

Four Tenderfeet...

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with hardships, only to find it covered with a blanket of snow over seven feet deep. The party camped in the vicinity of the spring. Jack Smith shot a bear, and two mountain sheep were seen by the boys. A writer in the Coconino Sun many years later wrote of the incident, as remembered by David Babbitt.

"Camp was pitched, but in the morning the first thing to greet their eyes was another blanket of snow that had fallen during the night. Breakfast being of course in order, wood was gathered, the coffee made ready, in fact all preparations made for a hearty meal, when it was discovered that in the whole party only a match and a half stood between them and hunger, and that Mr. Dave Babbitt happened to possess those."

"After much cajoling on the part of Al Grady he was entrusted with the one whole match. True to life, the first match went out, and then only the half match remained—truly a critical situation with the prospect of no breakfast if the remaining half match failed to function. Pleading on the part of Al Grady did not seem to do any good this time, for history records that Mr. Babbitt kept the match and lit it, only after a careful gathering of all the inflammable material to be obtained. The half match in the hands of Mr. Babbitt seemed to realize its responsibilities, and a roaring camp fire and a good breakfast for all hands resulted."

A "Pleasant" Valley Visit
A May, 1886, issue of the Coconino Sun, records that the Babbitt Brothers, accompanied by a friend, set out in search of new range in the Pleasant Valley country, a trip which proved to be more exciting than had been bargained for. Riding into the beautiful green valley, known as Pleasant Valley, bordering the Apache reservation, they were met by a man riding toward them rapidly, warning them that the Apaches were on a raid, and that everyone was seeking refuge at the nearby Tewksbury ranch. "In their conversation on the way to the Tewksbury ranch," a writer in the Coconino Sun several years ago says, "it was learned that their new found friend was named Sigsby. As the party passed a rather dilapidated cabin they made inquiry from their guide as to why the occupants were not warned of the coming danger, and were informed that the place belonged to the Grahams. Their guide went on to say that the Tewksbury and Graham factions were at war with each other, and inasmuch as Sigsby was a Tewksbury sympathizer, it did not seem quite in order to stop at the enemy's stronghold. From the way Sigsby talked the brothers gathered the impression that he was a bit more afraid of the Grahams than he was of the Apaches. The Grahams in this feud were the leaders of the cattle faction and the Tewksbury represented the sheep interests. As a consequence the party made

all haste to the Tewksbury ranch, which they found to be in more or less a state of siege."

The Indian scare finally subsided, but about this time the climax came in the Tewksbury-Graham feud, one of the bloodiest chapters in the history of the state. The Babbitt brothers were not actively concerned in this warfare, but were right on the edge of it all during the time that it was at its worst.

"The Pleasant Valley country looked pretty promising for the cow business," related Mr. David Babbitt in later years, "and it wasn't long before we had made negotiations for some land, and were really full-fledged cattlemen."

The more prominent cattlemen of the Flagstaff section at that time included Acker & Walker, Lot Smith, Al Doyle, John Marshall, the Black Brothers, Henry Ashurst, and John Clark.

The "A-One-Bar" Cattle Co.

The largest cattle company in the vicinity of Flagstaff at that time was the "A-One-Bar," the Arizona Cattle Company, with headquarters in Fort Valley. The company was being "ram-rodged" by Captain B. B. Bullwinkle. In the early '80's, and until 1885, it had been managed by John W. Young, son of the famous Brigham Young, president of the "Mormon" Church. John Young, with a company of lumberjacks, had built the fort in what later became "Fort Valley" for protection against the Indians, while they were engaged in cutting ties on the slopes of the San Francisco Mountains for the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad Company. Following the completion of the railroad in 1883, the fort was turned into headquarters for the big cattle company, which was financed by a number of wealthy easterners. Bullwinkle, whom old-timers described as an "original" had at one time been fire chief in Chicago for the insurance companies. He was a man who liked fast horses; riding his Kentucky racing stock from Fort Valley to Flagstaff, it was his pleasure to ride with a watch in one hand, striving to cut the time of the ride to the lowest possible point. Charles J. Babbitt remarks with a smile, that Bullwinkle's training as a fire chief, who "had to get there first" was the probable reason for the ex-fireman's continual hurry to get wherever he was going. Bullwinkle was killed in 1888 when a fast horse he was riding to Flagstaff to meet the "Hashknife" ram-rod, Captain Warner, fell with him near the western limits of town.

Following the death of Bullwinkle, the owners of the famous "A-One-Bar" decided to go out of business. Accordingly, that fall they shipped 19,000 head of cattle, ... the remnant of their herds, ... and the spring in For ... Babbitt brother, so ... bbbitts found themselves ... cattle business deeper than ever.

