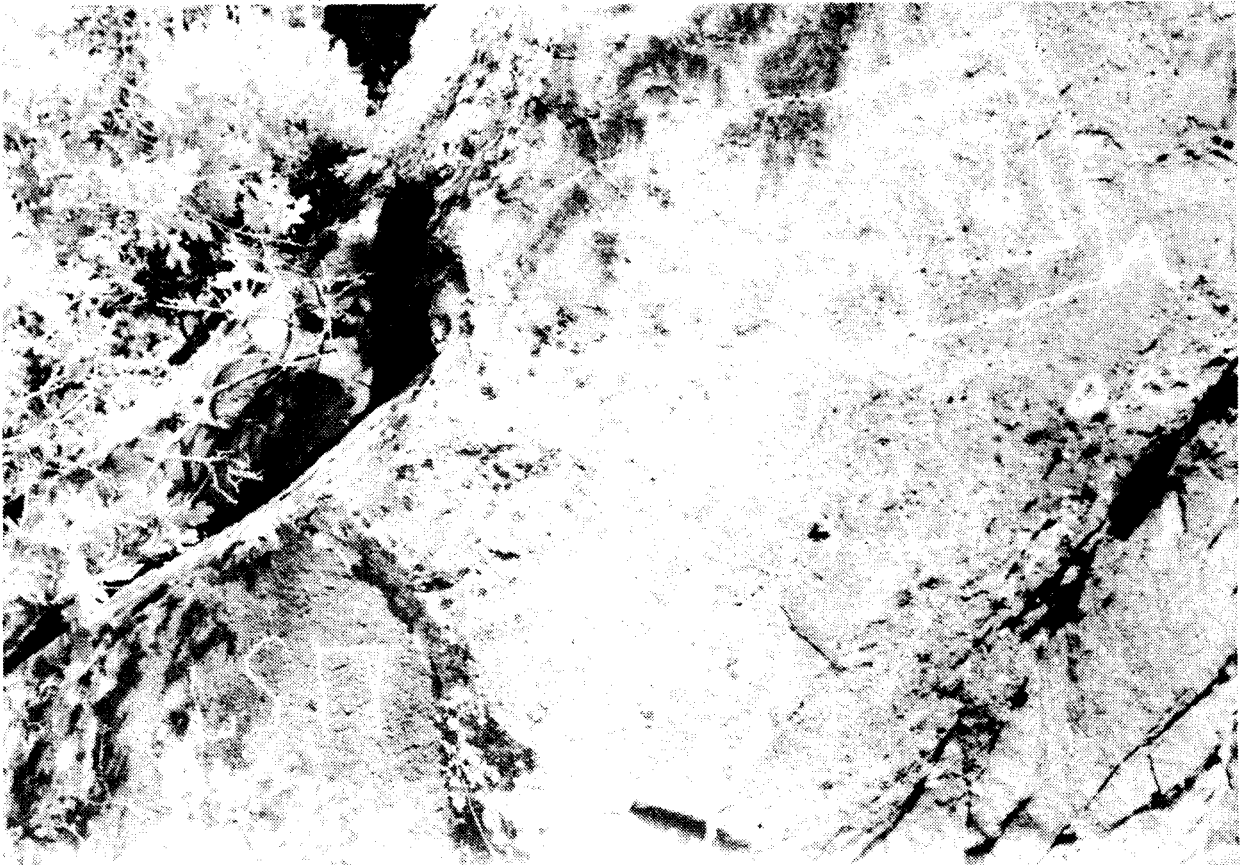


SPORTS



At the mouth of Canyon in Iron County, this detailed 'map' could lead to a lost Spanish mine; or is it just doodling by a lonely shepherd?

Treasure may not be best find

Commentary by A. True Ott

This is the final article in a three part series concerning the alleged early Spanish mines and settlements in southern Utah.

As stories go, the tale of three mountain men, snowbound in a mountain canyon in Iron County while striking Spanish gold, is surely as good as any, but what are the facts?

According to the "Utah Historical Journal," Lewis Burton, William Wolskill and George Yount, along with a string of cattle and horses and a number of Spanish hired hands, left Taos, N.M., on Sept. 30, 1830 on a beaver trapping expedition along the Old Spanish Trail.

Breaking off the trail to trap the Sevier River basin, the party found themselves atop the Markagunt Plateau in a mountain blizzard.

Trying to reach lower elevations, they dropped off Summit Peak by way Canyon, where they were forced to spend the winter.

Somewhere in this canyon, the mountain men found gold - enough gold that Wolskill and Yount purchased a vast amount of land from the Spanish at Monterrey, Calif., and eventually became very wealthy ranchers.

The fact that these early mountain men found a substantial amount of gold is well documented, but did they mine it or was it already processed for them by earlier Spanish expeditions?

The answer may well lie in the identities of their Spanish guides, for it is highly probable that they came along for more than just beaver furs.

Carved into a black volcanic

boulder is a detailed map or trail marker of some kind that obviously is centuries old and not Indian.

Also carved into another rock further up the canyon is the word "gold" in English text, with the letters

the date 1831.

TW could be Wolskill's initials, while LB could be Lewis Burton, for the dates match.

Whatever occurred in

1831 has faded into the mists of time, with only cryptic reminders whispering of those that came before.

If you happen to stumble onto ancient writings when you're in the mountains, please don't deface them, for they often represent valuable historic and archeological evidence. Often the treasure you will uncover is a greater knowledge of Utah and its hidden mysteries.