

**TIME TRAVEL THROUGH**

**THE HISTORY OF THE**

**CATALINA FOOTHILLS AND TANQUE VERDE VALLEY**

by Bob Ring



*It took 12 million years to form the Santa Catalina Mountains that we know today - one of the most beautiful and ecologically diverse regions in the U.S.*

July 2009

## **AUTHOR'S NOTES**

This article is based on the five-part newspaper series that ran in the *Arizona Daily Star*, Foothills regional section, on consecutive Thursday mornings from April 23 to May 21, 2009. The story covers the Catalina Foothills and Tanque Verde Valley's geological formation and early history, exploration and initial settlement, access to natural recreation areas, and residential and commercial development.

My original vision for this project was a single article containing the whole story - impractical for publication in a newspaper. Therefore, after the newspaper series concluded, I put together this booklet to fulfill my complete objective. Also, in this integrated article, I took the opportunity to include significant new material not covered in the newspaper.

For the purposes of the combined history, I define the Catalina Foothills to include ZIP codes 85718 and 85750 and the Tanque Verde Valley to include ZIP codes 85715 and 85749.

I took all of the photographs included with this booklet.

For comments or questions, please contact me via e-mail at [ringbob1@aol.com](mailto:ringbob1@aol.com).

## **Formation and Early History**

Imagine that you are in a time machine, sitting in La Encantada shopping mall's parking lot. You look out to see the beautiful Santa Catalina Mountains. Now you push a button and travel back in time twelve million years. Surprise, the Santa Catalina Mountains don't exist!

### **Formative Years** *12 Million Years Ago*

At this point in time you see only a range of small hills. Over the next seven million years or so, as your time machine steadily moves forward in time, the western North American continent stretches and the earth's crust cracks and breaks into huge blocks, bordered by deep faults. Some of the blocks rise and become mountains; others sink, forming valleys. Then comes the artistic part. Over millions of years, wind and streams from melting ice and rainwater erode the landscape. As you remember from the present time, what results are the mostly granite Santa Catalina Mountains covering 200 square miles with a peak altitude of 9,157 feet above sea level. Sabino Creek flows south out of the mountains. The Tanque Verde Valley lies in the northeastern corner of the Tucson basin at about 2,400 feet elevation, with two streams, Tanque Verde Creek and Agua Caliente Creek, flowing westward out of the mountains to the east.

About 11,000 years ago, near the end of the last ice age, you might spot your first human beings, hunter-gathers from the Clovis culture, hunting ice-age mammoths. As the ice recedes, you notice large bison, deer and other animals.

For the next 10,000 years you observe climate changes that alternate between wet and dry, causing the Sonoran desert and Santa Catalina Mountain forests to retreat and advance correspondingly. Finally, the familiar forested Santa Catalina Mountains and lush high-desert Tanque Verde Valley are spread out before you – one of the most ecologically diverse regions in the U.S.

### **Native Americans** *AD 500*

From about AD 500 to 1450, you watch Hohokam farmers and traders living in villages along the Santa Cruz River in the distance to the southwest. The Hohokam have summer camps in the foothills and mountain canyons to escape the desert high temperatures and to access water in dry periods when the Santa Cruz River flow is interrupted. Over a relatively short period of time, the Hohokam disappear, to be replaced by the Tohono O'odm and Pima, also desert peoples and riverside farmers.

In the early 1600s you will begin to see Apaches, nomadic people who use the Santa Catalinas for hunting and camping. They also collect acorn and piñon nuts and raise small crops of beans, squash, and corn. In a few years, the Apache will also use the mountains as a base to raid enemies to the south.



*Imagine that this is the Woolly Mammoth that you saw from your time machine 11,000 years ago, with the ice-covered Santa Catalina Mountains in the background. Then realize that this is a display at Tucson's International Wildlife Museum.*

### **Spanish and Mexican Influence AD 1500**

From your time machine vantage point, in the 1500s you might see the first Europeans to visit Arizona. In 1540, barely 20 years after Spanish conqueror Hernando Cortez overthrows the Aztec empire and claims Mexico for Spain, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado passes through the lower San Pedro River Valley, 40 miles east of Tucson, heading north in search of the rumored Seven Cities of Gold.

In the 1690s you see Jesuit priest, Father Eusebio Kino, visiting the Native American villages along the Santa Cruz River, establishing missions, and beginning the spread of religion and European culture in Arizona. History speculates that Father Kino is the first European to take official note of the Santa Catalina Mountains, supposedly naming them the Santa Catarinas, after either his sister or a desert village of the same or similar name.

