

**Arizona History**  
**AZT Passage 19-Superstition Wilderness**  
**by Preston Sands**

Rogers Trough Trailhead was named for James Rogers, an early miner in the area who staked a number of promising silver and gold mining claims with his partners in the canyon that now bears his name. Rogers and his partners established a cabin, garden and small camp near Rogers Spring, at the foot of Iron Mountain. During 2004-2005, Ron Feldman and his crew excavated an old mining tunnel they believed to be from the Spanish or Mexican era. Their findings indicated that the mine did indeed date from the Mexican era, prior to 1860, but no treasure or valuable ore was located. Mexican era mining figures prominently in many versions of the Lost Dutchman Mine legend.

In the early 20th century, the Woodbury family operated a mill to process ore from their claims in the vicinity. Little remains to be seen at the old mill site, shown as Rogers Trough on topographical maps. A number of old silver mines lie hidden beneath heavy chaparral growth on the west side of Rogers Canyon.

A little ways off the AZT route in Rogers Canyon are the ruins of a 13th century cliff dwelling constructed by the Salado people. The Salado occupied the area between the Hohokam people of Arizona's central desert regions and the Ancestral Puebloan people of Arizona's northern highland region. You can find ample evidence of Salado culture throughout central Arizona in the form of pueblos, cliff dwellings and colorful pottery.

One of the most popular locations along this passage is Reavis Ranch. Sometime in the early 1870's Elisha Reavis left civilization behind, made his way into the heart of the wild Superstition Mountain country, and established a homestead and farm in a mountain valley that now bears his name. For over twenty years, Reavis lived in relative seclusion in his mountain home, growing vegetables, hunting, and occasionally entertaining guests. Reavis, with his unkempt appearance, long beard, and unbathed fragrance, became well known in nearby towns where he would sell his produce. Reavis was said to have been a well-educated conversationalist and maintained a library of sorts in his humble home.

After a quarter of a century living in isolation, Reavis was found dead alongside the trail between his home and Roger's Trough in the spring of 1896. He was buried where he was found, alongside the present Arizona Trail route. Following his death, Reavis' ranch property changed hands several times among area ranchers before being sold to the U.S. Forest Service and incorporated into the Superstition Wilderness in 1966.

A few miles east of Reavis Ranch is an unusual mountain top archeological site known as Circlestone. Composed of a large, circular rock wall, Circlestone is thought by some to be an ancient astronomical site.

In the foothills below the AZT route near the end of this passage is one of Arizona's best known cliff dwelling sites, Tonto National Monument. Built by the Salado people in the 13th century, these impressive cliff dwellings show evidence of the once great population in the Tonto Basin and Salt Creek area.

### References

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