



# Headless in Taos: The Dark Fated Tale of Arthur Rochford Manby

*James S. Peters*

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Following the discovery of the decapitated corpse of Arthur Rochford Manby in his nineteen-room mansion in Taos, New Mexico, there quickly arose two schools of thought as to the event. One sect accepted that he was gruesomely murdered, while the second held to the belief that he had staged his death and left behind the cadaver of a stranger. The case was a bizarre enigma wrapped in riddles, confusion, betrayal and greed. Finally for posterity, and as relief to the guilty, it was labeled an unsolved crime. Today it is referred to as the "Manby Mystery of Taos." This book contains very little mystery. Rather, it is the tragic account of Manby and his 35-year career in manipulation, extortion, high-grading and murder. Arriving in New Mexico from England in 1883, the 24-year-old Manby began his personal odyssey for El Dorado: the dream of building a vast empire in the Southwest. He finally does so in 1913 when becoming the owner of the 61,000 acre Martinez Grant of Taos. But after three years it slips from his grasp and he is left nearly penniless. In his last years he gradually decays mentality and emotionally. Looked upon as an eccentric, no one realizes how ill he has become. Finally having a falling out with a quartet of compatriots, in July, 1929, he is murdered and decapitated.

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