Mercantile Business Started

Following the collapse of the

cattle markets, David Babbitt determined to go into the mercantile business in Flagstaff. Accordingly, he opened a small store near the present site of Babbitts Flagstaff department store, handling hardware, paints, and finished lumber. An advertisement he ran in the Coconino Sun about this time stated: "D. Babbitt, dealer in Hardware, Stoves, Paints, Oils, Cement, Plaster of Paris, and Hair. Guns and Ammunition. Also a complete line of Doors, Sash, and Redwood Shingles; in carload lots."

Many business interests were to be taken over by the Babbitt brother in the years following David's entrance into the mercantile business, but at no time were they to relinquish their live-stock holdings. Charles and William took care of the stock interests, while David was building up the hardware store business. It was through a deal made by Charles that the brothers found themselves in the sheep business. On a trip to Grand Canyon, Mr. Babbitt went down to the Joe Moritz cabin for a visit with Mr. Moritz. Mr. Moritz, in very poor health, wanted to sell his band of sheep. Charles bought the sheep, and Babbitts are still in the sheep business. Mr. Moritz regained his health, and still lives in Flagstaff.

Establishment of the Trading Co.

George Babbitt, another brother arrived in Flagstaff in 1887. He went to work immediately as a bookkeeper for the Brannen Mercantile Company, the town's largest department store. Later he resigned from the job, and took over a restaurant belonging to Wm. Switzer Sr. on "Front" street. Charles recollects that the restaurant was always open all night, to take care of late (or early) diners from the saloons and gambling halls, he later took in a partner, a man by the name of Jennings, who had the night shift in the restaurant. Later, George quit the restaurant, and joined his brothers in the founding of Babbitt Brothers Trading Company, in 1889.

Babbitt brothers purchased the business and stock of the Brannen Mercantile Company, which with the David Babbitt hardware store were the beginnings of the organization that was to assume immense proportion in later years. The four brothers, David, William, Charles and George, were partners; the company was purely and simply a partnership for many years, in 1918 it was corporated, because the varied and extremely large holdings of the concern made incorporation a logical move. George was appointed justice of the peace in 1889, his first public office.

1889 was a year of important and interesting happenings in Arizona. The census of that year, according to the files of the Coconino Sun, showed a population of 83,000, and the aggregate value of taxable property in the Territory was estimated at \$75,000,000. July 7, 1889, the Flagstaff depot burned to the ground, destroying an estimated \$50,000 worth of express

and freight. Two residences were also destroyed by the fire. The 15th legislature, meeting that year, passed a bill making train robbery punishable by death, following a series of train holdups.

Following the establishment of Babbitt Brothers Trading Company, the first building, on the site of the present Flagstaff department store, was built. It was about thirty feet by seventy, and as the business grew and new departments were added, other additions increased the size of the store building, which also housed the combination opera house, town hall, and court room. The old opera house, during its years of existence, housed some varied forms of amusement. Prize fights, amateur theatricals, "and," recollected David Babbitt in later years, "then some struggling theatrical troupe would wander in and give a performance, and if said performance was not quite up to the standard set by the citizenry it wasn't anything unusual for the actors to be treated to a demonstration that by the wildest stretch of the imagination could not be construed as friendly."

In 1891 the Cameron and Lind Mercantile Company, a large establishment, was bought out and added to the rapidly growing Babbitt concern.

George Babbitt was appointed first county treasurer of Coconino in 1891, and he was elected to a second term. He served as mayor of Flagstaff, and was chairman of the board of supervisors for four years. He also served as trustee of the state reform school, and was largely responsible for causing it to be converted into a state normal school, Flagstaff's Arizona State Teacher's College. During this period he was actively engaged in the business of the brothers' rapidly growing enterprise.

Babbitts Acquire 1st Trading Post

It is interesting to note how Babbitts first went into the Indian trading post business. In later years, David stated: "Our first trading post was at Red Lake. It was run by a man named Dittenhoffer. About that time Ditt made his appearance on our streets in a brand new buckboard. In the meantime we had let him have quite a few supplies on credit and he owed us a good deal of money. Ditt drove into town one day in his new buckboard, and one of the fairer sex who had a penchant for riding around in the new conveyance accompanied him back to Red Lake. However, one of her ardent admirers followed the pair out, and in a card game with Ditt the newcomer shot and killed him. Naturally we had to take over the business to protect our interests."

