

# THE COCHISE QUARTERLY

Douglas, Arizona  
Cochise College Library

Volume 14, Number 1  
Spring 1984



---

---

## Table of Contents

	page
When The West Was Young.....	3
The Apache Scare of 1924.....	17



**Cochise Head**

FRONT COVER: Vera Margarite Bright on horse. Minnie and John Bright with twins, John and Mike. Courtland, Arizona 1908.

---

Contents of **The Cochise Quarterly** may not be reprinted or photographed without the permission of the Cochise County Historical and Archaeological Society, P.O. Box 818, Douglas, Arizona, 85608-0818.

---

---

## WHEN THE WEST WAS YOUNG

The saga of the West is dead and slowly fading from the memories of those yet living who helped to tame the land. Those men and women of the long ago came with stout hearts and courage to make the West a place for you and me to raise our children in comparative safety and comfort. But there are a few of those old timers left who can tell of these things first hand. One of them is John H. Bright, Sr., who came to Arizona when it was a Territory of wild and lonely desert where men and beasts roamed at will. There was no law other than that carried by each man on his hip. A man had to be tough to survive from day to day. It was to this new country that John brought his young wife and infant daughter in the year 1901.

John was born in Collin County, Texas in 1869. When he was twenty-nine, he met the beautiful dark-haired little girl who was to be the one girl for him, Minnie Grey Allen. She was a small woman, five feet two and weighed about one hundred five pounds. To John she was the most fragile and beautiful creature ever born. Although dainty and fragile-looking, she was not as delicate as she seemed, for she was of pioneer stock. Minnie soon took her place beside her six-foot husband to endure the discomforts, inconveniences, and the dangers of those days. John and Minnie's marriage was blessed with a lovely baby girl, Vera Margarite. Throughout John's life, he never thought another girl could hold a candle to his daughter.

Minnie's entire family, two sisters and one brother, had often talked about moving out west to a new land. Minnie and John and their little girl, along with Minnie's sister, Pearl, and husband, Wes Cates, and their two small sons, decided to join a wagon train headed toward the Arizona Territory. At dawn one morning they started their journey across the vast plains of Texas on their way to New Mexico and Arizona. Each family started out well outfitted with new wagons, good teams, and a full supply of all they thought they would need for a new start in a new country. Each man took along a good saddle horse to be led behind the wagon until a need arose. The dangers of travel were minimal in that part of Texas so, for the first week or so they made good time. John claims that someone asked him if he was run out of Texas and he replied, "No, in fact, they followed me all the way to the border trying to get me to come back." When they reached Roswell, New Mexico they decided to stay in that pleasant town for a few days to rest up. After only a couple of days, Wes Cates was offered a foreman's job on a large ranch near Roswell and he decided to stay. John didn't want to continue on without the Cates so he found a job in an ice plant in town. But he soon tired of this and wanted to push onward to Arizona. Wes and his family didn't want to leave just then, so John sold his outfit and decided to take the train to the Territory. Minnie knew her brother, William Allen, was living in the

mountains somewhere near the tiny town of Willcox, but she had no way of knowing he lived in Aravaipa Canyon, located in the lonely country west of Willcox, in the snow-capped Graham Mountains. John began his search for William in Willcox. No one he talked to had ever been to Bill's place but several of the oldtimers knew of Bill and they advised John to wait in Willcox until Bill came into town for supplies as he usually did every three months or so.

After two weeks had passed John ran into a cousin of his by the name of Will Wooten. After long hours of talking about what John was going to do while waiting for Bill to come into town, the two men decided to start a small freighting operation to carry supplies to the outlying ranches and mines. They bought horses, wagons, and supplies they needed to start the new business. The only trouble was that there were no roads to speak of in the entire country, so the hauls were long and hard on both men and horses. They finally got a load of goods for a mine up in Aravaipa Canyon and on their first trip, John found Bill Allen. Several months later Bill talked John into giving up his freight business. Both Will Wooten and John were discouraged with the long hard hauls, just making a bare living, and both were willing to give up the operation when Bill offered to form a freight line using mules to haul the loads. It wasn't long before they had a regular route laid out to most of the mines in that part of the country. Supplies came into Willcox by rail and were loaded on mules to be taken to places found sometimes on the very top of the rugged Galura Mountains. The cost of those dear supplies was very high by the time they reached their destinations.

The Territory was new and untamed and every man had to keep an eye out for Apache Indians, although the tribes had all been captured and placed on a reservation at San Carlos a few miles away. They were still rebellious and troublesome and every once in a while a group of young warriors would break out, steal horses, and go on the war path, killing ranchers and any white men in their path until they were caught or killed themselves. The Indians were not the only danger at that time; there were many mountain lions and bears that did not take kindly to being disturbed. John finally moved his family to a small settlement in the Galura Mountains so they would be near him at least part of the time.

Of these days, John tells many tales, one of which involved a storekeeper who ordered what John understood to be ten hats. Bill and John had quite a time filling his order and undertook the job of getting the hats over the mountain trails without crushing them. When they finally arrived John proudly presented the storekeeper with his ten new hats. The storekeeper threw up his hands in shock and claimed he had not ordered hats at all. He refused to accept them and so back went the hats, all the way to Willcox, all of which made John and Bill very unhappy.

