

## THE HAYWOOD STORY

by Tom Kollenborn (c) 1999

There has been a lot said about lost gold in the Superstition Mountains and the involvement of native Americans. The following is a story surrounding Silas Haywood, an Apache Indian, and a story he told Johnny Kochera a few months before he died in 1960.

The story was not retold again for fourteen years, until Kochera put it into a letter he wrote to Robert Simpson "Crazy Jake" Jacob on April 4, 1974.

Kochera wrote, "With this letter I am enclosing a copy of the assays I had made on the ore we found. They are not too impressive. Just thought you might care to know. Also enclosed is a map that I will detail to you. I don't have the money to search for it. I am a darn good prospector but a poor salesman. I can't get any man with money to sponsor me in a search. So I am giving it to you. You seem to be an honest person and since you have about all the maps available I would like you to have these also. I hope you find it and if you do remember me in some small way."

Kochera's letter continued, "In 1960 I met an Apache Indian named Haywood, he was from the Verde River country in Arizona. He was in Milwaukee going to vocational school, which the government sent him to along with some others. We became good friends and one night he was over at my house and we had been drinking heavy. I started talking about finding gold in Mexico and then he told me this story.

In the spring of 1942, he and fourteen other men went on horses up the Salt River to La Barge Canyon then up La Barge Canyon to Squaw Box Canyon. They turned up Squaw Box Canyon, passed by the box canyon, then passed on the north side of three red hills. Then turned north about one mile and turned west to a hill north of the box canyon. There is a tunnel at the south side base of the hill, with brush and small trees nearly hiding it. They then went to the top of the hill and uncovered a pit. They took out about \$50,000 in gold. When they finished they covered the pit again. The vein of gold is in a soft black rock and on both sides of the black vein is red rock.

"Haywood was thirty-seven years old when I met him. He believes strongly that something bad would happen if he told a white man, but since I am part Indian, he thought it would be all right. In July 1960, he and another guy died in a head on crash with a tractor-trailer.

"For fourteen years I've kept this to myself and you are now the only person I've told this to. I hope it does some good for you. I personally believe this is the Dutchman's mine. I wish I could search for it, but just don't see how I can.

"I would appreciate hearing from you on what you think of this. I'll close for now and if you have any questions I'll be glad to help you out. I believe you are the person all this was predestined for.

Good Luck and Best Wishes, Johnny Kochera."

Next Week— Part II

The letter to Robert Simpson Jacob from Johnny Kochera (see Part I, December 24 edition) is interesting and certainly a different perspective on a story about lost gold in the Superstition Mountain region. Many of our readers are familiar with Robert Simpson Jacob and his operation in Squaw Box for more than a decade. Johnny Kochera heard many of his stories about the Superstition Mountain from Silas Haywood.

Another man spoke about Silas Haywood on several occasions and said he actually met a man who worked with Haywood and heard the same story about the rock that was formed by alternating layers of red and black material. This same rock was filled with gold. Stories often get confused over the years. The J.J. Polka story is very similar to the Haywood story, except it occurred in the area above the upper box of La Barge Canyon. The rock in the Polka story is almost identical to the rock in the Kochera story. There are several maps associated with these two stories.

Jim Butler, who knew Chuck Aylor, Roy Bradford and Abe Reid, spent a considerable amount of time searching for the ore associated with alternating layers of red and black rock filled with fine gold. Butler was familiar with the Polka story and the man named Silas Haywood. I don't dare try to figure out the exact relationships between these individuals and how much they knew about the Haywood story. As far as I know most of the knowledgeable "Dutch" hunters knew something about this story. There were many simple and complex versions of this story.

The Kochera letter of April, 1974, did shed a little light on the subject of the lost gold ore in the Superstition Wilderness Area and the origin of the story. When Kochera talks about Silas Haywood and fourteen other men making a trip up the Salt River in 1942, I find it difficult to believe they rode up La Barge Canyon from the Salt River. There were enormous obstacles to overcome with this route. First and foremost, there is a large lake in the way. The lake was created in 1925. Possibly Haywood and the fourteen men hauled their horses to a point just east of Boulder Canyon and rode south into La Barge Canyon. Most men believe all stories of lost gold must be checked out thoroughly.

