

**IN THEIR OWN WORDS**  
**The Fraser Letters Highlight the Challenge of Early Mining in Borderland Arizona**

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## PREFACE

Our first book published in 2005, *Ruby, Arizona – Mining, Mayhem, and Murder*, is a detailed 125-year history of the Montana mine and its Ruby camp, located near the international border with Mexico. That book highlighted the notorious double murder of brothers Jack and Alexander Fraser in the Ruby general store in 1920, and introduced Jack’s wife, Ines Fraser. Our second book, *Frontier Lady of Letters – the Heroic Love Story of Ines Fraser*, published earlier this year, is a personal historical memoir, written in Ines Fraser’s voice. It’s primarily her touching love story, but also a gripping account of how Ines met incredible challenges over her entire life.

This paper is a product of our continuing research into the Fraser family and the mining history of south-central Arizona. The inspirations for this work were Bob and Al Ring’s paternal grandparents, Ambrose and Grace Ring, and their father Clinton Ring. Ambrose and Grace befriended Jack and Ines Fraser in 1905 during Ambrose’s short stay in southern Arizona as a mining engineer. Thirty three of Ambrose’s old photographs survived from that period. In the 1980s Clinton “rediscovered” the pictures in the family album; that event sparked brothers Bob and Al Ring’s interest in researching the “story behind the pictures.” Some of those photos showed the Frasers. And as they say, “The rest is history.”

During the preparation of the Ines Fraser book, Clinton died unexpectedly at the age of 89 on September 12, 2005. No one could have had a greater positive influence on us, been a more proud supporter of our research and literary efforts, or been a more loving father. We miss him dearly.

Our research has been conducted over several years. Our most important success was locating the fourth child of Jack and Ines Fraser, Constance Fraser Kiely, born just three months before her father was brutally murdered. Connie provided an historical treasure trove of family letters, photographs, documents, and memento’s. Copies of the entire historical record are maintained by co-author, Al Ring.

Bob Ring, Al Ring, Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon  
Tucson, Arizona

## **IN THEIR OWN WORDS**

### **The Fraser Letters Highlight the Challenge of Early Mining in Borderland Arizona**

#### **Introduction**

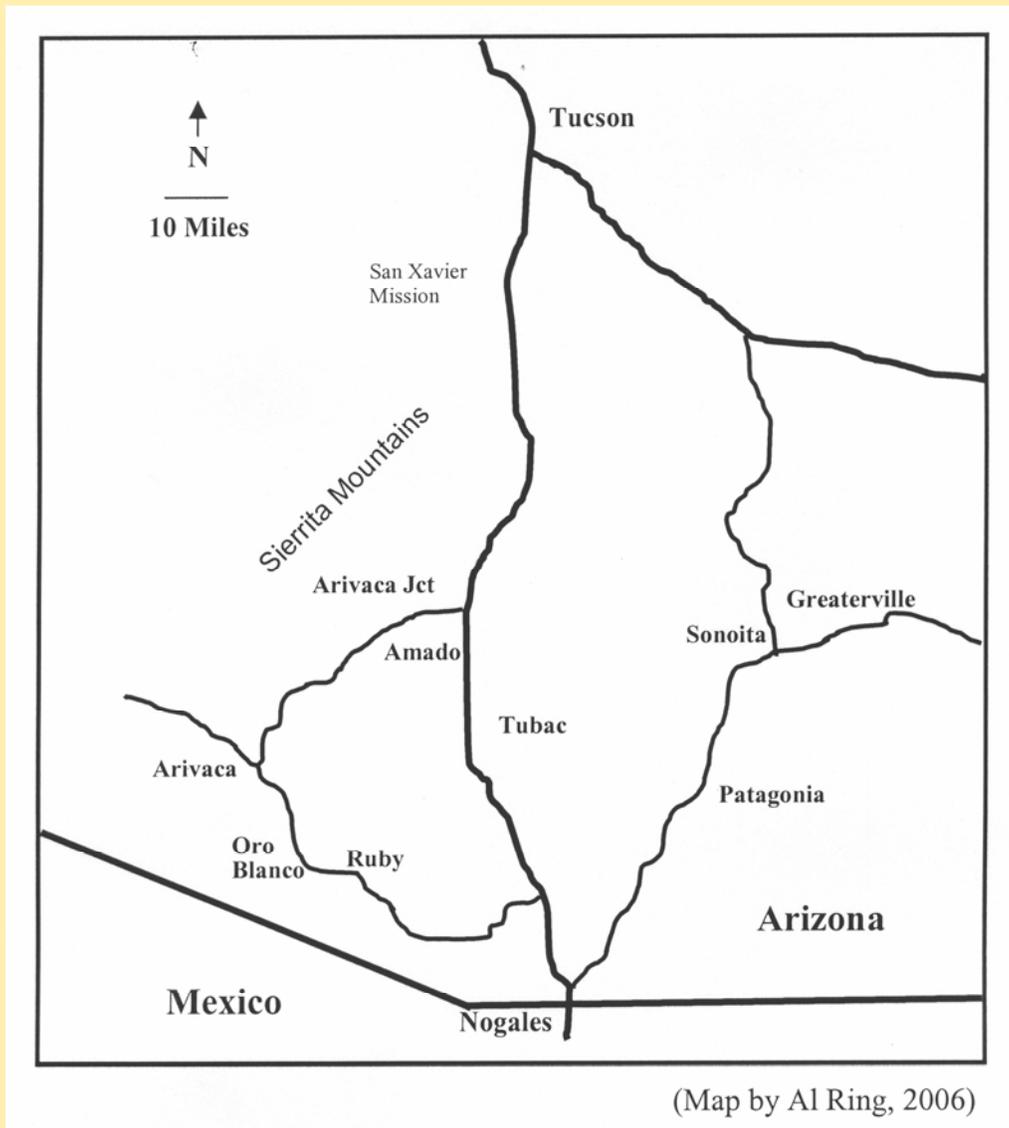
This paper provides a spiritually uplifting snapshot of Jack and Ines Fraser's incredibly difficult struggle to earn a living by mining gold in early borderland Arizona. The paper covers 1904-1920, just before and after Arizona became a state of the union in 1912. The history draws heavily on the letters written between Jack and his wife Ines, during times when they were apart, and Ines' later letters to her grandchildren.

