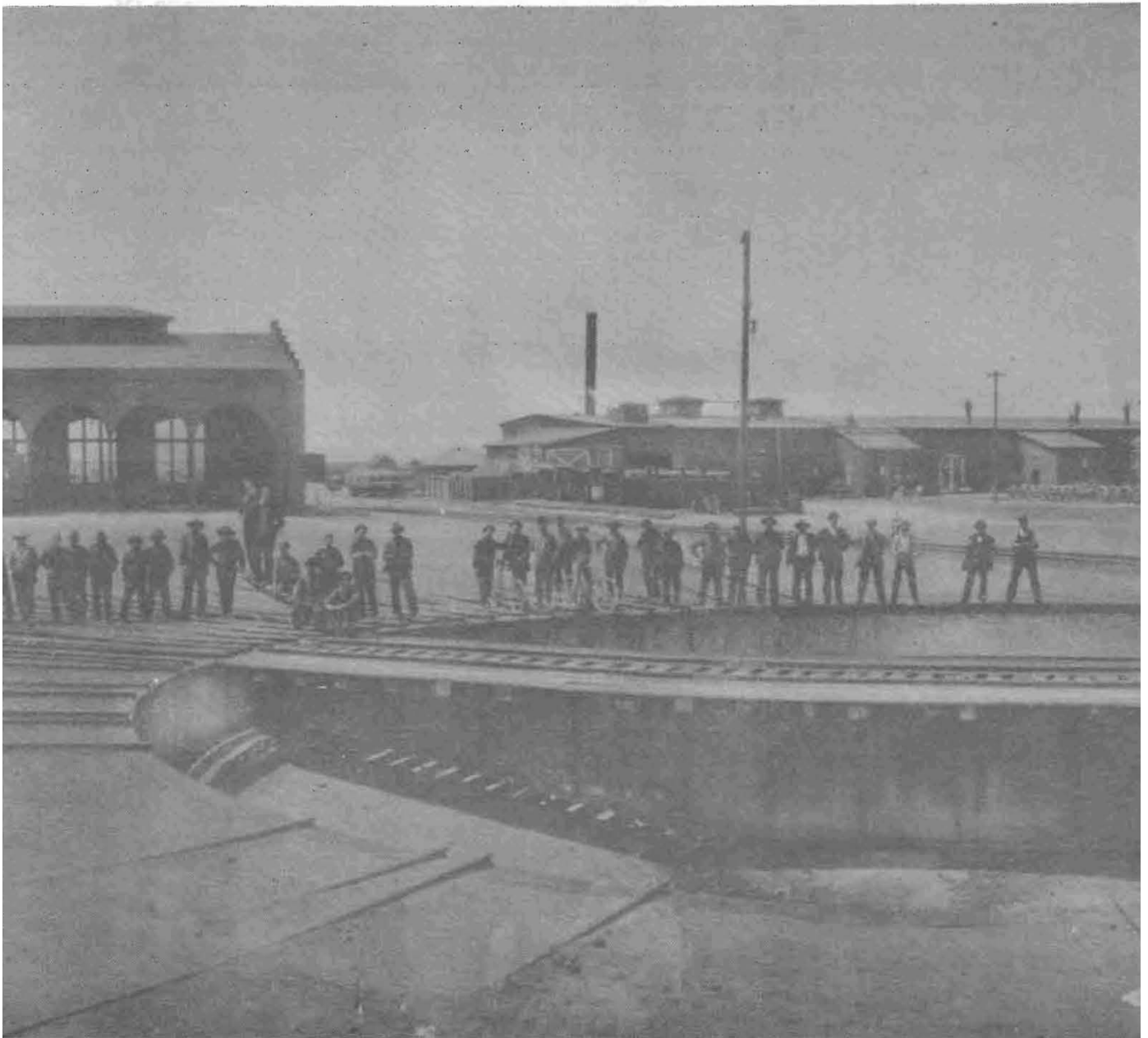


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# The Cochise Quarterly

Volume 20  
Number 3  
Autumn, 1991



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About The Cover: The El Paso and Southwestern Railroad's shop area, south of the passenger depot in Douglas, included this roundhouse. Mabel Magill Brown's father worked in the shops and lived with his family on Railroad Avenue, east of the depot. Brown's story is one of four oral histories published in this issue. Cochise College students conducted the interviews. The railroad shops are long gone but the passenger depot is receiving new life; it is being renovated to house the Douglas Police Department. (CCHAS photo)

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ISSN 019-80626

## THE UNTIMELY AND UNNECESSARY DEATHS OF TWO FAMOUS ARMY OFFICERS

By Richard Addison Wood

If John A. "Tony" Rucker and Austin Henely had known in 1878 what we know in 1991 about flash flood preparedness and awareness, both could still be alive today — maybe not today — but they would not have lost their lives to a flash flood 113 years ago in what's now called Rucker Canyon.

It may not have been a "dark and gloomy night" on July 11, 1878, but it must have been a dark and gloomy afternoon. In looking at the meteorological aspects of the unfortunate deaths of two well-liked and respected Army Officers in a flash flood, I wonder why they camped next to a wash in the foothills of the Chiricahua Mountains during the summer thunderstorm season.

The normal beginning of the "summer thunderstorm season" in Cochise County is the last week in June or the first week in July. The 1878 season began normally with four of the first five days in July receiving measurable rains at Camp (Fort) Bowie. Other than a "few drops" of rain on July 7, it remained dry from July 5 through the 8th. Showers (.05) were observed on July 9 and heavy rains were logged with almost an inch of rain (.85) on July 10. Another third of an inch of rain (.30) was observed on July 11 and measurable rains also occurred through July 14.

