

# Guns and Gold

History of the Galiuro  
Wilderness  
Coronado National Forest



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

PREPARED BY  
Forest  
Service

Southwestern  
Region

## **GUNS AND GOLD: HISTORY OF THE GALIURO WILDERNESS**

**Coronado National Forest**

**By  
John P. Wilson**

**Sept. 1977**

United States Department of Agriculture  
U.S. Forest Service  
Southwestern Region

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Cover Photo: John Power, member of the family involved in the 1918 "shootout at dawn". Photo courtesy of the Arizona Historical Society.

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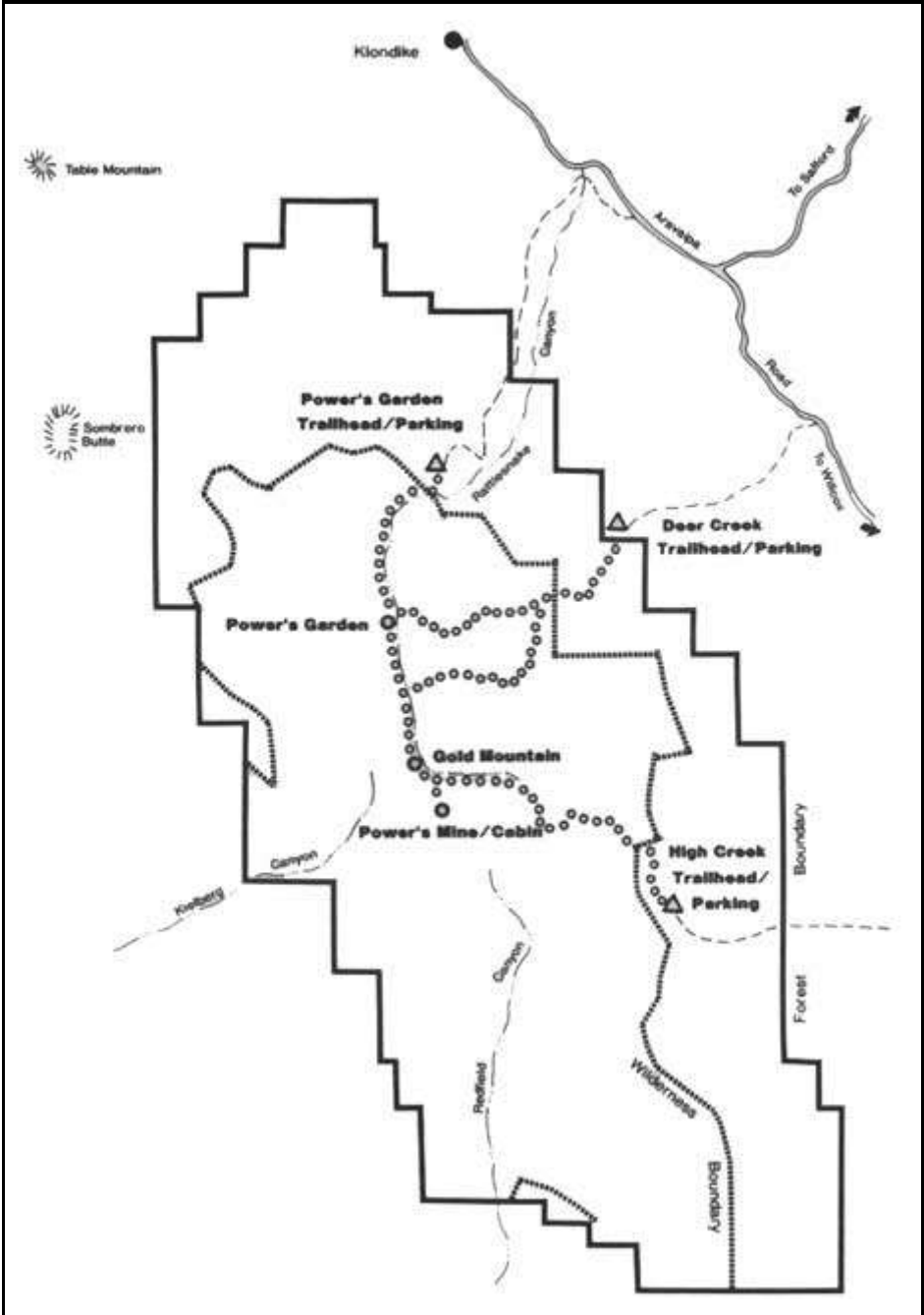
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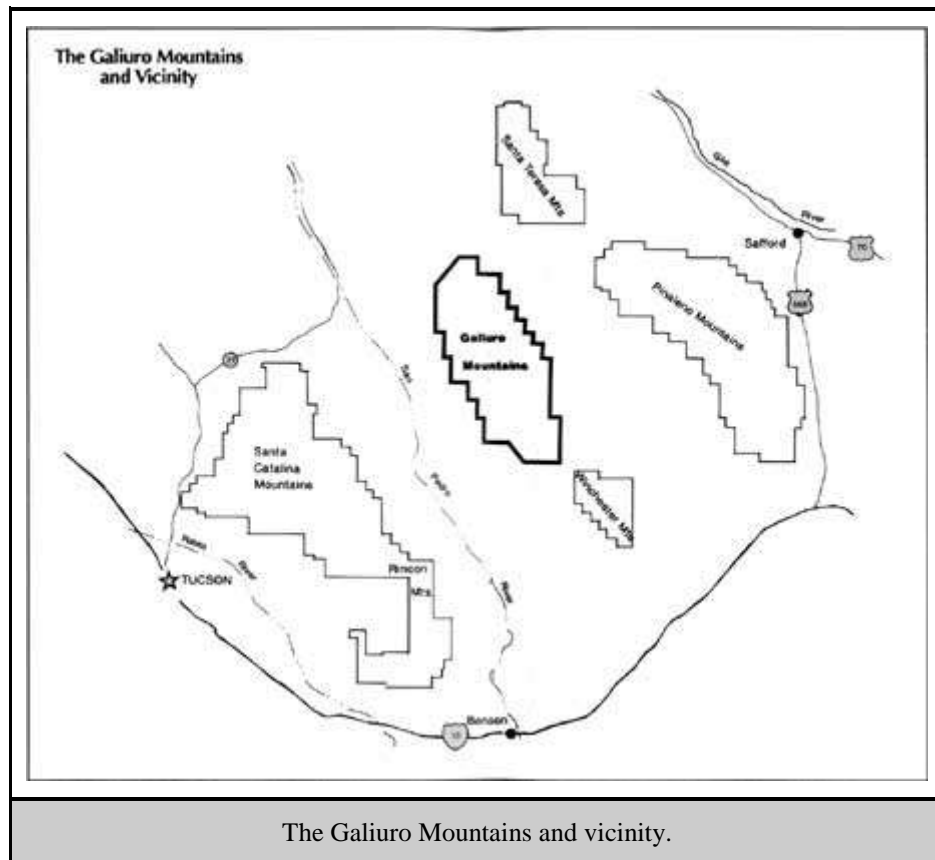
or visit the USFS Website on the Galiuro Wilderness.