You can't see it, but in 1736 there is a big silver discovery, just south of the present border with Mexico. This "Planchas de Plata" strike attracts thousands of Spaniards. After the silver is exhausted, some of these prospectors drift north along the Santa Cruz River,

looking for gold or silver in Arizona. Others establish ranches or farms along the Santa Cruz. Their numbers increase rapidly.

You watch the Apache leaving the sanctuaries of their mountain camps to raid the settlements along the Santa Cruz River. On August 20, 1775 you see Tucson established as a Spanish presidio, or fort, to protect settlers from the warlike Apache. The Old Pueblo is born.

You see the Mexican flag raised over Tucson in 1821 when Mexico achieves its independence from Spain. Little else changes for 20 years. You do notice that mountain men and trappers from the United States are beginning to explore the mountains, foothills and streams around Tucson.

### **American Tucson** *AD 1849*

Increased activity in Tucson catches your attention in 1849 as wagon trains from the eastern U.S. begin to travel west through southern Arizona on their way to the California Gold Rush. A few years later in 1854, with the Gadsden Purchase, the U.S. buys southern Arizona from Mexico to secure lands for a transcontinental railroad.

You notice that the Civil War, starting in 1861, pretty much brings business to a halt in Tucson. In 1862 Confederate troops occupy Tucson for a couple of months. In 1863 the U.S. Congress approves organization of the Territory of Arizona; Tucson is now officially part of the U.S. You recall that Arizona statehood will not come until February 14, 1912.

After the Civil War, Tucson becomes a “destination city” for easterners looking for new lands and opportunities. Tucson begins the transition from a Mexican village to an American city. Stagecoaches transport people and mail around southern Arizona, and connect Tucson with the rest of the country. You watch as Tucson grows rapidly with frontier Americans, and becomes a center for mining and ranching.

## **Exploration and Initial Settlement**

### **Ranches and Homesteads** *AD 1868*

In the late 1850s you watched people beginning to reach out from Tucson toward the north and east to make their living on the open lands of the foothills and valleys. You saw the Tanque Verde Valley (named for large water holes containing green algae) first settled by Mexicans, Anglos, and Chinese who started farms and cattle ranches. At the same time, you noted that William Kirkland, reputed to be the first American cattle rancher in Southern Arizona, had a ranch on Sabino Creek, just a mile south of Sabino Canyon. In 1868 well-known Tucson land holder and cattleman, Emillo Carrillo, founds the Tanque Verde Ranch, along Tanque Verde Creek at the far eastern end of the valley. Settlers establish Agua Caliente Ranch at the spring, along Agua Caliente Creek, in 1875.

You can see that these major creeks flow year round. Grasslands are plentiful. A large mesquite forest covers the southeastern Tanque Verde Valley. Cattle roam over expansive areas, even in the foothills. As you will see, these conditions will not last much longer.

In the early 1900s, you will note that William and Maria Watson start developing a 172-acre homestead in the foothills at Pima Canyon. At the same time you will observe a cattle ranch, the Flying V, established at Ventana Canyon.

In the 1910s, Frederick and Dolores Wright purchase and begin homesteading hundreds of acres of land near the confluence of Tanque Verde and Agua Caliente creeks. On their homestead in 1914, the Wrights establish a stage stop (along a stagecoach route from Tucson to Benson), a post office, a one-room school, and a grocery store - the forerunner of today's Wrightstown area.

Between 1890 and 1920 you will see the Tanque Verde Valley's mesquite forest cut down to provide fuel for residents of the growing city of Tucson. In 1930 Jane Wentworth will build a 640-acre stock-raising homestead on that deforested property. Jane's only neighbors will be thousands of saguaro cacti.

Also in the 1930s, the Double U Ranch will thrive in the eastern foothills, just west of Sabino Creek, with thousands of cattle roaming the hillsides.

### **Apache Wars** *AD 1873*

In the frontier period, Apaches continue to be a problem. The U.S. Army builds Fort Lowell east of Tucson. From 1873 to 1891, the Army escorts wagon trains, protects settlers, and conducts offensive operations against the Apache. Troopers use Soldier Camp on Mount Bigelow in the Catalinas for intermittent campaigns against the Apache. The Army also establishes a camp at Agua Caliente Spring, part of a protective barrier for Tucson. The Arizona Indian war will end with the final surrender of Geronimo in 1886 and the deportation of remaining Apaches to Florida.