Camp Bowie was located about 25 miles north of Rucker Canyon. It is probable that even heavier rains occurred between the two places. By the evening of July 11, the rains could have saturated the grounds around Camp Supply in Rucker Canyon and instead of soaking into the ground the water would have tended to run down the mountain slopes into the washes.

The Arizona Weekly Star of July 18, 1878, published then every Thursday, in a special item reported the details of the drowning of Lts. Rucker and Henely at Camp Supply on the 11th of July:

"They met their deaths in White River Canyon in the Chiricahua Mountains. Henely had been scouting between Camp Supply and Hatchet Mountain and returned with his Indian company. His command he had stationed in the canyon in the vicinity of Point of Rocks, when he started on horseback up the canyon toward Supply Camp. Twice he had succeeded in crossing the fearful torrent of water that was rushing madly along its course, carrying everything with it that came in reach, and arriving about opposite Supply Camp he made a third attempt to cross the angry stream. Reaching the rapid current his horse lost his foot-hold in the bed of the stream, when Henley was plunged into the water. He swam with the current for a considerable distance, when his body was thrown against a tree with great force, far out in the stream. The blow he received rendered him helpless. Lieut. Rucker, who was

near at hand, mounted his horse and rode rapidly a short distance below, and plunged into the stream, hoping to catch Henely, as he floated by. He too, was separated from his horse, immediately sank in the roaring, rumbling current, and was no longer seen alive. Rucker's body was found at 7 o'clock the same evening, about a mile down the stream, and at 10 o'clock the same evening the body of Henely was found near where Rucker's was taken out. Henely's skull was fractured and it was thought by the Surgeon that death occurred immediately after the fracture was received, which was probably at the tree or stump described above."

Later accounts of the circumstances surrounding the deaths of the two officers, found in the Summer, 1979 issue of *The Cochise Quarterly*, indicate they were in camp and rushed on horseback to save supplies along the flooding stream.

The Star said:

"Efforts at resuscitation were thoroughly made, but death had claimed its own. The bodies were sent to Ft. Bowie on the 12th and buried on the 13th at that post. The funeral was one of the most imposing ever witnessed in Arizona, the officers and men performing the last sad rites.

The particulars of the sad and untimely death of Lieut. Rucker and Lieut. Henely, will be read with sorrow and regret by the entire people of Arizona. The announcement of their deaths has cast a gloom over every community in the Arizona Territory and New Mexico, where they have rendered invaluable service as Indian fighters. Henely was a graduate of West Point, went there through the instrumentality of the late Hon. John Morrissey. He was born in New York. Rucker was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico, was also a student at West Point for a while, and both were young men in their thirties. Gen. Sheridan married a sister of Lieut. Rucker, and his father is a Lieut. Colonel in the regular Army.

Lieut. Rucker was a frontiersman from birth and nature. He loved the people with whom he had so long lived, and to protect them from the murderous hands of Indians was his all-absorbing thought. Rucker's raids in Arizona were not to be forgotten by the settlers, for to him belongs largely the peace and quiet that reigned within our border.

So will Henely: bold, daring, capable of endurance, let nothing stand in the way of duty, and after braving the dangers of so many Indian encounters, it is sad to reflect that he should be called





Lt. John A. Rucker, Sixth Cavalry, 1877. (Photo courtesy Arizona Historical Society)

hence so suddenly, and for a man of his bravery, in the manner he was. But the fatal blow he received upon the head as his body was dashed against a stump, did the work, and noble Henely went down to a watery grave.

Rucker, standing upon the opposite side of the stream, saw the danger his comrade was in, and after every endeavor by throwing a rope to Henely (who was of course insensible, as the rope reached him, and he made no effort to grasp it) Rucker made the last effort to save and was lost himself. That generous, steadfast friend in the hour of danger, made the leap into the angry stream, and he, too, was a victim, purely from the noble impulses of his heart. Many a tear has been shed in their memory by comrades in arms. The people of southern Arizona will deeply feel their loss, and to supply their places will be no easy task, for in this department, they were among our best officers. Their memory should be perpetuated by some public recognition, as it is in the hearts of the people whom they have protected and defended."

#### WEATHER PROBLEMS ELSEWHERE

On the same afternoon that the two officers lost their lives at Camp Supply, the heaviest individual rains ever officially recorded in Arizona were occurring in Tucson. Tucson was described as a "lake," even an ocean, between Main Street and the mountains on the opposite side of the bottom land.

An article in the The July 19, 1878 issue of the Arizona Citizen described the storm as an "extraordinary fall of rain" and measured 5.3 inches in one hour and 10 minutes! This is almost half of Tucson's annual precipitation in 70 minutes.

The dusty streets were suddenly transformed into broad and rushing rivers. There were many and simultaneous flashes of vivid lightning and loud and sharp thunder. As many as 50 houses were damaged or destroyed. Roofs fell in, walls toppled over, and some houses were total wrecks. In some instances, women and children barely escaped in time from being crushed under falling roofs or walls or both. Men and women could be seen on Main, Meyers, McCormick and other streets wading in water up to their shoulders in efforts to escape and save their household effects.

While there were narrow escapes from the falling of the roofs and walls and road torrents, it was said no lives were lost nor serious injuries occurred.

