

Harvard prize

Mrs J. B. de Alencar

THE BRAVIAPA CANYON

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## THE ARAVIAPA CANYON

When we think of Arizona a picture is formed, a picture which only nature can paint, of mountains, forests, and canyons clothed in a western sunset. No state in the Union is blessed with more natural scenic wonders than Arizona. The Grand Canyon of the Colorado River lies wholly within Arizona. This river is three hundred feet wide, thirty feet deep, and has a fall of one thousand two hundred feet in the two hundred eighteen miles of its course between its brilliantly colored walls, which rise a mile high on either side of the river.

The Petrified Forest in Navajo and Apache counties is the most famous in the world. One giant petrified tree sixty feet long spans a forty foot canyon and forms a natural bridge, but the grandeur of Arizona is not confined to the northern part of the state only. Hidden away in the southeastern corner of our state is the Araviapa Canyon which is so much like the Grand Canyon of the Colorado in its formation that it is sometimes called the second Grand Canyon of Arizona.

The Araviapa valley is a continuation of the Sulphur Springs valley which lies between the Goliuro and the Pinaleno ranges of mountains. In this valley the little Araviapa creek has its source. Following the creek in a northwesterly direction, we soon enter the canyon. This canyon is approximately twenty-five miles long. The hills on either side of the canyon show no indication of its presence. When looking down into the canyon from above, it has the appearance of a great crack in the earth. The long sloping hills gradually come closer and closer together until

they close in, forming a deep gorge whose walls rise to heights varying from three hundred to one thousand feet. In the lower part of the canyon the walls of this gorge come almost together forming a box which is impassible for vehicles.

The people of the community have tried to induce the Government to construct a dam across this box thus forming a lake to retain the water which flows through the box, but there is not sufficient agricultural land below the box to repay the Government for the construction of such a dam. There is a small mountain stream winding its way down the bed of the canyon that supports a few fish, such as Verde trout and carp. The bottom of the canyon is thickly wooded with cotten-wood, ash, willow trees, and many kinds of vines, especially wild grape vines, while grasses form a thick carpet underneath.

The walls of the canyon rise perpendicularly with many cliffs, some standing out by themselves and known as smoke stacks. One in particular known as the Chimney rises to a height of approximately four hundred feet with no support whatever from the surrounding cliffs, which are about twenty-five feet away. It is symmetric in form and closely resembles a factory or smelter smoke-stack. Another cliff known as Starvation Rock is noted for its historical interest. During Indian times, General Mile's men forced a band of Indians to take refuge on the top of this cliff where they perished from starvation rather than surrender to the troops. This legend is supported by the fact that human skeletons were found in caves on this cliff years later. Many

cliffs in the canyon may still be called Starvation Cliffs, as quite often an unfortunate goat which has been grazing in the hills sees some choice grass or shrubs growing on one of these cliffs and finds a way to the shelf by jumping from cliff to cliff. After she has satisfied her hunger she is unable to return by the way she entered; the cliffs are too steep for her to climb even though a goat can climb almost as well as man. When she looks over the cliff she sees nothing but open space to the bottom of the canyon below and she is left to perish.

Because the sun's rays reach certain parts of the canyon at noon only, the days are very short. When resting under the shade of the trees and looking up one can see the beautiful colors playing back and forth across the canyon. The brilliantly colored walls seem to reflect the sun's rays producing more and more color, while the vegetation swaying in the breeze seems to cool the atmosphere that causes a soothing effect, which makes one appreciate rest, and wonder what paints nature has used to produce such color.

Some fifty years ago this canyon was the home of the Araviapa Apache Indian. The Indians sought protection in the deep gorge of the canyon when they were driven out of the Gila Valley and Sulphur Springs Valley. The well known Indian chiefs, The Apache Kid and Geronimo, both found refuge in this canyon at various times. There are still many Indian ruins located on high peaks along the head of the canyon. Outlines of an entire village may still be seen on some of these peaks. The early villages were

usually located near a spring of water.

