

**Arizona History**  
**AZT Passage 7-Huachuca Mountains**  
**by Preston Sands**

Davidson Canyon, which this passage parallels for much of its length, was a particularly dangerous stretch of wagon road in Arizona's early frontier days. Mail carrier Joe Black was transporting Lieutenant Reid Stewart from Camp Crittenden to Tucson one August day in 1872, while a soldier escort brought up the rear for protection. Black had suggested to Stewart that they wait until nightfall to travel this dangerous area, as he had always done, in order to avoid any surprise attacks by Apaches. Stewart was in a hurry to get to Tucson, though, so Black urged their wagon onward. Black and Stewart's wagon was soon out of sight of the soldiers. When the soldiers caught up to the wagon again, they discovered Stewart lying on the ground with a bullet hole in his head, while Black and the horses were nowhere to be seen. The soldiers soon came upon Black's body, covered in over one hundred lance and knife wounds, and charred from having been tied to a burning tree by Chiricahua Apache warriors.

The broad pass between the Santa Rita Mountains to the south and the Rincon Mountains to the north has long been an important travel route. In 1846, during its war with Mexico, the United States military sent 340 Latter Day Saints under the command of Captain Phillip St. George Cooke on a road building mission to California, through what would eventually become Arizona. Entering southeastern Arizona, the "Mormon Battalion" carved a road north along the San Pedro River, and then turned west to pass through the area on the northern end of this Arizona Trail passage. Aside from an empty threat from a Mexican commander in Tucson, the Mormon Battalion encountered little resistance on their march, and completed their road into California in early 1847. Their new road, known as the Gila Trail or the Cooke Wagon Road, became an important travel route during the California Gold Rush of 1849.

In 1857, John Butterfield was awarded a government contract to build and operate a mail and stagecoach route between Missouri and San Francisco. The chosen route would travel through southern Arizona to avoid interference from winter snows, and often made use of the old Gila Trail. Following a year of hard work, stagecoach drivers began their runs over this 2,800-mile trail in September of 1858. With John Butterfield's determination and motto of "...nothing on God's earth must stop the United States mail," the Butterfield Overland Mail route was a success. Stagecoaches would continue almost nonstop along the route, pausing only briefly to exchange horses and obtain water from a series of stagecoach stations located every 20 to 40 miles. It was a dangerous job, and the stage stations, as well as the employees, were often the victims of violent attacks. When the American Civil War erupted in early 1861, the U.S. government had fears of Confederate Army interference with the mail delivery, and discontinued the Butterfield Overland Mail as a result.

The desert foothills surrounding Tucson were once home to a top-secret Cold War program – the Titan Missile Silos. Eighteen subterranean missile bunkers were located around Tucson, and the Arizona Trail passes near one of the old missile sites on the midpoint of this passage. Armed with nuclear weapon payloads, these missiles were hidden in the earth

in 1963 at the height of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. Thankfully, they were never needed, and the missiles around Tucson were taken off-line in the early 1980's. The Titan Missile Museum opened in 1987, and offers tours of another missile silo on the southwestern side of Tucson.

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