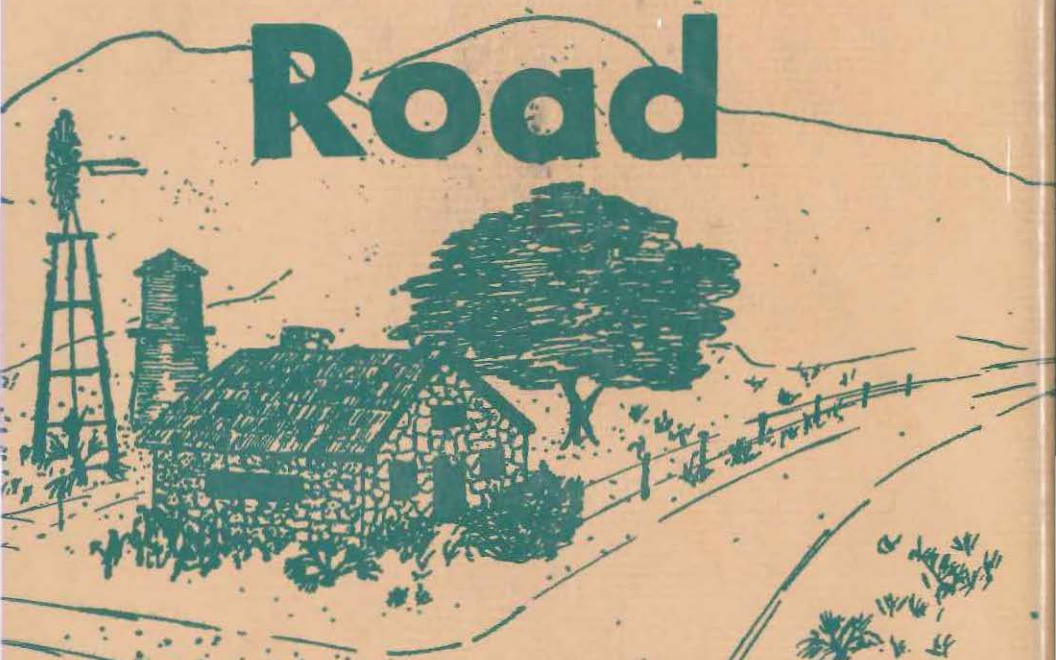


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House BY THE Buckeye Road



Helen H. Seargeant



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father was a Missouri farmer and a good husbandman, so it ran in the family — but they thought it was enough pioneering to come out and take up raw land under the new irrigation project and clear off the greasewood and mesquite. The young Phoenix was a rough place to his mother. When a perfectly tame Indian stuck his face up to her window to peer in, she was terribly frightened. The Arizona that I first knew was somewhat earlier and a far wilder place than the one that so scared the Missourian's mother. I was born here and my father had finished with his Arizona and gone hunting new fields before they came, and while I was away with him in jungle country, the Missourian and his family were making their move to Arizona.

Considering that my father was a fifth-generation, straight-line frontiersman and that my mother ran him a close second, I ought to have been something special in the way of a pioneer — but it happened that I was sidetracked. It takes a man to be a real leader, and my Missourian was of no mind to move to further new country. Anyway, he thought that by the time I met him I was about tamed down enough to live on a hundred and sixty acre plot.

Both my father and mother were from Arkansas — born in Locksburg, that was named for my great-uncles Locke. Matthew Alexander Humphreys (my father) was seventeen when he crossed the plains to California with the covered wagon train of his father's family, arriving in El Monte in the fall of 1861. My mother (Harriet Jane Wright) came with her father's family a little later. They all settled near Spadra, California, and my parents were married there.

My paternal grandfather and three of his sons took up a section of land near Spadra, and after a few years of farming my father and his next youngest brother, Tom, traded their half of the home ranch for livestock, and with Mama and the two little Californians, Kittie and Albert, they set out for Arizona. It was a slow journey of many days, but they finally reached the Colorado River — crossed the river on

the ferry at Ehrenburg, and thence by devious route to the old Fort Whipple Trail they made their way to Prescott and from there to the Verde Valley.

