

I'd like to introduce you to Jeff Coleman and Rick Collins, better known as Thaddeus Black and Thomas White. They'd like to tell you a story that's black and white and red all over.

...Blood on the Mountain:

Raiders, Outlaws and other Rincon Dangers

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Blood On The Mountain: Raiders, Outlaws and Other Rincon Dangers**Jeff Coleman/Richard Collins****Vers 10/22/05 9pm***Jeff*

To those who've traveled into the Rincons, the mountains offer cool solitude and peacefulness to its visitors. Time passes quietly and often you can go days without an encounter with another human being. And the Rincons have been a place where humans, having earned their way up the trails, interacted in friendship. Little of the ugliness of our nature has intruded into the pine trees above.

The same can't be said of the foothills and valleys below. The surrounding valleys, natural roadways for the transient human population that settled around Tucson and the Rincon Mountain foothills contain stories of human tragedy, the result of both nature, accident, and of course, man.

Nature and Accidents

Nature and accidents have taken a toll on humans in the Rincons. While these heights have not seen anyone die in a blizzard, as happened in the

Santa Ritas, a few people have been recorded to have been lost to the Mountain or died of thirst as one hiker did, close to the trailhead and with water in his canteen, or another, a Canadian, who died of thirst with an unused cell phone in his fanny pack. Sometimes, it's too much water that has taken lives, in floods at Tanque Verde falls or hikers falling to their death from the top of waterfalls at Chiva or Happy Valley Falls.

Deadly plane crashes have also occurred high atop the Rincon Range. World War 2 fed the mountain 4 military planes and their ill fated crews. Some remains of the airplanes were removed for their aluminum, but evidence still lies against the mountain side.

And in 1984 a plane carrying suspected drug smugglers crashed on Rincon Peak. Flying into the side of the peak on a cloudy monsoon afternoon the plane lay undiscovered until 1997. Thousands of dollars, a pistol, and human bones were among the items recovered.

It is man's hostility toward his own kind that has been a more common cause of injury and death.

We have only the historical record to explore. One can only ponder what conflicts might have taken place among the Hohokam population that first farmed and settled, but so far no remains have revealed a murder mystery.

It was in the middle of the 19th century that a human permanency came to the Rincon area again. While prehistoric settlements abounded in the area, in the 19th century most settlement was along the San Pedro. The Apache patrolled the land between the rivers and the O'odham mainly harvested the fruits of the Rincons.

Non-Indians began moving in prior to the American Civil War and almost immediately began to come into conflict with the Apaches. The residences around the mountain were at first simply the stage stations, for the Jackass Mail, and later the Butterfield Stage. The San Diego Herald November 21, 1857 describes the experience: "Each man proposing to go, should provide himself with a rifle and 100 cartridges; a Colt's revolver and two pounds of balls, knife, and sheathe; ...and such money as he takes should be in silver and small gold."

The Civil War, of course, emptied the countryside of non-Indian residences, but travelers still tried to make it past the Rincons. It was several years before the valleys saw anyone, but Indians. The California Volunteers marched along the foothills on their way to defeat the Confederates, and ended up offering the illusionary promise of safety.

Travelers were occasionally assaulted around the Rincons as the Chiricahuas fought to keep the invaders from returning. On July 11, 1865 a German family was attacked by Apaches under Cochise at the Cienega. The mother, father, and a child were killed with two Mexican laborers. Two of the family's boys were taken captive. The booty from the several wagons was said to be ten thousand dollars, which Cochise used to his advantage.

By 1869, the area was again seeing settlement and trouble quickly returned with a vengeance. The period between 1869 and 1871 was extremely dangerous for southern Arizona among both Indians and non-Indians as blows were traded, though in fact, the Apaches held the upper hand..

Rick

The Cienega Wash remained a particularly dangerous place to live. At the confluence of the Pantano River and Davidson Canyon, the stage station was repeatedly attacked by Apaches.

Over several years a list of deaths was reported in the Tucson newspaper:

December 14 "Bodies of 3 men murdered were found near Cienega."

April 17 "The Indians visited the ranch of J. Miller at the Cienega and killed one of the soldiers stationed there."

August 8 "The mail rider and two other men, Scott and Young, were murdered at the Cienega...The station with much property was destroyed."

At least one of the attacks had a touch of black humor to it. A station employee, known as "Shotgun Smith" had gone to the out-house away from the station buildings. Apaches attacked and killed his house mates. Later the story was made more exciting and in a move to save face, a most dramatic account was fabricated that Smith had blazed away with his shotgun at the Indians, killing them and driving them from the premises.

The military

The military was not exempt from these attacks.

A guard was posted at the station because of the high number of attacks and several soldiers were killed over time. A soldier by the name of Bernard Hogan was killed one evening while standing in the door of the cabin. No doubt he made a fine target backlit by the cabin lanterns.

The military post of Camp Crittenden, near present day Sonoita, required constant supply from Tucson and the road was heavily traveled, offering ample targets for the Apaches.