The 5.30 inches or the official 5.10 inches of rain that fell in 70 minutes in Tucson is still the heaviest individual storm in Tucson's weather history and Arizona's official greatest rainstorm.

R.N. Leatherwood had returned to Tucson from a 12-day trip though mining districts in southern Arizona. On the 11th, the same day of the heavy rains in Tucson and the Chiricahua Mountains, he was 10 miles west of Mountain

# War Department.

SIGNAL SERVICE U. S. ARM

DIVISION OF REPORTS FOR THE BENEFIT OF

and Monthly Means of Barometer and Thermometer, Monthly Velocity of Wind, prevailing Direction of Wind, &c., for the month of *July*, 1878.

RAPID OBSERVATIONS.						LOCAL OBSERVATIONS.						THERMOMETER.		Prevailing di- rection.	Maximum force of velocity. (daily.)
THERMOMETER.			RAINFALL, OR MELTED SNOW, IN INCHES.			LOCAL OBSERVATIONS.			THERMOMETER.						
A. M.	P. M.	Mid night.	A. M.	P. M.	Mid night.	Mean daily Bar- ometer.	Mean daily Ther- mometer.	Mean daily Hy- grometer.	Maximum.	Minimum.					
69	100	90	00	00	00	00	00	00	102	65	SE	0	0		
84	99	90	00	00	00	00	00	00	101	81	SE	0	0		
80	97	90	00	00	00	00	00	00	100	78	SE	0	0		
82	94	91	00	00	00	00	00	00	98	78	SE	0	0		
89	96	92	00	00	00	00	00	00	99	77	SE	0	0		
74	98	92	00	00	00	00	00	00	100	71	SE	0	0		
72	102	92	00	00	00	00	00	00	100	68	SE	0	0		
81	101	97	00	00	00	00	00	00	105	77	SE	0	0		
83	102	94	00	00	00	00	00	00	105	75	SE	0	0		
84	97	80	00	00	00	00	00	00	100	78	SE	0	0		
78	96	87	10	00	5.10	00	00	00	105	75	SE	0	0		
73	95	82	10	10	08	00	00	00	97	65	SE	0	0		
78	95	89	05	00	00	00	00	00	98	74	SE	0	0		
78	94	86	00	00	00	00	00	00	97	74	SE	0	0		
76	89	83	09	00	00	00	00	00	94	73	SE	0	0		
74	90	80	00	00	00	00	00	00	94	73	SE	0	0		
75	93	82	00	00	00	00	00	00	96	72	SE	0	0		
75	94	91	00	00	00	00	00	00	97	72	SE	0	0		
84	90	87	00	00	00	00	00	00	98	81	SE	0	0		
80	83	87	00	00	00	00	00	00	95	78	SE	0	0		
74	84	84	05	00	00	00	00	00	97	73	SE	0	0		
78	93	91	00	00	00	00	00	00	96	75	SE	0	0		
79	96	84	00	00	00	00	00	00	98	78	SE	0	0		
84	96	90	04	10	00	00	00	00	98	80	SE	0	0		
79	96	80	00	00	00	00	00	00	97	74	SE	0	0		
84	93	80	00	00	00	00	00	00	100	82	SE	0	0		
79	94	89	00	00	00	00	00	00	98	78	SE	0	0		
80	80	81	00	00	00	00	00	00	93	78	SE	0	0		
87	94	82	00	00	00	00	00	00	97	85	SE	0	0		
80	102	94	00	00	00	00	00	00	96	76	SE	0	0		
88	94	83	00	00	00	00	00	00	"	83	SE	0	0		

A table from U.S. War Department records compiled by the Army Signal Corps shows weather conditions in southern Arizona. The arrow marks the 5.10 inches of rain that fell in the Tucson area on July 11, 1878.

Station in Dragoon Pass when water came down in great volume. It was with difficulty he escaped with his team by ascending the mountain side above water level. The storm seems to have been very severe in every locality it visited, which was over a wide belt of country.

Reports from the Arizona Weekly Star of July 18, 1878 told of the railroad between Los Angeles and Yuma, or portions of it, washed away by the flood. There was no through mail from San Francisco since the last Monday.

The Arizona Citizen, in its July 19, 1878 edition, reported "The storms have played havoc with the railroads and telegraph lines. The lines have been down or working badly all week, and we have had no through mail since Monday, and little news from the outside world. The delay of the California mails is caused by a washout in the railroad about twenty-seven miles west of Yuma."

The Monthly Weather Review of July, 1878 reported that throughout the Arizona Territory from the 12th to the 14th of July, there were very heavy thunderstorms, accompanied by heavy rain and water spouts, houses unroofed and fences blown down. At Agua Fria, 27 telegraph poles were reduced to fragments. At Phoenix, the weather office was struck and a portion of the battery destroyed.

#### WHY WAS THE SEVERE WEATHER SO WIDESPREAD?

The 5.30 inches of rain reported in the Arizona Citizen or the 5.10 inches reported in the Monthly Weather Review in less than 2 hours has apparently never been equaled in Tucson and is an official record for the entire state.

As indicated in "Arizona Climate 1885-1985" by Dr. William Sellers and others, the 5.10 inches (or 5.30) is also almost twice the figure of 2.70 inches for the 100-year maximum 2-hour rainfall for Tucson. But while downtown Tucson was getting over five inches of rain, Fort Lowell, six miles to the northeast, had no rainfall!