Place names mentioned in the text.

## The Galiuro Mountains

Remote... primeval... rarely visited. These terms describe the nearly 120 square miles of the Galiuro Wilderness, an area of rugged beauty and isolation 50 miles northeast of Tucson, Arizona. The wilderness comprises much of the Galiuro Mountains, a "desert island" range bounded on the west by San Pedro River Valley, on the east by Sulphur Springs Valley, and on the northeast by Aravaipa Valley. Travelers on State Highway 77 can see the western scarp of the mountains at a distance, but the only access to them is by foot or horseback on forest trails. The Galiuros have borne this name since about 1870; earlier references called them the San Catistro or San Calisto mountains, and the Sierra del Aravaipa.



The most prominent peaks in the Galiuros reach elevations above 7,000 feet. Canyons and north slopes at higher elevations support ponderosa, Chihuahua and Mexican white pines, Douglas-fir, Arizona cypress, and Mexican piñon trees. Elsewhere the mountains exhibit moderate to dense growth of alligator and Utah juniper, piñon, and several kinds of oak. In the foothills and on the lower slopes one finds heavy stands of manzanita, mountain mahogany, mesquite, acacia, scrub oak, cacti, and other brush. Much of the range is rough and brush-covered. Along the watercourses, riparian growth includes Arizona sycamore, alder, ash, bigtooth maple, walnut and Apache plume. Although there are no permanent streams or lakes, surface water may be found at springs, many of which have been improved for livestock use. None of this country has been commercially logged.



Powers Garden along Rattlesnake Creek.

