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Historical Journal

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SULPHUR SPRINGS

CCHS

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Historical Society*

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the Past
for
The Future***

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*Sulphur Springs Monument
dedicated in October 2004*

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Sulphur Springs

By Harry O'Neil

Author's Note: This short history of Sulphur Springs is limited to those events that took place at the springs and gave the site its historical significance. Major events that happened elsewhere, such as the Bascom affair, the battle at Apache Pass, the Camp Grant massacre, the Cochise-Howard peace treaty and the final surrender of Geronimo are mentioned only briefly and in context with the springs.

The importance of Sulphur Springs in the history of Cochise County is disproportionate to its present-day appearance. The dry springs and remaining building foundations tend to belie all the exciting events that occurred there, and one can only imagine the scores of other events that took place, but happened without the participants leaving behind any written record.

Hopefully, the following narrative will justify the decision of the Sulphur Springs Valley Historical Society and the Cochise County Historical Society to erect a monument in honor of all the people throughout the centuries who played a role in making Sulphur Springs a regional landmark.

The First Occupants

Sulphur Springs is located one mile west of the Three Sisters Buttes. Near the springs lies a small rocky hill dotted with more than 30 cylindrical holes used by ancient Indians for grinding corn, nuts and seeds. These bedrock mortar pits are identical to the 50 found at the pre-historic Indian site in Texas Canyon, which dates from 700 to 1250 A.D.¹ It is likely that the pits on this hill are part of the same Indian culture.

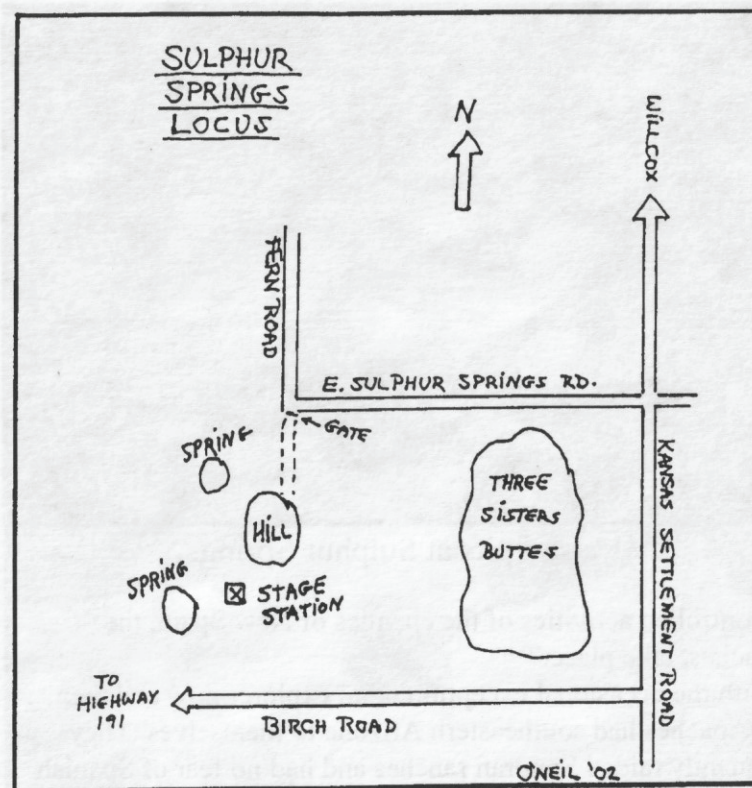
At the northern and southern bases of the hill were two springs. From atop the hill Indians could see for miles in all directions, and what they saw stands in sharp contrast to what we see today. They looked upon a valley of extensive grasslands, abundant surface water and lush riparian vegetation along the nearby streambeds. From this hilltop they could watch for deer, antelope, javelina and rabbits, all of which were plentiful throughout the valley.

Recent archaeological surveys indicate that Indian farming communities were probably well established in the Sulphur Springs Valley by 500 A.D., yet for some unknown reason these people left the area around 1450 A.D. It is not clear what specific cultural group these Sulphur Springs Indians belonged to, even though some archaeologists state that the entire southeastern Arizona region was predominately Mogollon culture during this time period.²

We don't know who these Indians were and we don't know the ancient or the Apache names for this perfect camping ground, but due to the slight aroma of hydrogen sulphide given off by decaying vegetation near the water, white men called the place "Sulphur Springs." Today, the entire 100-mile-long valley owes its name to these ancient waterholes.

Spanish Explorers and the Apaches

Early Spanish travelers noted that corn and beans were grown in the San Pedro Valley, so it is possible that the earliest



Chiricahua Apaches, who entered the valley possibly around 1500 A.D., could have grown corn along Turkey Creek, which ran close to the springs.

Spanish and Anglo explorers who camped at Sulphur Springs described the valley as one enormous grassland. Most scientists agree that up to around 1890 a wide variety of grasses flourished throughout the valley, and prior to their contact with Spaniards, the Apaches would periodically set fire to the grass in order to drive out the animals. This method of hunting didn't harm the grass seed and it kept the thorny shrubs and mesquite trees in check.

Father Juan Nentvig, who explored Sonora and Arizona in 1764, says that the land between the San Pedro River and the Chiricahua mountains is "where the wild, reckless and



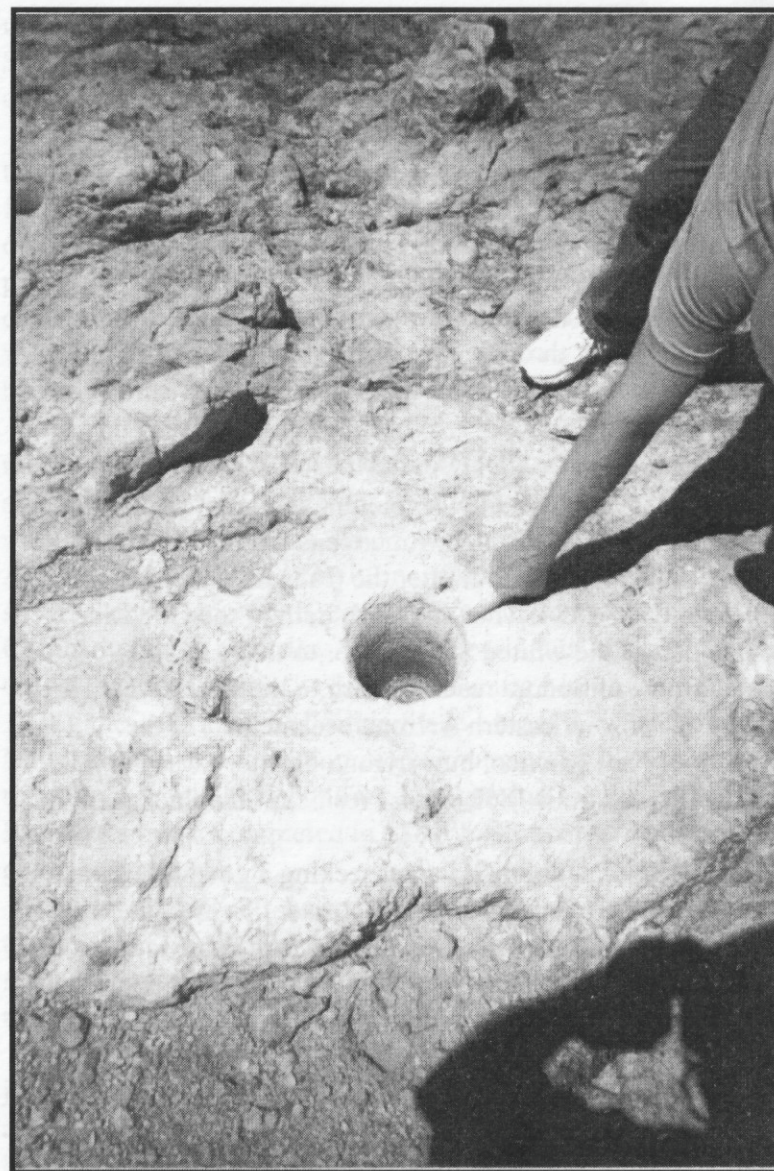
Mortar pits at Sulphur Springs.

uncontrolled activities of the enemies of New Spain, the Apaches, take place.”³

With the occasional exception of an explorer now and then, the Apaches had southeastern Arizona to themselves. They frequently raided Sonoran ranches and had no fear of Spanish troops. They attacked at all times of the year, in large numbers, when they had the advantage, and then fled into some mountain stronghold. It was with some justification that Father Nentvig called the Apaches “the scourge of Sonora.”⁴ Yet, in the opinion of the Apaches, it was the Spaniards who were the interlopers and who deserved ill treatment.

It is interesting to note that in addition to hunting, gathering and raiding, the Apaches also grew corn in what Juan Nentvig calls the “Valley de Florida,” which is now the valley around Safford.⁵

Also of some interest is the fact that early maps show that during the Spanish and Mexican periods of Arizona history, the Dragoon Mountains were called the “Sierra Calitro,” the Willcox Dry Lake was “La Playa de San Domingo de Los Pimas,” and Apache Pass was known first as “San Felipe,” then



One of several bedrock mortar pits.

“Puerto Del Dado” and finally, “Apache Pass.”⁶

In 1846, the U.S. Government, which was thinking about expanding its territorial boundaries, sent Lt. W.H. Emory on a

military reconnaissance of New Mexico, Arizona and California. His map of the region south of the Gila River is noteworthy in that it shows nothing between the San Pedro River and the Peloncillo Mountains (which he refers to as the "Black mountains") except a vast, open prairie; that is to say, the Sulphur Springs Valley.⁷

Three years later, the Fremont Association, heading from Lordsburg to Tucson, went through Apache Pass, becoming the first Forty-Niner party to travel that route to the California gold fields. After going through Apache Pass, it seems likely they would have camped at Sulphur Springs for at least one night.⁸

Enter the Americans

With the exception of a few explorers, emigrant trains and gold seekers passing through, Americans did not enter Sulphur Springs Valley history until after the Gadsden Purchase was implemented in 1854, when the land south of the Gila River became part of the United States. Prior to that year, the Mexican state of Sonora reached north to the Gila River. Thus, in 1854, all of southeastern Arizona became part of the Territory of New Mexico, but Arizona Territory was not made a political entity until 1863 when President Lincoln signed the bill.⁹

Also, in 1854, Lt. John G. Parke, seeking a good rail route, surveyed southern lands from the Colorado River to the Rio Grande, passing through Tucson and Apache Pass, south of the 32nd parallel, which meant he could have visited Sulphur Springs en route.¹⁰

Samuel Cozzens, who spent the years 1858 to 1860 in Arizona, states in his book *The Marvelous Country*, that the road from San Simon, Apache Pass, Sulphur Springs and Dragoon Springs was the only road that linked the towns along the Rio Grande with Tucson, Yuma and San Diego. His map of the region shows Sulphur Springs as a major stop along the route.¹¹

By 1850 still another route passed Sulphur Springs going

north from Sonora to the Gila River. This frontier road made Sulphur Springs a true crossroads for travelers heading in every direction.

Cozzens was also a witness to Anglo-Apache relations prior to the Bascom affair and the battle at Apache Pass. He became a friend of both Cochise and Mangas Coloradas, and it was his opinion that the years he spent in Arizona were "relatively peaceful," despite the fact that a few emigrant trains and mail coaches were attacked from time to time.¹² The few who were "butchered" prior to 1861 pales in comparison to what happened later in the decade.

Being on the road from Apache Pass to Dragoon Springs meant that Sulphur Springs was a perfect place for a stage station. In fact, five stage lines used the springs as a relay station from 1857 to 1878. The first of these was the San Antonio and San Diego Mail Line, began in 1857, but was superceded in 1858 by the famous Butterfield Overland Mail Company. Three other lines operated periodically until late in the 1870s. These were the Southern Pacific Mail Line (1874-1878), the Texas and California Stage Line (1878), and the National Mail and Transportation Company (1878). Possibly these lines would have continued longer, but the Southern Pacific Railroad, completed in 1881, took most of the business going east and west.¹³

The Sulphur Springs stage station was a relay station, similar to the one at Ewell Springs, which provided horses and mules for the Concord stagecoaches heading east to El Paso and west to Tucson.