This storm, however, does not exceed the eight inches caught in 45 minutes in a washtub during a rainstorm at Fort Mohave on Aug. 28, 1898 or the estimated eight inches in 1 ¼ hours near Crown King on Aug. 6, 1948.

Since high-level upper air observations would not begin for another 50 years or so after 1878, we can't be sure what was happening 4 to 8 miles above the surface of the earth where weather is manufactured. I suspect that a rather large low pressure system moved into the Pacific Northwest and was large enough to cover most of the western United States. But that alone should not have caused the heavy rains in southern Arizona.

I believe another low pressure system, such as an "easterly wave," traveling east to west across northern Mexico, Arizona and southern California unsettled the atmosphere and lifted already moist air into large, heavy thunderstorms.

Another possibility is that a tropical disturbance off the west coast of Mexico may have been caught up in the southwestern flow from a large storm

system in the Pacific Northwest and brought with it considerable moisture from the Pacific Ocean. The widespread nature of the heavy rainfall throughout Arizona and southern California indicates this was not just “a normal seasonal summer thunderstorm.”

An eyewitness in Tucson even said, “It appears that two clouds might meet” and it’s very possible that happened. When steering winds for thunderstorms are light, they may merge. When this happens, very heavy rain events can occur.

One other note, the heavy rains in Tucson of 10.43 inches for July and August in 1878 is second only to the 13.03 inches in 1955 in precipitation records dating back to 1867.

Statistics show over 50 percent of the people killed and injured in flash floods are people in vehicles driving into flooded areas. Since there were only horses and buggies in 1878 in Tucson, there were no fatalities despite the record rainfall.

The second greatest flash flood hazard is camping, playing or falling into washes, streams and other normally dry drainage ditches. Lts. Rucker and Henely were killed trying to save equipment and supplies at Camp Supply, which had been located near where two creeks came together. Had they made camp “upslope” from the creeks and not had supplies along the creeks, both officers would not have had to enter a flooding waterway in an attempt to save the material and then lose their lives.

**About The Author:** Tucson resident Richard A. Wood retired in 1987 after 35 years with the National Weather Service. He now is an educator, lecturer and freelance writer of weather-related articles.



**MABEL (MAGILL) BROWN**  
**Interviewed by Sherry McWilliams**

Trains catch our imagination and they are the substance of our dreams. There was a time when trains were very important to Douglas, and they arrived or left town at every hour of the day and night.

One person who remembers those times is Mabel (Magill) Brown who was born April 8, 1911 in El Paso, Texas. She moved to Douglas with her parents Mildred and Hugh Magill in 1914. These are her memories.

\* \* \* \* \*

Daddy was a happy going, Scotch-Irishman and at the age of 15 he went to work for the railroad as a blacksmith in Topeka, Kan. My father first transferred to El Paso, where I was born. When I was three-years-old, he transferred to Douglas.

I remember people running to their doors as the train went by to wave and call greetings. They would stop whatever they were doing even if it meant stopping in the middle of the street to watch the train go by and imagine where the train was going and who the people were inside the train.

Douglas seemed to be a very big and busy town. We lived on Railroad Avenue in a two block row of white clapboard houses with green lawns, trees and white picket fences. Railroad Avenue is gone now but the house I lived in is still standing, though a little rough for wear, on the corner of Pan American and 15th street. When I lived in the clapboard house, a building owned by the Overlocks was in front and they ran a general store there. The Overlocks were successful business people and owned another general store in Bisbee.

My favorite past time was walking down to G Avenue and sitting on the sidewalk with my back to a high wood fence that belonged to a business that sold hay, grain, wood and coal. It was on the street corner south of 14th Street and was owned by Bassett Lumber Co. some years ago. Stretching my legs out in front of me, into the pathway where people walked, I would make myself comfortable, watching the horses, buggies and wagons come down the street. I couldn't resist the pull of watching the traffic.

Every evening I would sit on the porch steps waiting for my father to come home from work with his lunch bucket in hand. He would swing me up onto the gate post and give me a quarter someone had given him for some friendly job.

Sometimes my mother would take me along with her when she took my father's lunch to him. I loved to watch him with bellows blowing air into the fire and see the irons in the fire turn from red to white hot. Then he took his hammer and fashioned a hammer or tongs or worked on a part of a train's engine.

There was a big air hammer reaching nearly to the ceiling of the shop in which he fashioned the huge pieces of metal for the train. He would go over





Mabel Magill plays with a neighborhood friend in the top photo. The building on the right was Overlock's store and the building on the left is the Magill home on Railroad Ave. Hugh Magill and his teen-aged daughter Mabel sat on one of the two fountains that grace the south side of the El Paso and Southwestern passenger depot for the bottom photograph. (Photos courtesy Mabel Brown)



to the air hammer and play "Yankee Doodle" in time with the large square boom for me.

They called the place where my father worked the round house. it was called that because of this huge round metal table, large enough to hold a train engine. The train would go on to the round table and be unhooked. Then the table would turn with this engine in whatever direction desired.

Because some of the railroad workers didn't have a telephone, the railroad hired boys who would stay all night at the round house in case a train came in and had to be repaired. Many nights I remember hearing a knock on the door and a voice saying 'Call Boy.' My father would answer the door, come back and dress, then leave at any hour of the night and go to the blacksmith shop to repair and keep the engines running. Many years later, Louie Mason, owner of Southern Arizona Auto Co. told me, 'Mabel, I was Call Boy for your father when he worked for the railroad.'

