

**Arizona History**  
**Passage 12-Red Ridge**  
by Preston Sands

This passage of the Arizona Trail begins in the upper reaches of Sabino Creek, in the mountain village of Summerhaven. In 1882, Frank Webber homesteaded this scenic and isolated valley, with the stated intention of logging. Webber was more interested in promoting his homestead as a summer retreat for heat-weary Tucsonans, however. Around 1897, Webber built a horse trail southward from his homestead, down the mountainside, and into Sabino Canyon, which empties onto the desert north of Tucson. Tucson residents now had a relatively easy way to reach the cool pine country of the Santa Catalina Mountains. As time went on, Webber's homestead grew into the summer cabin retreat of Summerhaven.

A mile west of Summerhaven is the southernmost ski area in the contiguous United States: Ski Valley. As an outgrowth of the Sahuaro Ski Club in the 1940's, Ski Valley began operations by leasing land from the Forest Service and installing a rope tow for skiers. Today, it includes two chair lifts, a number of runs, and a restaurant.

One of the Arizona's many lost mine legends is "The Mine with the Iron Door." According to this legend, somewhere in the Santa Catalina Mountains lies a lost Spanish gold mine, whose entrance was sealed with a door made of iron. This legend has been the subject of books and Hollywood films since it first came to light in Arizona's territorial days. Other local legends talk of a lost city and a lost Jesuit mission located somewhere in the Santa Catalina Mountains.

Located just east of the Arizona Trail on a spur of nearby Oracle Ridge is Marble Peak. The area around Marble Peak was the scene of much prospecting activity during the late 1800's and early 1900's. Numerous mines were discovered and opened during this time, including the Santa Catarina Copper Company, the Stratton, the Copper Hill, and the Oracle Ridge Mines. These mining ventures gave rise to the small mining communities of Catalina Camp, Apache Camp, and Congdon Camp, among others. Although the area was quiet for over 100 years, mining activity flourished again when Silver Mountain Mining began exploratory operations. The Arizona Trail used to descend from the mountains along Oracle Ridge, however due to private property issues and mining activity on and near the trail, the trail officially moved to Red Ridge in 2025. It descends to Catalina Camp, then rejoins Oracle Ridge near Dan Saddle.

As the Arizona Trail finishes its descent from Oracle Ridge, it passes the old Highjinks Ranch. The story of the Highjinks Ranch is tied to Oracle's best-known figure, William "Buffalo Bill" Cody. Cody, whose famous "Wild West Show" had captured the attention of many Americans during the late 19th century, became interested in the potential of Oracle mines through his friend Daniel Dyer. Cody and Dyer purchased the Campo Bonito Mine and formed the Campo Bonito Mining and Milling Company to develop it. This mining venture produced some tungsten and scheelite ore, but fraud on the part of the mine manager and a few employees bankrupted Cody and Dyer. During the time of his involvement in the area, Cody built a home at his High Jinx Mine, just north of the Campo Bonito mining camp. After his passing in 1917, Cody's heirs built the High Jinks Ranch at his old home site. This historic site along the Arizona Trail is still occupied, and offers water and a place to camp for trail travelers. A few foundations and long silent mine tunnels mark the site of Campo Bonito a short distance to the south.

## References

Barnes, W. C. (1988). *Arizona place names*. Tucson, AZ: The University of Arizona Press.

Leavengood, B. (2004). *Tucson hiking guide*. Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing.

Norman, B. (n.d.). Day Tripping: Box Camp Trail #22. *The Desert Leaf, July-August 2014 issue*. Retrieved from:  
[http://trendmag2.trendoffset.com/article/Day\\_Tripping/1738158/214061/article.html](http://trendmag2.trendoffset.com/article/Day_Tripping/1738158/214061/article.html)

United States Geological Survey. (1904). *Arizona tucson quadrangle*. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/topo/arizona/pclmaps-topo-az-tuscon-1904.jpg>

United States Geological Survey. (1911). *Arizona winkelman quadrangle*. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/topo/arizona/pclmaps-topo-az-winkelman-1911.jpg>

Zucker, R. (2014). *Treasures of the santa catalina mountains*. Tucson, AZ: BZB Publishing Inc.