This is a relatively young mountain range, formed in mid-Tertiary times by block-faulting and uptilting of the earth's crust. The upper part of the geologic sequence is made up of thick deposits of relatively young volcanic rocks known as the Galiuro Volcanics. These rocks, mainly ash fall deposits and lava flows, overlie older granites, quartzites and other formations. Structurally the Galiuros consist of two high, parallel ridges separated by two valleys, one sloping north and the other to the south. These deeply incised valleys, Rattlesnake and Redfield, run parallel to the lengths of the ridges. High-angle drainages dissect the mountain slopes fronting on the San Pedro and Aravaipa valleys.

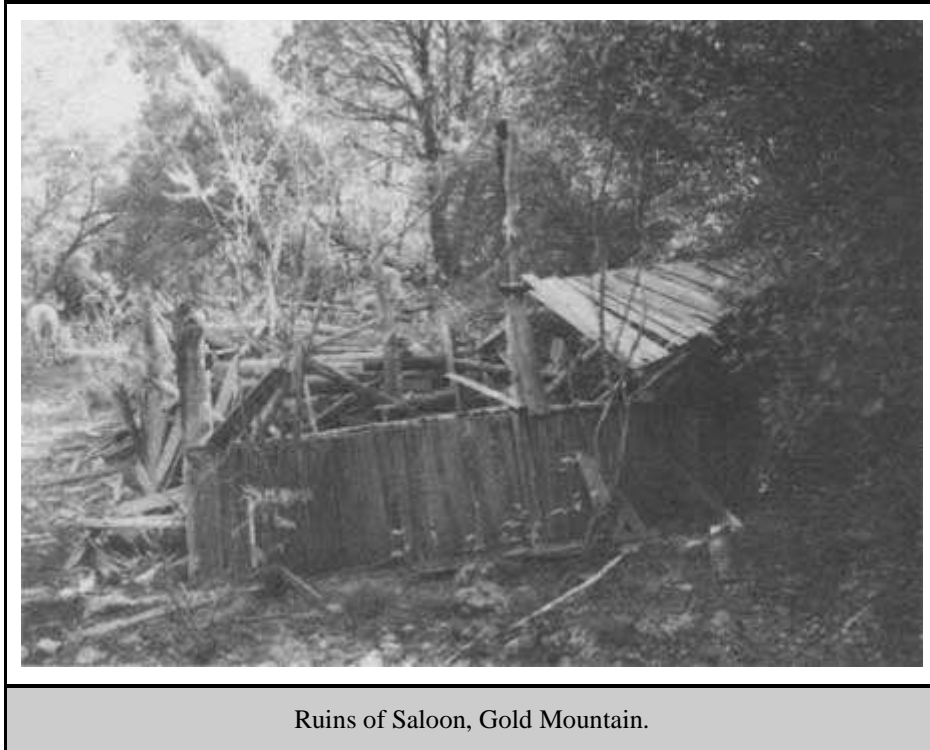
## **Early History**

One thousand years ago, large villages built by prehistoric farmers were scattered along the San Pedro and Aravaipa Valleys. Most of these had been abandoned by 1540 when Spanish explorer Francisco Vasquez de Coronado crossed what is now southern Arizona, probably passing just east of the Galiuros. His army may have followed the San Pedro River Valley northward from Mexico, then continued along the Sulphur Spring and Aravaipa Valleys with the Galiuro Mountains on their left.

Somewhere near the Galiuros, Coronado's chroniclers noted a large abandoned structure they called "Chichilticale," or Red House. No one knows exactly where this structure was. One of the chroniclers wrote that the natives of the region lived by hunting and in rancherias, without permanent settlements.

In the three centuries after Coronado, the Galiuros were virtually ignored by European explorers and colonizers. One visitor was the pioneering Jesuit, Father Eusebio Kino, who made a trip down the San Pedro Valley and stayed the night of November 14, 1697, at a Sobaipuri Indian village called Aribabia. This little town lay west of the Galiuros in the vicinity of modern-day Mammoth, Arizona. Aribabia and the other Sobaipuri farming communities along the San Pedro were frontier settlements, a buffer against their enemies, the Apaches, and another hostile Indian group called the Jocomes, both of whom lived farther to the east. The Jocomes, a little-known group possibly related to the Apaches, were probably the aboriginal inhabitants of the Galiuro Mountains. Spanish and Mexican soldiers penetrated this country in pursuit of Apaches, but their campaign journals reveal little.