### **Transcontinental Railroad** *AD 1880*

In March 1880 you notice a big "hub-bub" in Tucson, the celebration of the completion of the transcontinental railroad through the Old Pueblo. The railroad will help increase trade with the rest of the world and bring in heavier equipment for industry, construction, and mining. Trains will also bring in thousands of new permanent residents, tourists attracted by the fabulous winter weather and the prospect of a western frontier experience, and people seeking a dry climate to recover from illnesses like tuberculosis.

By the way, if you have maps of Tucson in your time machine, you may note that around 1880, the Spanish-named Santa Catarina Mountains mysteriously become our familiar Santa Catalina Mountains. History does not provide a satisfactory explanation for this change.



*This bronze casting by Tucson resident Dan Bates was erected at Fort Lowell Park in 1991 to honor enlisted men who fought in the Apache Wars in the 1870s and 1880s.*

Two of the first people to arrive in Tucson by train are botanist John Gill Lemmon and his wife Sara Allen Plummer Lemmon – on their honeymoon. In the spring of 1881 they climb the Catalinas' highest peak and name it Mount Lemmon in honor of the new bride, who is the first woman to climb the peak.

### **Mining AD 1881**

You've noticed prospectors searching for gold and silver in the Santa Catalina Mountains. Starting in the late 1860s, gold seekers worked placer deposits on Cañada del Oro Creek, four to ten miles southwest of the town of Oracle. Prospectors will return to this site time and again for more than a hundred years, but only small amounts of gold will be found.

Mineral seekers will locate a handful of claims on the Tucson side of the mountains, but none will make any money. Gold fever will even strike in Upper Sabino Canyon in 1892, but lasts only briefly as prospectors find little of the precious metal.

Starting in the late 1870s, you've seen most of the mining action occur on the north slope of the Catalinas, on Oracle Ridge. Here miners located and worked several gold and silver claims with some success, but these mines largely become inactive after the mid 1880s. Until the completion of a dirt road from Oracle to the mines (continuing nearly to the top of Mount Lemmon) in 1920, this area will remain largely inaccessible. Prospectors will make sporadic attempts to locate and work new claims over the years, but the only mildly successful activity is copper mining that will last intermittently until 1968.

### **Guest Ranches and Resorts *AD 1881***

Beginning in the early 1880s, you notice a new phenomenon – guest ranches and resorts. In 1881 Fuller's Hot Springs and Resort opens at Agua Caliente Spring. The next year the forerunner to today's Sunstone Guest Ranch opens just a few miles to the southwest. Starting in 1908, the Tanque Verde Ranch will invite tourists to participate in roundups, a tradition that continues today.

"Dude" ranches are emerging in the Catalina Foothills. The Flying V Dude Ranch will evolve from the working cattle ranch in the 1920s. By the 1940s, the large Watson homestead at Pima Canyon will become the Westward Look Resort. In 1946 the old Maltacqua Racetrack (quarter horse and sulky racing), south of Sabino Canyon, will be converted into the Ranch Del Rio guest ranch. Hacienda del Sol guest ranch will be born in 1948 from the previous property, a college preparatory school for young women.

You will see Tucson successfully change its marketing approach from a sanitarium for the sick - to recuperate from arthritis, bronchitis, and tuberculosis - to a tourist attraction for the healthy. In the 1970s you will note that the Double U Ranch has converted to a guest ranch, operating successfully until it is sold and reborn as Canyon Ranch spa in 1979. The ultimate expressions of these tourist attractions will be the foothills' Loews Ventana Canyon Resort & Spa opening in 1984 (with its Flying V Bar and Grill) and the Westin La Paloma Resort opening in 1986. Both of these fabulous resorts will offer championship golf courses to visitors.

### **Access to Natural Recreation Areas**

#### **Sabino Canyon *AD 1885***

By the 1880s Tucsonans are taking to the high country for picnics and to escape the hot weather in the summer. You see lean-to's, campsites, and log cabins begin to appear in the Santa Catalina Mountains. Summer colonies on Mount Lemmon will be evident by 1918 and you will certainly notice the start of the development of Mount Lemmon's Soldier Camp and Summerhaven communities in the 1920s. But lack of a road up Mount Lemmon from the Tucson side, will force people to use old horse trails and hiking paths, and greatly limit the number of visitors.



Meanwhile, Tucsonans discover Sabino Canyon as a recreation site. You see picnickers on horseback or in horse-drawn carriages or wagons flocking along a rutted dirt road to spend a pleasant day along Sabino Creek in Lower Sabino Canyon. Really adventure-some visitors can reach higher country on narrow horse trails or hiking paths.