I first heard about this story while working on the Quarter Circle U Ranch in 1955. Jim Butler was still active in the mountains with Chuck Aylor and others. Butler stopped by the Quarter Circle U Ranch hoping to acquire access to the region east of the ranch. He asked for permission to use the road going through the ranch. I told him he would have to talk to Bill Barkley.

Butler then told me a little about the mine he had been looking for. I believe he called it the Lost Polka Mine at the time. Haywood supposedly told those who would listen that there were two almost impassible boxes in La Barge Canyon. I am sure he was making reference to the Upper Box and Lower Box of La Barge Canyon. The Upper Box is located just above the confluence of Whiskey Springs Canyon and La Barge Canyon. This is the only part of his story I have found to be accurate. It could be that Haywood and Kochera were talking about two entirely different locations.

Only time will prove it out.

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There has been a lot said about lost gold in the Superstition Mountains and the involvement of native Americans. The following is a story that occurred in 1960 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This story begins with a letter written by John Kochera to Robert Simpson Jacob on April 4, 1974.

“With this letter I am enclosing a copy of the assays I had made on the ore we found. They are not too impressive. Just thought you might care to know. Also enclosed is a map that I will detail to you. I don’t have the money to search for it. I am a darn good prospector but a poor salesman. I can’t get any man with money to sponsor me in a search. So I am giving it to you. You seem to be an honest person and since you have about all the maps available I would like you to have these also. I hope you find it and if you do remember me in some small way.”

In 1960 I met an Apache Indian named Haywood, he was from the Verde River country in Arizona. He was in Milwaukee going to vocational school, which the government sent him to along with some others. We became good friends and one night he was over at my house and we had been drinking heavy. I started talking about finding gold in Mexico and then he told me this story.

He said in the Spring of 1942, he and fourteen other men went on horses up the Salt River to La Barge Canyon then up La Barge Canyon to Squaw Box Canyon. They turned up Squaw Box Canyon, passed by the box canyon, then passed on the north side of three red hills. Then turned north about one mile and turned west to a hill north of the box canyon. There is a tunnel at the south side base of the hill, with brush and small trees nearly hiding it. They then went to the top of the hill and uncovered a pit. They took out about \$50,000 in gold. When they finished they covered the pit again. The vein of gold is in a soft black rock and on both sides of the black vein is red rock.

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Good Luck and Best Wishes, Johnny Kochera.”

This letter to Robert Simpson Jacob from Johnny Kochera is interesting and certainly a different perspective on a story about lost gold in the Superstition Mountain region. Many of our readers are familiar with Robert Simpson Jacob and his operation in Squaw Box for more than a decade. Johnny Kochera heard many of his stories about the Superstition Mountain from Silas Haywood. Kochera met Haywood when he was attending school in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Another man spoke about Silas Haywood on several occasions and said he actually met a man who worked with Haywood and heard the same story about the rock that was formed by alternating layers of red and black material. This same rock was filled with gold. Stories often get confused over the years. The J.J. Polka story is very similar to the Haywood story, except it occurred in the area above the upper box of La Barge Canyon. The rock in the Polka story is almost identical to the rock in the Kochera story. There are several maps associated with these two stories.

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## FROM THE S.S. GERONIMO TO THE DOLLY

by Tom Kollenborn (c) 2000

Often we ask ourselves, what is there in a name? “Geronimo” was a common term used by airborne divisions as they jumped from aircraft during World War II. The term was accepted to mean a total defiance to danger and the origin of the name was the Apache Chief Geronimo.

He led his band of warriors against the United States Army from 1867-1886. Geronimo was outnumbered twenty to one and eventually surrendered to the Army at Skeleton Canyon in 1886, ending hostilities and creating a legacy.

The infamous Chirichuaha Apache war chief “Geronimo” has lent his name to many landmarks in Arizona. The name appears on landmarks in the Superstition Mountain area, including Geronimo Head and Geronimo Cave. Near the base of Superstition Mountain a street is named Geronimo.

The construction of the Mormon Flats Dam between 1923-1925 led to yet another interesting use of Geronimo’s name when the first tour boat used on Canyon Lake was named the S.S. Geronimo in 1925.