Jack Fraser's background was almost entirely mining. He was born on May 6, 1863 in Mulgrave, Nova Scotia, Canada. His mother's family originated in Scotland and his father's family in England, but both families had lived in Mulgrave since fishing began to replace the lumber trade as the town's primary industry in the early 1800s. Jack's older brother Al immigrated to Boston in 1876, worked at a series of odd jobs for a few years, and was able to put himself through school there, earning a degree in mining engineering. Jack didn't immigrate to Boston until 1884, but immediately caught the mining fever from Al, and soon both were looking for opportunities in the far west. Al and Jack then started their long mining career together in several western states, mainly in Colorado, including Leadville, Cripple Creek, Boulder, Creede, Breckenridge, and finally the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

Ines Chinn Fraser was born and grew up in the mountains of Colorado. Ines' mother's family came from France; her father's family (Chinn) had long-time roots in Virginia. Both families ended up homesteading in Kansas. Starting as a freighter for the rapidly expanding railroad, Ines' father settled in the newly developing frontier railroad town of Salida, Colorado. Ines was born in a tent in Salida on December 6, 1880. She grew up along with the town of Salida, attending both elementary and high school there, and had strong religious training at the Baptist church. Ines attended the University of Colorado in Liberal Arts and became a full time teacher in 1902 at the mining camp of Liberty on the south slope of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains.

Jack and Ines met in the Liberty Post Office in 1902, suffered through a long engagement due to Jack's investigating mining prospects in south-central Territorial Arizona, and finally married in Salida on January 26, 1904. The newlyweds spent just a few months at the Liberty mining camp; then Jack decided that prospects for gold were better in Arizona, so he, Ines, and Jack's brother Al headed southwest "to make their fortunes."

They were going to the Oro Blanco (white gold) region, along the border with Mexico. Jack's Los Alamos (cottonwood trees) mine was isolated from civilization, even Territorial civilization. The nearest towns were Tucson, 70 miles to the northeast, and Nogales, 35 miles to the southeast. The international border with Mexico was two miles to the south. There were no railroads in this country, and no paved roads. Only horse or



*The Frasers' Los Alamos mining camp was southwest of Oro Blanco, just two miles north of the international border with Mexico.*

mule-driven wagons were available to bring in heavy, bulky mining equipment and supplies over non-existent, or at best, dirt trails. There were no substantial smelters to process the ore.

The productive gold mining activity in the border region had extinguished in the 1880s, although not everyone believed that in 1904. All the easy to reach placer gold was gone. Any gold remaining was embedded in rock, sometimes deep underground, and was very hard to separate. Besides that, the resulting ore was not very rich – all in all not a very optimistic prospect.

Other issues were worrisome also. The environment was harsh, hot, and arid much of the year. Lack of water in some areas became a critical problem. Finally, U.S. relations with Mexico were not the best. Disturbances from Mexican revolutionaries and bandits from both sides of the line were common.

This history of Jack and Ines Fraser proceeds mostly in their own words. In 1968 and 1969 Ines wrote a series of letters to her grandson, Bruce, and granddaughter-in-law, Claudia, telling them her life story. These letters frame the paper. Excerpts from Jack's letters to Ines, written between 1913 and 1920, capture the details and emotion of their life together, and the great love that bound them.

### **Mining Camp Life**

Ines Fraser reached Los Alamos mining camp in the summer of 1904. She had been married to Jack Fraser almost a year, staying in Salida, Colorado while Jack established the camp. When Ines arrived, there was no house, no water, certainly no electricity, and only a limited store of provisions. Jack and Ines faced terrible conditions, but strangely, the hard work was balanced by a happy contentment.

Sixty five years later Ines remembered those early days in a letter to her grandchildren:

“Looking back at these times, I'll say only that it was all amazing, interesting, and not real hardship, though we lived in tents for nine months after my arrival - until we built the big adobe house.

“Early in my residence in Los Alamos camp, Jack, ‘Don Chapito’ to the Mexicans, began making me a more independent person, for he said, his duties would not allow him to be with me a good share of the day and he wanted me not to have to stay right at the camp. He did take time for some walks to show me various land marks and trails which I could go to and on alone, later.

“Jack taught me to mount a burro alone, and then to do the saddling and bridling alone - and I did not like that! I had always had my men folks to attend to all courtesies expected or requested about my things, but it was not too long before the task did not seem so bad.



*After nine months living in tents at Los Alamos, the Frasers built this large adobe house on a concrete foundation.  
(Courtesy Connie Fraser Kiely, circa 1910)*



*Ines Fraser adds promising soil to the gold-separation sluice at Los Alamos.  
(Courtesy Connie Fraser Kiely, circa 1910)*

I could go further than I did before; the burro was tractable and his slowness did not bother me a bit. It just took away fear of being unable to check him if I decreed.

