

BACK WHEN | STAN BROWN

# RIM COUNTRY PLACES

## CHAPTER 34: RYE

The year was 1864 when King Woolsey led a citizen militia in the first white invasion of Tonto Apache territory. They came up the East Verde River from the Verde Valley and followed a drainage southeast to the river they called Tonto Creek. After giving Tonto Creek its name, they assumed the way they had come was the north fork of the Tonto, and so it was called until a few years later when military detachments were invading the Tonto Basin. They followed the north fork up to the East Verde and then into Payson looking for a place to establish a fort. They called that place Green Valley, but decided it was too isolated and subject to attack, so withdrew to establish Camp Reno instead.

It was then the military began referring to Wild Rye Creek in their reports and on their maps. The name seemed obvious because of the luxuriant rye grasses and the wild rush of water during heavy rains. By 1879 the official maps vested the name "Wild Rye" although the same maps showed the country east of there as an unexplored blank.

As the Rim Country opened up to settlers a junction of the north-south and the east-west trails made a logical place to open a trading post, right where freighters and travelers would ford Rye Creek. It was 1881 when J.W. and Mary Boardman from California settled there with their family. The developing gold camp at Marysville and the Mormon settlement of Mazatzal City brought a lucrative traffic. As Payson developed the road around Ox Bow Hill followed Rye Creek and

later a couple of wagon roads developed a short cut from Rye over the Ox Bow Hill. It all made this a logical place for a store.

The Arizona State Guide published in 1940 by the WPA Writer's Program says, "RYE and the Rye Creek region is a scattered population that formerly constituted an important Gila County election precinct known as 'Wild Rye.' This was a crossing point for expeditions of every sort — soldiers, bandits, feudists, and Indians. It was neutral territory and a refuge for belligerents of the Graham-Tewksbury feud. John Gilliland, one

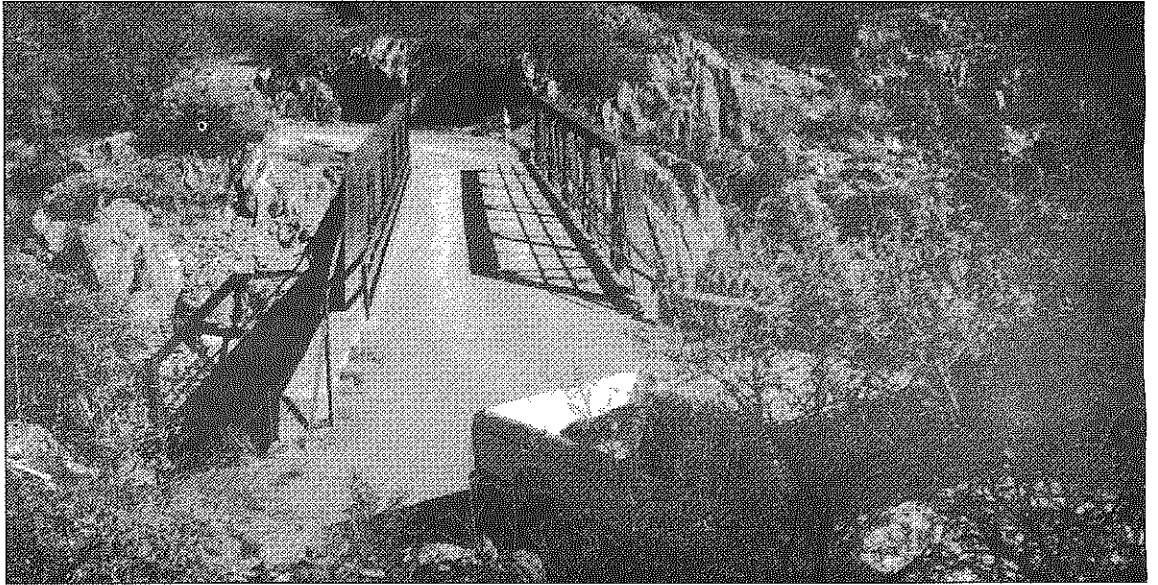


STAN BROWN

of the first men wounded, rode 30 miles to Rye, where a resident squeezed out the bullet after making an incision with a razor ...."

