

## Gary Cooper and The Apache Trail

by Tom Kollenborn (c) 2000

On February 13, 1927, a special train with five cars arrived in Phoenix from Los Angeles. The purpose of the special train was to carry a company of fifty famous 'Player-Lasky' actors who were filming a western movie for Paramount Films.

The title of the picture was "*Arizona Bound*" and the director was John Waters. His assistant director was Richard Blayton. The company motored along the Apache Trail to Fish Creek Canyon where they planned to film several takes for "*Arizona Bound*."

The film centered on the stagecoach days of early Arizona, back in the 1890's. Betty Jewel played the feminine lead while Gary Cooper, Jack Dougherty and Christian Frank interpreted the important male parts. The scenes are centered on a picturesque stagecoach and twenty-two-head of horses negotiating Fish Creek Hill.

The story, *Arizona Bound*, was by Paul Gangelin and was woven around the transportation of a particular gold shipment from New Mexico to Arizona in the early 1890's. The entire film was built around Arizona life and scenes. The cameraman for the project was Charlie Schoenbaum, one of the best known cameramen on the west coast. Betty Jewel was the only star brought in from Hollywood for the filming. At the time Gary Cooper wasn't a major star.

Each day the crew motored in a large bus from the Adams Hotel and the Arizona Hotel to their filming site. Of course, this involved extremely long days for the crew under quite primitive conditions.

John Waters directed many of Zane Grey's stories into motion pictures and they were very popular. Waters often returned to Arizona to film other productions along the Apache Trail and was one of the leading directors in the moving picture industry in the late 1920's. His success focused around new film techniques, new stars and innovations. One important attribute of his films was on "location" no matter where.

Gary Cooper appearance in this film was one of his first trips to Arizona for the purpose of filmmaking. Yes, Gary Cooper rode the Apache Trail for any of you who were fans of this legendary actor.



*Fish Creek Hill, the kind of scenery that Director John Waters came to Arizona to film.*



*A 10 mule team headed for the top of Fish Creek Hill, circa 1907. courtesy of Salt River Project.*

*Cut- Gary Cooper.*

*Stagecoach*