

FOLLOWING THE WARPATH: The Lake Valley Byway

Like the Quebrados, the road west from I-25 to Hillsboro and on to Lake Valley is a BLM Scenic Byway. Top off your tank in TorC, there's none to buy in Hillsboro. Ditto groceries and cold beer; I believe there may be a "wine bar," but if you want a bag of chips, a cold drink, a strip of jerky or a can of pork 'n beans, pick them up before you see Williamsburg in your rearview mirror.

Hillsboro was the first, biggest and most enduring of the Black Range mining towns, and was at one time county seat. While never entirely abandoned, it's dwindled away to a sleepy little village that has experienced a B&B/art colony revival in recent years. The little museum has been closed whenever I happened through town, but there's a nice little restaurant where the locals gather to drink coffee and yarn. That's where I picked up most of what little history I know of the place.

Prospectors found color in the foothills of the Mimbres Mountains In 1877, while the Army was still trying to round up Victorio's people after the closure of the Ojo Caliente Agency. The angry Apaches killed more than a dozen men in the area that first summer, but the lure of instant riches was too strong to stem the rush, and Hillsborough (as it was first spelled) boasted more than 300 residents by the end of the year.



Like his more celebrated cousin Smokey Bear, BLM mascot Seymour Antelope is a native New Mexican.



The ruins of the old county courthouse & jail.

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

TUCSON, WEDNESDAY MORNING, OCT. 1, 1879

Fight on the Animas, (From the River City Herald.)

On the 17th, Captain Byron Dawson, with forty-six men of the Ninth cavalry, came upon Victorio and his band of nearly one hundred and fifty Indians, strongly posted in the mountains near the headwaters of the Las Animas river and thirty miles above Hillsborough. So cautious had the Indians been and so well covered, that the command was hardly aware of their immediate presence before Captain Dawson found that he could not extricate himself without heavy loss and perhaps utter destruction. The fight commenced at once, the troops seeking the best cover possible but the savages having vastly the advantage in that respect.

About ten o'clock in the morning, Captain Beyer's command of fifty-two men, a number of whom were citizens, reached the scene of conflict. Owing to the constant and galling fire of the savages and the utter impossibility of dialoging them from their commanding position, Captain Beyer could do no more than afford Captain Dawson all possible aid, in the hope of extricating him and his men from their perilous position. The fight continued until just at dark, when Captain Beyer commenced to pour in heavy volleys upon the savages for the purpose of holding them closely behind the rocks. Under cover of this fire Captain Dawson fell back, and his company were nearly all saved. The killed were Jack Hagan (citizen), from Georgetown; Private Haines, Co. G, Ninth cavalry, and two Navajo scouts; wounded, two privates of Co. B, Ninth cavalry, and two Navajo scouts. Fifty-three government animals were left upon the field. The Indians captured the hospital train and the personal baggage of all the officers except two. Some of the soldiers behaved well, and the officers, without exception, are entitled to credit for bravery and good conduct. Among the citizens a young man named Bates, of the Placeros, specially distinguished himself. Lieutenant Day carried a wounded soldier across a space six hundred feet wide, at every point of which he was exposed to the heavy fire of the savages. Dr. Kannon, who accompanied the command as medical officer, had a narrow escape, his field-glasses being carried away by a savage while he was in the act of using them.

From the latest information we can now gather, Major Merrow, who has taken the field with all the available troops and scouts, is now at McEvar's ranch, near Hillsborough. His force is said to be two hundred strong, and he only awaits certain movements of Apache scouts from Arizona, to move forward against Victorio's position, which is said to be fully as strong as that of the Modocs in the lava beds of the north west.

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

TUCSON, WEDNESDAY MORNING, SEPT. 24, 1879

HELL BROKE LOOSE.

The Attack on the War-Pack in New Mexico—Removal of the Remains of Battle Days—Victorio's Atrocities—Royal Masses of Cochise.