How Sabino Canyon got its name will remain a mystery. Possibilities include being named after nearby ranchland, local pioneer Sabino Otero, or since “sabino” is a Spanish word that can be defined as roan or brownish red, the Canyon could have been named after the color of its cliffs or the water in Sabino Creek.

While refreshing mountain recreation resources are being discovered, another resource, water for Tucson’s increasing population, begins to become an issue. Already pumping water from the underground aquifer and the Santa Cruz River in the 1880s, Tucsonans wonder about Sabino Creek, flowing out of the Santa Catalina Mountains through Sabino Canyon, as a possible future source of water. Many schemes are proposed, including damming Sabino Creek near the mouth of the canyon.

Before any action is taken, you are startled on May 3, 1887 when an earthquake (Richter-scale magnitude 7.2), centered in northern Mexico, shakes southern Arizona. You watch huge boulders tumble down Sabino Canyon’s walls into the creek below.

Seemingly forgetting this earthquake that so violently affects Sabino Canyon, in 1901 a U. of A. professor proposes a huge dam in the canyon to create a large reservoir. The dam is to be more than three miles upstream from the mouth of the canyon, a mile beyond the end of the present road. You see workers start exploratory development. However, much-less-than-predicted water flow rates in Sabino Creek cause this project to collapse in the early 1910s.

The big-dam idea is resurrected during the 1930s depression-era government relief program to turn Sabino Canyon into a recreation area. Having found potable water and electricity sources elsewhere, Tucsonans’ objective this time is to attract tourists for boating, fishing, and lake-side camping.

It turns out that no government funds are forthcoming for the dam/lake project so effort concentrates in Lower Sabino Canyon. From 1933 to 1940 you will see work on a road running 3.8 miles into the Canyon – crisscrossing Sabino Creek, nine bridges, campgrounds, and picnic areas. You will notice the small dam built in Lower Sabino Canyon, with a small lake behind for swimming and fishing – enormously popular with Tucson citizens.

Visits to Sabino Canyon will be interrupted by heavy road-closing rains in January 1992 and again in July 2006. You will see that the damage in 2006 is extensive, with some canyon walls crashing down, dumping earth and rock across the road and with run off water undercutting the roadbed. Many of the small dams on Sabino Creek and picnicking facilities will suffer damage also.

But with the help of numerous volunteers, concerned about the oasis' future, you will see Sabino Canyon cleaned up and the damaged roads, dams, and facilities restored.

You will also see Sabino Canyon closed briefly in March 2004 when several mountain lions are sited in the Canyon. You will watch with interest as Arizona Game and Fish Department officials track, tranquilize, and relocate two animals and are forced to shoot another.

The Sabino Canyon Recreation Area will continue to be very popular for picnicking, hiking, and appreciating the natural environment, becoming one of the biggest tourist attractions in the state of Arizona at 1.5 million visitors per year by 2009.



*The entrance to spectacular Sabino Canyon, long a refuge for Tucsonans, opens up along this tram road from the Visitor Center.*

### **Catalina Highway AD 1933**

Also in 1933 you see the start of construction of the Catalina Highway to Mount Lemmon. This project is also funded by the federal government. The roadway is officially designated the General Hitchcock Highway after former Postmaster General, and then *Tucson Citizen* publisher, Frank Harris Hitchcock, who is primarily responsible for getting the project organized and kicked off.

You see that the early work on the highway is accomplished by prison workers housed in a federal prison camp located at the base of the Santa Catalina Mountains. The road extends north from East Tanque Verde Road in the Tanque Verde Valley, traverses a winding route up the Catalinas through Soldier Camp and four miles further on Summerhaven, intersects near the summit with the dirt road that comes up the north slope of the Santa Catalinas from Oracle, and ends near the top of Mount Lemmon. You will see the twenty-eight mile highway completed in 1950, truly opening up the Santa Catalina Mountains to visitors from Tucson.

The road rises from about 3,000 feet above sea level to approximately 9,100 feet. The scenic drive leaves the saguaro cacti, mesquite trees, and cholla plants of the Sonoran Desert, passes through stands of oak, juniper, and piñon pine, enters pine forests at about 7,000 feet, and then fir and aspen forests on the cooler north-facing slopes above 8,000 feet.

Mount Lemmon Ski Valley will open in 1970 as the southernmost ski resort in the continental U.S.

In June and July 2003 you will watch with horror as the Aspen fire burns for a month on Mount Lemmon, searing 84,750 acres of land, and destroying 340 homes and businesses of the town of Summerhaven. By 2009 the community will still be slowly rebuilding.