“Then I graduated from burro to pony and, in the early evenings Jack and I could ride down the Alamos Canyon at a trot or gallop, even, for the gravelly bed widened and made good going for about a mile and a half. Alazan, the pony, had a mind of his own and soon found out that he could be ‘boss,’ would stop on a steep trail and puff and even groan, take a few steps and repeat, and my small quirt and the child's spurs did not help get us to the top, so I’d get off and lead him.

“In the meantime, between jaunts, I studied Spanish and practiced talking with Mexican workers when they came to our camp store. I was the only woman in camp except two or three wives of the workers, who were camped just out of sight, below the point of land, where our tents were. I went to see them often, learned from them the Spanish names of the trees and other vegetation around us.

“Some of the things I was used to eating while growing up in Colorado were in short supply at Los Alamos. Fresh meat was very hard to obtain, and almost impossible to keep during warm weather. Until we got a garden producing, vegetables were likewise unknown. So when you eliminate meat and vegetables from your diet, as Jack said, ‘The resultant meal is liable to be sort o’ slim.’ But such is life on frontier; we made the best of what we had.”

Ines fought loneliness as an everyday opponent, as she told Bruce and Claudia:

“I was the only resident white female in all the years I spent at Los Alamos camp, and had no over-night visitors for years!

“While the camp was active we had various cooks, and I had a Mexican laundress at times. The Mexican women were not there much of the time. I don’t think that you young people, city or town or even farm living, can picture the isolation, the quiet, the often waterless camp, nor the happy contentment that was mine.

“There were periods when Jack and I were the only people in camp and had no horse or mule or burro. We walked the five miles for the mail, often waiting till nearly sundown to avoid the heat, and coming home by moonlight; but I stayed all alone sometimes and Jack went alone for the mail, which was often late. He would start early, expecting to return before real dark, and the stage would be late! I confess that we quit these habits before I had been left alone many times.

“You might wonder what I did with my time. All sorts of things; I even helped a little with the mining. I remember helping to build a dam in a shallow wash. Often I would be the lookout as Jack opened a connection upstream to see if our dam or sluice systems were working properly. I picked up broken cement blocks and piled them. I picked up and piled lumber scraps. I did a little painting – a red wagon as I recall. I gathered flower seeds and decided where to plant them. And I put a lot of work into our vegetable garden! For amusement, I collected, sorted, and rearranged pretty rocks.”

## **Raising Children**

In 1911, when Ines was pregnant for the first time, Jack insisted that she go to San Diego to get the help of friends there and to receive better medical care than was available in Arizona at the time. This became a pattern. With each succeeding child, Jack sent Ines to be with family and friends. Each time Jack would come at the last minute to attend the birth and then soon return to southern Arizona and his mining. So over the next eight years, Ines was away from Los Alamos and Jack for months at a time, giving birth to four children, Daphne, Richard, Jean, and Constance.

Ines' letters to Bruce and Claudia related both the highs and lows. Recalling mining camp life after having two children, Ines wrote:

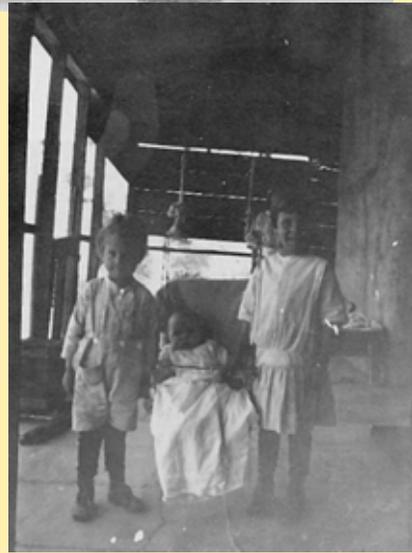
“Mining was a continuing struggle, but our life with our two rapidly growing children was wonderful. We generally had chicken for Sunday dinner and sometimes beef, supplied by hunters or an occasional supplier from outside the district. I even made cakes, usually nut cakes. We gathered native walnuts around Los Alamos or over the line in Mexico.”

“The babies got along splendidly. Daphne was certainly precocious. At age four she was starting a fourth grade reader and galloping along in other lines! Daphne was quite an elocutionist and it was very diverting to watch the gestures she used so lavishly in her renderings of her favorite pieces. Richard enjoyed being read to from his Teddy Bear book and experimenting with his pronunciation and spelling. And thank goodness, the children enjoyed playing together!”

Ines' third pregnancy was very trying. She told her grandchildren of her troubles in San Diego:

“My dears this was one of the most difficult periods of my life. I was sick. The children were sick with colds and earaches, seemed depressed, and never smiled. One of my friends, Mrs. Brown, was a proponent of the new Montessori Method of education, which provided children self-discovery opportunities to engage in spontaneous, meaningful activities. For Mrs. Brown this apparently extended sometimes to treating children with indifference, for example when they had crying fits. I was derided for repeatedly trying to show patience with and comfort Daphne and Richard, spoiling them in Mrs. Brown's opinion. And I was saddened because I knew that Jack was increasingly frustrated with trying to make a living for us mining in Arizona, and there was so little I could do to help him.”

