

Arizona History
AZT Passage 24-Red Hills
by Preston Sands

The Red Hills passage takes you from the remote Mazatzal Mountains highlands down to the East Verde River along an old road that was constructed to access the Red Metal copper mining claims in Red Metal Canyon.

Near the north end of this passage, the route passes a low hill named Copper Mountain, overlooking the East Verde River. This area was once informally known as the "Copperas Mining District," and several mines and mining claims were located here in the early 20th century. A mining camp known as "The Coppers" was located nearby. The mines produced limited quantities of copper, gold, and silver; never enough to justify the large operations that had been anticipated. Today, one can see numerous old mine trails and nearly overgrown mining excavations crisscrossing the ridges and slopes above the Copper Mountain area.

As the Arizona Trail approaches the East Verde River, it passes Boardinghouse Canyon. Annie Hardt, who had arrived in The Coppers mining camp in 1902, opened a boarding house for the miners here. Annie was a widow who had run a stage stop in Tonto Basin, along the old stagecoach road between Globe and Payson. After her husband Heinrich's death in 1898, Annie relocated to the little town of Gisela for a few years, before moving to The Coppers. The Hardt's old stage stop in Tonto Basin is the site of today's village of Jakes Corner, on State Highway 188.

This passage comes to an end near the LF Ranch, located on a flat above the East Verde River. The perennial flowing waters of the East Verde have been attractive to all who have come upon them, as evidenced by the large number of prehistoric sites and historic ranches along its course. One of these historic ranches, the LF, was started by the Fuller family in 1909. The Fuller family was a part of the original Mormon settlers who established the settlement of Mazatzal City in 1877, a couple of miles upstream on the East Verde River. Under the new ownership of Allen Belluzzi, the LF Ranch homestead was "patented" or made a legitimate parcel of privately owned land in 1922. Today, the LF is still a working ranch. Located within the Mazatzal Wilderness area, the ranch is accessed by a private, restricted access road that was originally constructed to access the mines around Copper Mountain.

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