

Arizona History
AZT Passage 4-Temporal Gulch
by Preston Sands

This passage begins near the former route of the New Mexico and Arizona Railroad. During the early 1880's, the Southern Pacific was the dominant railroad in southern Arizona. The Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railroad had grand plans of entering southern Arizona and then heading south to the Mexican coast, threatening the Southern Pacific's position. These two transcontinental railroads reached an agreement in June 1881, and the Santa Fe began building the New Mexico and Arizona Railroad south from Benson toward Nogales and the Mexican border, passing through the future site of Patagonia along the way. Ranches and mines along the route, including the Tombstone and Patagonia mines, profited greatly from a form of shipping far faster than the horse and wagon teams they had been using. By the 1950's, however, the railroad had outlived its usefulness, as mines in the area had shut down, and most ranchers were shipping their cattle by truck. The New Mexico and Arizona Railroad had one last moment of glory in 1954, when the movie *Oklahoma* was filmed along its tracks in the Sonoita area north of Patagonia. The steam locomotive used in the film was saved from becoming scrap metal, and is on display in downtown Tucson. The tracks were removed in 1962, and only photographs and memories remain.

The prominent, rocky summit to the west is Mount Wrightson, also known as "Old Baldy." At 9,453 feet in elevation, this peak is the high point of the Santa Rita Mountains. This scenic landmark was named for William Wrightson, mine manager at the Santa Rita Silver Mining Company and publisher of Arizona's first newspaper in Tubac, *The Weekly Arizonian*, in 1859. Wrightson was killed by Apaches while surveying a mining claim in the early 1860's. Army Captain Richard Ewell, in charge of Fort Buchanan in the Santa Rita foothills, was referred to as "Old Baldy" by those that knew him, due to his receding hairline. This nickname seemed fitting for the bald summit of Mount Wrightson as well, and his friends named the peak in his honor.

In November of 1958, six Boy Scouts from Tucson headed into the Santa Rita Mountains to hike to the summit of Mount Wrightson. Unbeknownst to them and weather forecasters, a freak snowstorm was on its way. As darkness fell, the weather began to deteriorate, and the six Scouts found themselves high on the mountainside below the peak. Three decided to continue on to the summit, while the other three headed back down to their campsite at the base of Mount Wrightson. The three returning Scouts awoke early the next morning to heavy, falling snow. The three that had pushed on to the summit still had not returned, so the worried boys trudged through deep snow to seek help from a nearby lodge. A massive search party gave a heroic effort in six feet of snow on the peak. But days turned into weeks, and the search was eventually called off. The three missing Scouts were finally located, but it was too late. A memorial to them is located along the trail where they spent their final hours.

Between Casa Blanca Canyon and Gardner Canyon, the trail parallels an old ditch that was created to bring water from Casa Blanca Canyon to the mines of the Kentucky Camp and the Greaterville area to the north.

The last few miles of this passage follows Gardner Canyon to the vicinity of the old Gardner or Apache Springs Ranch. An Arizona pioneer and all-around colorful, rugged character, Thomas Gardner came west and first settled near the Arizona-Mexico border in 1859, where he sold vegetables and beef to the miners at Mowry. Gardner married Gertrude Apodaca from Sonora, and the couple raised twelve children together. Josephine Peak, a high peak on the south side of Mount Wrightson, was named for his daughter Josephine, who passed away while only a child. Gardner spent a few years in the Sonoita Valley before establishing a homestead in the foothills of the Santa Rita Mountains in 1872. During his time in the Santa Ritas, Gardner sold cattle to the surrounding towns and mines, and operated a sawmill. Gardner was said to be a friend to many, and loved recounting stories of early Arizona life. During a trip to Tucson by wagon, Gardner was shot twice in the chest by two Apaches after his rifle failed to fire. The tough-as-nails Gardner stuck cloth into his wounds and retreated to his ranch to recover. Intent on retiring upon reaching his mid-seventies, Gardner sold his ranch in the Santa Rita Mountains and moved to Patagonia, where he spent the last years of his life.

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