

Arizona History
AZT Passage 29-Mormon Lake
by Preston Sands

This passage starts north by following an old railroad route past Tie Park, which may have been named for stacks of railroad ties believed to have been stored here, for use by the Arizona Mineral Belt Railroad in the late 1880s. The railroad was projected to pass through Tie Park, but the tracklayers never made it beyond Bear Park.

To the west of the trail, beyond Tie Park, lies Broliar Park, named for Dave Broliar, a cowboy who made his living in this area capturing and taming wild horses. Broliar began a homestead in this park in 1910, constructing a cabin and barn, growing oats, potatoes, and barley, and tending to his herd of cows. Broliar lived alone and was known for telling tall tales. He passed away in 1938, and his heirs eventually sold the homestead back to Coconino National Forest. Broliar's original log cabin still stands in the picturesque park named for him.

North of Bear Park, the trail briefly drops into a side branch of Fulton Canyon, where it follows alongside a prominent roadbed of neatly stacked volcanic rocks that stretches for miles down Fulton Canyon. This rocky roadbed was the route of the Flagstaff Lumber Company Railroad during the 1920s. The Flagstaff Lumber Company was an adventurous logging outfit that laid railroad tracks all over this area during the late teens and 1920s, often using stacked rocks for roadbeds and stacks of crisscrossed logs for crude bridges.

Fulton Canyon itself was named for Harry Fulton, who started a sheep ranch here in 1881. Harry's ranching enterprise was quite successful, and he helped create the Arizona Wool Growers Association. Harry and his brother Al became ranch partners in 1886. While herding sheep along the Mogollon Rim east of Payson in 1888, Al Fulton was shot and killed by parties unknown. Al is thought by some to have been one of the victims of the bloody Pleasant Valley War, Arizona's deadliest range war, fought between cattle and sheep ranching factions.

Between Navajo Spring and Wallace Spring, the trail generally follows the Flagstaff Lumber Company Railroad's grade again, in the rocky hills overlooking Mormon Lake.

As the trail ascends the hillside north of Double Springs Campground, it crosses Forest Road 240. This road was once a branch line of the Flagstaff Lumber Company Railroad, and ascended a steep route to the western shoulder of Mormon Mountain.

As its name suggests, the Mormon Lake area was the scene of Mormon activity during the late 1870s. In 1876, Mormon colonists under the direction of Lot Smith built a sawmill a few miles south of the marshy valley that came to be known as Mormon Lake, using a steam engine that had been transported from Lee's Ferry on the Colorado River near the Utah border. The sawmill site, which later included a tannery, was known as Millville. Along the western shore of the lake, these Mormons began a successful dairy farm in 1878, near the site of Dairy Spring. Each of these industries supplied the needs of the Mormon settlements

along the Little Colorado River to the northeast. Today, the Arizona Trail passes near Dairy Spring Campground, named for the old Mormon Dairy.

Passage 29 comes to an end at the eastern foot of Mormon Mountain, the highest and most prominent landmark in the area. Mormon Mountain was the site of extensive logging in the early 20th century, and logging roads and old railroad routes converge upon it from all directions. Today, the mountain is a mostly quiet place, visited mainly by hikers, hunters, and the service crews that maintain the communications towers atop the mountain's rolling summit.

References

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