My mother kept boarders who worked for the railroad. I remember one, an engineer who laid over because of his train schedule. He used to open his bedroom door and hand me butterscotch candy out of an apothecary jar. he was so nice.

One day I was in the kitchen with my mother while she was baking pies. We heard this loud noise, mother rushed to the bedroom door from the living room and tried to open it, but couldn't. She went outside and gasped when she looked in the porch door of the bedroom. I couldn't see because she held her long, dark, full shirt and big white apron, which they wore in those days tightly against each door frame so I couldn't see a thing.

Soon the yard was full of people, wagons and buggies. Mother had run over to Overlocks' store to tell them. I never realized until many years later that my parents used the Overlock's phone in emergencies.

I don't remember how long it took but a little while later a long bed wagon with a big, long, wicker basket and lid came down our street and stopped in front of our house. Men carried the long wicker basket into the bedroom and carried my dear friend out. He had committed suicide. My mother cut out a four-foot square of the wool rug that covered the bedroom floor but she never could scrub the blood from the wood floor underneath the rug.

This wasn't the only excitement in my young life. Pancho Villa was shooting cannons in Agua Prieta and I can still remember how tightly my mother held me and would let out a gasp each time the cannons went off.

The passenger depot is still standing and located just west of G Avenue across the track. It was a beautiful place in those days, a fine buff brick building, two water fountains filled with water and a large expanse of well-kept green lawn. The train was the main attraction in Douglas in those days. I can still see the families with lunch baskets having picnics on the lawn.

There wasn't much to do on Sunday after we attended the Presbyterian Church that still stands on the church block with three other churches. So many people came to see the trains come in and leave, to see who was coming

to town and who was leaving. The conductor helped people to get on the train as they stood in line. My father would look at different engines and call them by number and tell us just what part he had repaired on the special trains. We were so proud of him and his skill.

Sometimes he would take me and my mother for a ride on the trolley car and after the ride he would buy me a bottle of strawberry soda pop that had a glass stopper. Of course after such an exciting day and my treat, I would have a stomach ache that night. Dr. Adamson would arrive in his buggy carrying his black bag. By the time he arrived, my stomach ache was gone and he always teased me about being the only patient he had who could heal so quickly.

When I was old enough to go to school, I went to A Avenue School on Fifteenth and A. One of my school mates was John Slaughter's granddaughter, Adeline Greene. We were always asking the teacher to let Adeline tell the story of Apache May and usually the teacher would agree because Adeline could tell the story so well.

In 1922, I attended the grammar school on 12th Street and A Avenue. The Fisher boys were my classmates. Their father was killed by bandits on the Slaughter Ranch. My mother made dresses for Mrs. Fisher, and I remember how she would cry after her husband died while my mother was fitting her dress.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mabel moved with her family to Elfrida in 1925. After graduating from Pearce High School in 1930, she married Tom Brown of Bisbee and raised a family. She still lives in Elfrida.

The trains Mabel remembers no longer run through Douglas. The passenger depot will soon be rehabilitated and become headquarters for the Douglas Police Department.

## ALICIA GOMEZ

### Interviewed by Henry Wilkinson

Alicia Gomez is one of the few people still living who is an early-day resident of Pirtleville, the small community next to Douglas. Mrs. Gomez and her late husband, Mike, operated a grocery store in Pirtleville for many years.

"Mike was born in Jeres, Chi., Mexico," Mrs. Gomez said. "I was born in Douglas, Ariz. Mike was born on Sept. 13, 1905 and myself on March 17, 1912.

"My father's name was Ramon Vela and was born in Laredo, Texas, and my mother's name was Manuelita Lopez Vela and she was born in Sonora, Mexico. Both of their birth dates and the name of the town where my mother was born or their ages are unknown to me. Mike's parents were both born in Jeres, Chi., Mexico, dates unknown."

Mrs. Gomez came from a family of four children. One sister, younger than she, is still living. Her two brothers have passed away.

Mrs. Gomez had four children — Mike, Anita, Eddie and Helen. Both sons became dentists,

"They went to school at St. Louis University," said Mrs. Gomez. "My daughter Helen went to Our Lady of the Lake in San Antonio, Texas. Anita only finished high school here in Douglas ... went into the military where she met her future husband, married and they both made careers of the military."

Mrs. Gomez went to school at Sarah Marley, then Clawson, Carlson and on through high school. She doesn't remember anything out of the ordinary happening to her during those years other than she met her husband.

"We were married in the year 1929," she said. "I remember that Mike was working at Mike Simon Wholesale, making \$125 a month.

"When the Depression came, we had two children, Anita and Mickey. It was a hard time for every person in this country. Many people moved away because there was no work to be found in this part of the country. Many people moved away because there was no work to be found locally.

"Mike was making \$125 a month before the Depression and went down to only \$50 a month. Quite a big difference, but I remember that you could buy 10 pounds of potatoes for 20 cents, milk was only 10 cents a quart. ... [B]ut money was very hard to come by. The Depression was especially hard during the year of 1932 when Mickey was born; Mike was not making good money then.

"It was during this time that we bought our first house in Pirtleville for \$20 a month payment which only left us with \$30 a month to spend on everything else we needed to live on. That meant we had to find ways of making ends meet. The government did help out in the form of commodities and our parents helped in whatever way they could."

Mrs. Gomez also talked about where she worked before marrying and the store the Gomezes eventually started.