Sheriff John Francis, accompanied by a posse including William Babbitt, set out for Red Lake to capture the killer, but a rider from Flagstaff overtook them, with the news that prisoners in the jail in Flagstaff had broken out. The sheriff and posse returned to Flagstaff, and the killer of Dittenhoffer made good his escape. He went into Colorado, where he was sentenced to the

Colorado penitentiary later for killing another man. Later he was brought back here, and was sent to the Arizona penitentiary.

At one time Babbitts had seven trading posts. At the present time they have five. They are located at Tuba City, Cedar Ridge, Red Lake, Cow Springs and Jeddito.

Branches Established

The business of the trading company in Flagstaff grew rapidly, and branches in neighboring towns of northern Arizona were established from time to time. In 1904 the ice plant, part of the Flagstaff establishment, was built, the same year the Winslow store was opened. The Williams store was opened in 1905, the Holbrook store in 1915, the Kingman store in 1916. In 1921 the Grand Canyon store was opened. The garage building, on the corner of San Francisco and Birch streets in Flagstaff, was built in 1915. It is now operated by E. D. Babbitt.

In the early 1900's Babbitts acquired the famous "hashknife" brand, perhaps the most famous brand in the history of the cattle industry in Arizona. The "hashknife" still appears on Babbitt cattle.

At one time Babbitts operated a garage business in Phoenix, later sold, as well as a wholesale house in Prescott, also sold in the later years.

The Families

The five Babbitt brothers, including E. J., whom we have not so far mentioned in this story, were the children of David and Catherine Babbitt. Following a common school education in Cincinnati, their home, the five brothers attended St. Xavier's (Jesuit) college in that city.

Oldest of the brothers was David, born in 1858. He was married in 1886 to miss Emma Verkamp, sister of the wives of Charles and E. J. Babbitt, and also a sister of O. J. Verkamp, manager today of Babbitts' Flagstaff curio department. To this union were born six children: Raymond G., at present secretary-treasurer of Babbitt Bros. Trading Co.; Edwin D., proprietor of the E. D. Babbitt Motor Company, Flagstaff; Joseph R., vice-president of the Trading Co.; David M. Jr., who died in 1929; Elaine, who died in 1938; and Gertrude, who makes her home in Flagstaff. Mr. Babbitt died in 1929.

George Babbitt Sr. was born in 1860. He was married in 1887 to Philomena Wessell, of Cincinnati. The five children born to them were: Bertram H., prominent sheepman of the Flagstaff section; Marguerite (Mrs. Thos. McCullough, of Flagstaff); Herbert, proprietor of the Herb Babbitt garage in Flagstaff; George Jr., Flagstaff postmaster; and Eunice (Mrs. Ike Veazey). Mr. Babbitt died in 1920.

William Babbitt was born 1863. He was married in 1914 to Elizabeth Roach. Death came to him in Phoenix in 1930. Mrs. Babbitt makes her home in Flagstaff.

Charles J. Babbitt was born in 1865. He was married in 1891 to Mary Verkamp, of Cincinnati.

Four children were born to the couple: Helen, who resides in Los Angeles; Paul, an attorney in Las Angeles; James E., Arizona State Senator, and an officer of Babbitt Bros. Trading Co.; and John, also connected with the Flagstaff establishment.

Edward J. Babbitt, who has practiced law in Cincinnati for many years, was born in 1868. He was a Senator in Arizona's Territorial Legislature in the '90s, also probate judge for a time. When he was a member of the legislature he rode on the first train between Phoenix and Prescott. Later he returned to Cincinnati, where he is still active in the practice of law. He was married to Matilda Verkamp. Their three children, all of Cincinnati, are: Mary, Elizabeth, and E. J. Jr.

"They Built Well"

The little hardware business started by David Babbitt in 1886, and the first herd of cattle purchased by the brothers in the same year have grown to immense proportions. Today the wholesale and retail stores operated by the company provide almost every imaginable commodity used by townspeople, tourists, ranchers, and lumbermen. Modern stores are now operated in Flagstaff, Winslow, Holbrook, Williams, Grand Canyon and Kingman. The five trading posts, scattered over the Indian reservations, minister to the need of the Indians. Babbitts have over 2000 acres of extremely fertile land under cultivation in the Salt River Valley near Phoenix. The Arizona Livestock Loan Company, also owned by Babbitts, organized in 1926 with a capital of \$500,000, has in the 13 years since that time loaned over \$50,000,000 with only one foreclosure. By far the largest livestock loan company in the entire southwest, it has rendered invaluable service to the stockmen, particularly during the years between 1930 and 1946, when beef and sheep prices were shot to pieces. During this period the company carried scores of stockmen, who otherwise would have been "up against it."