The canyon was settled by white people through the Homestead Act. One of the first ranches established was located by Colonel Bridwell, an old Indian Scout. He was a friend of the Indians, although that does not mean that his life was safe, so he built his home facing the hill which was back of the house. In this position the house served as a fort during an Indian attack and water could be easily attained from the spring at the foot of the hill. The four room house was built of adobe with the adobies laid in double rows to add thickness to the walls for protection. The windows were placed high above the ground and were not much more than port holes in a fort. Here Colonel Bridwell lived for years with his family, caring for his herds of cattle with the help of his brother-in-law, A. C. Alexander, who brought his young bride of eighteen from Indiana to seek a fortune.

A few years later when the settlers thought that all danger of waring Indian tribes was passed, this young man moved his family to the upper part of the valley establishing a new home. Everything seemed quiet for months. Round-up time came and as the herds of cattle had grown it was necessary to use all available men at the round-up camp. The cattle, too, were well protected with their long horns, as the breed of cattle at this time was a very poor grade which are usually wild, thus requiring more men to care for the herds.

Duty called the father of this family, and he joined the

band of cowboys leaving the pioneer mother alone on the ranch with her three little boys--a tiny baby, the second two years of age, and the eldest only four. She went about her daily tasks keeping watch but not really fearing when suddenly one day she saw a band of Indians coming. She said her first thought was to save her children. There was no way of escape so she took them to the left and hid them there, praying constantly that they would not cry and so reveal her hiding place. The Indians rode around the house several times and then started out across the hills as fast as they could go. She never knew what had frightened them but she thought that perhaps the Indians thought soldiers were stationed in the house. Just a short time before the Indians had attacked what they thought to be a supply wagon train but the wagons were loaded with soldiers and many Indians were killed.

She feared the Indians would return in the night and set fire to the house so she made plans to escape. The nearest ranch was seven miles away. She felt that she must reach the ranch before night fell. As all the horses were in use except one old horse that was not considered worth taking to the found-up camp and a young horse that was untrained, there was no choice for her to make. She hitched this team to the wagon, put her babies in the wagon and drove to the nearest ranch. Driving was not an easy task as she was unable to guide the team on a straight course. The horses ran in circles until the Sierra Bonita ranch was reached. This ranch, an old landmark, was the property of Colonel H. C. Hooker, a well known pioneer of Arizona, and is still retained by his son, Ed Hooker. Cowboys and troops

were called out and in a short time life was considered safe again. It was this type of pioneer mother that has helped make Arizona what it is today. Little do we realize the dangers of forty years ago.

Most of the early settlers were fairly well educated as they were Eastern people attracted to this part of the country by the report that this was a rich mining section. Many rich claims have been located. Mr. and Mrs. H. T. Firth are the only pioneers of early days still living in the canyon. They are interested in the Araviapa mine which is one of the most promising mines of Arizona. Mr. Firth says in the early days when Mrs. Firth wished to make a call, it would mean a week's vacation for him as transportation was so slow that it took several days to call on the nearest neighbor. Mrs. Firth is a well educated pioneer mother and has added much to better the conditions of the community. Another well known pioneer of early days residing in the Araviapa Canyon was Dan Ming who was formerly a Government Scout and was later Chief Packer for the United States Army. He has retired within the last few years.

These early people were soon replaced by numerous homestead settlers, and the canyon was thickly settled in a few years. The upper part of the canyon was settled by white people and the lower part by Mexicans. Many of these Mexicans came directly from old Mexico and made very undesirable citizens.

Twenty-five years ago the first public school was established in this community. This school was located in the lower part of

the canyon about ten miles from the box. The majority of the children reared in this section of the country had never gone to school. Some families realized the need of an education and sent their children away to school or moved to a nearby town for the school year, thus giving their children the advantage of schooling. This was unsatisfactory as it broke up family life when the mother left for the winter months to place the children in school.