That was only one of a number of exciting events at Rye. In July 1882 this was the place where several detachments of U.S. Cavalry and Indian Scouts rendezvoused during the chase of renegade Apaches that ended in the Battle of Big Dry Wash. A wounded man named Sigsbee stumbled into the camp at Rye while the soldiers cooked supper. He had come from the Sierra Ancha and reported that he and his brothers had been attacked by the renegades, their horses stolen, his brother and a cowhand had been killed, and he had held the raiders off from his barricaded cabin until they left. The soldiers and scouts headed back to Sigsbee's ranch where they found the mutilated bodies of the ranchers.

In 1884 the mail route between Payson and Globe was established and it went past the Boardmans' store. They petitioned for a post office, and on



Stan Brown photo

The bridge over Rye Creek on the old Bush Highway as it appears today.

Nov. 14 Mary Boardman became its first postmistress. At the request of the Postmaster General the name was shortened from Wild Rye Creek to simply Rye.

In the summer of 1887 the Boardmans ended their mercantile business in Rye and moved to the growing town of Payson where they began a long and civic-minded residency. The business in Rye was taken over by Samuel J. Peters, and for the next two years he was the postmaster.

Then in the summer of 1890 Samuel A. Haught Jr. and his wife Dagmar filed a homestead claim in Rye and instituted the H-Bar brand that they brought with them from Texas. They had made their pilgrimage to the Rim Country five years earlier in 1885 and settled their first home at the mouth of Dude Creek. Haught planned to open a store there, having heard from his Uncle Fred (the first the Haught clan to come to the Rim Country) that a railroad was to come down the East Verde canyon. When it became obvious that would not happen, the Haughts moved to Rye. In August of 1892 tragedy struck the family when four of their small children died from diphtheria, which they contracted from an itinerant cowboy who used their water ladle.

Sam Haught Jr. opened a store and post office in their home at Rye and was postmaster until the fall of 1905 when he was elected to the 23rd Arizona Territorial Legislature, serving in the House. Dagmar took over as post-

mistress. By this time Sam Haught was looked upon as a cattle baron, having 10,000 cattle and 1,000 brood mares. His range extended from his H-Bar ranch in Rye up through Sunflower Valley.

In 1907 a severe depression hit America and the Haughts were economically devastated. That was the last straw for the marriage of Sam and Dagmar, a marriage that had become rocky after the loss of their four children. In 1909, when the divorce became final, Sam sold his H-Bar ranch to an absentee owner. That same year the post office in Rye was discontinued.

In 1912 a big change took place in Rye when the Chilson brothers, Boss, Jesse, Charlie and John, sold their Sunflower ranch and bought five ranches in the Rye area. These were the VH, H-Bar and Cross-F and Bar-T-Bar brands. The brands usually went with the land in those days. The community of Rye took on more life when other families "proved up" on their homesteads there: Chilson in 1919, Hiram Carther in 1919, Juna Portillo in 1921 and James Harry Brown in 1922.

At this time the Bush Highway had pushed over the Mazatzals and where it crossed Rye Creek it passed the Brown ranch where they established a store. Here Polly Brown operated the store for some years before becoming a businesswoman on Payson's Main Street.

By 1932 the Bush Highway was graded, following along Rye Creek and turning at Rye to climb over

the hill to Payson. Rye was called the "turn around point" because the only way to keep gasoline flowing to the engines of Model T Fords on a steep incline was to back up. Gasoline was not pumped to the engines but flowed by gravity.

In 1955 twin brothers Dick and Tom Connolly got out of the service and bought 10 acres in Rye from Charlie Chilson. They built a store, restaurant and service station.

Dick married Dora Lee Anderson, Payson's first rodeo queen, and they lived in the new establishment at Rye. The Bee Line Highway (spelled as two words in those days) had just realigned the old Bush Highway but was not yet paved. This provided the Connollys with plenty of flat tires to fix.

The 1957 issue of *Tonto Trails* highlighted the Connolly's store, "Today there is an ever growing collection of historical saddles, guns, buggies and other items typical of the west to remind you of the rugged pioneers that first pushed their way through the Tonto country .... Today the new store, Connolly's at Rye, located 10 miles south of Payson at the foot of Ox Bow Hill, offers everything for the traveler: spacious dining room, excellent foods, cold beer and soft drinks, modern service station, as well as a stupendous view and year-round pleasant temperature. All have gone together to make Rye the most restful and cheerful stop on the Bee Line Highway."