The region of the Verde was lonesome country in the fall of 1878. It was a long way to the nearest neighbors, and farther than that to a doctor's aid. It was about the second week in October when Mama decided she'd better start for Prescott (it was quite a journey in those days) to stay with friends pending a coming event.

The Tom Simmons family lived on the fringe of Prescott at that time, and though most of Prescott was fringe they were a substantial part of it, and Papa left Mama and the two children there and returned to the Verde. There were children in the Simmons family, too, but pioneers could always make room for a few more children, and Mrs. Simmons was a kind and motherly woman, so the time went pleasantly for them.

Hallowe'en came, and the spell of it was still hanging over the place when there was a yell that announced the arrival of an entirely new pioneer in Arizona Territory. As soon as Mama was able to travel comfortably (long before I was able to sit up and look at Prescott) they took us back to the Verde — and, because of the whimsies of Fate and Fortune, I didn't get back to see my birthplace till the better part of forty years had gone by.

My father's life during those early Arizona days was busy and varied. He engaged first in cattle raising (with freighting on the side) and then in sheep raising — then in prospecting and mining. And during those operations we were moved from the Verde Valley to Williamson's Valley, and then to Williams — before he finally struck the long trail and carried us all off to Mexico.

And now — we'll just skip a period of time — enough to grow up in — and come back to Arizona.

Chapter 7

WE HAD GONE TO LIVE AT THE LITTLE HOUSE on Lateral 23 the last day of August, 1913, and we got along with ditch water for washing, and hauled water for house use till the following July. Then John got Frank Davis to come bore a new and deeper well for us.

He came with his well boring rig and made a good start — and then he got drunk, so he laid off a couple of days. When he returned to work he was about “three sheets in the wind,” as my father used to say of such a state of insobriety, and he stayed that way, mostly, till the job was finished, but even half drunk, he was a pretty good well borer. He worked the rig all by himself, and on the second day (of real work) struck good water. Maybe you don’t think that was wonderful. Now we wouldn’t have to haul water, or have cans and barrels sitting around in the way and a shortage of water most of the time.

John had been off spotting a second-hand tank and tower, and they had the tank home next day, but the tower was a big job to transport home. They started off early in the morning, men, a wagon and team, and John with the extra men in the spring wagon, to help load the tower. It was a wooden frame tower, well built, and was bulky as well as heavy.

in the earth, we know nothing about Mr. Mooney's history or his people. The fact that several writers, getting history from hearsay sources, wrote him down as James Mooney proves how unreliable such fillers-in can be. The initials, as recorded on Mooney's mining claim — D. W. — couldn't be twisted to spell James.

According to my Uncle Font, he, with Mooney, Young, and Beckman, had been in and out of the canyon several times. They had not been able to get below the third and highest waterfall, and on this trip down, Mooney — who had learned rope climbing on a sailing ship — thought he could go down to the bottom of the cliff on a rope. The nature of the cliff was such that they couldn't see over and watch his progress; the noise of the falling water was so loud they couldn't possibly communicate with him by shouting. They really didn't know what happened or why he fell. They could only guess that he either overestimated his climbing skill or he lost his grip, for he did fall — and they had no way to get down to bury his remains for nearly a year.

In the year following Mooney's death (1884) my father went to Cataract Canyon and took over the mining claims. His first work was to discover a way to get down to bury Mooney. Young, Beckman, and Uncle Font were with him, and through the aid of an Indian they found a natural cave leading into the travertine overhang of the south bank, not far below the falls. They enlarged the cave a little, then blasted out a down-slanting tunnel, with steps in it, to open on the face of the cliff below the overhang. There they drove iron spikes into the cliff to make hand and footholds the rest of the way down. Thus, they finally made their way down to lay Mr. Mooney's remains to rest. (Fifty years later I went through this cave and the tunnel and down the spike ladder to the bottom of Mooney Falls.)

All during Papa's mining days he would come home on occasional trips for supplies, and there would be great commotion in our family when he arrived. Mama always cut