The Galiuros became part of the United States with acquisition of the Gadsden Purchase in 1856. Government exploring expeditions soon criss-crossed southern Arizona to determine the boundary with Mexico and lay out railroad and wagon road routes. While some of these parties skirted the Galiuros to the west and east, none report entering the mountains themselves. The nearby Aravaipa Apache band may have used the mountains at this time, but there are no reports that indicate they lived there permanently. Later during the Apache wars, Army patrols did have a couple of skirmishes with hostile Indians here.



Ruins of Saloon, Gold Mountain.

When prospectors arrived in the Galiuros, they discovered minerals around Sombrero Butte, a few miles west of the wilderness. Supposedly some mining took place as early as 1863, but it was another 20 years before this area was organized as the Copper Creek mining district. Over \$4 million worth of lead, silver, copper, and molybdenum, were produced from this district between 1905 and 1959, when mining ended. At Table Mountain, some five miles to the north, an energetic development of copper ores began in 1898 and the newspapers reported that "a lively camp" had sprung up. The short-lived "boom" here ground to a halt within a year.

Perhaps it was prospectors from Copper Creek or Table Mountain who first explored the higher reaches of the Galiuros. The beginnings of mineral exploration there are lost to history. The first claims, in 1902, were made on some low-grade gold prospects along upper Rattlesnake Canyon. A tiny community sprang to life. Besides the tents and cabins of the miners, Gold Mountain sported a saloon and a red-light house. Soon, however, the mining company pulled out and the original miners left. A visitor long afterwards found "...a few dilapidated log cabins still standing, the ruins of flimsy tent-houses, wagon wheels, tin cans and other rubble" strung along Rattlesnake Creek.



Mine adit, Galiuro Mountains.

The first gold discoveries nearly coincided with President Theodore Roosevelt's July 22, 1902 declaration of the higher part of the Galiuros as a Forest Reserve. Six years later the Forest Reserves in Graham County became part of Crook National Forest. The protection here was not for the timber, of which the Galiuros had very little, but for the watershed, which in desert lands is an even greater consideration. The ranger station for the district that included the Galiuro Mountains lay along Aravaipa Creek near the tiny settlement at Klondyke. It was not until 1953 that the Crook National Forest was incorporated into the Coronado National Forest.

Early-day Forest Rangers had enforcement duties, which meant that they customarily went around armed. Occasionally one of them wound up in a gunfight. One such incident involved F. Lee Kirby, an early ranger on the Aravaipa District. At a dance in Klondyke a miner with a quarrelsome reputation, Perry Tucker, insulted a woman with whom Kirby was dancing. Tucker warned Kirby not to come to the mine that Tucker and his partner Al Bauman were then working, to which Kirby responded that he would come if his business required it. This mine lay in the headwaters of Kielberg Canyon in the Galiuros, on Forest Service lands. At that time it was known simply as the Abandoned Claims. Within a few years it would become notorious as the Power Mine.

The mine was on a main trail and several weeks later—January 3, 1912—Ranger Kirby rode by. He stopped and called out at the mouth of the mine tunnel. The partners came outside and the three men talked, with Tucker doing some threatening, until Kirby started on his way with Tucker close behind. Bauman reentered the tunnel but a few minutes later he heard Kirby calling