A need for a school in the upper part of the canyon arose. This need was soon taken care of as the people of the community agreed to furnish the material for building a schoolhouse and to erect the building. After presenting the necessary petition to the County School Superintendent, the new district was established. When time came to build the schoolhouse, a dispute arose as to where it was to be located. This was soon settled by Mr. G. Haby who now lives on the old Bridwell land known as the Garden Springs Ranch, when he took his share of the lumber to the most central location and began work on the house. The schoolhouse was soon built and nothing more was said about its location. This is an example of how pioneers settled disputes.

Children were born, reared, and married before ever seeing the inside of a church. Spiritual training was unheard of. This accounts for much of the roughness and dishonesty which was prevalent at that time. Boys and girls were not taught refinement or honesty. They knew nothing of the outside<sup>world</sup>, their knowledge was confined to their own community. The women dressed very much



like the men. Many did not know that women wore other hats than men's hats, as the only hat worn was a Stetson. One dress hat could serve the entire family.

There has been a remarkable change withing the last fifteen or twenty years. Much of this change is due to the coming of the automobile. After the first automobile was brought into the community, every ranchman became interested in a car, and after only a short time every man owned a car. This took the people out to other parts of the country and some adults saw a train for the first time. With the coming of the automobile, needs for better roads were realized and well graded roads took the place of the early trails. These surveyed well graded roads made it possible to travel over the same country in two or three hours where formerly it required two or three days to make the trip.

Good roads brought new people into the community and with them came new ideas and higher ideals. One of the most important steps towards advancement was a Sunday School which was attended by most of the families of the community, thus binding the community together for a common good. Mrs. C. C. Hayes, who is often called "The First Missionary of the Araviapa Canyon", worked quietly among the mothers of the community trying to interest them in organizing a Mother's Club. The club was organized with eleven charter members. The late Mrs. H. A. Morgan of Willcox was a charter member of this club. Mrs. Morgan is remembered as one who has done much for the women of Arizona. The chief aim of this organization was to consider the welfare of the child. A

course of study was outlined by a few of the members, magazines were ordered, and each mother was assigned a topic for a report.

Although it was very difficult for some members to take part in the discussions, they never refused as each mother was concerned about the welfare of her own child and was anxious to better his condition. In recent years the club has joined the Federation of Women's Clubs and at the present time, it is an active organization that sends delegates whenever there is a call.

When the Union Sunday school was organized, the need of a place to worship was felt. The community was composed of Catholics, Baptists, Mormons, and Methodists. The people forgot their differences and a small Union Church was built that still serves the community.

Araviapa was not lacking in patriotism or quality of men. During the World War some of her boys were the first to enlist. Several of these boys returned as officers and are now doing their part in building up the community life. Major R. C. Haby and Lieutenant Chas. A. Firth are two of these boys who have been faithful through the years and are making Araviapa Canyon a better place to live. More and better schools have been established and a two year high school course is now offered for the children who are not able to attend elsewhere. Better homes have been built and progress is seen everywhere.

The community is supported chiefly by the goat raising and cattle industries. All available farming land has been placed under cultivation and delicious fruits and vegetables are grown due to the fact that the soil is free from alkali, the water is pure mountain

water, and the climate is cool.

At one time the range on which the cattle and goats feed was free range, but within the last few years it has been placed under the supervision of the State Land Department and the Forest Service. The range is now allotted to each ranchman according to his rights or holdings in the valley. The ranchman pays a small fee for the use of the range and he is required to do a certain amount of development work, such as developing springs and constructing water troughs on the range.

The canyon is not depending wholly upon its farming and ranching industries for its support, as rich deposits of copper, silver, and gold have been located and are now being developed by large mining companies that will add much to the development of the community.

The cattle and goat industries, too, are more productive. In place of the Texas Long Horn which was commonly seen in early days, we now see the white-faced Herford grazing on the hills and in the valleys. Many herds of high grade Angora goats are found in the canyon. The Araviapa Canyon is the home of the prize winning herd of goats known as the Wethersby Herd.

The advancement in education has led the people of the community to realize the value of an education. Many of the boys and girls who were reared in the Araviapa Canyon are now numbered among the graduates of our State schools, the University of Arizona, the Tempe State Teachers College, and the Northern State Teachers college of Arizona. The Araviapa Canyon has a very promising future.