The Papers of Dr. Ales Hrdlicka

Joe Ribauco obtained these papers from the National Anthropological Archives at the Smithsonian Institution. He provided copies to me. My thanks to him.

These papers have been in the Lost Dutchman community for some time and they represent nothing new for some people. They have been used by several authors. It was from some of those accounts that confusion arose. I believe the actual copies answer most of those questions. An example, of the confusion, was what type of weapon did Dr. Hrdlicka suggest had been used, if Adolph Ruth had been shot. Both Gregory Davis and Tom Kollenborn transcribed copies of these papers. In Gregory’s paper, Dr. Hrdlicka listed a shotgun while there was no mention of a shotgun in Tom’s book. This was the impetus for securing the papers from the Smithsonian.

I have included a transcription of the Hrdlicka draft from both Gregory’s paper and Tom’s book at the end of the documents. It seems the confusion arose when Dr. Hrdlicka prepared an initial draft copy that he marked up and a final draft that incorporated his markups. Tom apparently used the initial draft and Gregory used the final draft.

You can compare their accounts with the copies of Dr. Hrdlicka’s drafts word for word and there are some other minor discrepancies but they are all very innocuous.

I am including a chronology for convenience.

December 11, 1931 – Archeological Expedition finds Adolph Ruth’s skull

December 12, 1931 – Archeological Expedition brings Ruth’s skull to Phoenix

December 12, 1931 – Skull examined by two doctors and one dentist in Phoenix

December 13, 1931 - Halseth sends letter to Washington D. C. to Neil Judd stating that he is mailing the skull to Washington D. C. with instructions to contact Hrdlicka and Ruth’s son.

December 16, 1931 - Halseth sends letter to Hrdlicka explaining Adolph Ruth situation

December 19, 1931 – Hrdlicka receives Adolph Ruth’s skull

December 19, 1931 – The Phoenix Gazette (Evening Paper) reports that word was received from Ales Hrdlicka that the skull was that of an aged white man who had probably been shot to death.

Note: This telegram from Dr. Hrdlicka may have contained the wording on the document shown on page 5.

December 21, 1931 – Earl Ruth, Adolph’s son, who was also in Washington D. C. presented photographs of his father for Hrdlicka to use in identifying the skull. The skull features were consistent with the photos.

December 22, 1931 – The Phoenix Gazette carried a transcribed copy of a telegram from Adolph’s son, Earl Ruth to Sheriff McFadden. Earl offers some of the details that would end up in Hrdlicka’s final drafts. “Murder indicated”

January 1, 1932 – Phoenix Gazette carries a transcribed letter from Earl Ruth. Earl provides additional details of Hrdlicka’s examination and conclusions. Authorities and newspapers alike, seem to be willing to accept the murder theory.
January 8, 1932 – Deputy Sheriff, Jeff Adams, notifies Sheriff McFadden that Adolph Ruth’s body was found. The conclusion was that Adolph Ruth had died of natural causes. Later, the local Arizona authorities would concur with this finding.

After the death by natural cause findings of the Arizona authorities, Dr. Hrdlicka finalized his report in which he includes a reference to the discovery of the body. He retained his belief that Ruth had probably been shot. Since the request for his examination came from Odd Halseth and not the Arizona officials, it appears he never submitted his report to them but simply filed the report in his personal papers. It was never notarized or signed.

The differences between Dr. Hrdlicka’s initial draft and his final draft are interesting and what follows is a comparison.

**INITIAL** – Holes in the skull, one **about two inches** in diameter  
**FINAL** – Holes in the skull, one **over an inch** in diameter

**INITIAL** – shot to death by a **high powered gun** and that the **bullet** passed  
**FINAL** – shot to death by a **shotgun or large caliber rifle** and that the **shot or bullet** passed

**INITIAL** – and have examined many skulls with bullet holes  
**FINAL** – and have examined skulls with bullet **wound** holes

**INITIAL** – this skull is **extremely unlikely not to be** that of Adolph Ruth  
**FINAL** – this skull is **in all probability** that of Adolph Ruth

**INITIAL** – Adolph Ruth **very** probably met his death by means of a shot from a **high powered** gun.  
**FINAL** – Adolph Ruth probably met his death by means of a shot from a gun.