It is indeed a far cry back to the days when the brothers arrived in Flagstaff, a town of small shacks; when domestic water was sold by the barrel, the streets were always either muddy or dusty, and law and order had a precarious status; when the prosperous state of Arizona was "Arizona Territory." One small hardware store and one small herd of cattle have grown to be the largest business establishment in the State of Arizona, excepting the utilities and mining companies.

During the past 50 years "the brothers" have prospered, as business firms usually do when they are founded on fair dealing, hard work, and courage. A history of northern Arizona in the past 50 years would of necessity deal in considerable detail with the part played by the Babbitts, just as a history of "the brothers" would in a large part be a history of northern Arizona.



The SUN, October 31, 1969

Ed Babbitt Had Bright Future Here, But Left

SUNfiles, 1959

The youngest of the five Babbitt Brothers, Edward was born in 1868 and early in life faced a bright future in law and politics in the Arizona Territory.

Coming to Flagstaff after graduating from law school in the early 1890's, Edward served as Senator from Coconino County in the Territorial Legislature and later was named to the Probate Court Bench.

However, after his legislative and court service, and after working briefly in his brothers' trading company, Edward returned to Cincinnati where he married the third Verkamp sister, Matilda whose family is also well known in the Grand Canyon area.

Edward Babbitt settled down there to raise three children and build a distinguished law career in Ohio.

He held the distinction of having been a passenger on the first train from Phoenix to Prescott while serving as a member of the Legislature.

Babbitt Ranches Annual Overview, July 1998



Understanding the Coconino Plateau

The expansive and breathtakingly beautiful northern Arizona region bordered by wilderness, national parks and Indian reservations is largely Babbitt Ranches. When Dr. C. Hart Merriam, a medical doctor and naturalist, surveyed the Coconino Plateau more than 100 years ago, his assistant, Vernon Bailey, called it "scenery on a grand scale."

With life zones ranging from alpine tundra on the mountaintops to arid desert lands in the canyon bottoms, this land of lightning-scarred ponderosa, gnarled junipers, and lush meadows fringed by quaking aspen trees, has stolen the heart of countless pioneers.

The legends and legacy of the Babbitts' southwestern story began with the wild lands. And, since 1886, Babbitt Ranches has been the seed by which many of the Babbitt family enterprises grew. Thus, it is with great reverence and respect for the land that Babbitt Ranches has surveyed the area once more, a century later.

"We have just as much obligation to understand the land as those who are entrusted with the management of public lands," Babbitts Ranches has stated.

Certainly, there have been changes to the land since Merriam's account. Gone are the grizzly bears. And more numerous are the pines. With the help of all of the state and federal land agencies that have jurisdiction on the Coconino Plateau—the Arizona Game and Fish Department, Arizona State Land Department, Coconino Plateau Field Station, U.S. Geological Survey Biological Resources Division, Coconino and Kaibab National Forests, Natural Resources Conservation Service, National Weather Service, and Wupatki National Monument—Babbitt Ranches has been successful in its efforts to compile a comprehensive Biological Assessment of the area.

The information is now being used as the benchmark for a passion and commitment to understanding the ecological process and human impacts on these lands. It is the hope of Babbitt Ranches that 100 years from now, those who review the Coconino Plateau Biological Assessment will know that this was a time when people began to "just participate" with the environment.



Wait . . . Watch It's Coming!

BABBITT'S
BIG...

BOAT
SHOW

SEE The Showing of '59 Boats

• GLASSPAR • ARKANSAS TRAVELER • P-14's

SEE THE NEW
G 3 GLASSPAR SKI BOAT
Designed specifically for water skiers. The first boat of its kind at a price you can afford!

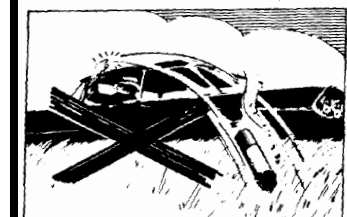
BUY WITH
36 MONTHS TO PAY

— LOW DOWN PAYMENT —

BABBITT'S Hardware Dept.

See The New
1959
JOHNSON
"The Motor to Buy"
OUTBOARD
MOTORS

HERE'S HOW TO SMOKE SAFELY IN THE WOODS . . .



IN YOUR CAR, always USE YOUR ASHTRAY! NEVER throw burning tobacco or matches out of the car window. Please avoid smoking while driving on unsurfaced forest roads.



IN THE WOODS; STOP, sit down, CLEAN a two-foot spot to BARE dirt and use it as your ashtray.



BE SURE to put all matches, ashes and burning tobacco — DEAD OUT — in the bare spot!



AVOID moving about while smoking. Follow the Good Smoking Rule listed above while HUNTING, FISHING, CAMPING, WORKING, or HIKING in the WOODS!