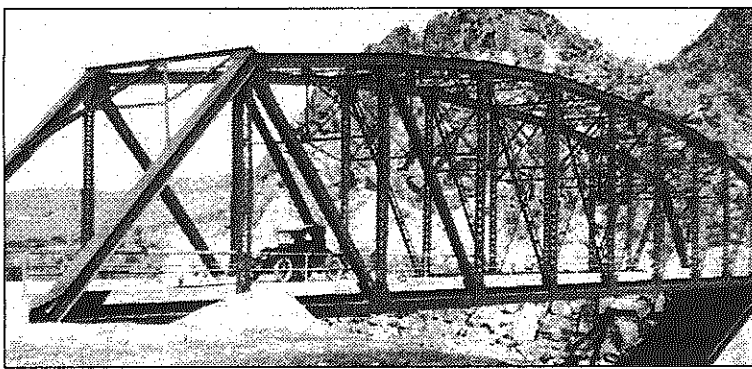


Photo courtesy of Rim Country Museum

The bridge over Rye Creek in the 1920s, note Model T that would have to back up the Ox Bow Hill to Payson.

BACK WHEN | STAN BROWN

# RIM COUNTRY PLACES

## CHAPTER 34: RYE

The year was 1864 when King Woolsey led a citizen militia in the first white invasion of Tonto Apache territory. They came up the East Verde River from the Verde Valley and followed a drainage southeast to the river they called Tonto Creek. After giving Tonto Creek its name, they assumed the way they had come was the north fork of the Tonto, and so it was called until a few years later when military detachments were invading the Tonto Basin. They followed the north fork up to the East Verde and then into Payson looking for a place to establish a fort. They called that place Green Valley, but decided it was too isolated and subject to attack, so withdrew to establish Camp Reno instead.

It was then the military began referring to Wild Rye Creek in their reports and on their maps. The name seemed obvious because of the luxuriant rye grasses and the wild rush of water during heavy rains. By 1879 the official maps vested the name "Wild Rye" although the same maps showed the country east of there as an unexplored blank.

As the Rim Country opened up to settlers a junction of the north-south and the east-west trails made a logical place to open a trading post, right where freighters and travelers would ford Rye Creek. It was 1881 when J.W. and Mary Boardman from California settled there with their family. The developing gold camp at Marysville and the Mormon settlement of Mazatzal City brought a lucrative traffic. As Payson developed the road around Ox Bow Hill followed Rye Creek and

later a couple of wagon roads developed a short cut from Rye over the Ox Bow Hill. It all made this a logical place for a store.

The Arizona State Guide published in 1940 by the WPA Writer's Program says, "RYE and the Rye Creek region is a scattered population that formerly constituted an important Gila County election precinct known as 'Wild Rye.' This was a crossing point for expeditions of every sort — soldiers, bandits, feudists, and Indians. It was neutral territory and a refuge for belligerents of the Graham-Tewksbury feud. John Gilliland, one



STAN BROWN

of the first men wounded, rode 30 miles to Rye, where a resident squeezed out the bullet after making an incision with a razor ...."

That was only one of a number of exciting events at Rye. In July 1882 this was the place where several detachments of U.S. Cavalry and Indian Scouts rendezvoused during the chase of renegade Apaches that ended in the Battle of Big Dry Wash. A wounded man named Sigsbee stumbled into the camp at Rye while the soldiers cooked supper. He had come from the Sierra Ancha and reported that he and his brothers had been attacked by the renegades, their horses stolen, his brother and a cowhand had been killed, and he had held the raiders off from his barricaded cabin until they left. The soldiers and scouts headed back to Sigsbee's ranch where they found the mutilated bodies of the ranchers.

In 1884 the mail route between Payson and Globe was established and it went past the Boardmans' store. They petitioned for a post office, and on



Stan Brown photo

The bridge over Rye Creek on the old Bush Highway as it appears today.

Nov. 14 Mary Boardman became its first postmistress. At the request of the Postmaster General the name was shortened from Wild Rye Creek to simply Rye.

In the summer of 1887 the Boardmans ended their mercantile business in Rye and moved to the growing town of Payson where they began a long and civic-minded residency. The business in Rye was taken over by Samuel J. Peters, and for the next two years he was the postmaster.

