

JOHN J. "JACK" FRASER

by Tom Kollenborn (c) 2000

John J. "Jack" Fraser was born in Nova Scotia on December 8, 1855. He moved to the United States from Canada with his parents when he was six years old. He lived in Nevada for twelve years. He worked in the famous Comstock Mine for several years before leaving Nevada and moving to Silver King. He worked in the Silver King Mine from 1877-1881. He had a vivid memory of Aaron Mason and John Bowen. Both men were instrumental in the history of the Silver King Mine.

There is a story as to how Jack Fraser got his start. According to a couple old pioneers this is how Fraser got his start. Fraser won a small herd of cows in a poker game one night at the Silver King Hotel. Fraser and a friend then drove the cows into an area northwest of the Silver King. Around 1887 Fraser acquired the JF Ranch along Fraser Canyon. Jack Fraser centered his operation around this ranch until 1909 when he sold it and the famous Reavis Ranch.

It was in July of 1896, a few months after E.M. Reavis died that Fraser acquired the Reavis Ranch by filing a Squatter's claim on it. Fraser also served as an appraiser for the probate of Elisha Marcus Reavis estate. Soon after Fraser's acquisition of the Reavis Ranch it became known as the Upper Fraser Ranch. William G. Knight, a young man from Cornwall, England, hiked to the Reavis Ranch and asked for a job. Knight became Fraser's foreman and manager of the Reavis Ranch (Upper Fraser) for the next twenty years. Fraser made money with the ranch, but not a lot of money.

Fraser was an entrepreneur always looking for a good investment. He found his fortune in grubstaking a prospector headed for the Klondyke in 1898. Fraser and Pinal County Sheriff William C. Truman grubstaked a friend named Jack Smith. The partners were contacted in 1901 by Smith and told they had struck it rich. This mining deal produced 1.2 million dollars for Jack Fraser. The Mayor of Bloomerville, the name Fraser called the Reavis, had finally struck it rich. Fraser, being the entrepreneur he was, wisely invested his money in irrigated-farm land around Mesa and Florence.

Fraser saw the economic future in the building of Roosevelt Dam and the Apache Trail. He built and operated the Fish Creek Station in 1905-1909. He sold it in 1909, when he sold the Reavis Ranch to William J. Clemans and moved his entire operation to the irrigated desert near Florence in 1910. Fraser drilled wells and bought big diesel pumps.

John J. Fraser was a staunch Republican. He attended the Republican Convention in Kansas City when Herbert Hoover was chosen to run for President of the United States. Fraser served as a committee member from Arizona to the National Republican Convention. Prior to Fraser's trip to Kansas City, Herbert Hoover had ridden with Fraser in the high country of the Superstitions looking for mineral outcrops while a mining engineer. During this time they became good friends. This friendship was resumed in Kansas City.

Fraser staked a gold claim in the Goldfield Mining District on June 6, 1930. The name of the claim was the Wasp Extension. You might say this was Jack's recreation mining site when he was seventy-five years old. He was always into something looking for a way to make money.

Fraser was a charter member of the Mesa Masonic Lodge. He was a member of the lodge for sixty-eight years. Fraser served as president of the First National Bank of Mesa for several years. He was also a partner in Everybody's Drugstore in Mesa. This business was a landmark in Mesa's early history. Fraser was a fascinating character of his time. He was a true pioneer of Arizona's Superstition Mountain region and the Salt River Valley.

Jack Fraser had a niece named Hazel Nichol and a nephew named Ralph Marshall, they both lived in San Francisco.

Jack Fraser died at 11:45 a.m. on March 1, 1943. He was 88 years old and had been a resident of Arizona for 60 years.



Grave marker for E. M. Reavis, 1827-1896, located 4 miles south of the Reavis Ranch site.



John J. "Jack" Fraser, 1855-1943. Photo courtesy Arizona Historical Society.



Looking east toward Fraser Mountain from Fraser Canyon



Cutting grain in the Reavis Valley south of the Reavis Ranch, circa 1930. Photo by USFS



The J.F. Ranch in modern times.