They had a chance to even the score later. That storekeeper raised, cured and sold his own bacon in his store, so sometimes the two men would take home a few pounds of fresh bacon, and when other people in the settlement would order bacon, too, they decided to take a good supply home with them. When they were all loaded and ready to go back down the mountain, John walked over to the store to pick up the bacon, and it just so happened the storekeeper's son was tending the store for a while. John asked if he could get twenty-five pounds of back and the boy helped him load it on the mules. John signed the slip for it as he settled his account once a month. The men were still smarting from the deal over the hats so when they went to pay their bill at the end of the month, they got a good laugh when they discovered the boy had only charged them for twenty-five cents of bacon — not twenty-five pounds. John said he often wondered what the old man thought had happened to all his bacon.

Every trip had some adventure. John tells of a time when his mules were plodding quietly down a narrow, rocky trail high in the mountains and one of his mules, loaded with four cases of dynamite, slipped and fell over a fifteen foot cliff. John and Bill, expecting a huge explosion, hit the dirt as fast as they could, hoping the explosion would pass over their heads. They waited a few minutes, and when no explosion came, they crawled over to look. Way down below was the mule stuck in the middle of a thick manzanita bush. His pack lay on a flat not far away and neither the pack nor the mule was hurt too much. Soon they were on their way again.

A few weeks later, as they came down that trail, the mules began to act nervous, rolling their eyes and snorting as they watched the trail ahead. The two men could see nothing wrong, but having worked with animals all their lives, they could tell that something was definitely wrong up ahead. They tied the lead mule to a tree and rode their horses up the trail to find the trouble. They soon spied a huge mountain lion, lying motionless on an overhanging bluff, waiting for the mules to come along the trail and pass beneath him. Since a full grown mountain lion is nothing to play with, John pulled his rifle from his saddle scabbard and dismounted to get a better shot. He handed Bill the reins to hold his horse as no one could expect a nervous horse to stay put with a lion so near. John angled around until he could get a clear shot and fired. The big lion leapt straight up into the air and with a mighty roar, came tumbling down the face of the cliff. He landed in the trail about twenty feet from John who, not knowing if the lion was dead or injured, whirled around reached for his horse intending to put a little distance between himself and that lion, but one quick look told him that his horse was no longer there! When the lion fell into the trail, Bill's horse had bolted, and Bill, forgetting he held John's horse, didn't let go of the reins. As soon as John realized he still had his rifle, he felt better. After a minute or two, the lion

still hadn't moved, so John walked cautiously over to see where he had shot him. The shot had taken the lion right between the eyes and he was very, very dead.

A few months later the big mines closed down and the men no longer had any business for their mule train, so Bill went back to ranching and John moved his family to a small mining town called Clifton. Clifton was located high up in the pine-covered White Mountains and was built on the steep sides of canyons near the mine. The uppermost house overlooked all the others spread down the sides of the hills, so while life there was rough and primitive, it was far from being lonely. John and Minnie bought a house in Clifton and he got a job in the smelter there. Here in Clifton, a second daughter was born to them, but she was a very frail child and only survived one year. John quit his job in the smelter and started to work in the saw mill. Here he shaped timbers for shoring up the mines. He enjoyed the work and stayed on for two years. By this time, Wes and Pearl Cates had made their way to Arizona, too. They had settled in another small mining town named Pearce, about ninety miles farther down the Sulphur Springs Valley. Wes sent word to John that there was plenty of work in Pearce and John moved his family there. John worked in the mine in Pearce doing timbering and while on the job, was injured when a saw-blade snapped, cutting the ligaments in his right arm. There was no hospital at Pearce, so he had to be taken to the only hospital in that part of the Territory located at a mine called the Black Diamond. If one could see the pitiful remains of this once booming smelter town now, it would be hard to believe that at that time there were at least five hundred families living and working there. There was a good hospital, two hotels, five busy saloons, two stores, a restaurant, stables, woodyards, a large smelter and all kinds of office buildings. Today, only three dwellings along with part of the smelter remain. This mine was shut down so suddenly that huge buckets of ore were left hanging on the tram cables leading from the mine to the smelter. The mine was located high on the mountain side and the smelter was built down in the nearest valley. It was a truly beautiful spot. The mine owner had been killed and the mine operation was shut down in the middle of a work shift. Everything stopped when the whistle blew and for years hand tools, caps, gloves, and other equipment could be found lying just where the men dropped them when they left work that day.

John worked in the Pearce mine for a year or two, but soon the mine was beginning to cave in. On the day before Christmas in 1904 all the miners were ordered to stop working in the mine and on January 9, 1905, the entire hill started to move. With a terrible roaring sound the dirt slowly poured into each of the many shafts of the mine, leaving huge cracks and craters all along the hillside. No one was injured due to work having ceased on Christmas day, but now all the work in this town was gone, so once again, the Cates and the Bright families were on the move.



John H. Bright, Minnie Grey Bright,  
Vera Margarite Bright, at Gleeson 1908.



Pearl Cates and Minnie Bright, sisters,  
Courtland, Arizona 1910.

This time they moved to a town about ten miles south, called Gleeson. This too was a boom town, but the mines were rather new and work looked as though it would last for years. In Gleeson John built their first permanent home in the Arizona Territory. They planted a few trees and a garden, the first in this busy and bustling town. Mrs. Bright's yard soon became the town showplace for it was the only house in Gleeson with green trees and blooming flowers in the front yard and a vegetable garden in the back. The whole town took a special pride in it. Minnie raised the first green onions ever grown on that barren rocky hillside. She had quite a laugh on John when her sister Pearl came to visit one day. Pearl told them of the jerky Wes and she had bought from the Mexicans there in town. She told them that once a person got used to eating it he would like it very much, and she asked John if he had ever tasted jerky. John, not wishing to admit he had no idea what jerky was, told her, "Oh sure, Minnie has a whole bunch of it growing in her garden." As jerky is dried meat, Minnie had lots of fun teasing John about that.