A passenger named Phocion R. Ray, who kept a diary of his journey on the San Antonio and San Diego Mail Line (also called the "Jackass Mail"), made the following entry regarding his impression of Sulphur Springs in June of 1858:

"We encamped last night in the midst of a beautiful valley between two ranges of lofty mountains. We saw Indian fires on the mountains all around us, but we were not molested. The continuing howling of the wolves was the only annoyance we

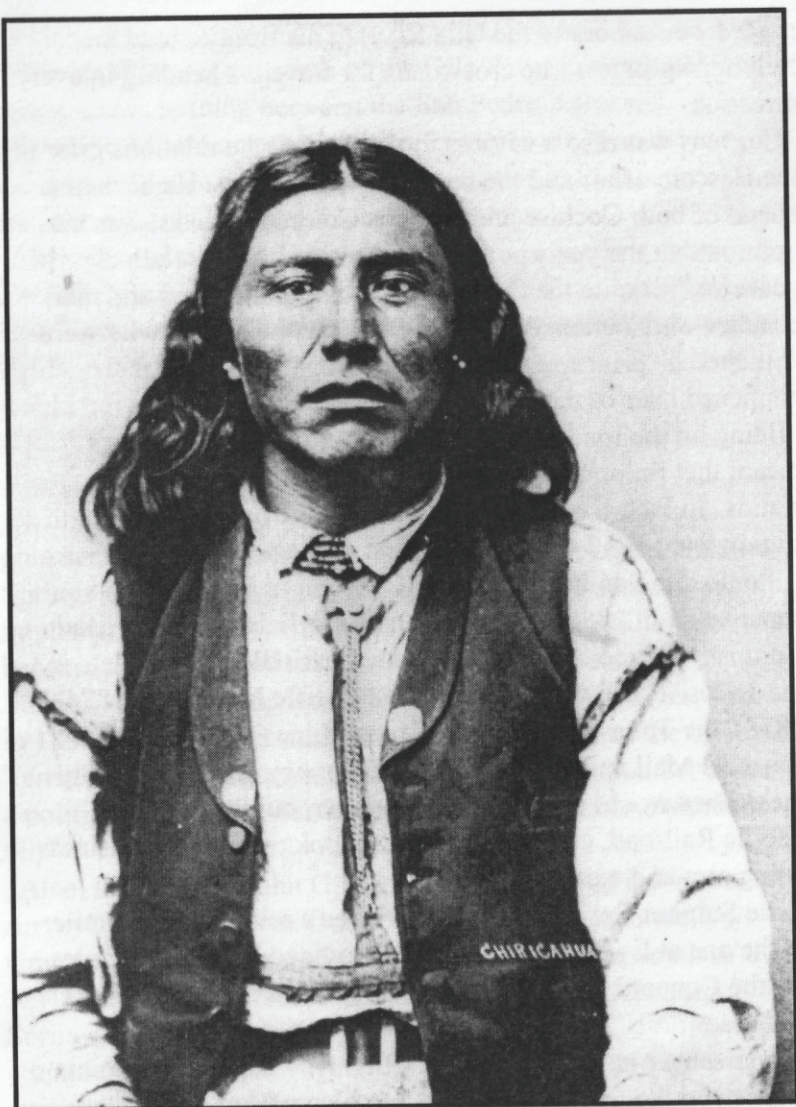


Photo courtesy Arizona Historical Society/Tucson
Taza -- Eldest son of Cochise.

had to complain of." By the evening of June 12th, Mr. Ray was safe in Tucson, which, he said, had a population of about 200 people, mostly Mexicans and Indians.¹⁴

In 1858, John Butterfield and Company won the contract with

the U.S. Postal Service to carry mail from St. Louis, Missouri to San Francisco. According to the contract, the trip between these two points would take between 23 and 27 days, depending on the time of year, and the coaches were authorized to carry letters, packages and passengers.¹⁵

During the early stagecoach years, Cochise and his people were on friendly terms with the Butterfield agent at Apache Pass. Cochise and his Chokonon warriors were paid to supply the agent with firewood. This mutually beneficial relationship ended abruptly on Feb. 4, 1861, when a young and inexperienced army lieutenant named George Bascom accused Cochise of stealing cattle from a Sonoita rancher named John Ward and of abducting Ward's 12-year-old stepson. Although Cochise was innocent and denied the charges, Bascom attempted to arrest Cochise. Cochise escaped, but six of his relatives were captured and held as hostages.

Infuriated at Bascom's refusal to listen to reason, Cochise blocked Apache Pass, captured several civilians on the Butterfield road and then tried to exchange prisoners with Bascom. When Bascom refused two offers of exchange, Cochise executed his captives. Lt. Bascom, following orders from his superiors, retaliated by hanging three of Cochise's relatives.

This unfortunate incident resulted in a bloodbath on both sides that continued for more than a decade. Cochise, Mangas Coloradas and their followers then focused their fury on Americans, which resulted in 12 years of warfare which cost more lives than any other Indian war in U.S. history.¹⁶

Meanwhile, the Civil War forced stage lines to move north, and Union Army Gen. James Carleton established Fort Bowie in July 1862. The purpose of the fort was to escort travelers, mail couriers and supply trains through Apache Pass and to attack Apaches wherever and whenever they were found in the region.

After the Civil War, 1866, mail service was resumed between El Paso and Tucson, and riders carried the mail through Apache

Pass, Sulphur Springs and Dragoon Springs on a twice-weekly schedule, but the Apaches continued their attacks.

Thomas Jeffords was superintendent of this mail service during 1867, but resigned in disgust over the army's inability to protect his mail riders from ambush. During his brief tenure, 14 of Jeffords' riders had been killed. He soon turned to prospecting and managed to work out a private arrangement with Cochise, which gave him immunity from Chiricahua war parties. For some reason Jeffords and Cochise got along very well and formed a friendship that lasted until Cochise's death in 1874.¹⁷ Part of the reason for Jeffords' success with Cochise was his courage in meeting Cochise and that he had learned to speak Apache with some degree of fluency.

Jeffords summarized the situation in southeastern Arizona from 1861 to 1872 by writing: "It has been said, and not with any exaggeration, that the southern Overland road from the Rio Mimbres (near Deming, New Mexico) to Tucson is a graveyard for Cochise's victims. Highways could only be traveled in safety by well-armed parties. Miners would leave their homes to prospect in the mountains and would be heard of no more. Farmers would be killed at the plow while tilling the soil." Jeffords added that scarcely any family living in the region "escaped the loss of some of its members, having met their deaths at the hands of Cochise's braves."¹⁸

Amidst all the turmoil and danger of that time period, Nicholas Rogers decided to homestead a 160-acre squatter's claim at Sulphur Springs. In 1868, he built a small trading post and managed the stage station. It is not clear how he managed to keep his scalp during the years 1868 to 1872, when peace was finally achieved between Cochise and the U.S. government.

Somehow Rogers kept on good terms with the Apaches, which is puzzling, especially when Gen. George Crook, operating in the same area, was trying to defeat every Apache he met. For example, on July 11, 1871, Crook, along with five companies of troops and 50 Mexican scouts came upon 60

Apache warriors at Sulphur Springs. The Apaches were not about to confront such a large force of soldiers and quickly rode off toward the mountains. Crook and his troopers could do nothing, so they rode north toward Camp Grant. As he left Sulphur Springs, Crook remembered thinking: "We thus lost one of the prettiest chances of giving the enemy a severe blow," but when the Apaches ran, "I saw it was useless running down the horses and men trying to catch them."¹⁹

From 1869 to 1872, several attempts were made to get the Chiricahua Apaches to accept the idea of living on a reservation. By this time, Cochise wanted peace, but was uncertain about the kind of treatment his people would receive at the hands of a government he had been fighting for more than a decade. Cochise was also unaware that the old policy of extermination was being replaced by President U.S. Grant's new policy of peace. Few people in the government bureaucracy or the military shared Grant's idealism, and most field officers, especially Crook, wished to end hostilities by defeating the Apaches in battle.²⁰

Making Peace With Cochise

In 1872, Pres. Grant authorized Gen. Oliver Howard to make contact with Cochise and do whatever was necessary to arrive at a peace settlement. Leaving Ft. Apache on Aug. 10, 1872, Howard and his small party traveled to Ft. Tularosa, New Mexico then entered Arizona by way of Stein's Pass. Along with Howard were Tom Jeffords, Capt. Joseph Sladen (who was also a doctor), an Apache guide named Chie (the Apache word for vermilion), and another gifted Apache named Ponce, who was fluent in Spanish and could both read and write.

Instead of entering Sulphur Springs Valley via Apache Pass, these five men camped one night at a place called Indian Bread Rocks, about seven miles northeast of Apache Pass. At that time, this Apache camping place had an intermittent waterfall from 30 to 40 feet high. From there, an old, but little known,

foot trail cut southwesterly to Sulphur Springs.²¹

The next day, after riding over 25 miles, Sladen wrote: "Midway between two ranges was located Sulphur Springs, where we hoped to rest and refresh ourselves....When within a few miles of this indicated locality we observed, rising out of the plain, almost as if done by the hand of man, an abrupt hill, which hid from our view the spring itself. As we rounded the hill, we were astonished to see on a butte a party of soldiers lounging about an old hut...."²²

Sladen continued his description by adding: "We found that the post was kept up as a stage station. Its keeper, who also kept a small supply of grain and other necessities, was absent, but his place was taken by a German assistant. A mail driver who had been shot through both arms by the Indians was also stopping there until a suitable opportunity offered for getting through to Tucson. The soldiers were a guard of a dozen men or so, from Fort Bowie, parties of which relieved each other every few days."²³

The "mail driver" mentioned by Sladen was, in fact, John Dobbs, a cattle herder who had been working near Ft. Bowie when he was ambushed by Apaches. He was injured so badly in both arms that his wounds took several months to heal well enough for him to travel. The doctor at Ft. Bowie removed many pieces of shattered bones and patched him up as best he could. The soldiers at Ft. Bowie took up a collection to pay his stage fare to Tucson, then the citizens of Tucson paid for his return trip to St. Louis. It is most likely that the "German assistant" was O.O. Spence, Rogers' helper.²⁴

Gen. Howard did not tell the soldiers at Sulphur Springs of his mission to make peace with Cochise. Howard knew that news of such a meeting would spread quickly and it would not help his project to have citizens of Tucson or the men at Ft. Bowie know that he was going into the Dragoon Mountains with only four other men.

Before leaving Sulphur Springs, Howard bought a few pounds of flour and grain from "the German in charge of the station"

and Sladen bought a few pounds of bacon from the soldiers. That night the Howard party camped between Sulphur Springs and the entrance to Middlemarch Pass.²⁵

When Howard met with Cochise the next day, Cochise expressed his sincere desire for peace and friendship, and was also amenable to the idea of some sort of reservation, but wanted his base of operations to remain in the Dragoon and Chiricahua mountains region. Howard wanted all Chiricahua Apaches to move to a New Mexico reservation. The two men then agreed on a long period of negotiation.

Both Howard and Cochise needed supplies and food for a lengthy visit, and word had to be sent to Ft. Bowie and to all of Cochise's sub-chiefs scattered throughout the region. Therefore, Cochise insisted that Howard ride to the fort immediately to notify the soldiers that peace was being discussed and all hostilities were to be suspended.

Howard, with Chie as his guide, set off for Ft. Bowie that night. On arriving at Sulphur Springs near midnight, Howard said: "We were able to get Mr. Rogers, with two fresh mules and a cart wagon, to take us to Camp Bowie. We arrived at the post when the sun was an hour high, having traveled 58 miles during the night."