"I started out as a sales clerk at the old Levy's store, which was located where the Capin's store is located now. Later I worked at a smaller outlet that Levy's had where they sold odds and ends that didn't sell at the large store. The name of the small store was 'La Tienda del Paso.'

"Later on I went to work at a shoe store; its name was 'Bazaar Store,' located in Douglas also. This work was done early in my life while I went to school and before I got married.

"Our first store was at a different location from our other store. It was in the 400 block of Grace Street, about a block away from our future store. It was located in a large building next to where Virginia Calvillo now lives, right on the corner, which we rented from Mrs. Holguin.

"Before we rented that store, Mike worked for Mike Simon Wholesaler and Mike used to deliver wholesale goods around the whole area and Mrs. Holguin was getting ready to retire from the business. So we bought all her inventory except the building, which we rented for \$100 a month.

"It was during the Depression and I remember selling beer for 10 cents a piece, thus making us the first to sell beer in Pirtleville, because we applied for a license and got one. We sold a lot of beer. Even though money was scarce, people seemed to get money for their beer.

"Later Mrs. Holguin decided to raise our rent but the building needed so much repair and it wasn't worth the extra rent, so we looked for another site for our store. That's when we found our second and last store.

"The owners wanted to sell because their parents who had the store had passed away and they didn't want anything to do with the store. We bought the building for \$400, which was a good buy. Mike and myself worked very hard on that building to get it in shape because it really was run down.

"At the time we were fixing the building, we were approached to see if we could take over the post office because the lady that ran it and was the postmaster wanted to retire. Mr. Frank Ames talked Mike into taking it over as we were a little worried for we had no training or knowledge about it. But we did it with the understanding that if we couldn't handle it, we would give it up. And that's how we came by the post office in Pirtleville, because there had always been a post office in Pirtleville.

"We had it for 35 years inside our little store and we spoiled the people in Pirtleville because we were open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. every day without a lunch break as either Mike or myself were at the store at any given time of day so our customers could pick up their mail or buy stamps or whatever they needed. After a few years, I became assistant postmaster so Mike could be off or if he got ill I could fill in for him. Also, if people wanted to get their packages on a weekend, they could do so and people were used to this way of business, so they were spoiled.

"After Mike retired from the post office, I took over and did so for three more years until we closed the store and Mr. Jordan took over as postmaster at the present location."



Mrs. Gomez remembered that the store sold many different things.

"Around 1945, for example, we sold things like hay, white corn, coal, kerosene and oats — even gasoline as we had our own pumps and all. Also just about everyone had pigs, chickens, cows and other animals. We sold a lot of feed and supplies. Really, those were our best business days when we made our most money ever."

There were other stores in Pirtleville, Mrs. Gomez recalled.

"There were six stores and three pool halls, also a bottling company for soda pop. Mr. Ernesto Archer owned the bottling company. It was located on the corner next to the Saavedra family and Mike worked there as a young man."

The Gomezes gave credit at their store, even to families whose head was on strike at the Phelps Dodge copper smelter.

"All the old residents of Pirtleville were very nice people and they always paid their bills on time. We hardly had any trouble with any unpaid bills.

"... the other day I was talking to my son Eddie if it would be possible for a street to be named for Mike, as he gave so many years of himself to that community. It would be just great if it could be done.

"Did you know that we went through many workers' strikes at Phelps Dodge and especially two that lasted a very long time and we carried them on our books, giving them credit until they went back to work? Many owed us quite a large amount of money but Mike was a very considerate person and he did all he could to help out.

"We worked very hard always and didn't spend our money foolishly and always invested in our store. We didn't entertain or go out much, or go on many vacations. But we did go to parties with our friends in Douglas, but when at the store everything was business and Mike was a good businessman always."

Mrs. Gomez recalled how Pirtleville was in the early days, noting the streets weren't paved then.

"Mr. Joe Good was supervisor for the county when he had our streets paved and Grace Street was the first one paved and Mr. Good had it paved all the way to the sidewalk because when it rained it got very muddy in front of the store. We also had a street or trolley car that ran all the way to the smelter and back along Grace Street. Many workers at the smelter used this mode of transportation to go to work as there weren't many automobiles back then.

"We were again the first ones to get phone service in Pirtleville. When we opened our store, we had a phone put in and I remember that when anyone had an emergency, even in the middle of the night, they would wake us up to use our phone to get help, and the doctor would come and make house calls, even at night."

Mrs. Gomez clearly remembers a holdup in the store which took place on June 22, 1972.

"One day when Mike and myself had closed the store for the day and were



getting ready for bed, as a matter of fact Mike was already asleep, when I heard a noise outside and the dog started backing. I noticed the door ajar some and as it was dark, I went to look.

“I tried the light switch but it wouldn’t go on. I came back into the room and met a man face to face inside the room. I yelled and Mike woke up all startled and the intruder put a gun to my husband’s head and told him to open the post office safe for him because he wanted money.

“I got a chance to get out of the house and ran to one of my neighbor’s house to get help. As I was near my neighbor’s house, I thought I heard a gunshot and thought the man had shot my Mike, so I started yelling for help and my neighbor let me borrow her phone and I called my son who in turn called the police. They came right away and surrounded the store.

“By this time, the burglar had the money and he made my husband open the front door to the store. That’s when he noticed the police outside and he tried to run back inside, firing his gun as he went at the police. They fired back, killing him instantly.

“This man had broken in to our store on two other occasions and had been sent to prison for long periods of time and after each release he always came back and broke in to the store again. This was his last attempt.”