While in Gleeson another daughter was born to Minnie and John, but the baby only lived one day. Heartsick over the loss of their two little girls, both John and Minnie gave up on the idea of ever having the son John longed for all his life. Minnie's health seemed to be failing, so into this new grave went not only their tiny child, but the hopes of their future children. About this same time, Minnie's sister Pearl was due to have a third child. She already had two fine sons, Guy and Ernest, and she and Wes were hoping that this baby would be a girl. Pearl felt so badly about her sister's loss that she promised Minnie if the child she was carrying was a boy she would name him John Bright Cates, after John. Sure enough it was a boy and that is why there is a John Bright Cates. Here in Gleeson both John and Wes decided to go into the law enforcement work. John was elected Constable and Wes took a job as Deputy Sheriff. Gleeson was a rip-roaring little town about that time and it was just nineteen miles from the toughest town in the west — Tombstone. Two miles north of Gleeson was another mining town called Courtland and in a few months, John was appointed Deputy Sheriff of Courtland as well. For a few years the two towns kept John pretty busy. Each payday the miners from both settlements got together for drinking, gambling, and fighting in general. It was in these days that the lawbreakers began to feel the power and fury of John Bright. He could ride and shoot with the best of them. He was a big man, strong, and with the temper of a bull, so it wasn't long until many a would-be bad guy found the new deputy was not a man to be fooled with. He had the courage and quick-thinking ability it took to hold that type of job in those days. His clear blue eyes had never been known to show fear and he hunted down the men known to be tough with the same cool deliberation he hunted killer wolves. Bad men and good alike held a healthy respect for this man. It was in Gleeson that the most



interesting part of his life took place. John was an officer of one kind or another for twenty-three years, part of that time he spent as a United States Deputy Marshall.

One of the many shooting scrapes John had during this time was one best remembered when the miners put up a huge gray stone marker in front of the graveyard at Gleeson. Across the face of the stone they chiseled the words, "This Is John Bright's Private Graveyard". The reason for this is a long story and almost cost John his life.

The incident took place when Pancho Villa was in his heyday and a few of his ragtag army were spilling over into the Arizona Territory. There happened to be two young Mexicans from Villa's troops in Gleeson and they figured themselves to be pretty tough customers. John had to arrest them several times for drinking and fighting on the streets and one night while they were drinking, they were heard to brag that some bright moonlit night they would get that damned sheriff. No one took their talk seriously, least of all John Bright, but one evening a few weeks later, as John rode down the trail on his way home from a dance in town, he came alive with a jerk! John had been dancing and didn't have his gun in his holster, but had it tucked under the waistband of his trousers and he had only five shells as he hadn't been expecting any trouble as he rode along half-asleep. At first he thought perhaps there was a rattler in the trail and figured that was the cause of that tight feeling at the back of his neck. The moon was bright and there was scarcely a breeze blowing. It was this that gave him his first inkling that something was not right on the trail, as a small bush kept moving ever so lightly. A large rock was close to the bush just off the trail and John knew he made a perfect target on his white horse for anyone hiding behind that rock. The two Mexicans waited, their rifles trained on the trail, for the chance to kill the man they feared, but he proved to be a wary adversary. The two men sat there, tensed and ready, every nerve on edge, waiting for the sound of hoofbeats in the dark. Suddenly, there he was, riding along relaxed in his saddle as the two men tensed. John quickly jerked his horse to a stop and whipped his six-shooter out. Their first shot caught him in the hip and the next killed his horse. Thrown hard, down and wounded, John still managed to kill both the Mexicans and crawled nearly a mile to his home. Gleeson had a small hospital and John's family quickly took him there. He had lost so much blood that it was several days before he was out of danger.