Returning the next day, and loaded down with supplies and gifts, Howard, Chie and several officers camped for the night at Sulphur Springs. It was a chilly night and Howard offered to share his huge bearskin robe with Chie. Chie was horrified and yelled, "Shosh, toujadah Apache," meaning, "Bear bad for Apache." Bears, it seems, were taboo to the Apache, believing that evil people sometimes returned after death in the bodies of bears.²⁶

Negotiations with Cochise lasted for nearly 11 days, and at one point Cochise invited Capt. Sladen to ride with him up to a lookout position on top of Mt. Glenn, the highest peak in the Dragoons. From that vista Cochise looked east, pointed and said, "Apache Pass." He then pointed to the barely visible wagon road that ran across the valley. Finally he pointed to a

dark spot midway between the two mountain ranges and said, very plainly, "Sulphur Springs."²⁷

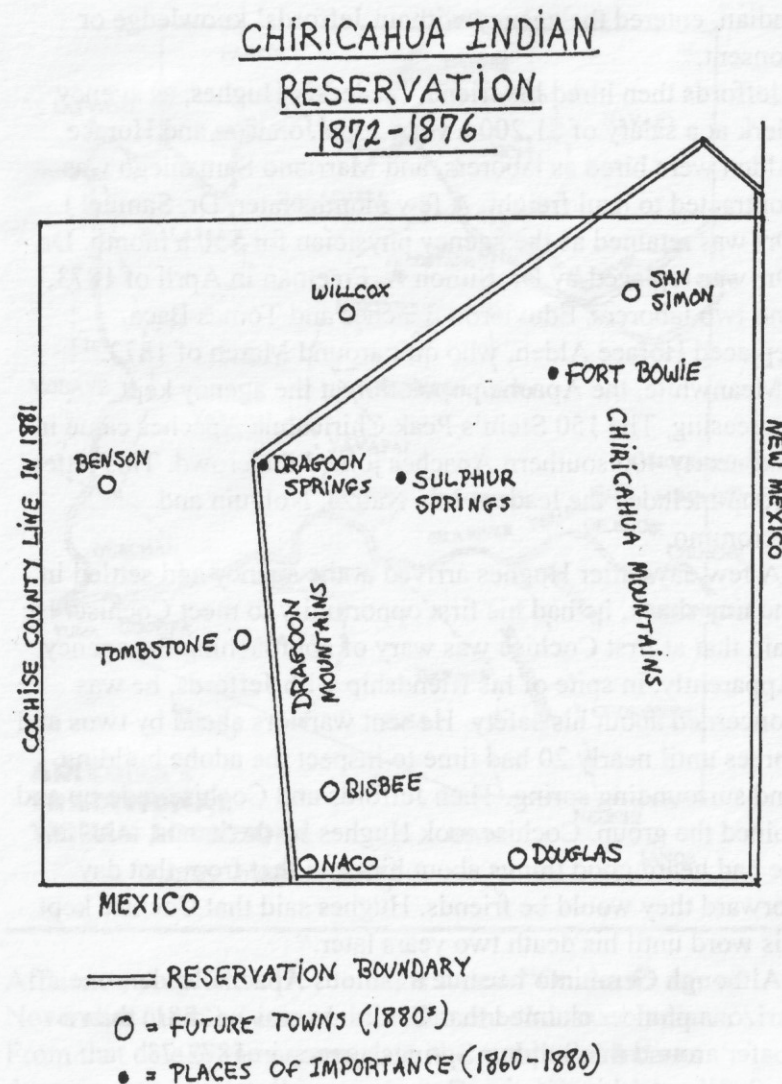
Clearly, Cochise could see everything from Mt. Glenn and lookouts were stationed there continually. Sladen realized that their stop at Sulphur Springs a few days earlier must have been noticed. In fact, all of their movements had been seen by Cochise's warriors since they left the Dos Cabezas Mountains.²⁸

The Chiricahua Indian Reservation

When peace was made with Cochise on Oct. 13, 1872, two items were insisted upon. Cochise wanted his friend Tom Jeffords to be the agent in charge of the reservation and Gen. Howard wanted Sulphur Springs to be the agency headquarters, primarily because Sulphur Springs had the only available building in the valley, a 12 x 12 foot adobe shack owned by Nick Rogers. Jeffords accepted the job, but not for purely altruistic reasons. In addition to being of service to Cochise, he expected to be paid a fair salary on a regular basis, and sometime in the future he hoped to open a store near the agency headquarters.

In Howard's report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs dated Nov. 7, 1872, he wrote: "The headquarters of the agency were established temporarily at Sulphur Springs; Mr. Thomas Jeffords made the special agent, subject to approval, and provisions made for necessary supplies for sixty days." He then added: "I recommend that Mr. Jeffords be confirmed as special agent...and that he be allowed the usual employees. Should a stranger be sent there I fear the consequences would be disastrous, as Cochise and his people have long known Mr. Jeffords and have full confidence in him."²⁹

Jeffords' immediate concern was how to provide food for 500 Chiricahua Apaches. Howard was able to provide food for 60 days and Jeffords managed to rent the adobe shack from Rogers for \$50 a month, which he thought was exorbitant. And Jeffords had some misgivings about the agency location. He



felt there wasn't enough water or wood at Sulphur Springs and the surrounding land was not the best grazing area within the reservation. Yet, Jeffords took charge of the situation and assumed the required leadership. In fact, he quickly became the absolute boss of the reservation. No one, soldier, civilian or

Indian, entered the agency without Jeffords' knowledge or consent.³⁰

Jeffords then hired his friend, Frederick Hughes, as agency clerk at a salary of \$1,200 a year. John Johnson and Horace Alden were hired as laborers, and Marriano Samaniego was contracted to haul freight. A few months later, Dr. Samuel L. Orr was retained as the agency physician for \$50 a month. Dr. Orr was replaced by Dr. Simon A. Freeman in April of 1873, and two laborers, Eduvieron Sanches and Tomas Baca, replaced Horace Alden, who quit around March of 1873.³¹

Meanwhile, the Apache population at the agency kept increasing. The 150 Stein's Peak Chiricahua Apaches came in and nearly 400 southern Apaches joined the crowd. This latter group included the leaders Juh, Natiza, Nolguin and Geronimo.³²

A few days after Hughes arrived at the agency and settled in the tiny shack, he had his first opportunity to meet Cochise. He said that at first Cochise was wary of approaching the agency. Apparently, in spite of his friendship with Jeffords, he was concerned about his safety. He sent warriors ahead by twos and threes until nearly 20 had time to inspect the adobe building and surrounding spring. Then Jeffords and Cochise rode up and joined the group. Cochise took Hughes by the hands, told him he had heard good things about him and that from that day forward they would be friends. Hughes said that Cochise kept his word until his death two years later.³³

Although Geronimo became a famous Apache leader, one Arizona pioneer claimed that Geronimo was no more than a loafer around the Sulphur Springs agency in 1872-73. According to this witness, Geronimo was just a "hanger-on, a recipient of weekly rations, with no standing in the tribe other than that of an ordinary, shiftless buck, roaming here and there, looting and raiding under the leadership of other men."³⁴ The basis of this characterization was typical of the times, and doubtless reflected the general attitude of many Arizonans.

Writing in his first report to the Commissioner of Indian



Affairs on Aug. 31, 1873, Jeffords stated: "On the 4th day of November (1872), I issued rations to one thousand Indians. From that date to the present date, the number of Indians drawing rations from this agency has varied from about 1,000 to 1,100, the latter being the highest number that has been upon the reserve at any one time."³⁵

Jeffords had only enough food and supplies for a 60-day period and time was running out. Fortunately, when the Chiricahuas settled into life on the reservation, they had accumulated enough spoils from that year's raiding to last until

the next spring. This stockpile of food and necessities would prove to be invaluable in the months to come.³⁶

It wasn't until Dec. 14, 1872, that Pres. Grant finally issued an executive order that delineated the Chiricahua Indian Reservation. The boundaries were: Beginning at Dragoon Springs and running northeasterly to a point on the summit of the Peloncillo Mountains; then southeasterly to the New Mexico border; then running south to the Mexican border; then running west along the U.S.-Mexican border fifty miles; then running north back to Dragoon Springs.³⁷ In other words, the new reservation composed an area nearly two-thirds of what is now Cochise County.

The reservation was meant for all Chiricahua Apaches, not just the group controlled by Cochise. Cochise, although very influential with all Chiricahuas, was the leader of only one of four bands, the Chokonon, who occupied the area from the San Pedro River Valley east to New Mexico, including the Dragoon Mountains, the Sulphur Springs Valley, and the Chiricahua Mountains.

The Chihene lived north of the Gila River and into New Mexico. They were also known as Warm Springs Apache, Copper Mine Apache, Ojo Calientes, Mimbrenos, Mogollon, Loco Apaches or Gilenos. Their most famous leaders were Victorio and Mangas Coloradas (Red Sleeves).

The third group, the Bedonkohe, was situated just south of the Chihene in the region near Silver City and Lordsburg, New Mexico. The most famous Bedonkohe was Geronimo.

The fourth group of Chiricahua Apaches was the Nednhi, who ranged widely throughout northern Mexico, but who thought of the Huachuca Mountains as their ancestral homeland. They were also referred to as Pinery, Southern and Bronco Apaches. Their most famous leaders included Juh, Cuchillo Negro and sometimes Geronimo, whose first wife, Alope, was a Nednhi woman.³⁸

By the beginning of 1873, a large percentage of all the groups of Chiricahua Apaches had arrived at the agency at Sulphur

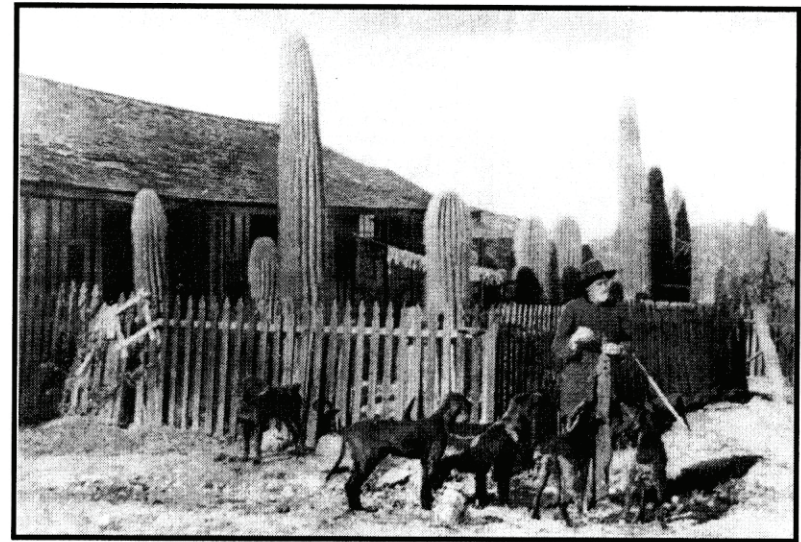


Photo courtesy Arizona Historical Society/Tucson
Tom Jeffords, Indian Agent.

Springs. And it was at this time that problems began to beset the reservation. Jeffords didn't realize that he, Howard and Grant were about the only Americans who wanted to see the reservation succeed. There was also some confusion among the bureaucrats as to who was supposed to be handling supplies and providing the budget. Requested supplies were not arriving and payments for goods already purchased by Jeffords with vouchers were not being honored. Jeffords was forced to use his own money to keep the Indians fed.³⁹

To make matters worse, Gen. Crook and others were doing everything they could to undermine Howard and Jeffords in an attempt to place the reservation under military control. Throughout the four-year history of the reservation (1872-76), forces were at work in both the U.S. Army and the Bureau of Indian Affairs to have all the Chiricahua Apaches moved to either Cañada Alamosa in New Mexico or to the newly formed San Carlos Reservation, approximately 100 miles north of Sulphur Springs.