After the birth of Ines' third child, Jean, and following a long recovery, Ines finally returned to Arizona:



*Ines Fraser and her children loved living in the southwestern desert. These photos from the Fraser family album capture moments of pure joy. (Courtesy Connie Fraser Kiely, 1918)*

“In May 1917 I returned to Arizona and Los Alamos with the children. I had been away for a full year! ... while Jack’s mining occupation was stagnant, our family life prospered. ... I was back to full strength and good health. Jack had been right – the climate agreed with me and we found enough good food to eat. The children ... were healthier and happier than ever. I had a piano shipped out from San Diego so I could teach my children about music. Somehow the other children in the district were attracted to Los Alamos. I befriended all the children in the mining camps.”

By the spring of 1919 Jack and Ines realized that they were going to have a fourth child. There was no question about going to San Diego for the birth. They decided that Ines would rent a small house for a few months before she was due. So, in early September 1919 Ines and the children traveled to San Diego.

Ines wrote Bruce and Claudia of Jack’s arrival for the birth:

“And he got there just in time. Bruce, your mother Constance Fraser was born on November 19, 1919.”

### **Love Letters**

Ines and Jack found being apart very difficult during Ines’ long childbirth trips. Not only was it hard personally, but the two-residence situation put an additional strain on their increasingly limited finances. As Ines told Bruce and Claudia:

“The only thing that made it bearable were Jack’s letters. ... They were daily most of the time, though mail in that part of Arizona was only twice or three times a week. His letters were absolutely wonderful, not only as love letters, which were unexcelled even in literature, but were filled with anecdotes, descriptions, quotations in poetry and prose, parodies on many familiar verses and songs, allusions and quotable phrases from English authors. I had learned a good deal about some of these topics, so I could, I think, respond with some pleasure and satisfaction to both of us.”

While Ines was away in San Diego, preparing for the birth of her second daughter Jean, Jack wrote this remarkably intimate love letter to Ines:

**Sunday, May 21, 1916** My Blessed, ... These letters of mine threaten to become merely weather reports. But I love you, my dearie, and love is something that does not often work its way into the weather. I hope I can get along and survive on the mental loving ... Please imagine yourself well nigh crushed in a furious hot embrace. ... The fact that I have experienced heavenly joy with you thousands of times does not lessen in any measure the thrill of pleasure that comes whenever I think of being “with you.” Age does not change, nor custom stake “The joy of loving



*For 16 years, starting with their marriage on January 26, 1904, Ines and Jack Fraser's letters demonstrated their strong love for each other.  
(Design by Al Ring, 2006)*

you, oh heart of my heart.” And there is no other woman, in heaven or earth that I desire but you my precious sweetheart love. Which makes separation from you all the harder to endure. And now this threatens to become a regular love letter. But I don’t mind dear love, if you don’t. It may be that the idea of the physical expression of love is too much in evidence and it would be better if it were supplanted entirely by a purely spiritual love, but that is a theory that I think will only work when desire and strength are gone. So long as my blood is red and warm I want to love you as “hard” as I can. ... And so, while feeling a bit bashful, I want to say that I would give a heap at this particular time to be “with you,” and hold you close to me and to kiss you and feel your flesh and love you tremendously and finally to ride with you on a wave of joy to heaven. ... Good night, my heart, Your Jack.

And in 1919, when Ines had returned to San Diego, for her fourth child’s birth, Jack beautifully professed his undying love for Ines:

**October 21, 1919** Dearest Girl, ... If we could only go back and begin again, my love, with the lessons well learned and the chance to profit by the experience we have had in these sixteen years, “to remold them to the hearts desire.” Well does [his poet friend] Sterling say, “How vast the gulfs of man’s desire!” However, love of my heart, I love you just as much as in the beginning and only ask of Fate, or Providence as the Infinite, or whatever term we use to signify the Power we think is behind the veil – just as many more years of life with and for you as the extreme ultimate gods allow. ... Give my love to the blessed children and tell them I love them very dearly, as I do their mother, and I want them to not forget me. Good night. Dear heart yours Jack

## **Mining Struggle**

Jack and Al Fraser’s Los Alamos gold mine continued to be unproductive. Things got so bad there, that the brothers had to work at other mines in the district, just to keep going. They also expanded their mining exploration effort into Nevada and northern Mexico, but without any significant success. Ines remembered the sorry situation in a letter to Bruce and Claudia:

“Los Alamos was not only our home, but the center of their gold mining efforts for quite a while. Jack and Al started working only the surface gravel, but gradually dug a 300-foot shaft to go after deposits buried underground. Initially, Jack built a small dam in the canyon to back up runoff rainwater to run through the sluices; to provide water for us to cook and wash with, and for us to drink; for the animals; and to keep our garden watered. But the dam failed to hold water, because as Jack said, ‘It was not founded on a rock.’ Despite our best efforts, Los Alamos was stubbornly unproductive. This disappointed not



*Al Fraser (in white shirt) stands with miners in the opening of the Los Alamos mine. The authors believe that this is the only surviving photo of Al Fraser. (Courtesy Connie Fraser Kiely, circa 1910)*

only Jack and Al, but also the investors from Colorado who our promoter friend Gene Alnut had convinced to provide development money.”

Jack was increasingly discouraged and lamented in a letter to his sister Annie in Boston in the summer of 1909, “We’ve spent about \$75,000 in the mining business and it is high time something was coming back. I am mighty glad, that it has not been all our own money. Most of the stockholders of the company made up their minds long ago that there wasn’t any gold here at all, that it was only another mining fraud.”