Then in the summer of 1890 Samuel A. Haught Jr. and his wife Dagmar filed a homestead claim in Rye and instituted the H-Bar brand that they brought with them from Texas. They had made their pilgrimage to the Rim Country five years earlier in 1885 and settled their first home at the mouth of Dude Creek. Haught planned to open a store there, having heard from his Uncle Fred (the first the Haught clan to come to the Rim Country) that a railroad was to come down the East Verde canyon. When it became obvious that would not happen, the Haughts moved to Rye. In August of 1892 tragedy struck the family when four of their small children died from diphtheria, which they contracted from an itinerant cowboy who used their water lade.

Sam Haught Jr. opened a store and post office in their home at Rye and was postmaster until the fall of 1905 when he was elected to the 23rd Arizona Territorial Legislature, serving in the House. Dagmar took over as post-

mistress. By this time Sam Haught was looked upon as a cattle baron, having 10,000 cattle and 1,000 brood mares. His range extended from his H-Bar ranch in Rye up through Sunflower Valley.

In 1907 a severe depression hit America and the Haughts were economically devastated. That was the last straw for the marriage of Sam and Dagmar, a marriage that had become rocky after the loss of their four children. In 1909, when the divorce became final, Sam sold his H-Bar ranch to an absentee owner. That same year the post office in Rye was discontinued.

In 1912 a big change took place in Rye when the Chilson brothers, Boss, Jesse, Charlie and John, sold their Sunflower ranch and bought five ranches in the Rye area. These were the VH, H-Bar and Cross-F and Bar-T-Bar brands. The brands usually went with the land in those days. The community of Rye took on more life when other families "proved up" on their homesteads there: Chilson in 1919, Hiram Carther in 1919, Juna Portillo in 1921 and James Harry Brown in 1922.

At this time the Bush Highway had pushed over the Mazatzals and where it crossed Rye Creek it passed the Brown ranch where they established a store. Here Polly Brown operated the store for some years before becoming a businesswoman on Payson's Main Street.

By 1932 the Bush Highway was graded, following along Rye Creek and turning at Rye to climb over

the hill to Payson. Rye was called the "turn around point" because the only way to keep gasoline flowing to the engines of Model T Fords on a steep incline was to back up. Gasoline was not pumped to the engines but flowed by gravity.

In 1955 twin brothers Dick and Tom Connolly got out of the service and bought 10 acres in Rye from Charlie Chilson. They built a store, restaurant and service station.

Dick married Dora Lee Anderson, Payson's first rodeo queen, and they lived in the new establishment at Rye. The Bee Line Highway (spelled as two words in those days) had just realigned the old Bush Highway but was not yet paved. This provided the Connollys with plenty of flat tires to fix.

The 1957 issue of *Tonto Trails* highlighted the Connolly's store, "Today there is an ever growing collection of historical saddles, guns, buggies and other items typical of the west to remind you of the rugged pioneers that first pushed their way through the Tonto country .... Today the new store, Connolly's at Rye, located 10 miles south of Payson at the foot of Ox Bow Hill, offers everything for the traveler: spacious dining room, excellent foods, cold beer and soft drinks, modern service station, as well as a stupendous view and year-round pleasant temperature. All have gone together to make Rye the most restful and cheerful stop on the Bee Line Highway."

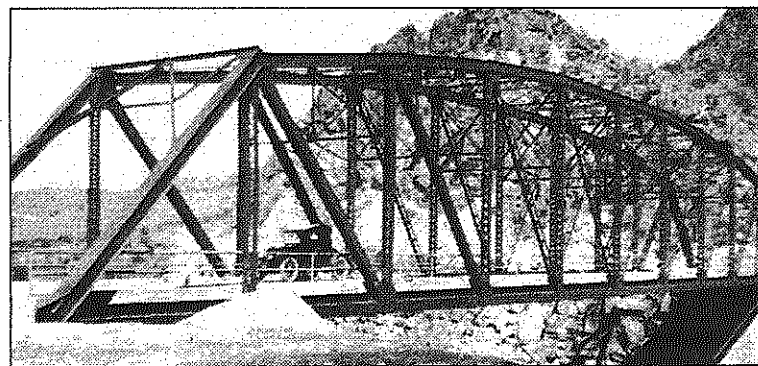


Photo courtesy of Rim Country Museum

The bridge over Rye Creek in the 1920s, note Model T that would have to back up the Ox Bow Hill to Payson.