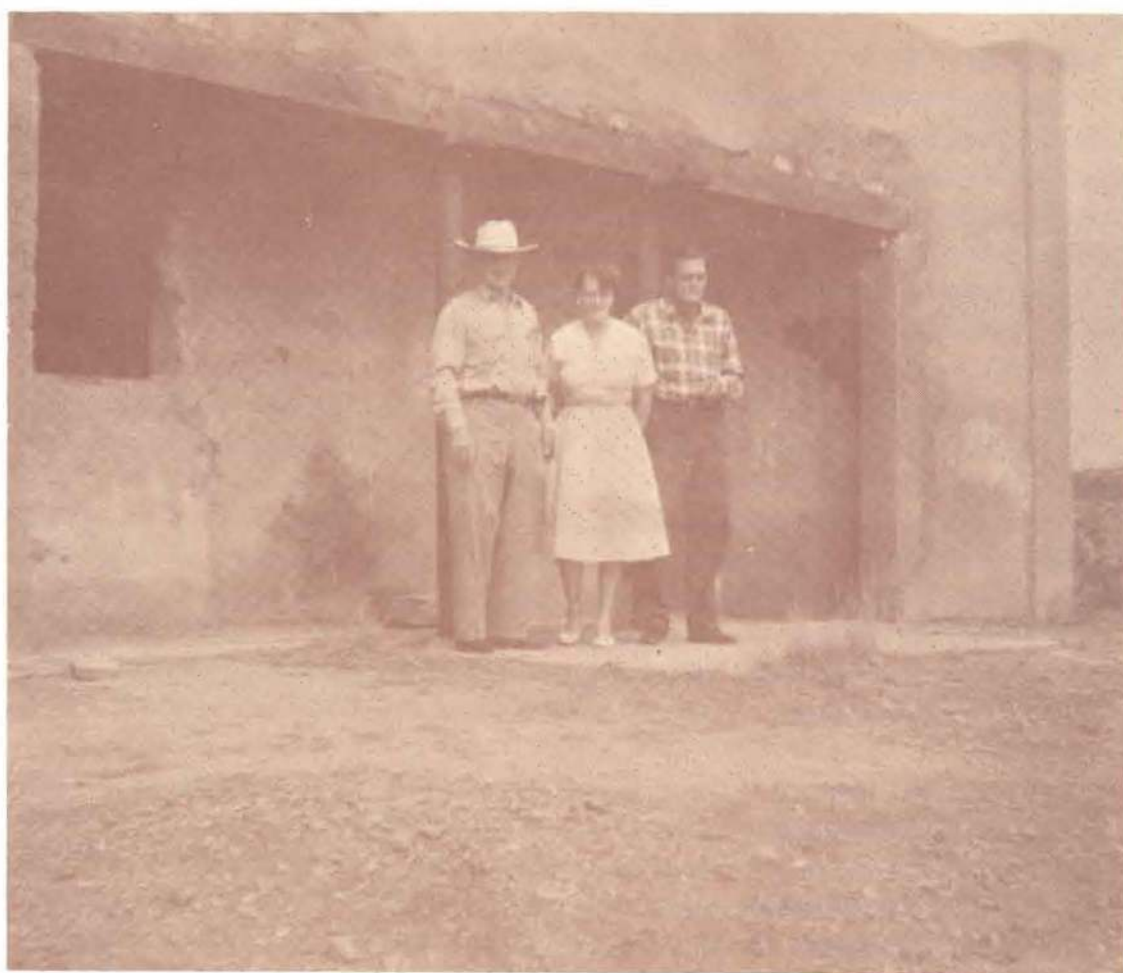
The miners buried the Mexicans John had shot in the corner of the cemetery and put up a large board sign reading "John Bright's Private Graveyard". When John was able to ride, he roped the sign and pulled it down. A month or so later, he passed by to find a huge boulder with the same words carved upon it and the miners dared him to drag that one off. One of the men told John that out of the five shots he had fired at the Mexicans that night, four of them had found their mark.

Back in those days a sheriff had to be his own detective, figure out who had committed the crime, and then go out and catch the criminal. John tells of a time when a store had been robbed in Courtland and someone sent for him. The robbery had been done the night before and along with the money that was stolen two pairs of lady's stockings were taken. From the bungled way the job was done, John figured it most likely that the robbers were drunk at the time of the theft. First thing, he called on all the saloons to talk to the cronies to try to pick up a lead. He soon heard of three Mexicans who had drunk too much and talked too much. He went up to one of their houses and found the man still in bed from a hang-over. His wife told John he was awfully sick and had been right there in bed for two days. John was not taken in by the wife's story, so he pulled up a chair and sat down by the man's bedside to talk with him. Across the chair were hanging some of the wife's clothing, so he lifted them out of the way and there he found a new silk stocking hanging. Taking the stocking into his hand, he sat in the chair and without saying a word, just watched their faces. The woman reached for the stocking, but John held onto it and asked the man how he could afford to buy his wife silk stockings in a time when they cost as much as five dollars a pair and the man was working as a laborer. The man said he had not bought the stockings, but that a friend had given them to his wife and he gave John the name of his friend. So without another word, John put the stocking in his pocket and left to visit the friend. He arrived at the man's house, pulled the stocking out and announced the man was under arrest for the robbery of the store. John told the man that his accomplice had squealed on him and had given John the stocking to prove the story was true. The man promptly confessed his part in the robbery and blamed the whole idea on the other man. So both the Mexicans went to jail in less than half a day's work.

Another occasion saw John with the task of solving a murder. It was the day after payday at the mines when the body was found under a railroad bridge. It didn't take John long to find out that this man and two other fellows had been drinking pretty heavily the night before in one of the saloons and that they had all left the place together. Near the body John had found a small piece of white rubber and having no idea whether it had any connection with the murder, he nevertheless, put it in his pocket. John went to talk to the two fellows who had been drinking with the dead man the preceding night. Both men wore heavy workshoes and after talking with them a while, John got up to leave. The older man of the two rose to walk to the door as John left and John noticed he was limping. John decided he would return to the saloon and question the men who had been present. The case didn't make much sense so far — the murdered man was a poor working man and had been robbed for only the little bit of money remaining after an evening of drinking. There was nothing to tempt a robber, and if the motive was robbery, why kill



John H. Bright, Sr., at their ranch 1924.



From left to right, Bob Henderson, Vera Bright Hawker, John Bright, Jr. in front of his grandfather's old jail, Gleeson 1961.

the fellow? As John listened to the men in the saloon talk he heard someone say the old fellow who had limped was married to a pretty young wife who did not seem to be averse to flirting. John asked the men if they knew why the old fellow walked with a limp and he was told that the man had some form of arthritis and could hardly stand to wear the heavy miner's shoes and often wore tennis shoes instead. Suddenly a bell rang in John's head — he asked if the shoes the man wore were white and was told that indeed they were. Back to the Mexican's house he went and asked to see all pairs of shoes they owned. After examining each pair, John could not find the shoes he sought. He decided to look around the place and searched the wood shed. Sure enough behind grain sacks in the shed he found the pair of tennis shoes, one bearing blood stains. He took the little piece of rubber from his pocket and there on the heel of one shoe was a little hole where the piece fit perfectly. It had been cut from the shoe by the rough slag on the railroad bed. John took both men in, but later the old man took sole responsibility for the crime. He stated that they had begun to quarrel and the murdered man had left for home after bragging to the old man that he had slept with the young wife while the old man was away at work. The jury turned the old man loose.