Gen. Crook was a continual thorn in the side of the Chiricahua

reservation supporters. Although Crook respected the Apaches as warriors, and would never have condoned something as horrible as the Camp Grant massacre, he did not believe that a peaceful resolution to the "Apache question" could be achieved. His position during the 1870s was to find the Apaches, defeat them in battle and then place them on a New Mexico reservation.⁴⁰ As one recent writer put it, "Crook...combined a paradoxical sympathy with a relentless antipathy" for the Apaches, "and never questioned the right of whites to destroy native cultures and sieze (sic) their land."⁴¹ These comments regarding Crook are apropos to the Sulphur Springs agency, for during peace negotiations with Cochise, Gen. Howard had agreed that no military personnel would be allowed to stay on the reservation, except those stationed at Fort Bowie. Soldiers could use the road that passed through Sulphur Springs, but they could not stop there or remain on the reservation.

Crook understood this, but wanted to have a meeting with Cochise in order to determine what Cochise's future plans were and what his understanding of the peace treaty was, especially in light of the fact that there was no written treaty. Therefore, three of Crook's officers arrived at Sulphur Springs in late January 1873, and requested a meeting with Cochise. Jeffords arranged the meeting, but not at Sulphur Springs. Headed by Maj. William H. Brown, the Crook mission met with Cochise in the Dragoon Mountains. The meeting proved to be of little value. Crook wanted to know if the peace treaty would keep Cochise's men out of Mexico, and Cochise answered that his treaty was with the United States, and Mexico had nothing to do with his agreement with Howard.⁴²

It was becoming increasingly clear that the southern border of the Chiricahua agency was creating a major problem that had not been addressed during the peace negotiations. Raiding continued into Mexico during 1872 and never ceased during the four years the reservation was in existence.

Somehow a peculiar double standard existed regarding raiding

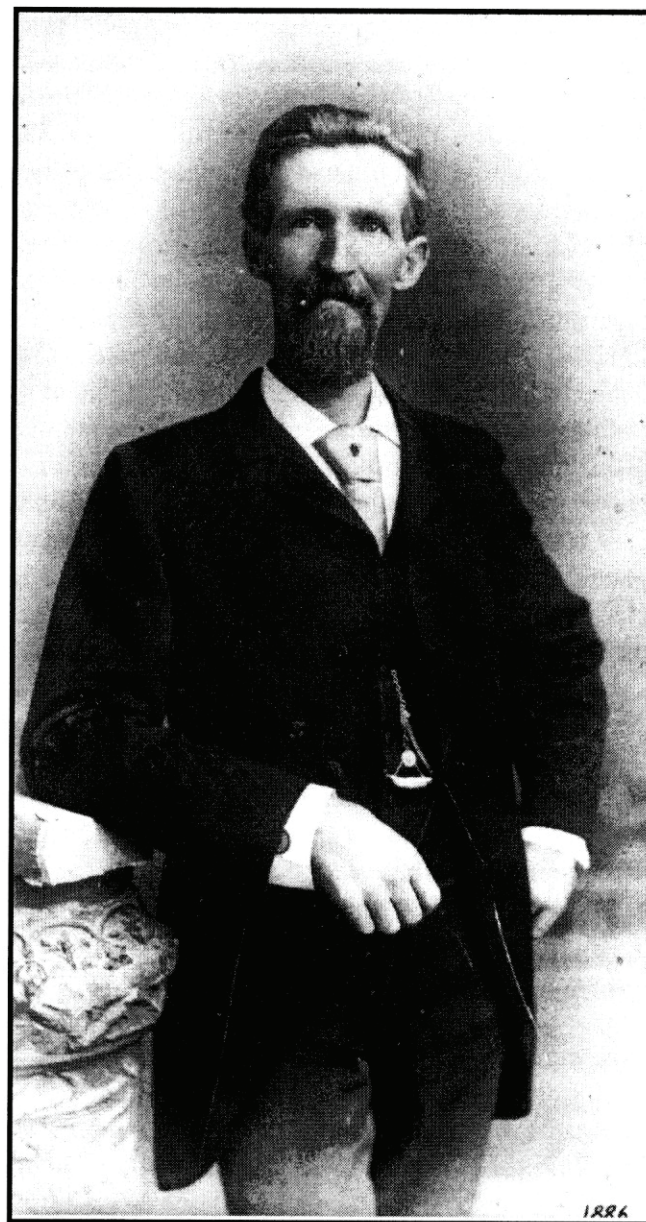


Photo courtesy Arizona Historical Society/Tucson
**Fred Hughes, Agency Clerk of Chiricahua Indian
 Reservation.**

into Sonora, and from Sonora into Arizona. American traders and other citizens didn't mind when Cochise's warriors raided Sonoran ranches, and gladly traded goods for booty carried across the border. Even the traders at Ft. Bowie bought things from the returning Apaches. Likewise, the citizens of Fronteras and Janos, Mexico, didn't complain when the Chiricahuas brought in loot taken from Arizona ranchers, miners and farmers.⁴³ Jeffords couldn't stop the raiding. It can't be proven, but it's been suggested that Jeffords and Howard believed that peace in Arizona outweighed depredations in Mexico.

Toward the beginning of 1873, Nick Rogers decided to raise the rent of the agency shack from \$50 to \$100 a month. Rather than pay the increase, Jeffords was requested to draw up plans for necessary buildings at Sulphur Springs. Jeffords estimated the amount of money it would take to build an agent's house, housing for his employees, a kitchen and dining room, a badly needed storehouse, carpentry and blacksmith shops, and a good stable and corral. All this could be built, Jeffords thought, for under \$7,000. He submitted his plans to Dr. Bundell, superintendent of Indian Affairs for Arizona, but the plans were soon filed and forgotten.⁴⁴

Inspector-General Robert Brown visited Sulphur Springs in January of 1873, and concluded that Jeffords was doing a good job. The number of Apaches at the agency during Brown's visit was 1,025. Less than half of these were Cochise's Chokonon; the rest were Bedonkohe, Chihene and Nednhi.⁴⁵

A few months later, Gov. Anson P. Safford also came to the agency for a visit and inspection. He wanted to see for himself how things were progressing and went away highly impressed with both Jeffords and Cochise. Jeffords, he thought, was the right man for the job if peace was to endure. The praise heaped on Jeffords by Safford and Brown forced Gen. Crook to pull in his horns for awhile.⁴⁶

Although outsiders were impressed with Jeffords' success with the Apaches, problems with payment delays continued to haunt the agency. Jeffords had more than 1,000 Chiricahuas to

feed and clothe, and only half were under Cochise's control. The Apache itch to roam and raid seemed to increase as spring arrived at Sulphur Springs. This was also the time of year when many Apache maidens were coming of age and their ceremonial celebrations demanded huge amounts of food, gifts and clothing. Cochise was able to satisfy most of the families' needs, but in doing so used up all his personal wealth and that of his extended family.⁴⁷

Whenever supplies were not forthcoming, Jeffords allowed the Apache hunters to roam the Dragoon and Chiricahua mountains in search of game. However, with so many Indians at the Sulphur Springs agency, game quickly became scarce. The fact that the troopers at Fort Bowie also hunted in the Chiricahua Mountains didn't help Jeffords' supply problems.

In March of 1873, Jeffords finally received some much needed food. In addition to an allotment of beef on the hoof, he received 23,000 pounds of corn, 1,820 pounds of coffee, 3,640 pounds of sugar and 910 pounds of salt and soap – all items that the Indians either needed or enjoyed, and enough to last until June of that year.⁴⁸ But storage was a perennial problem. The 144 square foot adobe, shared by Jeffords and Hughes as living quarters, was still the only structure at Sulphur Springs, and Jeffords complained that some food was ruined by the elements because there was no place to store it.

Slowly, though inexorably, small groups of warriors began to wander away from the reservation in order to raid in Sonora. Nothing in their treaty prevented them from doing so. Besides, other bands of Apaches, especially Coyoteros and White Mountain warriors, were using Sulphur Springs Valley as a corridor into Mexico and Jeffords couldn't keep track of everyone roaming on and off the reservation. It wasn't long before complaints from Mexican officials began to pour into Washington D.C. and the Mexican newspapers were printing articles detailing all the horrors of Apache atrocities. Gen. Crook resumed his efforts to have the army take control of the Sulphur Springs agency.

Gov. Safford wrote Crook on March 31, 1873, sending a list of 20 depredations committed by Apaches in Sonora during the previous six months, including the murders of several Mexicans. Yet Safford seemed satisfied that Cochise was keeping his word by not causing Americans any problems.⁴⁹ Despite Safford's letter to Crook, the general feeling throughout Arizona was that the reservation was working, and whatever happened in Mexico was conveniently ignored. In fact, the residents of Tucson were pleased with the reservation. Apache raids were minimal. Miners and ranchers were doing well. Articles in the newspapers expressed satisfaction with Grant's peace policy.

Henry Clay Hooker, owner of the famous Sierra Bonita Ranch north of the reservation, had a unique way of handling stray Apaches. By 1872, Hooker had a herd of more than 21,000 cattle, yet had no problems with Indians. His solution was simple. Whenever a raiding party came his way, he would butcher a steer and invite the Apaches to the feast. That, along with giving Cochise gifts now and then, was his way of maintaining peace.

If most of the Chiricahua Apaches were behaving well, nature was not. The last six months of 1873 were unusually wet. Rain began falling in mid-June and continued throughout the summer. Jeffords couldn't keep his supplies dry and lost a considerable amount of grain and other food items. By October it became clear that the agency had to be moved. The entire valley had been nearly impassable for more than three months. November rains were so severe that many adobe buildings at Camp Grant, 40 miles north of Sulphur Springs, were washed away.⁵⁰

Jeffords selected San Simon as the next agency headquarters. Potable water, grazing land and wood were all in plentiful supply and Jeffords believed the San Simon Valley would be suitable for agriculture, which he hoped the Apaches would adopt. But there was a cienega, or swamp, at San Simon and mosquitoes were everywhere. It wasn't long before several

Apaches, mainly the youngest children and the elderly, died and many others became sick. Once again, small groups of young warriors, who were unhappy with San Simon, began wandering into Mexico. Sub-chiefs began begging Jeffords to move the agency.⁵¹

The third headquarters was built in Pinery Canyon to the delight of everyone. Building materials were close by and food supplies finally began to arrive on a regular basis. The only items the Apaches lacked were material goods, such as clothing and blankets which the government would not supply.

In order to meet these needs and keep his flock from raiding in Mexico, Jeffords secretly mined gold, and with the help of Hughes and Cochise's son, Taza, and a few other Indians, they managed to buy the necessary dry goods in Janos, Mexico.⁵² Jeffords' gold mining activities during this time were verified three years after the reservation closed. In 1879, he returned to Pinery Canyon and operated three mines in that area.⁵³

It was during the Pinery Canyon year that Cochise became gravely ill with some disease of the stomach, possibly cancer, and he was taken up into the Dragoon Mountains to spend his final days.

Superintendent of Indian Affairs, L. Edwin Dudley visited the dying Cochise and then spent the night of June 3, 1874, camped at Sulphur Springs. The next morning he was surprised when Taza and 27 warriors rode up to Sulphur Springs as a war party en route to find the man they believed had "bewitched" Cochise and was causing his illness. Their plans were to hang the culprit in a tree and burn him alive. When Taza returned to Sulphur Springs later that day, he had his victim tied to a horse. Dudley wasn't positive, but he thought that Jeffords managed to intervene and save the man's life.⁵⁴

Cochise died on June 8, 1874, and his eldest son, Taza, became the new leader of the Chokonon band of the Chiricahua Apaches. Although Taza lacked experience and natural leadership qualities, both he and his brother, Naiche, vowed cooperation with Jeffords and were determined to fulfill

Cochise's promise of a lasting peace. Soon after Cochise's death, Jeffords wrote a brief, but fitting, tribute to his old friend. He said simply: "He was the most reliable and honorable Indian it has been my fortune to meet."⁵⁵

The final move of the Chiricahua Indian Agency took place in May of 1875 when Dudley authorized Apache Pass to be the new headquarters. Apache Pass was selected primarily because it was near the east-west wagon road where Jeffords felt he could keep better control of his people. Apache Pass had good water, timber and adequate pasturage. It is hardly coincidental that Jeffords also opened his own trading post, competing against Sidney DeLong's store at Ft. Bowie.⁵⁶

The End of the Reservation

In March of 1876, a serious rift developed among the Chokonon Apaches. A battle broke out in the Dragoon Mountains between Taza and his men and a faction led by a warrior named Eskinya. Three men were killed, including a grandson of Cochise. Taza's men returned to Apache Pass, but Eskinya's men rode south into Mexico. They returned several weeks later with a sizable quantity of silver. Knowing that Nick Rogers had whiskey for sale, some of Eskinya's men rode to Sulphur Springs to get drunk. A year earlier, Rogers had been warned by Jeffords, both verbally and in writing, that he would be evicted from the reservation and prosecuted if he was ever caught selling whiskey to any Indian. Rogers chose to ignore Jeffords' warnings.