Mrs. Gomez also remembered when the store was built.

“As far as I know, our building was built in 1905 by Mr. Pirtle, as he is the person for whom our town is named after. He ran a store in the same building in the early days of the Phelps Dodge smelter and he gave the early-day workers credit at this store and PD collected at the plant for him, which was just great. This was around 1910 or so.

“Our building was very old and the walls were very thick, about the thickness of double adobes. At one time during the war, the government came and inspected our store and said it was strong enough to be used in emergencies and it was designated as such for the whole area.”

## **HERLINDA R. TAFOYA**

**Interviewed by Michelle Irey**

Herlinda R. Tafoya was born in 1923. As a small child, she was adopted by a family in Bisbee and attended elementary classes at Franklin School, which was made up of minority students, mostly Mexicans and a few Blacks. At this time there was segregation and most Anglo children attended Central School.

She went into school knowing a little bit of English — which was an advantage because most of the other children only understood Spanish. The teacher taught in English, so Herlinda would help her classmates.

“I was the only one there who knew what the teacher was talking about. They would all look to me, and I was always in trouble at home and at school because I was always whispering.”

When Franklin School became over-crowded, lighter-skinned Mexicans were chosen to attend Central, said Herlinda. They all had to walk in through the back door and were segregated at recess. In junior high, minorities became more acceptable and the quality of teachers improved, she said.

Minorities were allowed to play sports, but Herlinda remembers, “The Mexican kids really had to prove themselves way beyond what other kids had to do.”

She graduated from high school during World War II and remembers ration stamps for gas, shoes, sugar, coffee and other necessities. She worked for the telephone company, which was set up at the Copper Queen Hotel. During the war all calls that came through were screened.

After the war, Bisbee prospered and many young men were able to work in the mines. Many of them came from different places because of the war. The economy picked up and Phelps Dodge was the biggest employer.

Herlinda recalls that the end of the war was a “boom” for ladies since many servicemen returned to Bisbee. But the status of women at this time was definitely not what it is today, Herlinda said. Marriage was expected of women as a means of “moving on” since a college education was not an opportunity for many of them.

“Marriage was expected of many of the Mexican girls. They did not need an education to know how to make tortillas,” she said.

But there were a few who were able to attend college. They usually had the money to do so. Others joined the Army and became nurses.

For entertainment Herlinda remembers that there were many dances and clubs that people attended. She thinks fondly of those times, but also recalls the many inconveniences.

“I’ll tell you, the good ol’ days, they can keep them because I did go through all that before there was refrigeration and washing machines, and when you grow up in that era, you appreciate the conveniences of nowadays. It was hard work! I just don’t know how I’d get along without my microwave. I can reminisce about the past, but I don’t miss it.”

## ROSE SMITH

### Interviewed by Cheryl Cox

My grandmother, Rose Smith who was born on Aug. 22, 1904, was the daughter of a pair of Irish parents. Delia Varley and John Clinton were both immigrants who came to the U.S. looking for a better life. They met and married in Pasadena, Calif., and later moved to Bisbee. Their hearts were eagerly waiting for a piece of land to call their own.

"They both had the Irish love of land," my grandmother said. She explained that "because you were not able to own land in Ireland, but to just run the farms, it was exciting to be able to buy or homestead a piece of land to live on and call your own."

Mr. and Mrs. John Clinton, with their first small child, did find a piece of land and they grabbed the chance to homestead it and develop it into their new home.

"It was on the west side of the San Pedro, river bottom soil, close to the banks of the river. It had been relinquished by the first settler who left a well and a cabin," my grandmother said.

To obtain ownership, homesteaders had to live on their land for five years. Then they could "prove up," which meant show evidence of having a well, a home and a farm field of 10 acres. Then they could "sell out," which most of the homesteaders did.

"My parents were among the few who stayed on in their homes," my grandmother noted with pride.

In the early summer of 1905, the Clinton family arrived at their new home "with a horse and buggy and Bossie, the milk cow tied behind the buggy." Being only about a year old, my grandmother can't tell you what the land was like then. But because she grew up on this piece of land, she described what it was like as far back as she could remember.

"It was beautiful country — tall grass, very little mesquite and a few huge shade trees," she said.

How the land has changed!

"A homesteader's first job is to build a home, dig a well with a pick and a shovel and a windlass (which is an apparatus operated by hand or machine, for hauling or hoisting, consisting of a drum or cylinder attached to the object to be lifted).

"Since this was already done, all Papa had to do was get a hand plow and another horse and break the grassy sod nearest the river bank and plant a 10-acre crop of sorghum, which is a sweet, sugar cane-like grass, to provide hay for his stock. This had to be watered along with the vegetable garden. The process of getting the water was called 'pulling water with the buckets.' Water was obtained by a pulley wheel over the top of the well with two buckets. When the full one was pulled up, the empty one went down to be filled.

"To harvest his hay, Papa had to cut it with a hand scythe (which is an instrument used in mowing or reaping, consisting of a long curving blade with a sharp edge fastened at an angle to a handle, which is bent into a convenient form for swinging the blade to advantage), let it dry on the ground, turn it over with a pitch fork, load it on the wagon and haul it to the house where it was stacked for winter use."

Because the valley was full of wild cattle, a fence to protect the house and crops had to be built right away. There were wild horses, too.

"They would try to take old Molley, the mare, away with them," my grandmother recalled.