### **Forest Service Actions** *AD 1933*

While traveling back to the present in your time machine, you've noticed the U.S acting to preserve and improve access to some of the Tucson area's important natural resources. In 1908 the newly created U.S. Forest Service designated the Coronado National Forest comprised of several elements in southeastern Arizona, including the Santa Catalina Mountains (and Sabino Canyon), the eastern edge of the Tanque Verde Valley, and the Rincon Mountains. In 1933 beautiful stands of saguaro cacti are preserved in the Saguaro National Monument, east and west of Tucson. Both areas will be designated as Saguaro National Park in 1994.

The eastern saguaro monument area defines the southeastern boundary of the Tanque Verde Valley. The federal government attempts to include the privately-owned Jane Wentworth homestead within the monument, but efforts fail, apparently because of the lack of funds during the Great Depression. So this one-square-mile "notch," at the extreme northwest boundary of the monument, is not included.

The Forest Service will construct a road into Lower Bear Canyon in 1960 and build a visitor center for Sabino and Bear Canyons in 1963. A narrated-journey shuttlebus service will begin in 1978 in Sabino Canyon. Also in 1978 the Forest Service will establish the Pusch Ridge Wilderness Area on the southern slope of the Santa Catalinas to provide additional protection for our forests, wildlife, and the natural environment.

## **Development of the Catalina Foothills**

*(Time-machine clock: AD 1933)*

### **First subdivisions**

You noticed that in 1928, Tucson developer John W. Murphey purchased at a public auction over 7,000 acres of federal and state property in the Catalina Foothills.

In 1929 Murphey built an elite college preparatory boarding school for girls, right in the center of the foothills, off today's North Hacienda del Sol Road. A sufficient number of people lived in the foothills, near East River Road by 1931, that the Catalina Foothills School District was formed. Nine students attended classes in a garage. In 1939 Murphey will sell the district its first land for a school, just north of East River Road.

In the early 1930s Murphey teams up with Swiss-born architect Josias Joesler to begin development of what we would call today a master-planned community in the Catalina Foothills. Their objective is to attract wealthy easterners seeking a winter residence in the desert. Joesler designs large, luxurious southwestern and Mexican style homes for substantial lots, many with views of Tucson. Construction starts in 1935 on Catalina Foothills Estates, just northeast of the intersection of North Campbell Avenue and East River Road. For more than two decades Murphey and Joesler will collaborate on hundreds of buildings as Catalina Estates extends north, up the foothills – on both sides of today's North Campbell Avenue, and east along the mountains. There will eventually be ten Catalina Foothills Estates subdivisions.

### **Roads and traffic**

You watch as a series of bridges are built across the Rillito River and a network of roads is completed in the foothills, enabling further housing development. In the mid 1930s, you see North Sabino Canyon Road completed to provide access to the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area. By 1940 East River Road will extend along the Rillito River and Tanque Verde Wash all the way to North Sabino Canyon Road. Also by 1940 North Campbell Avenue will reach northward into the foothills. You will see North Hacienda del Sol Road and North Pontatoc Road by 1950, North Swan Road by 1960, and North First Avenue and North Craycroft Road by 1965. East Ina Road will extend along the mountains from the west almost to North Campbell Avenue by 1955 and further east via East Skyline Drive to North Swan Road by 1965. East Sunrise Drive will be completed across the northeastern foothills to North Sabino Canyon Road by 1975.

A side benefit of the road network's expanding northward will be access to hiking trails in the National Forest. By 1975 there will be a detailed guide available for the popular routes and trails in the Santa Catalina Mountains.

Traffic in the Catalina Foothills will increase rapidly. Over the years you will see road improvement programs, like the widening of North Swan Road that will cause dissen-

sion from opponents who will derisively call them “freeway” projects. The idea of a cross-town freeway through the Catalina Foothills will come up again and again, but will be beat back by proponents of “protecting” the foothills from such “trashy” development.

You understand that the Catalina Foothills are outside Tucson city limits, in Pima County and how that affects services provided and taxes.

The possibility of a bridge over Sabino Creek on Snyder Road to connect the foothills area immediately south of Sabino Canyon with the Bear Canyon area to the east will also be a controversial issue. Proponents will argue that Snyder bridge is needed to reduce traffic congestion on East Tanque Verde Road and improve emergency vehicle response. Naysayers will counter that the bridge would bring heavy, noisy traffic to the area and degrade an important riparian environment along Sabino Creek. You will observe a spirited debate among foothills residents in 2005, trying to influence the Regional Transportation Authority plan for road improvements. Voters will defeat the Snyder bridge idea in a special election.

