

## (58) The Mysterious Treasure of Karl Steinheimer

**VALUE:** Ten mule loads of gold and silver buried in one location and a "package" of gold buried in another. How much is a mule load of gold? There has been much speculation on this subject, and nobody agrees on the answer. There are far too many intangibles for this writer to attempt a guess. The treasure herein is otherwise described as being worth "millions."

**LOCATION:** The search for Steinheimer's fabulous treasure has taken place at many locations, but the burial sites are popularly agreed to be in Bell County, Texas, the main hoard near the junction point of three streams. These streams are named as the Leon, Lampasas, and Salado which unite south of Belton to form the Little River. The smaller portion of gold is said to have been buried about fifteen miles south of the stream junction, in a group of hills locally known as the "Knobs."

**AUTHENTICATION:** There has been an "authentic" Steinheimer map in existence for many years, and a great many people have searched for the Steinheimer treasure. Yet, strangely, little is known of the principal character in this story, and none of the so-called "facts" have ever been satisfactorily substantiated. This in itself does not, of course, prove that the treasure does not exist. It does make one wonder, however, if there can be any truth behind such vague details.

Karl Steinheimer, according to pure legend, was born

in Germany in 1793. At the age of eleven (remember this point) he ran away from home and became a sailor. Among the pirate commanders he served was one Luis de Aury, who specialized in running black slaves into America. It is a matter of record that Aury became military and civil governor of Texas, and in 1816 moved his headquarters to Galveston. **Steinheimer** is said to have accompanied him to the Texas port, and to have been placed in charge there of the slave running activities.

Some time after the move to Galveston, **Steinheimer** and Aury had a falling out and the German left for the interior of Mexico, where he soon became involved in a series of mining ventures. Here he prospered and is said to have amassed a great fortune in gold and silver, remaining until 1838, when his sudden departure was brought about by a piece of startling news that reached his ears.

It will be remembered that **Steinheimer** had left Germany at the tender age of eleven. But now, in the process of growing wealthier by the day, he heard that the sweetheart he had left behind in Germany was in St. Louis, and that she was not married! Such was his devotion to this girl whom he had not seen since the age of eleven, that he decided to give up everything, rush to her and ask for her hand in marriage. Accordingly he disposed of all of his Mexican interests, packed his gold and silver on ten mules and, with but two trusted companions, started out across the deserts and mountains, bound for his childhood love in St. Louis. It is your privilege to believe this incredible story, and it is ours to disbelieve it, which we do.

At any rate, the **Steinheimer** pack train eventually arrived safely at San Antonio on the plains of Texas. To the north was dangerous Indian country, and **Steinheimer** delayed the journey while debating the wisdom of risking his fortune and life in the inhospitable land. But after a delay of several weeks the decision was made to push on, Indians or no Indians. He wanted to see that childhood sweetheart.

Avoiding all traveled trails, and moving only at night, the little party of three and the ten **treasure**-laden mules eventually arrived at a place where three small streams joined into a single river. Here **Steinheimer** decided that his luck



must soon run out, and he did not want anything to happen to his fortune. There was only one thing to do — bury it and return for it later. Keeping aside one small sack of gold for traveling expenses, the major portion of the fortune was secreted or buried near the place where the Leon, Lampasas and Salado join to form the Little River. How would he know where to find the **treasure** when he returned? Well, the streams would be there forever, but just to be on the safe side, he drove a brass spike into an oak tree about fifty feet from the actual hiding place. Now the mules were turned loose and the three men set out on their horses in a southeasterly direction.

After about fifteen miles of relaxed travel the little party came to a group of hills rising above the broad prairie. To the east was a great valley ringed with trees. While resting here, **Steinheimer** and his companions were suddenly attacked by a party of Indians. Two of the men were immediately killed but **Steinheimer**, although badly wounded, managed to find concealment in some brush atop one of the hills. In his flight he had not had time to secure his horse, and he was now afoot, surrounded for all he knew, by hostile Indians. During the day he buried his sack of gold, keeping out only a few coins. With nightfall, and in spite of his pain, he crept out and started in a northward direction.

Afraid to shoot any game lest he attract the attention of Indians, and barely able to walk, he nevertheless pushed on, sustained only by his determination to reach his childhood love in St. Louis. He eventually arrived at a trail and was soon overtaken by a party of eastbound travelers. They were friendly and offered help, but by this time **Steinheimer** realized that his wound was going to be fatal. He told his full story to members of the party, and drawing a crude map of the **treasure** site, elicited the promise that the map and message would be delivered to his sweetheart in St. Louis. Some time after the departure of the strangers, **Steinheimer** died at a place unknown.

In due time, and true to their word, the strangers found Steinheimer's sweetheart in St. Louis and delivered the dying man's message to her. In spite of the huge fortune waiting