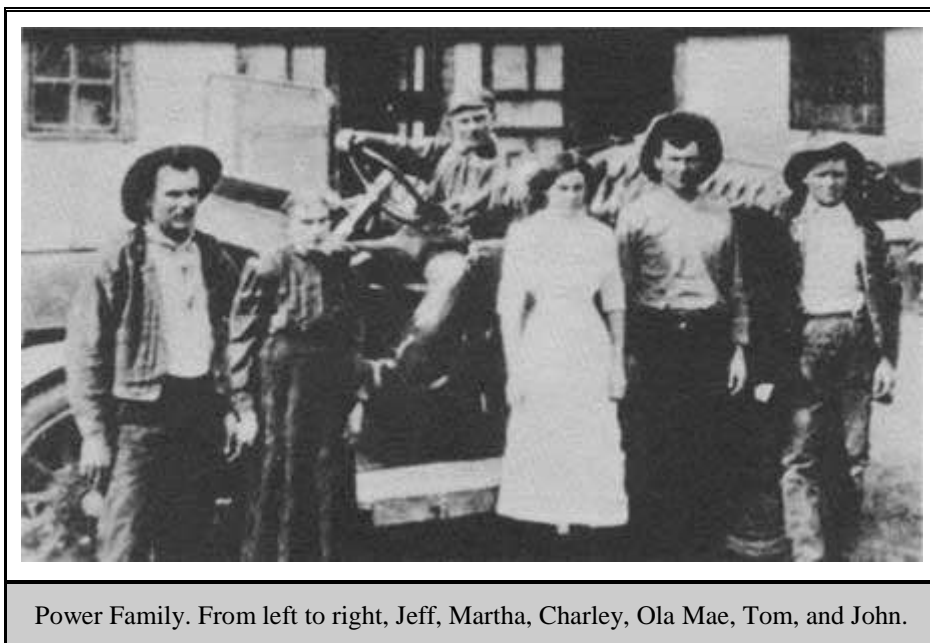


him and so stepped back outside. Once again he heard his partner tell the ranger not to pass through or stop there any more, and Kirby answered that he would pass by and stop if he had any business. Tucker, whom Bauman thought had already determined on trouble, then threw out the taunt that "If you want gun play you've got it!" Both men went for their weapons, but Kirby fired first and emptied his gun into Tucker, who managed to get off at least one shot. Tucker gradually sank down until he was sitting in the trail, then leaned over on his elbow and laid his head down, dying on the spot. The ranger was unhurt and rode into Klondyke, accompanied by Bauman. A coroner's jury returned to the site the next day and held their inquest, with Bauman as the only witness. They ruled that Kirby had acted in self-defense.

Ranching got its start in the Galiuros at almost the same time as mining. In the 1890's and through the first decade of the 20th Century, the principal type of livestock was probably Angora goats rather than cattle. Goat ranching paid well and the slopes of the Galiuros and neighboring hills were ideal range for these browsing animals. One of the goat ranchers was Pete Spence, who had a one-room log cabin well up in the mountains at a place called Rattlesnake Springs. The location is now known as Power's Garden.

## The Power Family

The Power family left an indelible mark on the history of the Galiuros. Originally from west Texas, the family moved around for years as Jeff Power, the father, sought work and tried his hand at ranching. They came to the Galiuro Mountains in 1909, to a place in lower Rattlesnake Canyon. Two years later the oldest son bought out Spence's goat ranch. The family moved there and continued raising horses and cattle, also adding four rooms to the cabin and building a couple of corrals. They planted a garden as well, thus the placename Power's Garden. At this time the Power family consisted of Jeff, also known as the Old Man, his three sons Charles, John, and Tom, and a daughter, Ola May. Rattlesnake Springs was their main headquarters until about 1917. By then the oldest brother, Charles, had sold his share of the cattle to the rest of the family and left for New Mexico.



Power Family. From left to right, Jeff, Martha, Charley, Ola Mae, Tom, and John.

In what was still a rough and occasionally violent frontier, the Powers were a fairly typical family—close-knit, quick to defend their interests, rarely staying more than a few years at one place. Life was not easy and the Power men periodically sought employment with other ranchers or at the mines around southern Arizona to supplement the income from their own cattle. They also held mining claims at Rattlesnake Springs and Gold Mountain. Other Galiuro residents held mines along upper Rattlesnake Canyon and in the headwaters of Kielberg Canyon.

As miners, the Powers and their neighbors did little more than assessment work to hold their claims, probably hoping to eventually sell at a profit. It was typical that individuals expected to make money by selling their claims rather than by bringing a mine into production, especially if a property had only low-grade ore. The gold and silver prospects in the Galiuros were all extremely low-grade and limited to the shear zone along a single fault line. The Powers of course were not geologists and they may have been wildly optimistic about the value of their holdings.

What has been called the Tragedy of the Galiuros started when Jeff Power bought Perry Tucker's one-quarter interest in the Abandoned Claims from Tucker's estate. Eventually the Old Man and his sons acquired a three-quarter interest in this property, now known as the Power's Mine. They also had gold fever, and started serious preparations for mining after selling their ranch and cattle at Rattlesnake Springs.

First they built 25 miles of wagon road through some of the roughest country imaginable, completing this with the help of a hired man, Tom Sisson, early in 1917. The road ran from the Haby Ranch, several miles above Klondyke on Aravaipa Creek, south for a dozen miles before dropping down what is still called Power's Hill into Rattlesnake Canyon, then up this canyon to the mine sites.