Another time John tells about involved the arrest of a giant man for beating his wife. It seems that every pay day the man got drunk, would go home and beat his wife. John had taken the man in several times and was more than a bit fed up with him when it happened again. One evening very late, neighbors called John to stop the beating. John became so angry when he saw what the man had done to the wife that his blood fairly boiled, but being an officer of the law, he arrested the man and took him before a judge. On the way to the jail the man began to brag about how mean he was and how he could beat his wife anytime that he wanted to. John tried to ignore the man's bragging, but all of a sudden he just couldn't take anymore. He turned to the guy and said, "Why don't you shut up! You don't know the first thing about beating a woman!" The drunk flared right back, "Oh yeah? I suppose you could have done it better?" John asked, "Do you want me to show you how I would beat a woman?" And he tied into the old boy and gave him a real going over and then threw him in jail. That was the last time the man ever beat up his wife.

Wes Cates tells of a time when he and John were after the same outlaw. Wes was serving as a Deputy Sheriff in another nearby county. They had chased the man for several hours and finally cut him off from his horse. The man had taken to the hills on foot to try to get away. There were many prospect holes where miners had dug for different kinds of ore and the man ran and jumped into one of the holes on the hillside. He had a rifle and he did not intend to be taken. The two officers separated and one came up the bottom of the canyon while the other

tried to get around behind the outlaw. John managed to slip up behind the man, but the outlaw saw him and opened fire. John took cover behind a large rock where he could see the man standing in the hole. Wes was coming up from below and could see the man's head bob up each time he fired at John. Each time his head would rise up, Wes would shoot at him. John called down to Wes, "You are shooting too high, Wes!" About that time the outlaw located Wes and opened fire on him as well. Wes popped another shot off at the guy and again John yelled, "You're still too high, Wes!" And this time Wes yelled back, "If you can see so damned well, why don't you shoot him yourself!" John had been so interested in watching what Wes was doing he had forgotten to shoot. About that time the outlaw put up his hands and surrendered. John and Wes could spend hours telling of the many wonderful times that they had spent together and the different scrapes they had pulled each other out of.

It was about this time that Minnie told John she was expecting another child. Her sister had given birth to a little daughter, Katherine and Minnie so wanted to give John that son he wished for. At first he was sorry to learn of her pregnancy as Minnie's health was not good in the last few years. John called in the best doctor in the country to care for her and after nine long, anxious months Minnie presented John with not only one son, but two fine boys. The identical twins were born in the little hospital at Gleason on June 23, 1908. She and John named the first twin Michael Landin, as they had promised Uncle Michael so long before, and the second boy was named after his father, John Henry Bright, Jr. They were delicate babies, but they soon began to grow strong and healthy. For a number of years following their birth, their mother was in better health than she had been before they were born, but when they were only eight years old, she became very ill with gall bladder problems. She underwent surgery, and even with the best care available, she slowly failed. Minnie at last passed away in the Douglas hospital. She was taken home and buried in the beautiful little cemetery on a grassy hillside overlooking Gleason in 1916.

In 1918 John decided to move his family to a new mining town called Johnson as the mines at Gleason were closing down and many people had moved away. Shortly after they arrived in Johnson, Captain Wheeler appointed John United States Deputy Marshall and he served in this capacity for a number of years. His hardest job was to keep the Mexican miners from stealing the tungsten ore and the dynamite they used for blasting. The "high-graders" could steal and sell the ore and the dynamite on the black market as the ore brought such a price that at that time a hundred pound sack was worth a day's wages.

One day someone came to get John to stop a fight between two miners but when he got there, one man was already dead and the other,