### **Development expands!**

Residential expansion will generally be towards the east. By 2009 the Catalina Foothills will have more than 20 gated communities such as Skyline Country Club Estates, starting in the early 1960s. The private Skyline Country Club, together with a golf course, will open in 1963. Rancho Sin Vacas will start development in the late 1970s, La Paloma Estates and Ventana Canyon Estates in the 1980s, Cobblestone in the 1990s, and Sabino Mountain and Pima Canyon in the 2000s. Several large non-gated subdivisions will also appear, including Alta Vista, Cimarron Estates, Fairfield, and Sabino Vista – starting in the 1970s and 1980s.

Apartments, town homes, and patio homes will also be built in addition to single-family homes. Not all of these developments will be greeted with happiness by long-time residents.

Some developments will support the increasing number of residents. Catalina Foothills High School will open in 1992. Retirement and nursing facilities will be built to serve the older population - Santa Catalina Villas in 1988 and Freedom Inn at Ventana Canyon in 1998. Two recreational parks will open on East River Road - George Mehl Foothills District Park in 1989, opposite North Pontatoc Road, and Brandi Fenton Memorial Park near North Dodge Blvd in 2005. La Paloma Urgent Care and Physicians Offices will start operating on East Sunrise Drive in late 2008.

### **Landmarks**

Four Foothills landmarks will catch your attention in the central Catalina Foothills: the familiar three radio transmission towers constructed just off North Swan Road (the dirt road extension, before paving) in 1951; the DeGrazia Gallery in the Sun built in 1965 on

North Swan Road, north of East Sunrise Drive; the dramatic Rancho Sin Vacas entry portico, the former entrance arch from the El Conquistador Hotel on East Broadway Blvd, where the El Con shopping center sits now; and Anthony's in the Catalinas restaurant that will open in 1989 on the northeast corner of East Skyline Drive and North Campbell Avenue.

In the Eastern Foothills, near the end of East River Road on North Sabino Canyon, you will see St. Ann's Convent open in 1950 as a retirement home for Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Novitiate. A mile or so north on Sabino Canyon Road, the 1960s will see the development of the picturesque wild west restaurant, the Hidden Valley Inn, which unfortunately will be destroyed in a 1995 fire. A mile south of St. Ann's Convent, at an eastward turnoff from North Sabino Canyon marked by a huge cowboy boot, the Tack Room restaurant will open in 1965 as Arizona's first restaurant for fine dining. The Tack Room will be honored many times as one of the best restaurants in the country, but economic conditions will cause it to close in 2003.

### **Businesses too!**

Commercial development in the Catalina Foothills will parallel residential development. By 2009 businesses will populate all but the northeast corner of the intersection of East River Road and North Campbell Avenue. On the northeast corner will still reside Saint Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church, designed by Josias Joesler. Shopping centers too



*Saint Philip's in the Hills Episcopal Church was designed by famed Catalina Foothills architect Josias Joesler and built by developer John Murphey in 1936.*

will populate the Catalina Foothills - at East Sunrise Drive and North Swan Road, at East Sunrise Drive and North Kolb Road, and at East River Road and North Craycroft Road. The Dusenberry-River Branch Library will open at East River Road and North Craycroft Road in 1991. The largest Foothills shopping center, La Encantada, at East Skyline Drive and North Campbell Avenue, where you started your time travel journey, will open in 2004.

### **Are we done yet?**

The Catalina Foothills' population grows rapidly. In 1997 you will see voters reject an attempt to incorporate the area as a separate city. The 2000 census will count over 51,000 residents in ZIP codes 85718 and 85750. By 2009 development is dense; little land is left for future building. In fact you will see new housing start to creep higher onto the steeper slopes of the mountain foothills, at the edge of the Coronado National Forest, and you will wonder if this practice will continue unabated.

## **Development of the Tanque Verde Valley**

*(Time-machine clock: AD 1935)*

### **Northeast Tucson**

While you watched the start of development in the Catalina Foothills, there is similar activity beginning in Northeast Tucson. Concurrent with the government-funded efforts in Sabino Canyon and on the Catalina Highway to Mount Lemmon, you note in the mid 1930s that East Speedway extends to North Wilmot Road, which intersects with East Tanque Verde Road to provide access to the Tanque Verde Valley. Tucson city limits gradually move eastward. Grant Road will extend to East Tanque Verde Road by 1960.

