

Wrapped in the lore of Nineteenth Century Wyoming is the Lost Cabin Mine, somewhere in the Bighorn Mountains, or possibly to the west, in the Owl Creeks. Online the story involves seven Swedish prospectors who never returned to civilization. In the version I heard as a kid, they were seven Dutchmen.

We moved to central Wyoming while Boysen Dam was still under construction and the Wind River was still crossed via a truss bridge. The dam was declared complete when the hydroelectric generator went on line in December, 1952. Possibly inspired by worked out goldmines a few miles east of the dam, a rumor about the discovery of a large vein of gold during the preparations to pour concrete floated around. The tale went on to say that work was continued until that specific area was buried by tons of concrete, to protect the progress of the project from any complications.

The scuttlebutt I heard in the early fifties indicated the lost men had prospected the mountains northeast of Shoshoni. The father of a school friend found an odd rock beside a dirt road coming out of those mountains. He thought the specimen looked like gold ore and had it assayed. The assay showed it to be very high in gold content. He believed it was from the Lost Cabin Mine, but he never found the source of that piece of ore.

In the late seventies, my Dad sold his corner lot to my uncle Burt. He and my aunt Beulah moved their trailer-house onto the lot. A gate in the fence facilitated visits. Thinking about retirement, he built a shop at the north end of his lot and filled it with lapidary equipment, agate, jade and obsidian. Burt was ready to begin a more self-controlled life of retirement.

Whenever I had the opportunity to visit my folks, I also visited my aunt and uncle. On one occasion Burt had a slice of jade he wanted to show me. When I to held it up to a lamp, a white, milky substance that permeated the jade was highlighted. He handed me a loupe so I could

take a closer look. Through the loupe the cloudy substance turned into tiny metallic cubes. I asked Burt about the cubes, and he told me the assay showed them to be pure platinum.

I asked him if he had staked a claim. He said he hadn't been able to file a claim because he did not know where the jade had come from. He said a man had found the piece somewhere on South Pass and had dropped it off at the shop to be sliced. Less than a week later the man died in an automobile accident. Later Burt cut a slice from the jade and discovered its source is worth a fortune. The rest of his life, Burt searched for a motherload that was not lost, for it had never been found.