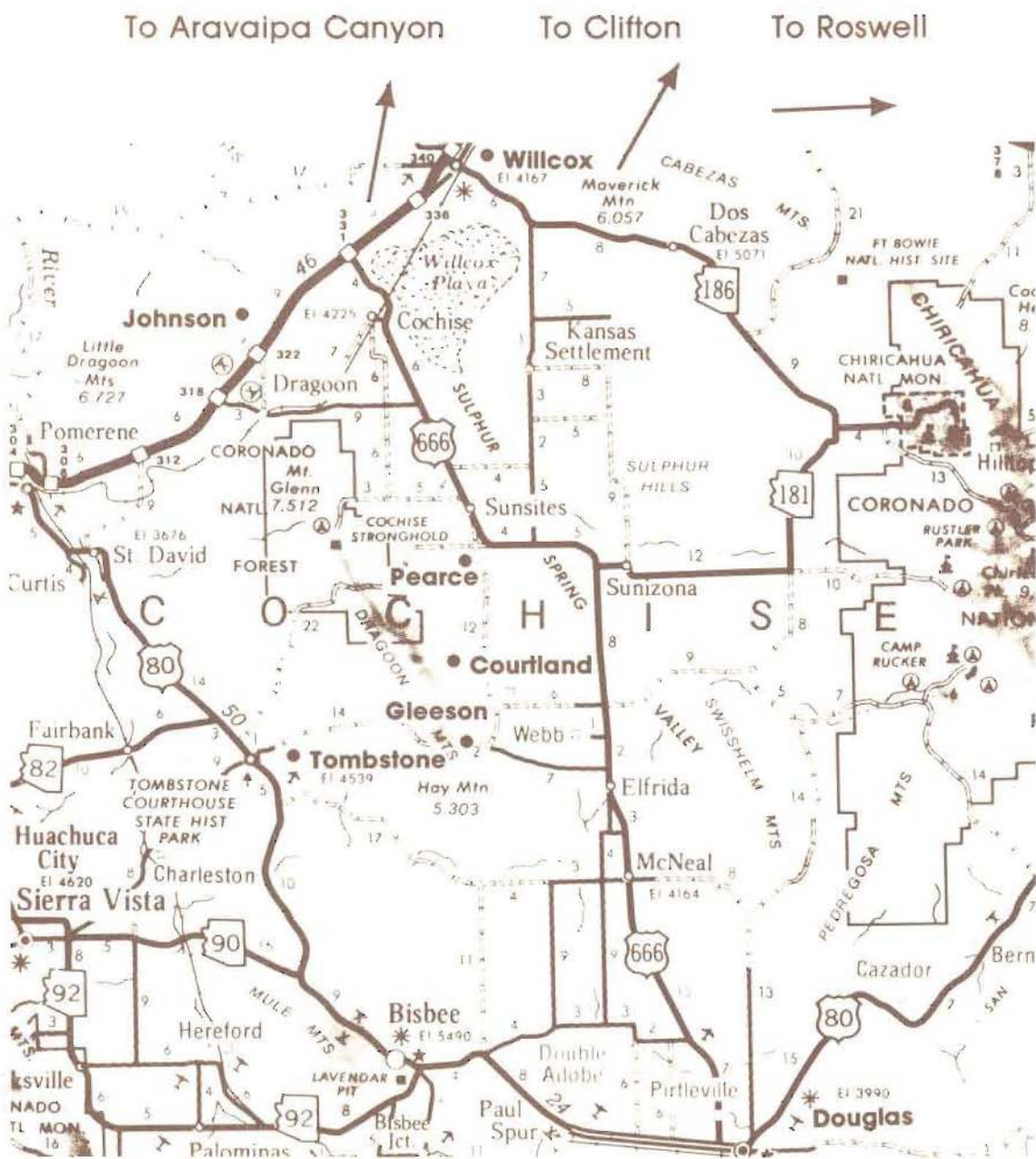
badly wounded, had gotten away. The dead man had been shot while he was playing his guitar on his own front porch. He had been shot in the chest, but managed to get into the house to get his gun and shoot the other man in the mouth. The man spit out four front teeth, placing them on a post in the front yard and got out of there as fast as he could. John found him several days later hiding in someone's barn. The man was brought to trial as he had shot an unarmed man from ambush. The jury convicted him and he was sentenced to twenty years in prison. On the way to Yuma prison, he escaped from the deputy and made his way into Mexico. Years later John found out where he was hiding, but decided it was not worth the trouble and expense to bring him back.

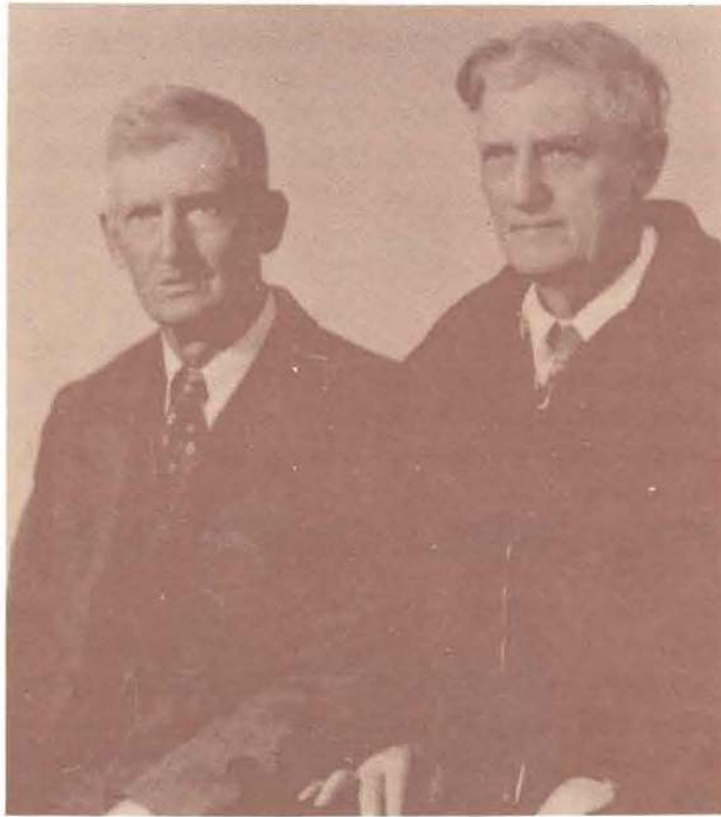
After three years as a lonely widower, John began to think about getting married once more. His daughter Vera was almost grown, but his two sons were only twelve years old and needed a woman's loving care. He had bought a ranch and was, by now, doing rather well. About this time he met a handsome young widow named Catherine Walker. She had lost her husband Ebe Walker in the great influenza epidemic of 1918. Catherine had six small children. Her oldest son, Albert, was the same age as John's two sons. June was the eldest girl, followed by Norman, Nancy, Raymond, and a charming two-year-old named Harry. Catherine owned a small ranch and when she agreed to marry John, they decided to merge not only their households, but their ranches, too. Catherine was a young woman of pioneer stock and proved to be a great help to John in his work. She did a fine job of helping raise his two boys. Vera was grown and had decided to marry. Several years later she was to give birth to a lovely daughter named Florence Margaret Hawker. Of Catherine and John's marriage, there was one son, Howard Norton Bright. He was the image of his father and when he was grown he had the same build and those same clear, far-seeing, blue eyes. Howard spent over twenty years in the armed services of the United States. Between Catherine and John they raised each of those children to be fine, honest, hard-working people — a family anyone could be proud of. In 1926 they sold their ranch and moved to Tucson to allow the older children to attend college.