On August 7th, an army mail rider, a Corporal Black, was traversing a narrow part of Davidson's Canyon when his horse began to shy. He stumbled upon the remains of a wagon freight train and the dead freighters. A man with the common sobriquet of "Curly Bill" Venable and two others

were killed, apparently just after going into camp. Black, who had made the trip to Tucson with frequency, made fast for the post and reported the killings.

A column of 20 cavalry troopers, examined the site the next day. Overnight, flooding had disturbed the area and hidden one of the bodies. The two recovered were buried near the spot. The column, accompanied by Tucsonans, Hiram Stevens and Tom Hughes pursued the Apaches and fought a short skirmish in upper Rincon Creek. Overwhelmed, the troops withdrew in darkness leaving the field to the Indians who attacked the Cienega Station and killed two men, forcing its abandonment.

Poor Corporal Black would later meet his death on this same road. On August 27, 1872 he left Camp Crittenden with Lt. Reid Stewart, a popular young 22 year old officer who was called to Ft. Lowell to serve on a court martial board. They ran into a group of Apaches, probably led by Taza, Cochise's son. Stewart was shot dead instantly by five rounds. Corporal Black jumped from the wagon and tried to run. He was captured and brutally tortured; his heart cut from his chest.

A second opportunity then presented itself to the Apaches within the hour. A wagon loaded with sick soldiers had left Crittenden with Stewart and Black. This larger army ambulance lumbered some distance behind them. An escort of 4 troopers, under the command of Corporal James Brown, rode along-side to offer protection.

The wagon load of soldiers stumbled onto the body of Stewart. Corporal Brown sent his out pickets while Stewart's body was loaded. One of the soldiers ran directly into the Apaches and found the wagon almost surrounded.

In the end the wagonload of soldiers fled the site and cut cross country. Corporal Black would be found tied to a tree with over 100 stab wounds. Corporal Brown would receive a Medal of Honor for his actions that day.

Incredibly another unbelievable story unfolded on the road that day. Four Mexican cowboys would be coming up the road and run into Taza's group. Two were killed, another fled and a man named Antonio Bravo was captured.

Bravo, an older man with graying hair, realized his fate and made his peace.

It was after dark when he was approached by one of the Apaches. The Indian put his hand on Bravo's heart. He told the cowboy that due to the courage he had displayed he was going to be let go.

Bravo told how he was stripped of his clothing and set free. He walked calmly till he was out of site and then ran for some time before stopping. He made the Cienega Station before dawn and decided not to approach the place, sure that he would be shot as an Apache. Instead, he walked all the way to Tucson arriving three days later on August 30, 1872.

The Apaches too suffered. In April 1871, the mountain saw a party of six whites, forty eight Mexicans and ninety two Papagos, climb Redington Pass on its way to commit the infamous Camp Grant Massacre on the Aravaipa. Over 100 Apache woman and children were killed or taken captive in this raid.

After Cochise made peace in 1872 the Rincons were only occasionally the scene of violence though bodies would continue to be added to the grave

yard there. Rancher Edward Vail recalled being amazed that nearly all the graves were "killed by Indians."

Jeff

The 1880s

A big event happened in May of 1886. Apaches raided the ranch of OO-sob-io Telles, located along the Rincon Creek. Octaviano Gastelum, the 7 year old son of a ranch hand was captured. Octaviano and his mother were milking a cow when the raiders appeared. His mother was stoned by the Apaches and left for dead in a ditch.

The young boy was taken across the west face of the Rincon's and up into Redington Pass where the Indians stopped, slaughtered a captured cow and made some tortillas. Octaviano was offered a rib, but later said he couldn't eat it. After lunch some of the Indians napped while others watched the low country with a telescope.

Gastelum told that he was sent "by Geronimo" along with some Apache boys to catch a loose horse. Young Octaviano managed to slip in a rock

crevice to hide and the other boys passed by him. He only looked out of his hiding space when he heard shooting.

The Apaches had taken flight from a posse in pursuit of them and led by the prominent Mexican businessman, Mariano Samaniego. The party recovered 12 horses along with little Octaviano. They got down off the mountain before dark and Octaviano reported it was "good to be home".

A week later on May 26, 1886 a company of the 8th Infantry and Indian scouts marched through the Rincons in search of Geronimo's group. Captain Henry Lawton pushed up past Posta Quemada, while two troops of 10th Cavalry waited at the mouth of Happy Valley Canyon and around to the east at Page Canyon.

The 10th Cavalry, (African American troopers) soon went up the Rincons in pursuit of the Indians, under the command of Lt. John Bigelow. In his book, *On the Bloody Trail of Geronimo*, Bigelow writes of camping in the Rincons, where he described a restful camp overshadowed by tall pines. He told of a rather large lake near the top and noted the water was almost ice

cold. Lt. Bigelow stared in awe of his view towards the Tucson Mountains in the distance and the Catalinas and Santa Ritas to his right and left.