Four years later, writing to Ines, who was away for the birth of her second child, Richard, Jack philosophized:

**Saturday night, November 15, 1913** Dearie Precious Sweetheart, ... I am always glad there’s no rent to pay, nor fuel bills, nor light, nor water, nor sidewalks, nor sewers. We could actually stand a chance of going broke if we had those to pay here. What do I call the present condition if it is not being broke? I guess I shouldn’t ask such leading questions, dear, and I love you, just the same. ... Your lover, Jack

Almost four more years of mining struggle passed. Ines was visiting a friend in Twin Falls, Idaho, during the despairingly slow recovery from the birth of her second daughter Jean. Jack wrote Ines:

**Wednesday April 4, 1917** My Devine Girl, ... Dear love, I get so upset whenever you are not feeling well that it runs me into a panic. It seems so awful for you to be in that cold country when there is so much warmth going to waste down here. But I guess it is much better for you to be there where you get good things to eat and plenty of milk. The latter is a mighty scarce article in this country. ... I have just \$50 left in the bank. If matters don’t improve here, I will be obliged to go elsewhere very soon. ... But how you are fixed I don’t know. You cannot have much money left, that is sure. If the way opens up here, I will send you the 50 and follow it up with more as soon as I can possibly raise it. Will have to let the Montgomery Ward grocery order wait awhile. The devil take this infernal everlasting “if!” ... Well, please god, maybe we will be together soon. Love to all dearie, Good bye, Your love, Jack

By the fall of 1919, it was clear to Ines that Jack was ready to give up mining in Southern Arizona. Ines was again back in San Diego, getting settled for the birth of her fourth child. Jack’s letters talked of closing things down, cleaning up, and getting out, and looking elsewhere for mining opportunities:

**Austerlitz, September 19, 1919** My Dear Love, ... You say, beloved, that you miss me as much as you did the first time you were away. I am sorry, dear heart, because you will not be very happy. It’s a precious fix we are in, since I miss you as much as any time you have been away from me. I’ll tell you what’s coming, honey. It won’t be very long till I will clean up things here and hike. A couple of months ... Then I will sail away. ... I want to get enough mazuma to provide you and the tykes with a year’s expense, so that I may go, if all goes well, north for a season, after spending a good while with you at the coast. How is that for a plan? We had better not call it a plan else it will sure go astray. ... Give the children a hug and kiss all around and let me whisper in your ear that I love you. Your lover, Jack

## **New Opportunity**

By the end of 1919, Jack and Al Fraser had spent 16 years in southern Arizona trying to earn a living by mining, but had never achieved any real success. They were both in their late 50s, Al 58, Jack 56, and were terribly frustrated with mining. They were looking for something more profitable and much more dependable.

A new opportunity seemed to come out of the blue. Phil Clarke, the owner and operator of the general store at the nearby Ruby mining camp, was looking to sell his store, a large new building - complete with post office and family living quarters. Clarke did a very good business there, but more and more, he split his time between operating the store and his growing cattle business. He yearned to become a full time cattle rancher.

Jack told Ines of the opportunity in a letter to her in San Diego, awaiting the birth of their fourth child:

**September 25, 1919** Dearie Sweetheart, ... A good deal could be made with Clarke if one had the money to back an offer. ... Clarke gave every indication of being both eager and willing to accept any reasonable offer. ... Your lover, Jack

So the problem came down to how to work out a deal with Clarke that would not require a large initial investment. Clarke must have really been anxious to get into his cattle business full time, because just before Jack left southern Arizona to join Ines in San Diego, Clarke agreed to sell the store to Jack and Al, for no money down, the price to be paid in regular future installments. Jack and Al figured that these payments would be made from the store's profits.

By mid January 1920 Jack was back in southern Arizona; he and Al completed the deal with Phil Clarke to buy the Ruby store. Though the final papers had not yet been signed, Clarke had moved out of the store and Jack and Al moved in, and began to operate the place. This was a new beginning for the Fraser brothers!

Jack kept Ines updated on activities at the store as Ines recuperated from the birth of Constance in San Diego:



*This is the Fraser brothers' Ruby general store in 1920 as viewed from the rear, looking south. The wrap-around porch off the living area and an ice house addition (extension on right hand side) are visible in the photograph. Ruby's Post Office was just inside the front door to the right, on the other side of the building.  
(Courtesy Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon)*

**Ruby, Arizona, January 20, 1920** Dearie Dear, ... Having now sort o' settled down I will tell you. Trade is quiet today. I am writing in the living room that leads directly into the store. The place is rather bare of furniture but in one corner is the Britannica and opposite it the Alamos chair. In the center of the room, the Old Oro Blanco desk, at which I am doing this here stint. The books are in the built-in bookcase and there is a stove, which we have not yet used. There is a bedroom off this room. In the dining room end is a table covered with newspapers and having a chair and an ottoman for sitting purposes. In the kitchen on the Old Oro Blanco stove, brought from the Austerlitz and fractioned on the way, a pot of beans is uneasily boiling. A dozen or so magazines rest on this desk, waiting for someone to read them. They never waited so long before. I will have to give the desk a coat of shellac. It begins to show the effects of transportation over mountain trails on evil days and burro's backs. In the bedroom directly behind this room Al sleeps and I try to do likewise. Both of these rooms open onto the porch and outside is the garden. There's a lot of lettuce and other greens growing in the garden which I did not know anything about. Our good size finest tree – a fig – and four smaller ones. Several other trees around the place. The garden is big enough for all purposes. I will have to work and plant something. Mrs. Clarke says anything will grow and the government seeds are the best. Will ask Phil Clarke when he comes again if there are any seeds around the place. ... Love to all,  
Your Jack

Just before their 16<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, Ines responded to Jack from San Diego:

**Saturday, January 25, 1920** My Dear, ... Your description of the store is very satisfactory, dear. It makes me wish I were there to fix it up, for there are "possibilities," you know. Am glad the garden is starting. Do try to take advantage of it. Plant some tomato seeds in a box of good soil and transplant to your garden when four or five inches high. ... I may ... like very much to fix up "garden salad." You would find Spinach, Chard and Kale good greens and easily cared for. Try to get a few hens, too, dearie. ... The days are kind of lonely lately dear. It would not be hard for me to persuade myself to come to you. ... Tomorrow is our Anniversary, dearie – And I love you as I did 16 years ago, only more. Ever your own girl, Ines

By the middle of February, Jack was getting ready to finalize the deal with Clarke. He summarized the status to Ines in San Diego:

**Ruby, Arizona, Friday night, February 13, 1920** Dear Sweetheart, ... And as to your finances I hope to be in position to send you more "dough" before you begin thinking you will have to draw on your reserve. The situation here is this; we owe for goods ordered and now due about \$1050, and will soon have funds enough in the bank to pay the bills. We don't have to worry about them. On 1 April, Clarke's first note for \$765 comes due. I am not sure whether we can meet that and pay for another load on time. So I am holding \$500 I have in the bank as an emergency fund. The idea of course is to make the store pay for itself. All we have invested so far is \$134 in currency to have on hand in the store. ... Give my love to the blessed and I love you, you dear! Your Jack

In a February 16<sup>th</sup> letter Jack told Ines that Phil Clarke had come over rather late the previous night "to close the store deal and sign agreements, bills of sale, and deeds." So, the deal was finally done! Jack and Al Fraser were now officially owners of the Ruby general store.

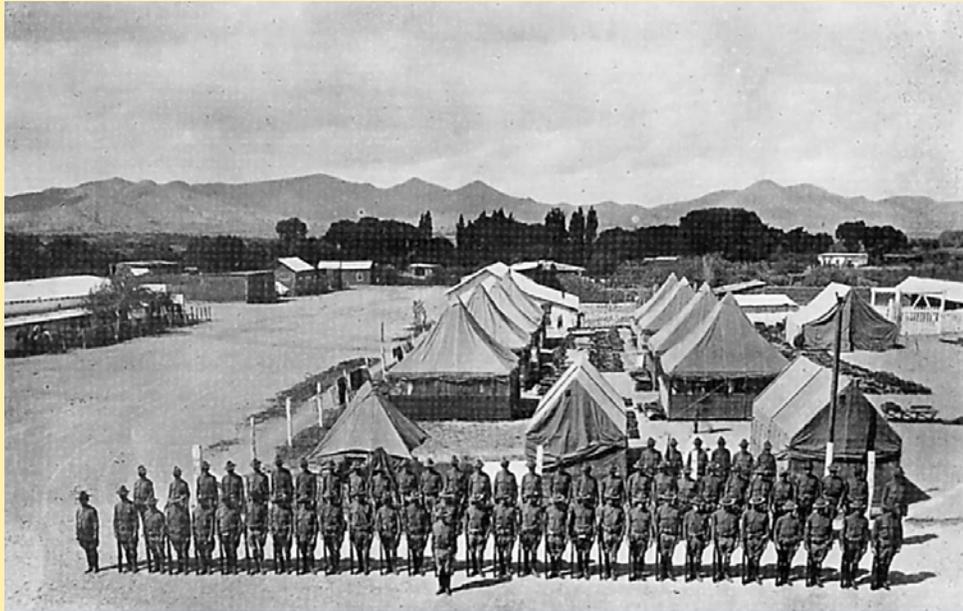
Jack wrote Ines a handful of additional letters as February came to an end, happily talking about fixing up the store, ordering goods, and describing the beautiful blooming peach trees around the garden.

## **Border Dangers**

Problems with Mexico, so close to the south, had worsened steadily while the Fraser's were mining in the Oro Blanco district. Mexican revolutionists plagued the entire border between the United States and Mexico. There were many incidents of murder, robbery, kidnapping for ransom, and property destruction. In March 1916 "Pancho" Villa, raided Columbus, New Mexico. In response to Villa's incursion, the U.S. sent a punitive expedition under General John J. Pershing into Mexico. President Woodrow Wilson mobilized the National Guard from every state in the country for service on the Mexican border. Troops soon patrolled the entire southwest border with Mexico. The U.S. established new military camps in remote areas, including one at Arivaca, a few miles north of Los Alamos.

Then, on January 26, 1917 an incident occurred at a place called Casa Piedra (Stone House), on the border south of Ruby and 16 miles south of the new military camp at Arivaca. American cowboys were fired upon by Mexican cavalry. The cowboys withdrew northward until cavalymen from the Utah Cavalry, stationed at Arivaca reinforced them. The two sides exchanged fire for the rest of the day, with no American casualties. By the next morning, the Mexicans had departed. Hard feelings between Americans and Mexicans were intensified by this episode.

After a political settlement, the 10<sup>th</sup> U.S. Cavalry returned with General Pershing from Mexico in February 1917 and replaced the Utah Cavalry in Arivaca. Made up of African American troopers, sometimes called "Buffalo Soldiers," the 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry began to patrol the south-central Arizona borderland on a regular basis. The unit's squadron camp was at Camp Stephen D. Little in Nogales, but a detachment squadron occupied a troop outpost in Bear Valley, a few miles east of Ruby.