Next, the Powers purchased a second-hand stamp mill and hauled this to Gold Mountain, where the family and Tom Sisson now lived in the old buildings. There on December 6, 1917, a week after her 23rd birthday, Ola May Power "came to her death from an unknown cause " according to a coroner's jury. The circumstances were never really explained at the time and lingering questions have prompted later writers into endless speculation and some graphic descriptions. Following her death, the Power men and Sisson moved to the cabin near the Power's Mine.



Stamp Mill, Gold Mountain.

By this time the United States was well into World War I. At their father's insistence, Tom and John Power, aged 24 and 26 years, had failed to register for the draft, making them what were called "slackers". They must have realized the seriousness of their action although Tom Power later claimed that they were told the Army did not need them, after which "we did not give the matter any more thought."

The law did not regard draft evasion lightly. In mid-January 1918, as the Powers completed their preparations to begin mining and processing ore, Sheriff Robert F. (Frank) McBride of Graham County happened to meet Jay Murdock in Safford. At the sheriff's request, Murdock agreed to carry a letter back to the Galiuros and deliver it to Jeff Power. The letter outlined the situation

that his sons now faced and asked them to come in immediately. The Old Man evidently thought that the sheriff wouldn't follow up on his words. Tom and John Power stayed out.

## **The "Shoot-Out at Dawn"**

The climax came several weeks later. On February 9, 1918, Deputy U.S. Marshal Frank Haynes, Sheriff McBride, and deputy sheriffs Martin Kempton and T. K. "Kane" Wooten started for the Powers' camp. Marshal Haynes carried arrest warrants for Tom and John Power on draft evasion charges, while the sheriff had warrants for the Old Man and Sisson, who were wanted for questioning in connection with Ola May's death. The lawmen drove as far as the Upchurch Ranch near Klondyke the same evening. They borrowed horses, saddled up and rode south into the Galiuros during the night. Some time in the early morning hours the posse arrived at the cabin near the Power's Mine and silently took up positions, two men north of the house and two to the south. Inside were Jeff Power, his two sons, and Tom Sisson.

Just before dawn on Sunday, February 10th, the Old Man rose and started making a fire in the fireplace. John built a fire in the cookstove. They heard two of their horses gallop by and the dogs started barking. Jeff Power grabbed his rifle, went to the door (which faced to the east) and stood there looking out. Just then "Kane" Wooten yelled, "Throw up your hands! Throw up your hands!"

What happened next was a shoot-out that left four men dead and a bloody trail in Arizona's history. Marshal Haynes, the only survivor of his party and a badly rattled man, made a statement a few days later. In 1969, over 50 years later, Tom Power gave his version of events. Their accounts disagreed at points since neither man saw everything that happened; Power remained inside during the fight while Haynes witnessed part of what happened outside.

According to one reconstruction, Jeff Power had stepped out in the yard when almost immediately someone inside the cabin began firing through the doorway. Marshal Haynes pumped two bullets through the door and one into a nearby window as he and McBride ran for the north end of the cabin. One or both of the deputies then opened up from the yard, but Mart Kempton was cut down either by the Old Man or by a shot from inside. Kane Wooten fired and felled Jeff Power with a bullet in the chest. Wooten ducked for cover at the southeast corner of the house, where he glimpsed a figure at the window and fired through it. He tried to scuttle away again but Tom Power caught his silhouette outside the window and fired once, downing Wooten with a shot in the back. Both deputies now lay dead in the yard. Meanwhile, flying glass had hit Tom Power in the left side of his face while slugs striking the doorjamb had driven wood splinters into his brother's face.