On April 6th an Apache named Poinsey bought some rotgut whiskey for \$10 a bottle, then returned the next day for more. He got into a drunken fight with his brother, and killed two of his own sisters who tried to stop the fight. Poinsey rode back to Sulphur Springs on the night of April 7th and when Rogers refused to sell him any more whiskey, he and a friend named Nazary shot and killed both Rogers and O.O. Spence. The two ransacked the store, fleeing with whiskey, ammunition and several horses.

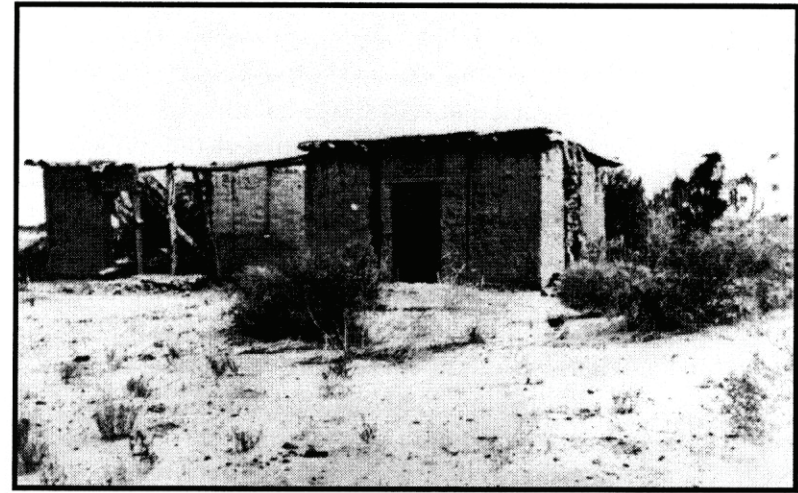


Photo courtesy Arizona Historical Society/Tucson
The Sulphur Springs Stage Station probably looked like this western Arizona station.

Jeffords learned of the murders by dawn the following day. Immediately, 44 troopers of the 6th Cavalry were dispatched to Sulphur Springs. Jeffords, Taza and three of Taza's men met the troopers at Rogers' station and found the bodies. Jeffords opened a wooden keg left behind and found it was whiskey mixed with chewing tobacco and chili pepper.⁵⁷

According to Jeffords' report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, written seven months later, he took four Indians with him and caught up with the cavalry at Sulphur Springs. "The bodies of Rogers and Spence were buried the next morning, and we then followed the trail of the Indians..." Ft. Bowie cemetery records indicate that Rogers and Spence were indeed buried at Sulphur Springs as Jeffords said. However, a few weeks later, their bodies were dug up and taken to Ft. Bowie for a proper burial on April 23, 1876.⁵⁸

The killing of Rogers and Spence had enormous repercussions. Their murders, more than any other single factor, brought about the closure of the Chiricahua Reservation. Word quickly spread throughout the region that the Apaches

were once again on the warpath. For some people it was the excuse they had been waiting for to finally rid southeastern Arizona of all Apaches. To the more rational minded, the incident caused an alarm far out of proportion to the danger posed by a few renegade Indians.

Jeffords wasted no time in getting all of his agency Apaches under complete control. Poinsey, although now considered by his people to be an outlaw and forbidden to return, did so anyway and joined his brother Eskinya at Apache Pass.

All of Jeffords' efforts to smooth things over were of no avail. On May 3, 1876, John Clum, the Indian agent at San Carlos received the following telegram from Washington: "...Proceed to Chiricahua; take charge of Indians and agency property there, suspending Agent Jeffords...If practicable, remove Chiricahua Indians to San Carlos. For that purpose use not exceeding \$3,000. Governor Safford has been advised." The telegram was signed J.Q. Smith, Commissioner of Indian Affairs.⁵⁹

Clum soon began his march from Tucson to Apache Pass, taking with him two companies of the 6th Cavalry and 54 members of his San Carlos Indian Police. Clum and his small army arrived at Sulphur Springs on the afternoon of June 4, 1876. They camped there that evening before riding the 26 miles to Apache Pass.⁶⁰

Upon seeing Clum's forces moving toward them, Eskinya began urging all warriors to return to the warpath. Taza and Naiche confronted him and his small band of followers. That night a violent gunfight broke out at Apache Pass. Naiche shot Eskinya in the head and Taza shot Poinsey in the right shoulder. Poinsey managed to escape, but five of Eskinya's men were killed. Taza lost two men and two others were wounded. Four days later, on June 9th, Poinsey, badly wounded, surrendered to John Clum. Poinsey's followers, 38 men, women and children, also surrendered to Clum that day.⁶¹

Although several groups of Chiricahuas fled in various directions, mainly to Mexico, Clum was able to gather the

remaining 325 and escort them to San Carlos. Clum was pleased to bring about the removal of the Chiricahuas and help close the reservation. As he said in his report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1877, "...by closing the Chiricahua Indian Reservation, large tracts of land were opened up to ranchers, farmers and miners in Arizona."⁶²

On Oct. 30, 1876, the reservation was officially terminated by executive order of President Grant, and all the land was restored to the public domain. The relative peace and security that lasted during the four-year period of the reservation's existence came to an end, and the Chiricahuas who had not settled at San Carlos reverted to raiding and warfare. These renegades exacted a heavy price in lives and property during the period from 1876 to 1886.⁶³

At least two scholars, Harry Cramer and D.C. Cole, believe the Bureau of Indian Affairs never wanted the Chiricahua Apaches to remain on their traditional lands and continually sought reasons to remove them to either New Mexico or San Carlos. The underlying management principle of government officials during that time was to convert the Apaches into farmers and Christians. The Apaches, on the other hand, did everything possible to hang on to their traditional way of life. In the struggle between the Apaches and the U.S. government, the final outcome was never really in doubt.

The doors to settlement in the Sulphur Springs Valley were open and within a few months cattlemen and miners arrived to fill the void left by the departed Chiricahua Apaches. The following year, 1877, the *Handbook to Arizona*, written as a guidebook for miners and travelers, offered the following useful information:

"From Camp Crittenden (no longer in use) to Camp Bowie, Arizona Territory: to San Pedro crossing, 38 miles – stage station. Tank always contains water. San Pedro crossing to Dragoon Springs, 18 miles. Water, grass and wood available. Dragoon Springs to Sulphur Springs, 16 miles. Water brackish, grass and wood scarce. Sulphur Springs to Camp Bowie, 25

miles..." The same information was supplied for travelers heading to Arizona from New Mexico.⁶⁴

Enter the Cattlemen

Soon after Rogers and Spence were killed, I.S. Fried, the administrator of Rogers' estate, requested that Theodore F. White, a surveyor in Tucson, determine the exact boundaries of Rogers' homestead at Sulphur Springs. White completed his survey before the end of April 1877, and filed his map with the Surveyor General's Office on June 21st.⁶⁵

White discovered that the Rogers homestead included only the northern spring, leaving the southern spring available. White told two friends, Robert Wolff and James Pursley, about the situation and these two cattlemen quickly moved onto the land. Although they ran separate herds, with separate ownership, they shared the water at the southern spring and became known as "The Sulphur Springs Boys." The cattle brands used by Pursley and Wolff were not recorded until 1884. Several years earlier, though, an adobe ranch house was built near the spring, about 50 feet west of the small shack used by Jeffords and Hughes as their agency headquarters.⁶⁶

The Sulphur Springs Boys were not the first ranchers in the valley. Henry Clay Hooker began his Sierra Bonita Ranch back in 1870, north of the reservation, and John Chisum brought longhorn cattle from Texas and built a ranch in 1876.⁶⁷

The ranch at Sulphur Springs later became part of Theodore White's famous Chiricahua Cattle Company, yet the ranch house and springs continued to be an important watering hole for anyone traveling across the valley. John Rockfellow, in the mid 1880s, mistakenly said that the Sulphur Springs ranch was the northern limit of the Chiricahua Cattle Company.⁶⁸

The early cattlemen had no difficulty in appreciating the potential value of the Sulphur Springs Valley, yet two men who roamed the region during the 1870s had conflicting views as to

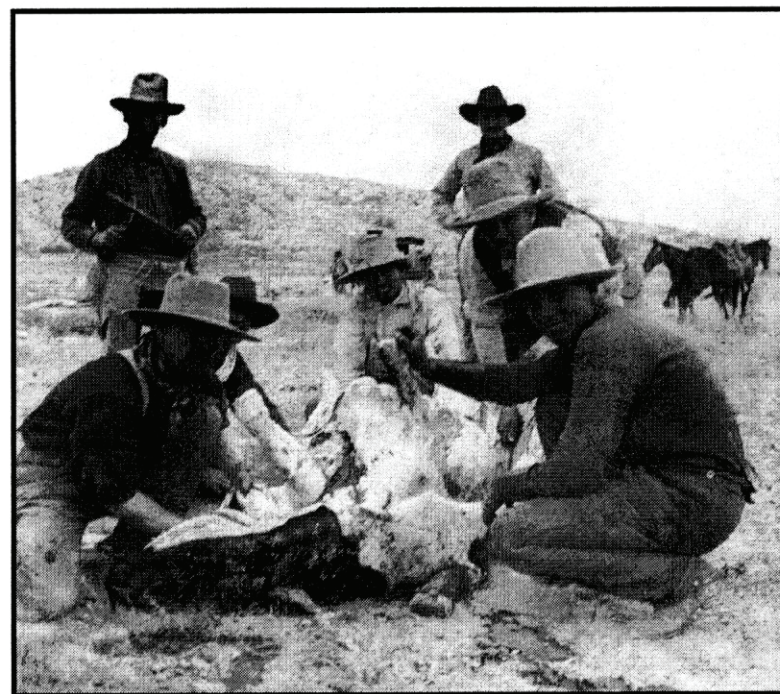


Photo courtesy of Choate family
Chiricahua Cattle Company in the Sulphur Springs Valley about 1906.

its worth. John Bourke, an aide to Gen. Crook, and still chasing Apaches in 1877, wrote that he didn't think the valley was being utilized properly and that "...The Sulphur Springs Valley has been occupied by cattlemen to the exclusion of the farmer, despite the fact that all along its length one can find water by digging a few feet beneath the surface." The valley, Bourke thought, would be more profitably employed in the cultivation of "The grape and cereals than as a cattle range."⁶⁹ Bourke proved himself to be something of a visionary, for within the next 25 years farmers would be competing with cattlemen for valley land.

Hiram C. Hodge, writing in the same year, 1877, said "The Sulphur Springs Valley is now almost entirely worthless for

farming purposes, as it is almost wholly destitute of water, except from a series of springs....These springs afford water sufficient for thousands of cattle, horses, etc., but not for farm irrigation.” Hodge added an interesting bit of historical data (or hearsay) by stating that 50 years earlier a wealthy Spaniard had a herd of 60,000 cattle in the valley.⁷⁰ It’s hard to believe that the above two men, when evaluating the same region during the same year, could arrive at opposite opinions.