*Arivaca accommodated one of the new military camps established in 1916 to protect the U.S. border with Mexico, following Pancho Villa's raid on Columbus, New Mexico. During the Frasers' time at Los Alamos, the African American troops of the 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry regularly patrolled the border. (Courtesy The Origin and Fortunes of Troop B)*



*The 10<sup>th</sup> Cavalry troopers were friendly young men and enjoyed the adulation of Richard and Daphne Fraser. (Courtesy Connie Fraser Kiely, 1918)*

Jack kept Ines advised of the situation while she was in Utah with her sister, building back her strength from the birth of her third child:

**Saturday, February 17, 1917** My Beloved Sweetheart, ... There are about fifty American soldiers camped at the line near where the "battle" occurred. So long as they remain there I guess we cannot do anything in Mexico. When they are removed maybe the situation will improve. Naturally, the other side will have men there too, to watch the other fellows, and that mine is in sight of both of them. ... Good bye, dear love, Jack

There were no further border incidents near Oro Blanco, although there were continuing incursions in other places. Jack received a letter from his poet friend George Sterling in August of 1918 expressing the opinion, "You are certainly up against it on the border, and I hope this letter finds you alive. You have your nerve with you to stay near such a bunch! I should prefer the Western Front!"

Just after Ines arrived in San Diego for the birth of her fourth child, Jack wrote her on September 15, 1919 that the U. S. Army had shifted the Casa Piedra trooper patrol, stationed just south of Ruby on the border with Mexico, to another location. He viewed this positively, since it eased his border crossings to visit his mine in Mexico. Jack didn't fully appreciate the protection value that the troopers provided for Ruby.

On January 20, 1920, George Sterling had written Jack, "The Mexican trouble simmers like a brew (or stew) of witches. I suppose you weary of the uncertainty."

Three days later Jack wrote Ines:

**Ruby, Arizona, January 23, 1920** Dear Heart, The Mexicans say the border is open to them now. Don't know whether or not this is official, tho. The patrol is being taken away from Bear Valley today. ... Good bye, dear, Your Jack

The Army had now removed the two closest patrols of protective troops from the Ruby area, just as Jack and Al completed their deal to take over the Ruby store.

As Ines related to Bruce and Claudia 60 years later:

"I was concerned about Jack's comment about the patrol being taken away from Bear Valley. But Jack didn't seem worried, so I tried not to worry."

Jack and Ines Fraser had reached a crossroads in their lives. They had made the best decisions they could and were generally happy and optimistic about their future. They of course had no idea of what was to come.

## **The Rest of the Story**

On February 27, 1920, four days after Jack's last letter to Ines - just 11 days after Jack and Al had completed the store deal with Phil Clarke - two Mexican bandits robbed and brutally attacked Jack and Al in the Ruby store. Al Fraser died immediately from his gunshot wounds. Jack, although shot through his eye, survived a few days, dying just before Ines reached his bedside after a mad dash by train and stagecoach from San Diego.

Trained to persevere in the face of all difficulties and stoically to work towards a better tomorrow, Ines had to draw on every bit of her religious faith to get through the devastating aftermath of the crime. It was the thought of her children, what their future could be without her immediate full attention, that drove her to accept her

tragic loss and move on with her life.

Ines raised her four children in San Diego during the Great Depression. Ironically, it was only because she was a widow that she could earn money as a teacher; at that time married women were expected to stay at home. Daughter Daphne's academic precociousness and son Richard's burgeoning success as a violin prodigy provided much satisfaction to the family in that early period in San Diego. A few years later, besides constant financial pressures, Ines' struggles included coping with brilliant headstrong teenage Daphne, taken with new "freedoms" offered by the emerging women's emancipation movement, and Richard's troubled adolescence plus a serious diving accident. Daughters Jean and Constance seemed to have a more normal and stable childhood and teenage development.

Ines Fraser was an intellectual in the sense that she thought deeply about family life, education, politics, and religion. She read a lot. She spent most of her life trying to understand her relationship to the Almighty and exploring daily practices to illuminate and strengthen this relationship. Ines became a part of the "New Thought" movement in the 1920s and 30s and taught and spoke for the Harmonial Institute in San Diego. She expressed her thoughts and opinions wonderfully, first in beautifully composed letters, and later in poetry.

Ines spent her later years, living with her family and remembering her past. She experienced the tragic illness and death of her daughter Jean to cancer in 1960, and her son Richard's troubling heavy involvement with the Socialist Workers Party. Ines spent many happy years living with her daughter Constance and her family, which included her grandson Bruce.

In late 1969, Ines was suffering from arteriosclerosis and then broke her hip. She was forced to move into a nursing home, where she contracted pneumonia and died of heart failure on August 4, 1970 at the age of 89 years.



*Ines Fraser and her family lived at 3151 Chamoune St. in San Diego for 15 years. Left-to-right: Jean, Ines, Richard, Daphne, and Constance. Unfortunately in this only-known entire-family photo, Connie is cut off – so the authors added another photo of Connie taken at the same time. (Courtesy Constance Fraser Kiely, circa 1925)*

Daphne and Richard both suffered difficult and ultimately fatal battles with cancer. Daphne died in 1981, remembered for her extensive work with the Red Cross. Richard finally succumbed to his cancer in 1988, after a truly heroic battle and still very active in the Socialist Workers Party. Constance's death in 2006 came after the resumption in her later years of her athletic and dancing activities. Ines would be proud of her children's accomplishments and willingness to meet life's struggles head on, surely a part of Ines' legacy to them.