There were other minor changes but these seem to be ones that may impact our perception of the events.

These documents also shed light on the Halseth involvement with the skull and some of the political undercurrents present.

Garry Cundiff – January 13, 2008
Postal Telegraph-Cable Company
PRESS TELEGRAM
COPY

C82 NFR COLLECT 1931 DEC 13 AM 643

PHOENIX ARIZ 12

SCIENCE SERVICE
WASHINGTON DC

AM SENDING SKULL FOUND THREE MILES FROM LAST CAMP OF ADOLPH RUTH OF WASHINGTON
FART JUNE. PLEASE GET IN TOUCH WITH RUTH'S SON AND MR. HRDLICKA FOR IDENTIFICATION.
HAY CONSULTED THREE PROMINENT DOCTORS HERE WHO HOLD SAME OPINION I DO. SKULL MAY
BE INDIAN OR CAUCASIAN OLD OR FRESH. IT IS OF AN OLD PERSON WITH NO SIGNS OF SUTURES
TWENTY INCHES AROUND WHERE HAT WOULD FIT. A SMALL HOLE ONE SIDE OVER TEMPLE CIRCA
TWO INCHES DIAMETER AND LARGE HOLE OPPOSITE SIDE SHOWING FRACTURE. LOWER JAW
MISSING UPPER GUM SMOOTH FROM LONG ABSENCE OF TEETH. I FOUND SKULL UNDER PALO
VERDE TREE IN ONE OF THE MANY UNNAMED CANTONS IN THE SUPERSTITIOUS MOUNTAINS ON THE
GROUND EVIDENTLY CARRIED THERE BY AN ANIMAL. SEVERAL HOURS SEARCH FAILED TO BRING
FORTH MORE OF THE SKELETON, BUT COUNTRY IS VERY ROUGH AND BRUSHY. MY GUIDE KNEW
RUTH AND SAYS EVERYTHING CHECKS WITH HIS SHAPES OF HEAD AND LOCATION OF FIND CHECKS
WITH POSSIBLE DISPOSAL OF RUTH WHO BY MANY HERE IS BELIEVED MURDERED. THE SKULL
WAS NOT THREE THOUSANDS MONTHS AGO WHEN GUIDE LAST WAS OVER THE TRAIL. IT HAS SOME
TISSUE AND ODOR AND ATTRACTED FLESSES. BEING PARTIALLY FINANCED ON MY SIX DAYS TRIP
BY LOCAL PAPERS I HAVE AGREED TO GIVE THEM STORY FOR TODAY PROTECTING MY WIRE AND
OTHER STORY RIGHTS BY COPYRIGHT AND RELEASE. USE THIS TO BEST ADVANTAGE FOR SALE
FOR WIRE SERVICE AND NOTIFY ME OF NEXT STEP. OUT OF FUNDS. IF YOU THINK BEST TO
RETURN FOR FURTHER SEARCH WILL GO. WIRE EXPENSE MONEY. FULL REPORT AND PICTURES
FOLLOW SKULL. ALSO STORY OF RUINS FOUND AS REPORTED. FURTHER REPORT OF CLIFF
DWELLINGS DEEPER IN THE MOUNTAINS BUT HAD TO COME OUT LAST NIGHT. INS WILL BUY STORY
HERE BUT IS YOURS EXCLUSIVE UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTIFIED.

OJDE 3 HALSETH.
Postal Telegraph-Cable Company
PRESS TELEGRAM
COPY

December 13, 1931

DPR PAID CHARGE SCIENCE SERVICE

ODD S. HALSETH, SECRETARY,
ARIZONA ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMISSION
P.O. BOX 477
PHOENIX, ARIZ

COMMUNICATED WITH FAMILY ADOLPH RUTH THEY WILL COMMUNICATE YOU STOP
DO NOT HAVE MECHANISM FOR SALE OF RUTH ANGLE YOUR EXPEDITION HERE SUGGEST
YOU DISPOSE YOUR RIGHTS TO YOUR BEST ADVANTAGE DIRECTLY WE ARE PRIMARILY
INTERESTED ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASPECTS

WATSON DAVIS SCIENCE SERVICE
ARIZONA ARCHAEOLOGICAL COMMISSION

P. O. Box 477,
Phoenix, Arizona, December 16, 1931.

Dr. Ales Hrdlicka,
U.S. National Museum,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Dr. Hrdlicka:

From a message received from Mr. Earl A. Ruth, I understand either he or Watson Davis of Science Service has communicated with you in regard to a skull I found last week while on an archaeological expedition in the Superstition Mountains and that you will examine the specimen upon its arrival to determine whether it is Indian or Caucasian. I am very thankful for your presence in Washington at this time and for your expert advise. Not certain of your being there I addressed the box, which was sent Monday, Dec. 14, to my old friend Neil Judd, with word to deliver it to you at once if you are in Washington.

Unfortunately I was accompanied by some newspaper men on my trip and my own inability to definitely pronounce the skull that of an Indian together with the circumstances connected with Dr. Ruth's disappearance here last June made too good copy for them to keep and the whole mystery of Ruth's fate was reconstructed in a local paper Monday. I fortunately avoided being mentioned as the finder of the skull or author of the consequent story, however, so the status, in so far as my professional part in the discovery is concerned, is one of further investigation, submitting of the specimen to you for expert opinion, and final report to my local office with the inclusion of your report. If the skull should prove to be Caucasian, and possibly that of Dr. Ruth, the matter will be refered to the sherryff of Pinal county, where it was found, unless it is a matter for U.S. investigators, as the land is within the Tonto National Forest.

For any data that might be of help to you I submit the following information:

The skull was found exposed on the surface under a Palo Verde tree on a small rise where evidence shows both Indian and white occupation of at least a temporary nature. It is in a valley with drainage from several directions and the find was made after two days of torrential
rains. The only fresh track around the place were of a small animal, probably a skunk, but the skull was most likely transported to its finding place by an animal or other being. Guides and cattlemen claim no one has been over that trail since last November, to their knowledge.

The surrounding country is full of broken pottery, the exact period I have not had time to determine, but my first casual impression was that some is prehistoric and some may be modern Apache cooking ware. The whole country has been used by Apaches and history reports many fights in these mountains between Apaches and Pimas. A site of unquestioned prehistoric age is located within a few hundred yards of where the skull was found, and uphill with the soil between cut deep by erosion. Some of the arroyos are several feet deep and run thru loose soil.

Several hours' search failed to disclose any place from where the skull might have been washed, but it would take days to carefully investigate even the immediately adjacent country. The place is located about three miles from where Dr. Ruth had his last camp, across a rough mountain. The whole general region, within the ten or more miles I observed, is full of prehistoric ruins, some of the Salt River Valley Red-on-Buff pottery culture horizon, cliff-dwelling, and numerous campsites of yet undetermined age, some possibly recent Apache.

The skull had a "green" appearance when first found and attracted bottle flies, but dried up considerable in the two days before I shipped it. It then still had an odor, however. I have never experimented with desiccated flesh on old skulls and "mummies", so don't know about appearance or smell. The characteristics of the skull also puzzle me. Lack of artificial flattening, rather low cheekbones, such measurements as I was able to make in a hurry, all left me determined to submit the specimen to an expert at some convenient date, but the circumstances of Ruth's disappearance in the same general region, pressure of local newspapers and the suspicions of local authorities made me feel it had better be expedited. Hence this SOS to you at this time.

I am holding my final report of the trip in abeyance till I hear from you, so shall greatly appreciate your telegraphic verdict, collect, as I am pressed for a final report as soon as possible. I intend to continue my survey, which was broken off by this find, and proceed to the cliff-dwellings we were almost to, when, like the hound after a lion, I was sidetracked by a jackrabbit.

Sincerely yours,

Home Adr.: 323 East Willetta St.

