

**Arizona History**  
**AZT Passage 17-Alamo Canyon**  
**by Preston Sands**

This passage of the Arizona Trail travels through historic mining country. One of Arizona's largest silver strikes, the Silver King Mine, occurred in 1875 in the mountains north of this area. As a result, a silver rush of sorts brought in many prospectors and would-be miners, all hoping to cash in on the mineral riches that were surely to be found in the area. One of these men was J. DeNoon Reymert. A lawyer and journalist by trade Reymert founded and published the *Pinal Drill*, the area's first newspaper, in the lively boomtown of Pinal during the early 1880's. Reymert's best known contribution to the area may have been his discovery of a rich silver mine a couple of miles west of today's Arizona Trail route. This silver strike became the Reymert Mine, which spawned a large mining camp to support the mine workers, and a secondary mill town nearby, known as DeNoon. While the town of DeNoon was short-lived, the town of Reymert, along with the Reymert Mine, lingered on until the 1950's, reportedly producing around \$700,000 dollars of silver during its lifetime. Reymert is a ghost town today, with abandoned mine workings being the only evidence of its existence.

Along the horizon to the east, a massive cliff wall known as Apache Leap towers over the surrounding hills. Apache Leap takes its name from a tragic incident that was said to have taken place atop its rocky crest. While there is no official documentation of the incident, the story is considered by many to be historical fact. The story goes that a band of Pinal Apaches had a camp on top of Apache Leap, from which they would stage occasional raids upon the settlements in the desert flats to the west. Following these raids, the Apaches would retreat back into the mountains to the safety of their nearly inaccessible camp. Sometime around 1870, a group of angry locals, along with a military escort, decided to attack the Apache's camp in retaliation for a recent raid. After some searching among the cliffs and canyon walls, this vigilante group located the route to the top of Apache Leap and surrounded the Apaches' camp. The surprised Apaches, unable to retreat due to their camp's location near the cliff edge, began to perish in droves under the merciless rifle fire of their attackers. In an act of desperation, the remaining Apaches chose to leap to their deaths over the cliff edge, rather than face slaughter at the hands of their enemies. For decades afterward, many claimed that the bones of the fallen Apaches could still be seen, scattered among the rocks below Apache Leap.

The Apache Leap incident gave rise to the legend of Apache Tears. The numerous obsidian nuggets found in the rocks below Apache Leap were said to be the tears of the Apache women whose husbands had died on Apache Leap. When held up to a light source, Apache Tears, although black, reveal themselves to be translucent.

Near the end of this passage, the Arizona Trail skirts the western side of the massive, fortress-like Picketpost Mountain. Atop this mountain, the U.S. Army operated a "heliograph" station, which was basically a signal mirror for rapidly relaying messages between other heliograph stations on distant mountaintops. Just northeast of Picketpost Mountain is the site of Camp Picket Post, an army fort in use during the 1870's.

After Camp Picket Post closed, the ground it stood upon became the site of Pinal, a booming mining and milling town during the late 1870's and 1880's that owed its existence to the Silver King Mine. Heavily laden ore wagons from the Silver King Mine were hauled several miles south to Pinal, where the ore was milled, thanks to the reliable water source of Queen Creek. Pinal is said to have home to around 2,000 residents during its peak. Nothing remains of Pinal or Camp Picket Post, save for some barely discernable foundations and a few old wells that have long since run dry. The Pinal Cemetery, located near the site of the old town, is the final resting place of Celia Ann Blaylock, also known as Mattie Blaylock or Mattie Earp. Blaylock was Wyatt Earp's one-time girlfriend, who passed away of Laudanum (opium) poisoning in 1888, during the decline of Pinal.

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