One of the most beautiful lakes in Arizona was formed with the completion of Mormon Flats Dam on January 12, 1925. The dam stood 225 feet above bedrock and was 25 feet thick at the base and 12 feet thick at the crest. The dam was 320 feet long and 160 feet about the streambed. Mormon Flats Dam required 44,000 cubic yards of concrete to complete and the dam was capable of impounding some 98,000 acre- feet of water. The lake filled rapidly during the late winter and summer of 1925.

Local businessman George Moody soon recognized the business potential as the beautiful lake rapidly filled just east of the Salt River Valley. Moody, with the help of Ben and Jess Cramer, built a launch capable of transporting fifty passengers and a crew of five.

The S.S. Geronimo was thirty-five feet long and had a ten-foot beam. It was powered with a thirty-five horsepower engine and could cruise at about fifteen miles per hour. The S.S. Geronimo was launched on October 3, 1925. The launching of the Geronimo required the building of a short rail system to get the launch from the road to the lake. This was the introduction of tour boats to Mormon Flats Lake, known today as Canyon Lake, and Moody was the man most responsible for changing the name.

The tradition of tour boats on Canyon Lake continues today with the Dolly Steamboat. Drive up the Apache Trail and enjoy the beauty of Canyon Lake, have lunch or dinner at the Lakeside Cantina, ride the Dolly Steamboat or rent a boat from the Canyon Lake Marina.

Whatever you do— enjoy the beauty of this desert lake created by man some seventy-five years ago. C.C. Cragin once said of Mormon Flats Lake, “What a beautiful paradise of stone and water.”



LaBarge Mountain is in the area where some believe the Polka (Haywood) Mine is located.



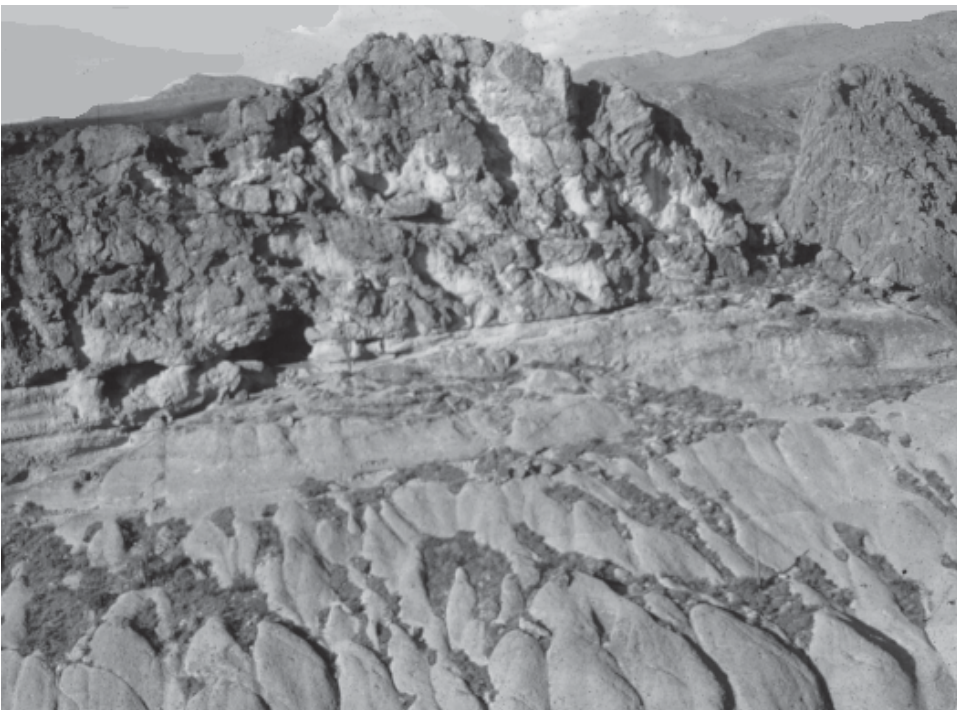
This rock shelter, located in upper Red Tank Canyon, is believed to have been used by J.J. Polka.



Robert Simpson “Crazy Jake” Jacob, of Superstition Mountain notoriety, circa 1978. Crazy Jake lived in the area from 1964 to 1993. Photo by Doris Matthews, Apache Junction Sentinel.



S.S. Geronimo, Canyon Lake, November, 1925  
Photo courtesy of Az. Historical Society



cave



g-head