A few years ago John received word from his cousin Henry Bright, still in Texas, that an oil company had taken a lease to drill for oil on the ranch property John's father, M.C. Bright, had left to his eight children. The ranch was near Content, Texas. Four wells came in and there would be more later. John never needed to know hardship in his old age; he could sit back smoking his pipe, knowing his life had been a long and fruitful one. He now sits with his little granddaughter, Anne Helene Bright, on his knee and tells her tales of when both John Bright and the West were young. He had only one grandson who carried his name, the son of John Jr. and Ann L. Bright. This grandson was named after his father and his uncle Mike, making his name John Michael Bright. Years later he was to carry the

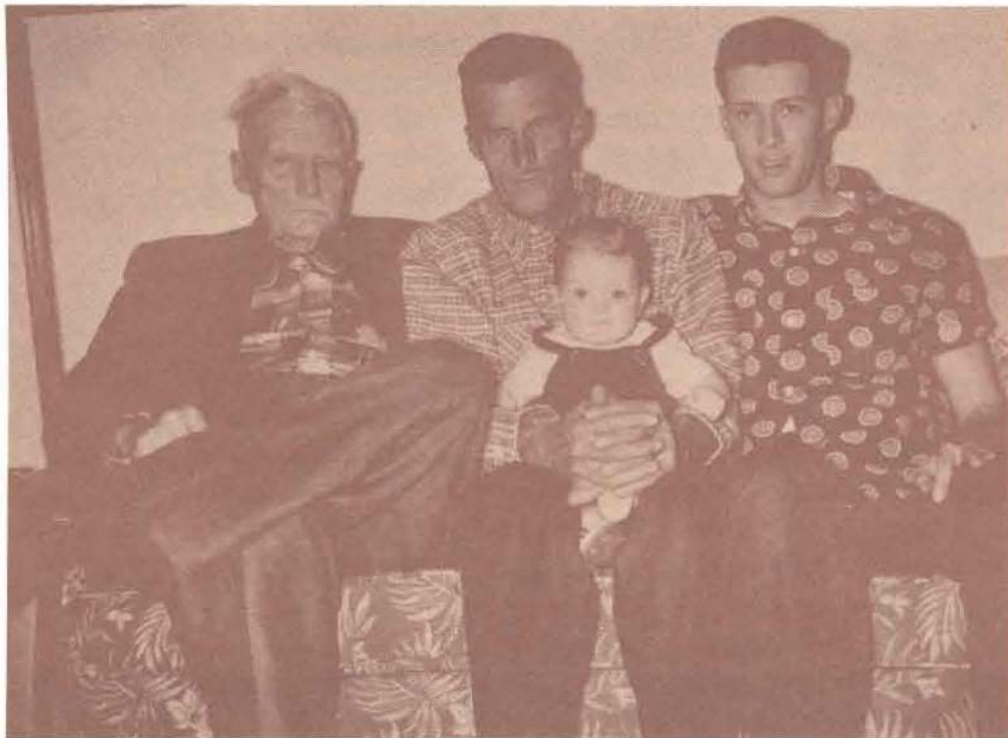
Bright courage into the battlefields of Korea. In 1953 John was stricken with the same illness that had taken his beloved Minnie from him so many years before, but due to modern drugs and the finest possible surgeon, John lived to see five great-grandchildren. He passed away in Tucson, Arizona at the age of eighty-six in February 1954 and is buried there.

\* \* \* \* \*





John H. Bright, Sr. (right) and his brother Will Bright (Vivian Place's father) 1940.



Four Generations, Dad's last picture. From left to right, John H. Bright, Sr.; John H. Bright, Jr.; John Michael Bright and Judy Bright (Mickey's daughter) 1954.



## THE APACHE SCARE OF 1924

Beth Noland Willis

This is the way I remember the last known sashay of the Apache Indians from the Sierra Madre Mountains in Mexico into the United States. The crossing was made in the late summer of 1924.

I was a small girl of eight years living on a ranch with my mother and father, Tom and Beulah Noland; there was also my sister six years and my brother three years old.

My father (Tom Noland) and some of the other ranchers, Charles Noland, Joe Summeral, Floyd Miller and Birt Roberds, had gone to the hay fields in the Cienega about ten miles north of Rodeo, New Mexico to gather wild horses.

Sometime between dark and mid-night our three old hound dogs began barking and barked all night. At one time the barking was very faint, but could be heard at a distance east of our house.

I was the oldest of the children and I knew that my mother was suspicious of something not just right going on, so I stayed awake with her and walked from window to window and door to door with her all night.

When the ranchers arrived in Rodeo the next day and heard the Apaches had been in the vicinity, they rushed home to check on their families, as only women and small children had been left at the ranch houses by themselves.

When my Dad arrived and was told how the dogs barked, he changed horses and started trailing the dogs. Dad found where the Indians had come to within one mile of our house, and were traveling South just inside the New Mexico state line. These Indians were very hard to track as they were wearing moccasins and had their horses shod with rawhide. If it hadn't been for the Travois pulled by their horses, the men don't think they could have been tracked.