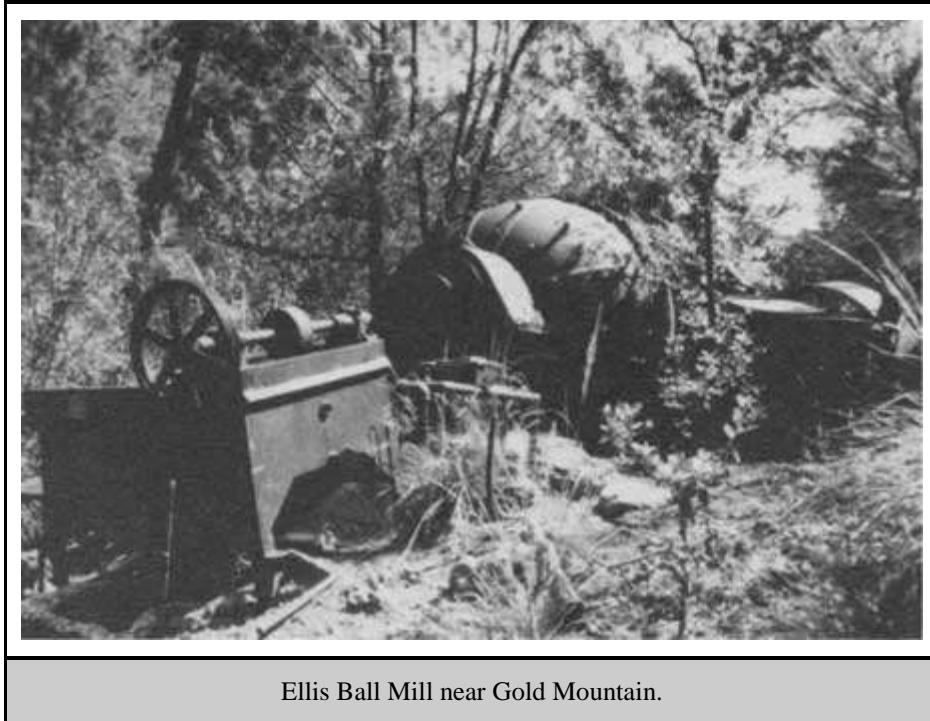


Powers Cabin as it appeared many years ago. The kitchen (at rear) has since been removed.

Sheriff McBride hugged the northeast corner of the cabin while the marshal went to check the west side. He could see nothing and came back to find the sheriff sprawled on the ground, dead. Empty cartridge cases indicated that Tom Sisson had poked his rifle through a crack in the logs and put three bullets into the sheriff. The shooting stopped about this time and Marshal Haynes retreated to where they had tied the horses, mounted his own and then "I came on into Klondyke just as fast as I could come." About 25 shots had been fired. It was all over in a few minutes.

What followed was the biggest manhunt in Arizona's history. The Power boys and Tom Sisson made their father comfortable (he died later in the day), mounted the officers' horses and a mule, took plenty of guns and ammunition and rode south towards Redington on the San Pedro River. From there they worked their way east across southeastern Arizona, slipping past the posses that criss-crossed the country and finally entering Old Mexico south of Hachita, New Mexico. There on March 8th they surrendered to a U.S. Army patrol that had picked up their trail and crossed the border in pursuit.

At their trial, all three men were convicted of first-degree murder and sentenced to life imprisonment. Sisson eventually died in prison at the age of 86, but the Power brothers lived on. In 1960, forty-two years after their conviction, they were released on parole. Nine years later Governor Williams signed their pardons. Tom Power lived until September of 1970. John spent his last years near Aravaipa, passing on in 1976.



Ellis Ball Mill near Gold Mountain.

The Powers never shipped any ore from their own mine. It passed into other hands and in the early 1930's a few test lots of ore were shipped from there. An Ellis ball mill installed about five miles to the north, near the old Gold Mountain workings, processed about 100 tons of ore (apparently from the Power's Mine) in 1933. The last recorded production in this district dates from 1940. More recent studies by the U.S. Geological Survey have shown a spotty occurrence of gold and silver at the Power's Mine, most assays indicating little more than a trace of precious metals. Other mines and prospects in the Galiuros have approximately the same values. Historically this district yielded only 163 ounces of gold.



## **The Wilderness**

In October 1932, the Forest Service created the original Galiuro Primitive Area within the Crook National Forest. The Primitive Area became the Galiuro Wild Area in 1940, with administration shifting to Coronado National Forest in 1953. Under the 1964 Wilderness Act, the area was redesignated the Galiuro Wilderness in September 1964. A last addition in 1983 incorporated the parklike floor of Rattlesnake Valley, the so-called Galiuro Corridor, into the wilderness, which now totals 76,317 acres.

Most of the trails of the wilderness follow historic routes, but the most visible link with the past is Power's Cabin where the shoot-out took place. With its log walls of Arizona cypress, the shake roof, and rough-sawed door and window frames, the cabin stands little changed from its appearance at the time it was originally built around 1905 or 1906. It has recently been rehabilitated and should endure for many more years, as a focal point for all who value the history of the Galiuros.

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John P. Wilson

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