## Conclusions

Looking back across Ines Fraser's entire life, several conclusions can be drawn about her life with her husband Jack in the 15 years they spent together in the mining camps of southern Arizona:

1. **Gold fever can dominate the lives of a man, his family, and his community.** Jack and his brother Al came to southern Arizona seeking gold, already having spent 20 years gold prospecting and mining together, mostly in Colorado. As a younger man, Jack had even tried his hand in the Alaskan Klondike gold rush in 1897 and 1898. So gold fever struck early, and stubbornly held on through a total of over 35 years. It must be said that all of that mining was unsuccessful. Ines and her children were affected by Jack's gold fever too, having to subsist in the barren mining camps of Oro Blanco. And all around them were people with similar afflictions, spending their lives chasing the dream. They never subscribed to the belief that a gold mine was nothing more than a hole in the ground with a fool standing on top.

2. **A loving family can achieve a satisfying life together under very trying circumstances.** It is both heartwarming and heartbreaking to read the letters that Jack and Ines wrote to each other during their years on the frontier in borderland Arizona. There were so many challenges, disappointments, and frustrations. And yet, there were many positives in their life together, chief among them, their children and their obvious great love for each other. Ines spoke of her "quiet contentment" and of the "children being healthier and happier than ever" in the sunny desert of Arizona. And after more than half a century, Ines was able to recall many good times for her grandchildren, Bruce and Claudia.

3. **Danger signs are often ignored or rationalized as groundless.** Jack and Ines lived in an environment that was constantly in turmoil, due to the many incursions by Mexican revolutionaries and bandits along the international border. Perhaps they were "too close" to "hear the alarms" that sounded, like the worsening political situation and removal or reassignment of protective troops. Ironically, it was those away from the border, e.g. their friend, poet George Sterling, who seemed to appreciate the danger more, and tried to express their concern and worry, but sadly to no avail.

4. **Tough life experiences build personal strength to meet future challenges.** How can one not be impressed at how heroically Ines recovered from the tragedy of her husband Jack's brutal murder, and went on to raise four children by herself. The dedication, personal fortitude, and optimism that she exhibited in her experiences during those years in the mining camps of Arizona certainly fueled her ability to carry on her life successfully.

Ines Fraser was a loving wife and mother and these traits characterized everything she accomplished. Her dedication to cultural and moral beliefs positively impacted generations that followed. Ines Fraser exhibited the true spirit of early Americans that has made this country so great.

## SOURCES

1. Fraser family records, courtesy of Constance Fraser Kiely. This is an historical treasure trove of family letters, photographs, documents, and memento's. Copies of the entire historical record are maintained by co-author, Al Ring.
2. Bob Ring, Al Ring, and Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon, *Frontier Lady of Letters – the Heroic Love Story of Ines Fraser* (Tucson, Arizona, Wheatmark, 2007).
3. Bob Ring, Al Ring, and Tallia Pfrimmer Cahoon, *Ruby, Arizona – Mining, Mayhem, and Murder* (Tucson, Arizona, U.S. Press and Graphics, 2005).
4. Ring Brothers History Website @ <http://ringbrothershistory.com>. The purpose of this website is to share our research on the mining history of south-central Arizona, family genealogy, and the “projects” that have resulted from our work. These projects include books, history papers, newspaper columns, and an extensive collection of historical materials, including thousands of old photographs. Our research and writing will continue and we will periodically update this website.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Sparked by family genealogy research, all three authors are long-time investigators of the history of Arizona's south-central borderland, particularly the Montana mine, its Ruby camp, and other important mines and people of the Oro Blanco Mining District.

**Bob Ring** is retired from the aerospace industry, where he worked for 35 years as both a technical contributor and a manager. He completed his aerospace career as a Senior Fellow at Raytheon Missile Systems in Tucson. In May 2006 Bob became a professional member of the Society of Southwestern Authors.

**Al Ring** was self-employed in Louisville, Kentucky for over 34 years, first in a retail business, then in sales and contracting companies. He also consulted for, or managed several real estate offices and found time to volunteer as a firefighter. In 2004 Al published *St. Matthews Firefighters, 84 Years of Firefighting in St. Matthews, Kentucky*.

**Natalia "Tallia" Pfrimmer Cahoon** is a second-generation Tucsonan who lived in Ruby as a youngster, during the mining camp's heyday in the 1930s. Tallia's father was chief engineer of the Montana mine's operation. She is a retired teacher and has been conducting historical tours to Ruby for Pima Community College since 1994.



*The authors signing their first book, Ruby, Arizona – Mining, Mayhem, and Murder. Left-to-right: Bob, Al, and Tallia. (Photo provided by Bob Ring, 2005 )*

The authors have participated in six Arizona History Conventions. They've presented a total of seven papers ranging from the history of Warren, Arizona, a suburb of Bisbee, to the mining history of Oro Blanco and Ruby. At the 2006 Convention the authors participated in a Roundtable Discussion, "So You Want to Write a Book: Self Publishing Arizona History."

From October 2003 to February 2007 the authors wrote a bi-monthly newspaper column, "Along the Ruby Road," for the *Green Valley News & Sun*. The column highlighted the colorful history of the Oro Blanco Mining District, with emphasis on the mining ghost town, Ruby.

In July 2005 the authors self-published their first book, *Ruby, Arizona – Mining, Mayhem, and Murder*.

In December 2006, Bob and Al Ring launched their own website, <http://ringbrothershistory.com>, to share research on the mining history of south-central Arizona, family genealogy, and the “projects” that have resulted from that work.

In April 2007 the authors self-published their second book, *Frontier Lady of Letters – the Heroic Love Story of Ines Fraser*.