Hodge’s book supplies us with one more piece of historical data. He says that in 1877 the Southern Pacific Mail Line was still running through Apache Pass via Sulphur Springs to San Diego. It maintained a three-times-per-week schedule, and took eight days to travel from Mesilla (near present-day Las Cruces, New Mexico) to San Diego.⁷¹

Although cattle ranchers were moving into the Sulphur Springs Valley, several groups of Apaches were still active in southeastern Arizona and Mexico. In early 1883, Geronimo and his followers had jumped the reservation and were raiding in Mexico. After several months of marauding, word reached Gen. Crook in the Sierra Madre Mountains of Mexico that Geronimo was ready to return and become a “good Apache.”

Lt. Britton Davis was sent to the Mexico border with orders to escort Geronimo to the San Carlos reservation.⁷²

Lt. Davis was amazed to see that in addition to Geronimo’s 26 warriors and 70 women and children, he was also bringing back 350 head of cattle stolen from Mexican ranches. The return route Davis selected was “via Sulphur Springs Ranch, a small cattle ranch thirty miles west of Fort Bowie.” Geronimo also wanted to camp at Sulphur Springs for at least three days in order to rest the cattle. He wasn’t concerned about his people because he knew they were strong and healthy, but he was concerned that his cattle were losing weight and the drive was taking all the fat off them.⁷³

To illustrate Apache toughness and stoic resolve, Lt. Davis wrote that shortly before reaching Sulphur Springs a pregnant woman rode off from the group just long enough to give birth,

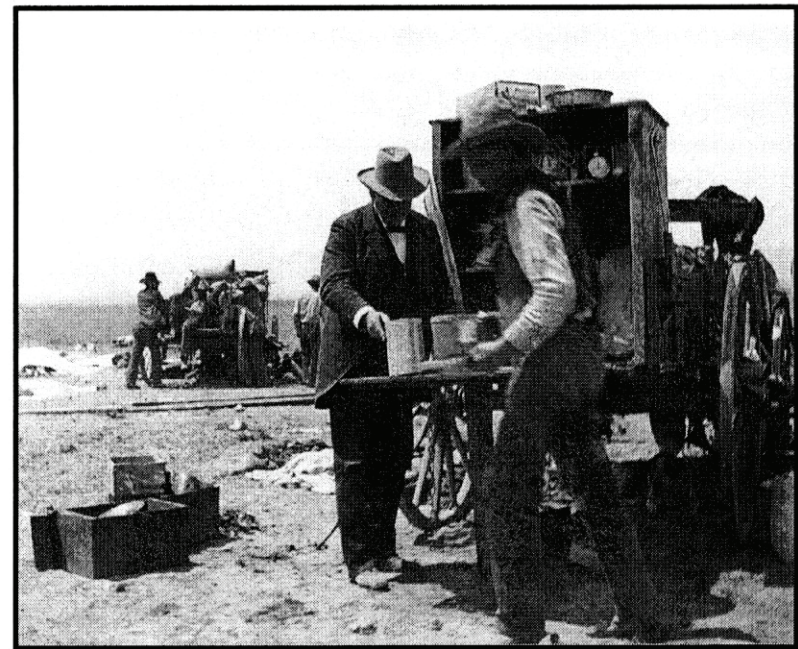


Photo courtesy of Choate family
Chiricahua Cattle Company wagon in Sulphur Spring Valley about 1906.

and then rejoined the others at Sulphur Springs.

In writing of his experience with Geronimo’s people, Davis went out of his way to describe Sulphur Springs, including details that are both puzzling and enlightening. He says, “Sulphur Springs was then the headquarters of a small ranch. An adobe wall four or five feet high enclosed the spring and a low adobe ranch house with a porch on the front. A small gate in the wall before the house formed the entrance to the enclosure. On all sides the valley stretched away as level as a floor.” Davis emphasizes the unusual nature of the ranch by stating that the adobe wall surrounded at least two acres, including the ranch house and the spring.⁷⁴ Today there is no evidence that an adobe wall encircled the entire spring and ranch house area.

When Davis and Geronimo arrived at Sulphur Springs Ranch

they were met by a U. S. Marshal and a Collector of Customs from Nogales. The marshal was there to arrest Geronimo for murder and the customs agent wanted him for smuggling contraband; that is to say, the stolen cattle. They ordered Davis to take Geronimo and the cattle to Tucson to await trial.

Davis, however, was determined to follow his army orders. Late that night, after drinking whiskey with the two officials, Davis and Geronimo arranged to have all the warriors, women, children, horses, soldiers and cattle slip silently away from the ranch and head toward San Carlos. They moved very slowly at first, careful not to make a sound, and by dawn were many miles away. When the marshal and customs agent awoke that morning, they found themselves alone at the ranch and without any idea as to the whereabouts of Geronimo. Out-foxed, the agents gave up and returned to Tucson. Davis, who had stayed behind at the ranch, got a firsthand lesson in how amazingly elusive Apaches could be.

Before leaving for Tucson, the marshal said to Davis, "It was a mighty slick trick, Lieutenant, but I would have never believed it possible if I had not seen it."⁷⁵

Geronimo was forced to relinquish his cattle at San Carlos and the money from their sale was sent to the ranchers in Mexico. Within a year, Geronimo and 143 of his people left the reservation again and made history in what became known as the Geronimo Campaign.

In November of 1883, a Captain Rafferty was escorting a large group of Apaches back to San Carlos from Mexico. They, too, spent one day resting at Sulphur Springs ranch. John Rockfellow spent the day with them, as did several other cowboys and miners. While mingling among the Apaches, Rockfellow noticed that these Indians had all sorts of loot stolen from Mexico – the latest rifles, binoculars, silver bridles, colorful Mexican clothing and a good-sized herd of horses.

Strangely, two white captive children were with the Apaches; a boy of 12 or 13 and a girl about 7 years old. When questioned by an interpreter, the children claimed to be Indians and

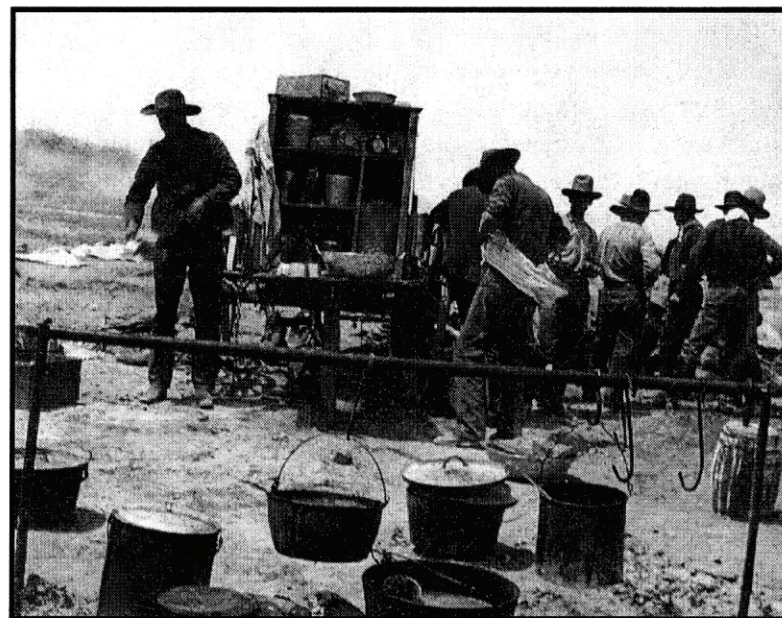


Photo courtesy of Choate family
Chiricahua Cattle Company wagon in Sulphur Spring Valley about 1906.

seemed very afraid of both their Apache captors and the white people trying to talk to them. Rockfellow concluded by saying, "I don't know what finally became of them, whether they were claimed by relatives or provided an education by our government."⁷⁶

In the spring of 1885, eight ranchers consolidated their holdings into one huge ranch covering most of the northern half of the Sulphur Springs Valley. This ranch, known as the Chiricahua Cattle Company, included the land and ranch house of the Sulphur Springs Boys. The corporate office was in Tombstone and the ranch headquarters was at the El Dorado ranch house near the base of the Chiricahua Mountains. The ranch house at Sulphur Springs was used thereafter as a line camp and roundup center.⁷⁷

The decade of the 1880s proved to be the heyday for Sulphur Springs Valley ranching. Nearly everyone did well during

those years, except for those few ranchers who were killed by Apaches. However, overstocking the available grasslands, the drought of 1891-92 and falling cattle prices brought about the demise of the open-range cattle industry. Although cattle ranching never ceased, farmers began to homestead throughout the valley and barbed-wire fences went up. From 1900 onward, the cattle industry declined and changed methods, while farming and mining increased.⁷⁸

While ranchers were doing well during the 1880s, a few scattered Apache renegades were still creating havoc from time to time. Another good example of their stealth occurred at the Sulphur Springs ranch in October 1885. Charles Lummis, a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times* who had come to Arizona to follow the Geronimo Campaign, wrote from Ft. Bowie that Ulzanna and his band of Apaches, while fleeing from Gen. Crook's cavalry, stole all the horses at the Sulphur Springs ranch. They accomplished this feat in the dead of night, taking down some corral posts and silently leading away more than 30 good mounts, all without waking the cowboys sleeping in the ranch house.⁷⁹

Crook, however, in his report written a few months later, stated that the Apaches took the above horses under circumstances that made it evident that "several men who were in the ranch house knew what was going on. Although there were only three Indians in the raiding party, no attempt was made to prevent the stock from being taken."

Crook made several complaints against Arizona cowboys during this period. He believed the cowboys were unwilling to help the army deal with the remaining renegade Chiricahuas. Lummis came to the defense of the cowboys by explaining that the cowboys were not afraid of the Apaches, but didn't think it was part of their job to fight Indians either for the army or for the ranch owners. The cowboys, said Lummis, were generally willing and able to fight with guns or fists, but they had to have a personal reason.⁸⁰

Rockfellow, a partner with Walter Servoss in the NY Ranch a

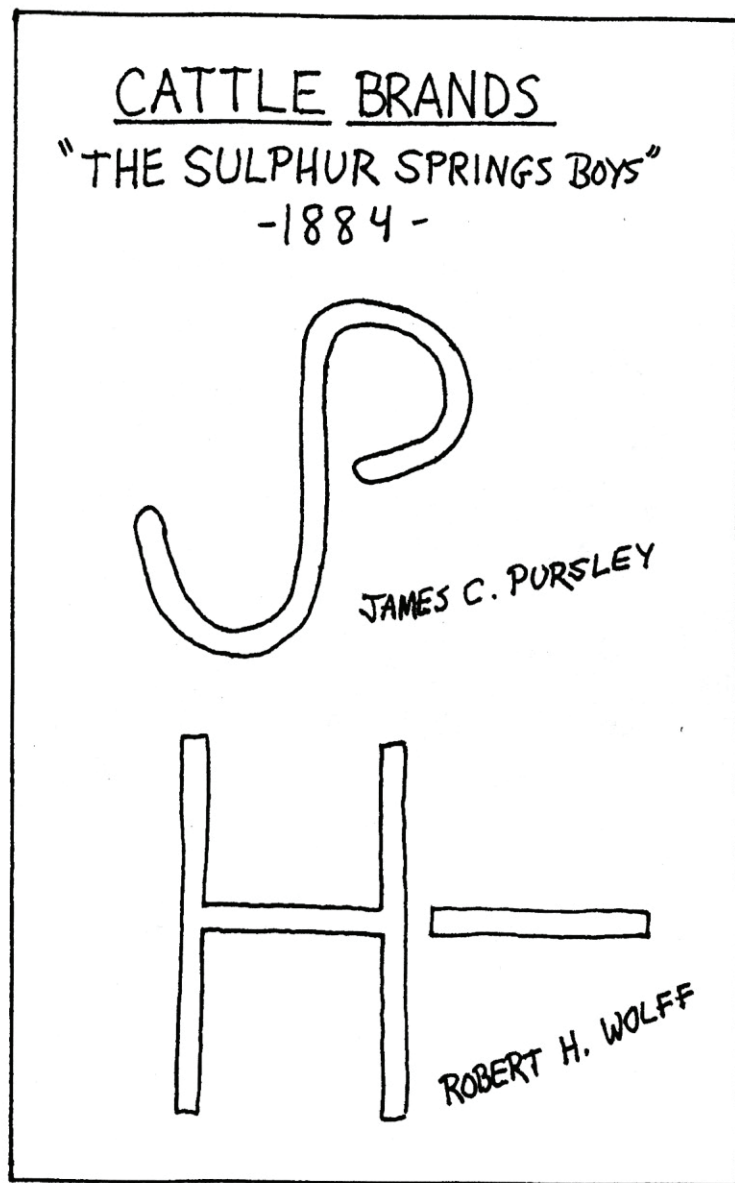


Photo courtesy of Choate family

Jack Busenbark on horse, wagon boss, Chiricahua Cattle Co. Sulphur Springs Valley 1906.

few miles west of the Sulphur Springs ranch, wrote an entirely different account of the above incident. He claimed that when the Apaches stole the "fifty or more horses and mules" from the Sulphur Springs corral that night, the cowboys thought some animal had frightened the stock and caused them to break out. Rockfellow says, "As soon as daylight came, closer examination showed moccasin tracks, which told the story."⁸¹

Rockfellow rode immediately to Dragoon village where he ran



into Capt. Henry Lawton of Ft. Bowie. The two men sent a telegram to Crook stating that "...Sulphur Springs ranch raided this morning before daylight and Indians headed south..." Crook ignored the telegram and ordered most of his troops north toward Ft. Grant, thinking there might be a breakout at San Carlos.