In 1948 you will see Tucson Country Club built, with accompanying golf course, just south of Tanque Verde Creek, northwest of the intersection of today's East Tanque Verde Road and North Sabino Canyon Road. By the mid 1950s you will see construction start on Tucson Country Club Estates, situated around the golf course, and nearby Indian Ridge Estates.

Commercial development on East Tanque Verde Road keeps pace with residential development. A little to the west of the intersection of East Tanque Verde Road and East Grant Road, you will note the building of the Trail Dust Town movie set in 1963. Further west you will see the start of "Restaurant Row," with the opening of Cork'n Cleaver (now Jonathon Cork) in 1969. This is just the beginning; by 2009 East Tanque Verde Road will be "wall-to-wall" businesses from North Wilmot Road to North Sabino Canyon Road.

Dorado Country Club and golf course will be built in 1970, situated north of East Speedway, south of the intersection of today's East Tanque Verde and North Kolb roads. Housing construction around the golf course will start immediately thereafter. By 2009 commercial development will "fill in" among subdivisions, townhomes, and apartments on East Speedway from North Wilmot to North Kolb.

### **Access to the Valley**

In parallel with this "progress," you see roads being extended to the east, and a network of north-south roads connecting them that will enable development of the Tanque Verde Valley.

In the mid 1930s you note that East Tanque Verde Road extends as a dirt road from the East Catalina Highway turnoff to near the start of the Coronado National Forest where it becomes East Redington Road. By the 1950s and 1960s East Tanque Verde and East Speedway will be completed to the boundary of the Coronado National Forest.

By the mid 1960s East Wrightstown Road, North Pantano, and North Camino Seco will be constructed – between East Tanque Verde Road and East Speedway. In the late 1960s North Houghton and North Harrison roads will be opened south of East Tanque Verde.

North of East Tanque Verde, you will notice that North Bear Canyon Road is completed in the 1940s. East Snyder Road will be constructed in the mid 1960s, along with North Melpomene Way and North Soldier Trail, with extensions of North Houghton and North Harrison roads coming along in the mid 1970s.

Because of these new roads, residential development in the Tanque Verde Valley explodes in the 1960s and 1970s. Land is plentiful. Some people want room to keep horses. Sprawling ranch style homes are in vogue. There is room to build your own house that is not part of a large subdivision. There is also room for golf courses and parks.

### **Central Valley**

Development starts to the north of East Tanque Verde Road and west of East Catalina Highway, with North Bear Canyon, North Harrison, and East Snyder roads opening the area for homes. Canyon Heights, Tres Lomas and other subdivisions will start construction in the 1970s. By 1972 you will see Sabino High School built to support the rapidly increasing population. Just north of Sabino High School, nestled up against the Santa Catalina Mountains, the Raven Golf Club will be built in 1996. Sabino Springs gated community of fine homes will be constructed around the golf course starting in the late 1990s. In 2002 Raven Golf Club will be sold and emerge as today's world-class Arizona National Golf Club. McDonald District Park will open in the early 1980s and will offer off-leash dog areas by 2004. Kirk-Bear Canyon Branch Library will open in 1991.



Commercial development will also be booming; by 2009 shopping centers and other businesses will populate the four-corner intersections on East Tanque Verde Road, at North Bear Canyon Road and East Catalina Highway.

At the same time, you watch housing development proceed south of East Tanque Verde Road and east of North Kolb, with East Speedway, East Wrightstown, North Pantano, and North Camino Seco providing access to the area. In the 1970s you will see subdivision starts that include Hidden Hills Estates, Cochise Estates, Silver Shadows Estates, and Woodland Hills. The 1980s will see such subdivisions as Rosewood Estates and Wrightstown Square, plus Pantano Townhouses. The growing population will enjoy Morris K. Udall Park starting in 1982. The gated community, Lakes at Castle Rock, will be started in the late 1980s.

By 2009 businesses, townhomes, and apartments will almost completely line East Speedway from North Kolb to North Harrison. Also by 2009 East Tanque Verde Road, from North Kolb to North Pantano, will be almost completely commercialized, and the intersection of East Wrightstown Road and North Pantano will have business developments on all four corners.