When Dad returned from tracking the Indians, he told us that a cowboy for the Diamond A Cattle Company had rode upon the Indian Camp close to the Animas Mountains. An old squaw saw the cowboy about the same time he saw her; she broke and ran to alert the others and he rode back to the Diamond A and got a posse together to follow the Indians.

When the posse arrived at the camp the only sign of them was a small

calf that had been killed and all of the bones were crushed and removed through the mouth. This was used to carry water in.

The posse trailed them down through Skull Canyon and across to Skeleton Canyon, where they stole two mules from a rancher named Ross Sloan. It appears that the posse was crowding them too close so they turned the mules loose before crossing into Mexico at the White Gate.

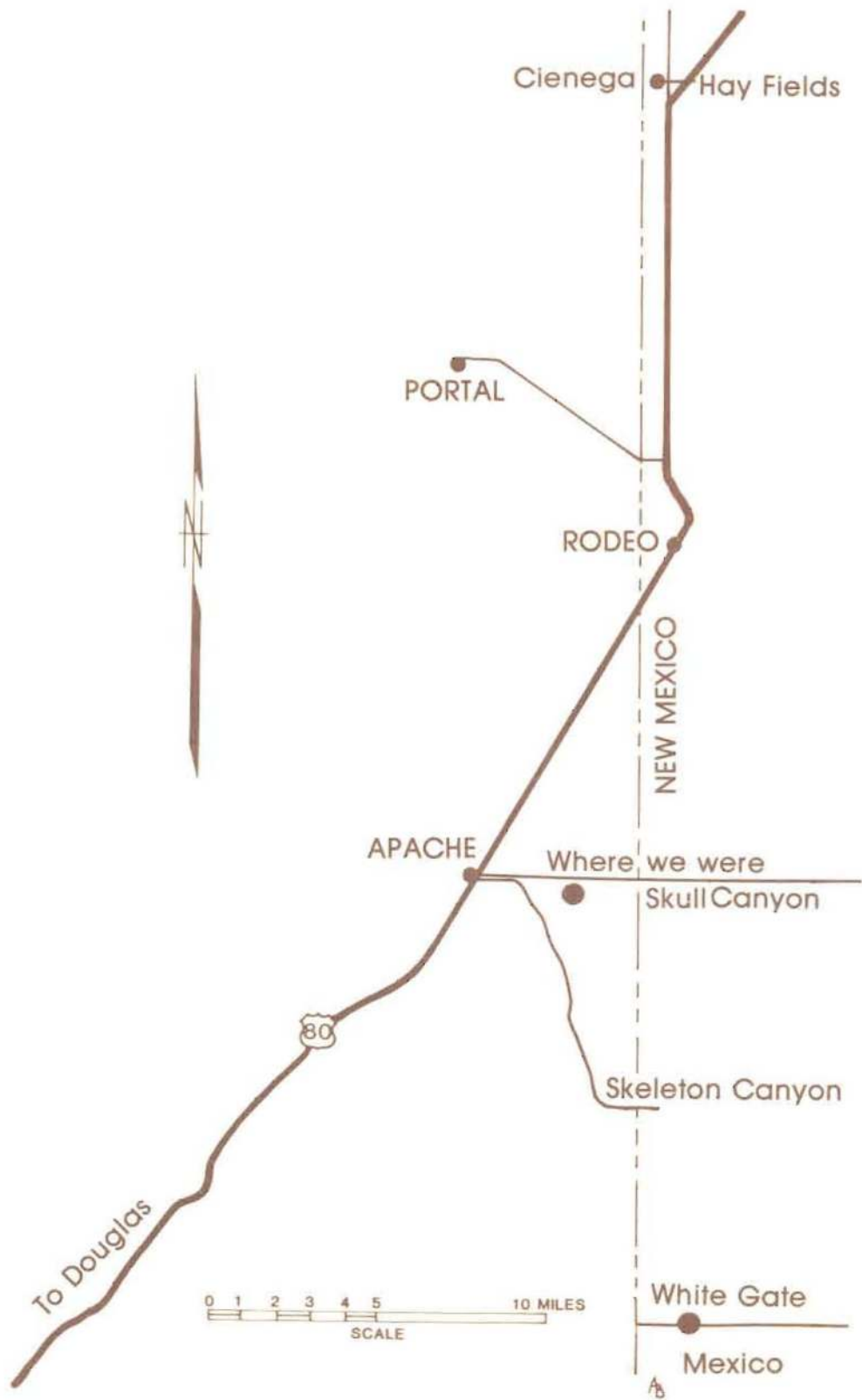
A few days after the Indians went back into Mexico, a young steer was found in the Peloncillo Mountains above Skull Canyon with the body of a small child tied on it.

Between Skull and Skeleton Canyons they went into a homesteaders shack and ripped open a feather mattress and scattered feathers all over and took his groceries. This man's name was Lee Burrow.

I have also heard that this group of Indians were believed to be the fiercest warriors of the Apache tribe; and when Geronimo surrendered, this group escaped into the Sierra Madre Mountains in Mexico.

Listening to some of the old timers' stories of the 1924 incident, the Diamond A cowboy was close enough to see the scout or leader of these Apaches. He was a white man with a red beard. It is believed he was the little white boy kidnapped near Safford, Arizona. Some say his name was McComas.

\* \* \* \* \*



Map first appeared on page 17 of "Cochise County, Arizona, Past & Present" by Ervin Bond. Expanded upon as noted for this story. Used with permission of Mr. Bond.