Meanwhile, 15 cowboys, who managed to find horses to ride, started after the Indians who had taken the old Fronteras road to Mexico. By the time the cowboys were on the Indians' trail, the Apaches turned west into the Dragoon Mountains where they were safe from attack. Rockfellow blamed Crook for not paying attention to his telegram. If Crook had sent his troops south, Rockfellow says, the results could have been entirely different.⁸²

John Bourke, in his book *On the Border With Crook*, does not mention the event but writes rather prosaically that the

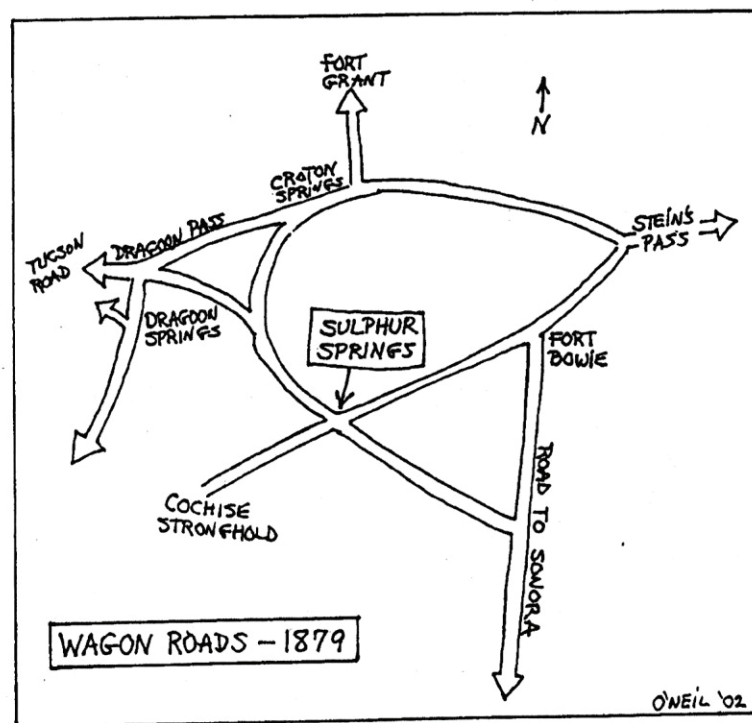




Photo courtesy of Arizona Historical Society/Tucson
The adobe wall at Sulphur Springs may have looked like this one near San Simon.

Chiricahua Cattle Company had "an excellent rancho at Sulphur Springs, twenty-five miles from Fort Bowie," and that as late as 1891 had a contract to supply 500,000 pounds of beef per year to the Apaches at San Carlos.⁸³

The completion of the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1880 eliminated the need for the east-west stagecoach route, and towns sprang up along the railroad. Benson and Willcox came into being in 1880, followed by Bowie and San Simon in 1881, and Cochise in 1886. The mining towns of Bisbee and Tombstone attracted thousands of people, and due to this increase in population, Cochise County became an entity in 1881.

Sulphur Springs in the 20th Century

Homesteaders began moving into the Sulphur Springs Valley before the turn of the century, but the Desert Land Act of 1909, which increased the amount of land a person could homestead to 640 acres, encouraged farming throughout Arizona.⁸⁴ The previous limit was 160 acres. Many families from Kansas took

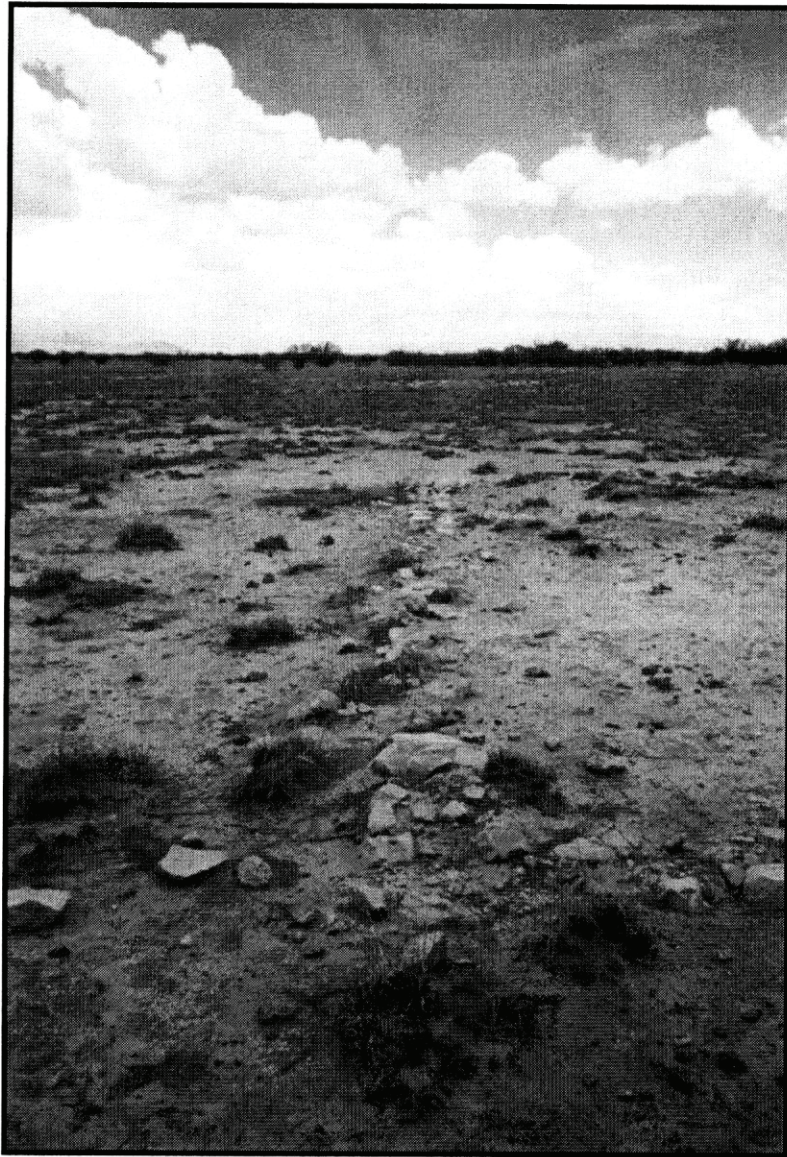
advantage of the new land act and established Kansas Settlement south of Willcox.

Arizona obtained statehood on Valentine's Day, 1912. One year later, the Arizona Good Roads Association published a guide book for a new breed of American traveler, the motorist. The book contained more than a dozen maps illustrating that all the old wagon roads were becoming automobile roads, and every town in Cochise County placed ads in the book that would appeal to tourists and homesteaders. Willcox, Benson, San Simon, Douglas, Bisbee, Bowie and Cochise promised cheap government farmland, abundant water and an enviable climate.

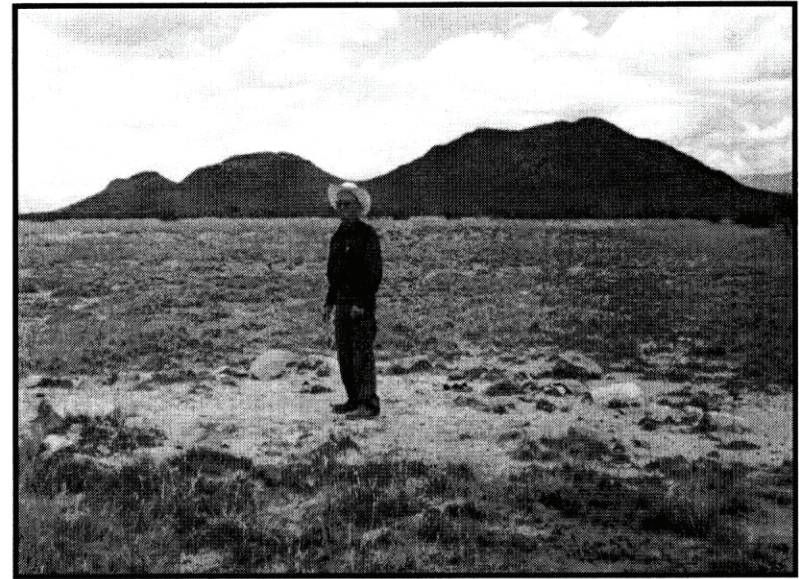
The guide book encouraged new-comers with these seductive words: "In the Sulphur Springs Valley an almost unlimited supply of water can be obtained from ten to two hundred feet below the surface...Hundreds of windmills and pumps...are used throughout the valley for stock raising and irrigation purposes....Cotton, tobacco, alfalfa, corn, sugar cane, cereals,



Photo courtesy Arizona Historical Society/Tucson
Rare photo of 1930s picnic at Sulphur Springs.



Stone foundation of ranch at Sulphur Springs.



Ray Blanke standing inside Stage Station ruins at Sulphur Springs in 2000. Three Sisters in background.

vegetables and fruits can be produced in profusion....There are hundreds of thousands of acres of government land left, and it is practically free."⁸⁵

By 1913, many sections of land surrounding Sulphur Springs had been claimed by homesteaders. It is uncertain how long the Sulphur Springs ranch house continued to be used. A survey, completed in 1913, shows that the ranch house was still there, as well as the wagon roads that ran east and west from the springs.⁸⁶

The ranch house must have been torn down sometime between 1915 and 1925. Ray Blanke, who was born in 1918 at the A.C. Blanke homestead east of Sulphur Springs, recalls that his grandfather took all the adobe bricks from the stage station in order to build a workshop at his farm. Ray does not remember ever seeing any buildings at Sulphur Springs. He does remember, however, seeing two graves on the west side of the hill, which are no longer visible. Other homesteaders in the area likely had the same idea as Ray's grandfather and removed all

usable materials from the site.

The 1940 edition of the W.P.A.-sponsored Arizona guide book gives a rather bleak description of the Sulphur Springs locale. It states, "The old emigrant trail that crosses the present highway (today's Highway 191), was used by the Butterfield stage line....For many years the old trail was marked with the wrecks of wagons, half covered by drifting sands, skeletons of horses and mules, and the bones of cattle that had died of thirst."