I asked her if people ever took these horses to keep for themselves since they were wild.

"No, they didn't," she said, "because they weren't really wild, they were owned by people, but were called wild because they were allowed to roam free over the open country."

Settlers had moved into the east side of the river some years before grandma's folks came in and they were "proving up" and moving out before her family could, "so my father had a chance to buy their "improvements." This consisted of tearing down cabins and moving them to his own place.

"That was how we got a second room and a good sized adobe house with a shingle roof and a wood floor including doors and windows," grandmother said.

Needless to say, all this took money. Mr. Clinton worked as an electrician in the copper mines in Cananea, 30 miles to the south in Mexico.

"Mama took him to work in the buggy and came back alone to keep the homestead going with only a small child for company and a good dog named Major," said grandmother. "About once a month, my father walked home those 30 miles through rough country full of wild cattle. They sometimes would follow him but he always scared them away."

As the years went by, more settlers came to the valley.

"Each had a house, well and cultivated plot with fences to keep out the herds of wild cattle. Hereford was the railroad station, post office and country store. All the little roads led to this center where groceries, stock feed and ranch supplies were bought. Visiting was also done and news exchanged. Housewives often exchanged eggs and butter for store goods."

Every one or two months, a trip was made to Bisbee to stock up on things not available in the country store.

"This trip took two days. The milk cows would be turned out with their calves, chickens were locked up and provided with water and feed and the dogs left to guard the place. It took all day to get to town. The family stayed in a rooming house overnight. The horses were left at the livery stables."

My grandmother said her father always took the family to see the fireworks. "Children always set on their fathers' shoulders so they could see," she said.

Life on the early ranches was very busy.

“There was always work to do and it was hard work. Children participated as much as they were able and it was fun and a lot of excitement.”

Kids loved going for wood.

“Going for wood was a picnic,” grandmother said. “Lunch was packed and when the place in the Huachucas was reached, everybody helped get the fire ready and the food set out. Our bottles of milk would have little balls of butter on them churned up by the rough wagon.”

My grandmother said sometimes her father would use dynamite to blast down a dead tree and the kids thought that it was exciting to run off to a safe place, then help gather the wood.

To get to school, children rode horses or drove buggies. If they were near enough to the school, they walked. There were district schools scattered throughout the valley. Besides education, these schools were also used for social get-togethers. They had dances and town meetings here.

“At the dances, the children played games while their parents danced and were in the adult activities. When it got too late for the children, they would climb up on top of the desks and go to sleep until the parents were ready to go home. Then their fathers would carry them home.”

One game my grandmother remembered kids liked to play was “Annie Over.”

“That is where the kids split up into teams and get on either side of a small building,” she said. “Then someone would throw the ball over and someone on the other side would catch it. As soon as that happens, whoever caught the ball comes around and tries to hit an opponent. That opponent would have to come over to the other side. This goes on until everyone is on one side.”

I really admire my grandmother for all that she has been through. It is hard to imagine that my grandmother has lived from horse and buggy, no electricity, everything manual, from sun-up until sun-down days to phones, cars, computers and kick-back days. She’s lived at that same homesteaded piece of land all her life, except about a year when she went to college. She has three younger brothers that she did not mention. Her family is still very close.



## A DOG'S BEST FRIEND

By Adeline G. Parks

On a summer day in 1916, a week of camping for the Greene family came to an end. Before our return to Douglas from Cave Creek, we stopped by the Lee brothers' place where they raised airedales for lion hunting.

They were agreeable when we asked to buy the runt of a recent litter. We named him Punch. When he was full grown he never weighed over 30 pounds.

One day, my best friend Mildred Smith and I were playing jacks on the front porch of my house. My mother sat on the swing with Punch asleep at her feet. Suddenly, he woke up and sauntered out to the curb, where he sat down and rearranged some fleas on his ears.

Punch got to his feet. As Kirby's grocery truck chugged along at 10 miles an hour, Punch found he had urgent business across the street. This was his game — the closer the call, the bigger the thrill.

But his timing was off a fraction of a second. A front wheel grazed his left hind leg. The gambler collapsed on the street.

Mildred and I ran to him. Young Tom Kirby got out of the truck and said, "I knew that smart alec was going to get hit one day." With this insult, Punch got up and limped to the sidewalk.

Mother called from the porch, "I'll try to get your father at the office." In about 10 minutes, my father and my brother, John, drove up. There was a sidewalk examination — diagnosis, a broken leg.

While my brother carried the casualty into the house, my father issued orders to mother. "Put a sheet on the kitchen table and get these weeping girls out of my way. John will help me put on a cast."

The patient was able to get around on three legs, but for several weeks his activities were restricted. Those early morning runs during which he covered about half the area of the town had to be postponed. In the late afternoon, however, he sat on the front steps waiting for my father's arrival.

When the car drew up, he limped to the curb and the daily ritual began. My father picked him up and carried him into the house while complaints and commiserations were exchanged.

When the cast came off, he resumed his former lifestyle with one exception. Every afternoon he was on the steps ready to limp out to the car and to be gathered up in my father's comforting arms.

**About The Author:** Adeline Greene Parks, only surviving grandchild of rancher and lawman John Slaughter, lived with her parents, Dr. and Mrs. W.A. Greene, in a house on Ninth Street in Douglas. Two of her articles about her family have previously been published in *The Cochise Quarterly*. "I don't know why I wrote this story," she said. "Perhaps to expose the love all the family had for dogs."