Odd S. Halseth,
P.O.Box 477,
Phoenix, Arizona.
It is not clear what the document shown below represents. There was no date but it may have been a transcribed copy of a telegram sent to Odd S. Halseth in Arizona by Dr. Hrdlicka shortly after he received the skull of Ruth.

Odd S. Halseth,
P.O. Box 477s,
Phoenix, Arizona.

Skull unquestionably that of aged white man.

recent shot possibly.

Hrdlicka.
To Whom it May Concern:

On December 19, 1931 I received a human skull shipped from Phoenix, Arizona, by Odd S. Halseth who stated that he had found it in the Superstition Mountains of Arizona, and that it was possibly that of Adolph Ruth of Washington, D. C. who disappeared in those mountains during the month of June, 1931.

My examination positively determined that it is the skull of an aged white man. Holes in the skull, one about two inches in diameter on the left side and a much larger one on the right side, indicate a strong probability that the man was shot to death by a high-powered gun and that the bullet passed somewhat downward from the left. I have examined such wounds before and have examined many skulls with bullet holes, found on battlefields. I hold a degree as Doctor of Medicine, and have been engaged in anthropological work for many years. At present I am Curator of Physical Anthropology for the National Museum.

On December 21, 1931, Earl A. Ruth, a son of Adolph Ruth, presented three large photographs and three stereoscopic photographs of his father. The stereoscopic photographs were viewed through a stereoscope which revealed the shape of the head in three dimensions. A comparison of the aforementioned skull with these photographs showed that the high forehead, position of cheek bones, and comparatively frail features of the face corresponded. The long nose, the short distance between the mouth and nose, and the general contour of the head, corresponded. The upper jaw of the skull revealed that the person had been without teeth for years, and showed new bone tissue such as would be caused by pressure from a dental plate. Earl A. Ruth states that his father had nearly all of his upper teeth extracted many years ago and that all of his remaining teeth were removed seven years before his disappearance. He further states that his father wore an upper plate for many years and both upper and lower false teeth for the last seven years of his life.

I am informed that since the finding of this skull a headless skeleton somewhat scattered over the ground has been discovered about three fourths of a mile from where the skull was found, and that the skeleton has been identified as that of Adolph Ruth by the presence of his watch, papers, and other personal belongings.

The condition of the skull indicated that death occurred not more than a few months ago. My examination discloses that all features of this skull closely correspond with the aforementioned photographs and information, and not a single feature fails to correspond. Furthermore, the mere fact that the skulls of different individuals greatly vary, in view of the aforementioned close correspondence, indicates that this skull is extremely unlikely not to be that of Adolph Ruth.

A consideration of all the evidence presented to me which is related in detail above, discloses with reasonable certainty that the aforementioned skull is that of Adolph Ruth. Furthermore, it is my opinion, as stated above, that Adolph Ruth was probably met his death by means of a shot from a high-powered gun.

Alas Hrdlicka

Subscribed and sworn to before me, a Notary Public, in the District of Columbia, This ______ day of January, 1932.

Olive S. Taylor
To Whom it May Concern:

On December 19, 1931, I received a human skull shipped from Phoenix, Arizona, by Odd S. Halseth who stated that he had found it in the Superstition Mountains of Arizona, and that it was possibly that of Adolph Ruth of Washington, D. C., who disappeared in those mountains during the month of June, 1931.

My examination positively determined that it is the skull of an aged white man. Holes in the skull, one over an inch in diameter on the left side and a much larger one on the right side, indicate a strong probability that the man was shot to death by a shotgun or a large caliber rifle and that the shot or bullet passed somewhat downwardly from the left. I have examined such wounds before and have examined skulls with bullet wounds holes found on battlefields. I hold a degree as Doctor of Medicine, have had medical-legal instruction, and have been engaged in anthropological work for many years. At present I am Curator of Physical Anthropology for the National Museum.

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I am informed that since the finding of this skull a headless skeleton somewhat scattered over the ground has been discovered about three-fourths of a mile from where the skull was found, and that the skeleton has been identified as that of Adolph Ruth by the presence of his watch, papers, and other personal belongings.