The guide book goes on to say that as of 1940, there was a dirt road that went to Sulphur Springs, six miles east of the old highway, and that Sulphur Springs was the only place for water between Apache Pass and Dragoon Springs. The book concludes its comments by saying that Sulphur Springs "...is now a watering place for livestock."⁸⁷

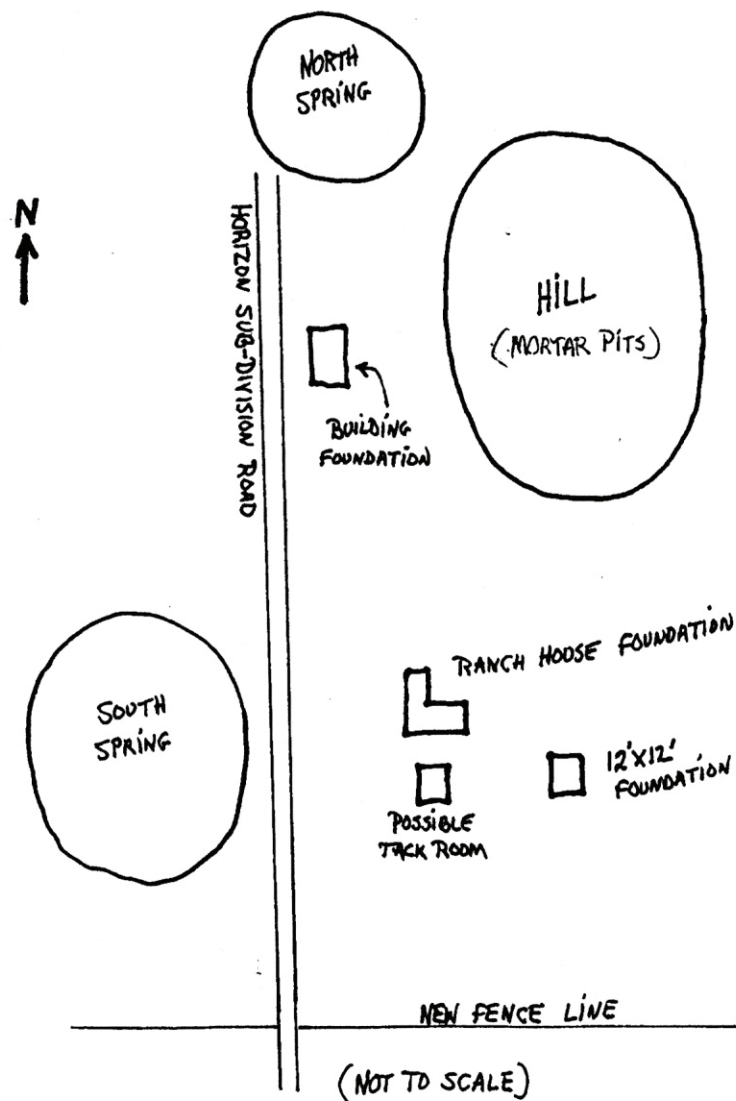
The chronological record of ownership of the section of land surrounding the Sulphur Springs site needs to be mentioned, if only for the purpose of providing data for future research. This piece of land is officially designated as Section 33 in Township 16 South, Range 25 East, in the Gila and Salt River Meridian.

As mentioned earlier, James C. Pursley and Robert Wolff shared the spring for many years, but on Nov. 5, 1892 Pursley obtained title to the land around the south spring. The deed to his 160 acres is on file at the Cochise County Recorder's Office. Oddly enough, Pursley sold the land immediately and bought a farm near Safford.

Henry G. Boice and his brother Frank took control of the Chiricahua Cattle Company in 1911 and changed the name to the Chiricahua Ranches Company. By that time the Boices owned Pursley's quarter section of Sulphur Springs property. Then, on Jan. 31, 1938, the Boices sold nearly the entire Sulphur Springs section (560 acres) to John C. Riggs. According to Ray Blanke, Karl Albert Roth leased the acreage from Riggs and ran cattle on 10 sections of adjacent land for a number of years.

When John C. Riggs died in 1944, his wife, Nettie Riggs, inherited one-half of his estate which amounted to several

SULPHUR SPRINGS TODAY



thousand acres. The remaining half was equally divided between four heirs: John Stark Riggs, Ellerbe Riggs, Paul W. Riggs and Jeannette Riggs Roll. Betty N. Kendall, the granddaughter of Napoleon Igo, owned the remaining 80 acres of the Sulphur Springs section. The Riggs heirs divided their interests and Paul W. Riggs received the Sulphur Springs land.

In 1961, Paul Riggs sold the above acres to the Southwestern Farm and Cattle Co., who, in turn, sold to the Horizon Land Corporation in 1963. The Horizon Land Corporation subdivided many sections of land around Sulphur Springs into 20-acre parcels and these parcels became part of Arizona Sun Sites units No. 9 and No. 10.⁸⁸ When subdividing the land, road graders criss-crossed the historic site, which makes it difficult to reconstruct how the area appeared in the 1800s.

The 80-acre property on which the historic site is located was then sold to Olga McKinney of Tucson. Within the past year, 2003, the property was sold to Michael and Peggy Williams who live west of Sulphur Springs.

Mike and Peggy Williams bought the land in order to preserve and protect it against cattle, careless visitors and souvenir hunters. They have fenced the entire site and have given notice that permission to visit the area will be restricted to those who have a legitimate interest in Sulphur Springs history.

Today the site offers visitors a mixed experience. The building foundations are intact but the springs are dry and the area has been picked clean of important artifacts. Only an occasional pottery fragment and the many mortar pits remain to remind us that Sulphur Springs was once a major center of activity.

While standing on the hill and looking in all directions, it's hard to imagine the countless events that took place at the springs during the past thousand years or more. Most of the stories that could have been told perished along with those who made the springs so important in Sulphur Springs Valley history. Yet, even the few facts and anecdotes that remain seem to be enough to justify the claim by some that Sulphur Springs is the most important historic site in the valley.

Notes

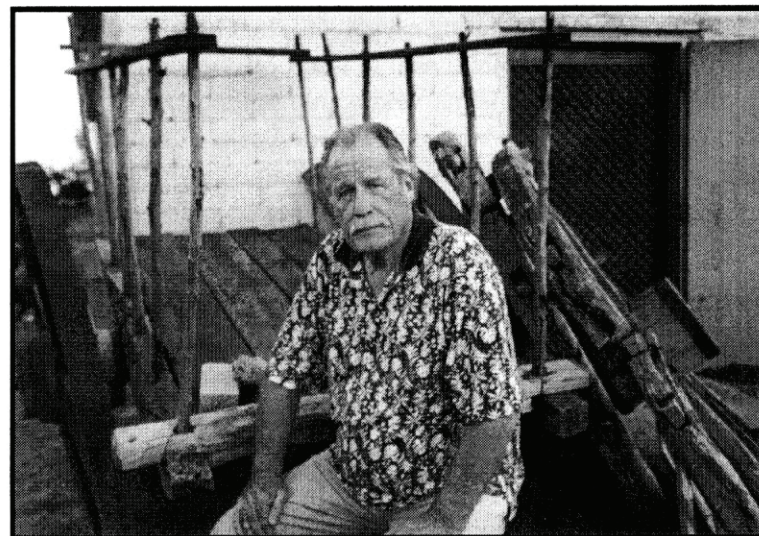
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Harry O'Neil

About the author

Harry O'Neil received his B.A. from the California State University at Long Beach in cultural anthropology, sociology and history. He has a master's degree from St. John's College Graduate Institute in classical philosophy and literature. Harry taught for several years at the high school and college levels, and has traveled widely throughout much of the world. He is retired and lives in Richland Ranchettes. His main interests are great literature and Cochise County history.

Dear readers,

Cochise County Historical Society members are pleased and proud to have joined forces with the Sulphur Springs Valley Historical Society in putting up the long overdue monument to Sulphur Springs. This historic site is finally

getting some much deserved recognition.

We commend Harry O'Neil for his dedication in working to bring his dream of a monument to fruition. Harry's talents include exhaustive historical research; compiling this information into a fascinating article and then helping to raise funds to finance the project. And to top it off, he almost single-handedly constructed this marvelous monument, stone by stone. The rocks, by the way, came from Cochise Stronghold. To say the least, Harry is versatile! Not only that, he is modest. Harry, we eagerly look forward to your next project.

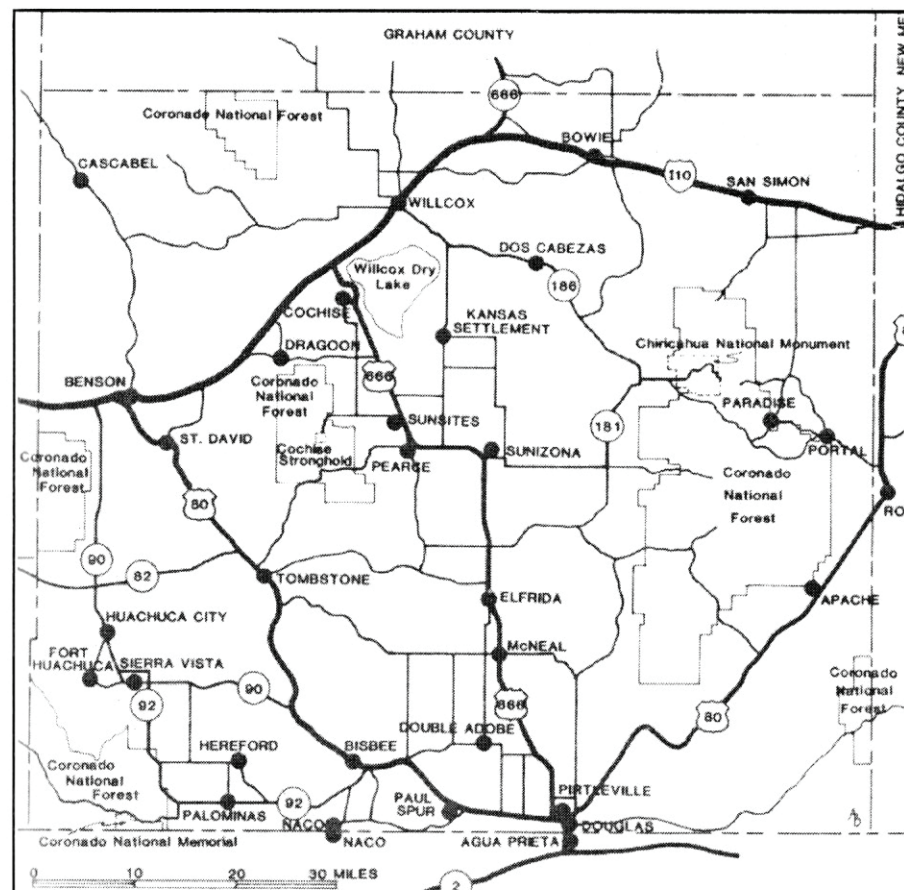
The Editorial Committee

Wording on the Monument plaque is as follows:

Sulphur Springs

This valley owes its name to the two springs located one mile north of this monument. From 400 A.D. to 1450 A.D. indigenous Indians farmed the region. Their bedrock mortar pits remain on the nearby hill. Later, Chiricahua Apaches, Spaniards, Mexicans, Anglo-American immigrants and U.S. Soldiers used the springs as a camping ground. Between 1857 and 1878 several stage lines, including the Butterfield Overland Stage Company, operated a relay station here. In 1872, with Tom Jeffords as agent, the springs became the first headquarters of the short-lived "Chiricahua Indian Reservation." As a result of selling whiskey to the Indians in 1876, storekeepers Nick Rogers and O.O. Spence were murdered and the Apaches were removed to San Carlos. Cattlemen James Pursley and Robert Wolff, known as "The Sulphur Springs Boys," ranched here until 1885, when they merged with the famous Chiricahua Cattle Company.

Sulphur Springs Valley Historical Society
Cochise County Historical Society
October 2004



Cochise County, Arizona

Cochise County Historical Society Membership Information

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