### **Way out east**

The far eastern reaches of the Tanque Verde Valley are also being developed. In 1946 Jane Wentworth will sell her homestead that abuts Saguaro National Monument East and in 1948 residential development of the “notch” will start on 3.3-acre lots. In 1961 you’ll see the Forty Niner Golf & Country Club built just northeast of the “notch,” three miles east of North Houghton Road on East Tanque Verde. Residential housing construction will start there immediately after the Club is built. In the 1970s and 1980s you will see luxury housing starts on large view lots in places like La Cebadilla Estates and Redington Ranch, “way out east” on East Tanque Verde Road. In 1998 the Lew Sorensen Community Center, remodeled from Tanque Verde Elementary School, will open on East Tanque Verde Road, about a mile east of North Houghton. Meanwhile, Tanque Verde Ranch will continue to draw visitors.

Some of the later development occurs to the east of East Catalina Highway. Housing developments in this area of the Tanque Verde Valley will include Miligrosa Hills luxury homes that will start construction in the 1990s. In 1984 local businessman Roy Drachman will donate \$200,000 towards the purchase of Agua Caliente Ranch; the Roy P. Drachman-Agua Caliente Regional Park will open in 1985. You will see Tanque Verde High School completed in 2005.

By the year 2000 the census will count almost 16,000 residents in ZIP code 85715 and over 18,000 people in ZIP code 85749. Nine years later in 2009 there will still be plenty of land left for development in the eastern part of the Valley.



*Agua Caliente Ranch became a park in 1985 after Tucson businessman Roy P. Drachman donated more than \$200,000 towards purchase of the land.*

### **End of your journey**

You're almost back to the present time on your return trip from twelve million years ago. You feel your time machine gear down. Oops, you overshoot a little. It's the year 2050! You look over the Catalina Foothills and Tanque Verde Valley. Gosh! Would you ever have thought ... ?

**Sources:** Kathy Alexander, *Paradise Found: The Settlement of the Santa Catalina Mountains*; *Arizona Daily Star*; Arizona Historical Society; 2000 U. S. Census; Coronado National Forest; Pete Cowgill & Eber Glendening, *The Santa Catalina Mountains: A Guide to Trails and Routes*; Odie B. Faulk, *Arizona, A Short History*; Catalina Foothills Association; David Wentworth Lazaroff, *Sabino Canyon, The Life of a Southwestern Oasis*; Long Realty Co.; Pima County Natural Resources, Park, and Recreation Department; RE/Max Majestic; C. L. Sonnichsen, *Tucson, The Life and Times of an American City*; Jim Turner, *A Nice Place to Visit: A Brief History of Sabino Canyon*; and John P. Wilson, *Islands in the Desert, A History of the Uplands of Southeastern Arizona*.

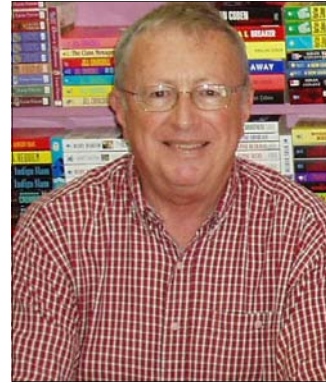
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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Bob Ring has lived in the Catalina Foothills since 1993.

He retired from Raytheon in 2000, where he worked for 35 years as both a technical contributor and a manager.

Sparked by family genealogy research, Bob and his brother Al are long time investigators of the history of mining in Arizona's south-central borderland. Since 2000 Bob and Al, along with partner Tallia Cahoon, have shared their research at eight Arizona History Conventions.



From October 2003 to February 2007, Bob co-wrote a bi-monthly newspaper column, "Along the Ruby Road," for the *Green Valley News & Sun*. The column highlighted the colorful history of south-central Arizona mining.

Bob has co-written and self-published three books:

***Ruby, Arizona – Mining, Mayhem, and Murder*** (2005) The complete history of an Arizona mining camp and its noteworthy characters.

***Frontier Lady of Letters – The Heroic Love Story of Ines Fraser*** (2007) A personal memoir based on intimate family letters.

***Detour to the California Gold Rush: Eugene Ring's Travels in South America, California, and Mexico, 1848-1850*** (2008) Bob's great grandfather's incredible memoir of his trek to, and almost fatal return from, the California Gold Rush.

Since November 2006 Bob has written a humorous, family-interest column, "Gym Rat Rantings" for his Fit Center Gym's monthly newsletter.

Since October 2008 Bob has written a monthly human-interest newspaper column, "Loose in the Foothills," for the *Arizona Daily Star*, Foothill regional section.

Bob is a Professional member of the Society of Southwest Authors.

See Bob and his brother Al's website at <http://ringbrothershistory.com>.



*New housing is creeping higher into the Catalina Foothills.  
What will the Foothills look like in the year 2050?*