The troops circled the mountains dropping into the Tanque Verde Ranch and then moved south across the western face of the mountain, resting their horses at Pantano Station. Though these soldiers never found their foe, they soon received confirmation that the Apaches had indeed been in the Rincons. A telegraph reported signal fires the past two days on the Rincons and they learned the death of a Mr. Davis, killed by Apaches about four miles east of the Vail Ranch. This patrol was the last in the Rincons during the Geronimo campaign.

The last chapter of the military in the Rincons came in 1894. The heliograph, a system of signal mirrors, greatly assisted the Army during the Apache campaigns, helping to drive the Apaches south into Mexico. To capitalize on this effort the army held a major heliograph exercise in 1894. Rincon Peak, then known as Colorado Peak was the signal station between Ft. Lowell and Ft. Bowie. The soldiers made camp in a flat area below the Southside of the peak. Alas technology would outpace this effort and the heliograph passed into the history of the mountain.

As the Indian Wars waned, civilization came to the area in the form of the railroad. Nothing would have the impact Tucson and the Rincons the way the railroad did. The railroad came to the area in 1881, and engineers found the valley to the south offered a mild grade through the mountains.

The problem with a railroad following a wash in southern Arizona is that occasionally the sky opens and the dry arroyo becomes a turbulent river.

The Cienega experienced several washouts. In August of 1881 engineers hit a partially washed out trestle in a work engine. Two of the men aboard leapt to safety, but the engineer pulled the throttle open and the engine managed to reach the other side. Shaking and surveying the damage, they railroad men found that supports were gone for 25 feet of trestle.

1887 and 1888 were banner years for natural and man made trouble. In 1887 an earthquake damaged the rails and the Pantano Railroad Station. A major rain came that September washing out the rails. Again in November a second quake damaged buildings and rails. In 1888 the railroad was finally removed from the Cienega to higher ground. Despite the move, a cloudburst in August of 1888 nearly drowned the railroad agent who was riding his bicycle through the washes.

The coming of the railroad trains offered a new opportunity to another entrepreneur of the west. There were about 60 train holdups on the Southern Pacific line between 1870 and 1933 and six of these were in Arizona.

Rick

On April 27, 1887 the Sunset Express was westbound from Pantano Station, running 45 minutes late. It was moving through the area of the Cienega. The engineer was barely able to stop the train before it collided with an obstruction. Gunfire pelted the engine, followed by two masked men.

They went to the express car and demanded the safe be unlocked. The Wells Fargo agent, when opening the safe, managed to quickly stash \$5,000 dollars into an unused stove.

The outlaws then separated the engine from the cars and drove it off, leading some to believe they were ex-railroad men. The engine was later found abandoned at Esmond station.

On August 10, 1887, the westbound train was again held up just a mile east of the previous robbery. This time the engine was unable to stop in time and slowly rolled partially on its side. Again the four bandits fired on the engine. The engineer and fireman jumped, and fearing the engine would roll down the embankment, departed the area

The same messenger was in the express car. The bandits, aware of the stove ruse from the newspaper reports, cautioned him "Smithy, the stove racket don't go this time."

Pima County Sheriff Shibell led the posse of deputies. The trail led into the Rincon Mountains and evidence was found that the robbers had used Colossal Cave as a hide out. The robbers, who had planned the holdup in El Paso, were eventually either killed or arrested.

In the 20th century the mountain has not been without its drama.

In 1901 stupidity and liquor mixed in a macabre incident on a ranch in Redington Pass. Two drunken cowboys, caught up in an argument ended up

chasing each other around a cotton wood tree, emptying their revolvers at each other until both fell dead.

In more modern times, a shotgun duel erupted in the Speedway Parking lot in 1996. Neither party was known to be hit and the drivers disappeared, leaving behind broken window glass.

Suicides and suicide attempts are common on the city side of the mountain. An unfortunate number of despondent individuals have taken their lives inside Saguaro National Park, some overdosing as they watched a sunset, and others violently and instantly ending their lives.

Elaborate marijuana fields have been grown on the east face of the Rincons. The largest was only found after the 1994 fire raged over it. The remains of the elaborate field revealed a camp with generators and VCRs. One dares to speculate the fate of a ranger or hiker who strayed into it.

A couple of people have disappeared under suspicious circumstances. A young woman named Shannon Schell had the dubious distinction of being the only person to disappear forever in the mountains in October of 1994,

possibly the result of foul play. A two week search of the mountain proved fruitless.

On Father's Day, 1995, William Cisco never made it home from the south side of the Park, and his death is one of the cold cases in the files of the Pima County Sheriff's Department.

Today, with the Tucson population growing by leaps and bounds, the Rincons continue to accumulate stories. There are the lost and hurt, the search and rescues, and occasionally the body recoveries. There are the tragedies for the unfortunate. But mainly the Mountain still offers the visitor magic. And if, as the poet suggested, the mountains whisper when the wind blows, then you can only imagine the stories the Rincons tell.