The condition of the skull indicated that death occurred not more than a few months ago. My examination discloses that all features of this skull closely correspond with the aforementioned photographs and information, and not a single feature fails to correspond. Furthermore, the mere fact that the skulls of different individuals greatly vary, in view of the aforementioned close correspondence, indicates that this skull is in all probability that of Adolph Ruth.

A consideration of all the evidence presented to me which is related in detail above, discloses with reasonable certainty that the aforementioned skull is that of Adolph Ruth. Furthermore, it is my opinion, as stated above, that Adolph Ruth probably met his death by means of a shot from a gun.

Alas Hrdlicka

Subscribed and sworn to before me, a Notary Public, in the District of Columbia,
To whom it may concern;

On December 19, 1931, I received a human skull shipped from Phoenix, Arizona by Odd S. Halseth who stated that he had found it in the Superstition Mountains of Arizona, and that it was possibly that of Adolph Ruth of Washington D. C. who disappeared in those mountains during the month of June, 1931.

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I am informed that since the finding of this skull a headless skeleton has been identified as that of Adolph Ruth by the presence of his watch, papers, and other personal belongings.

The condition of the skull indicated that death occurred not more than a few months ago. My examination discloses that all the features of this skull closely correspond with the aforementioned photographs and information, and not a single feature fails to correspond. Furthermore, the mere fact that the skulls of different individuals greatly vary, in view of the aforementioned close correspondence, indicates that this skull is in all probability that of Adolph Ruth.

A consideration of all the evidence presented to me which is related in detail above, discloses with reasonable certainty that the aforementioned skull is that of Adolph Ruth. Furthermore, it is my opinion, as stated above, that Adolph Ruth probably met his death by means of a shot from a gun.

Ales Hrdlicka
To whom it may concern;

On December 19, 1931, I received a human skull shipped from Phoenix, Arizona by Odd S. Halseth who stated that he had found it in the Superstition Mountains of Arizona, and that it was possibly that of Adolph Ruth of Washington D.C. who disappeared in those mountains during the month of June, 1931.

My examination positively determined that it is the skull of an aged white man. Holes in the skull, one about two inches in diameter on the left side and a much larger one on the right side, indicate a strong probability that the man was shot to death by a high powered gun and that the bullet passed somewhat downwardly from the left. I have examined such wounds before and have examined skulls with bullet wound holes found on battlefields. I hold a degree as Doctor of Medicine and have been engaged in anthropological work for many years. At present I am curator of Physical Anthropology for the National Museum.

On December 21, 1931, Earl A. Ruth, son of Adolph Ruth, presented three large photographs of his father. The stereoscopic photographs were viewed through a stereoscope which revealed the shape of the head in three dimensions. A comparison of the cheek bones, and comparatively frail features of the face corresponded. The long nose, the short distance between the mount and nose, and the general contour of the head and face corresponded. The upper jaw of the skull revealed that the person had been without teeth for years, and showed new bone tissue such as would be caused by pressure from a dental plate. Earl A. Ruth states that his father had nearly all of his upper teeth extracted many years ago and that all of his remaining teeth were removed seven years before his disappearance. He further states that his father wore an upper plate for many years and both upper and lower false teeth for the last seven years of his life.

I am informed that since the finding of this skull a headless skeleton somewhat scattered over the ground has been discovered about three fourths of a mile from where the skull was found, and that the skeleton has been identified as that of Adolph Ruth by the presence of his watch, papers, and other personal belongings.

The condition of the skull indicated that death occurred not more than a few months ago. My examination discloses that all the features of this skull closely correspond with the aforementioned photographs and information, and not a single feature fails to correspond. Furthermore, the mere fact that the skulls of different individuals greatly vary, in view of the aforementioned close correspondence, indicates that this skull is that of Adolph Ruth.

A consideration of all the evidence presented to me which is related in detail above, discloses with reasonable certainty that the aforementioned skull is that of Adolph Ruth. Furthermore, it is my opinion, as stated above, that Adolph Ruth probably met his death by means of a shot from a gun.

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Ales Hrdlicka

Subscribed and sworn to before me, a Notary Public in the District of Columbia, This __________ day of January. 1932.

____________________
Olive S. Taylor