(From the Silver Record, September 18.)
Thursday evening the people of Hillsborough were electrified by the intelligence that the Indians had raided the placer camp, about five miles below that town. The news came to the effect that they had ridden into camp in great numbers, mounted on government horses and armed with revolvers and government rifles. They sacked the camp, driving off between thirty and forty head of stock. The miners were mostly all at work on their claims, and having no thought of an attack, had left their arms in their cabins. Some few, however, rushed for and obtained their guns and opened fire on the band of red devils as they were riding hither and thither through the camp. This fire seemed to exasperate the Indians, who immediately shot and mangled several women and children in isolated cabins, as also wounding several men. They then rode off in a body—the band numbered seventy-five to one hundred Indians—driving the captured stock before them, in the direction of the Paches river. A number of miners rode pell-mell to Hillsborough, carrying the startling news and stating that the copper-colored devils were heading toward that town. For a while this caused great consternation and excitement. Women and children were gathered together in a common place of safety, and the town, though woefully deficient in arms, presented a stirring and martial appearance. Soon came another courier from the placers saying that the band had divided into two parties and that both divisions were making south; one toward the Trujillo place, and the other toward McEvar's place. A band of twenty Americans, imperfectly armed and poorly mounted, started out at once to intercept them. This band was followed by other smaller parties—starting out whenever they could find horses and guns to go with. The first party which started after the Indians came upon them in a cornfield the other side of McEvar's house, and immediately gave them battle; but the force of the redskins so overpowered them in numbers and was so much better armed that the American boys were scattered—although fighting in a brave manner, only like Hillsborough boys can do—like chaff before the wind. They broke and separated, each man taking care of himself as best he could, though meanwhile many a saddle they emptied of its redskin occupant, and a large number of Indian horses were left riderless before they fell back. The parties going to their assistance united on the road, but were intercepted by a detachment of Indians before they could reach the cinisaga, where they could hear the battle waging. The relieving party at once engaged the detachment of reds and fought as only men can fight whose lives are at issue, but all to no purpose—the odds were too great, they being outnumbered ten to one. They saw they were surrounded, a shower of Indian bullets was being poured in upon their little company from all sides, and finally they, too, sought each for himself shelter as best he could find. They retreated leaving a number of their

They retreated leaving a number of their men dead on the field, a larger number wounded, and animals crippled and dying on every side. Small parties made their way about, hiding behind bushes and rocks, where they joined those who had first gone out and who had re-assembled after the raid at McEvar's ranch; others picked up stray horses behind their riders and made the best of their way back to Hillsborough, to carry the direful news and obtain reinforcements; and others detached in their flight by the merciless savages, were ridden down, trampled upon, mutilated in every conceivable and inhuman manner, and left dead or dying—food for the yulmsa and coyotes. In this conflict the Indians are known to have lost their chief, who fell from his saddle, plumed through the heart by a bullet from the muzzling rifle of poor Tom Hughes, who paid the forfeit of his own life just one moment after. The savages having now whittled their horrid teeth for blood, and maddened beyond measure at the death of their chief and so many of their braves, and finding no fresh parties to attack, made their way to a Mexican ranch a short distance off, where resided ten souls—three men, a youth, three women, and three children of tender years, and a most smoking babe. All of this congregation were cruelly massacred, the men backed to glass with horses and riddled with war-bullet bullets, the babies with axes

and their little innocent heads cleft from crown to chin, and the women, reserved for a still more horrible fate, were left dead and mutilated after atrocities had been committed, the very thought of which compels humanity to shudder. The Indians then gathered up their surplus stock, took all the mules and horses from the ranches in the vicinity, and not feeling an attack McEvar's ranch, which was now so well protected by the Hillsborough boys, made for the mountains, one party of them taking a westerly course, and the other directing their march toward the Mimbres river. They will undoubtedly strike for Mexico and dispose of the stock stolen from their own, or will they can have no less than two hundred head.

We would like here that two companies of negroes arrived at Hillsborough only forty-eight hours after the battle and massacre. They came from Palomas, scarcely twenty miles, where, as we are reliably informed, they had been in camp for some time "looking for Indians." "Looking for Indians," forward! Looking down the walls of whisky bottles!
Besides the ten Mexicans whom we have mentioned as being massacred and were buried in one common grave, the Americans lost seven men, whose bodies have been found and interred. Double that number are wounded, and several more who are presumed to have been killed. Thirty horses were shot in the engagement. The following Americans of Hillsborough fought and nobly sacrificed their lives for the people at large: H. F. Green, Steve Henlon, Doc Williams, A. Frisman, Tom Hughes, Mr. Thornton and an unknown and brave man.

The Arizona Daily Star reported the violence around Hillsboro during the Victorio War.



Gold Dust is long gone, but there are still a half-dozen picturesque buildings standing at Lake Valley (although the town site has moved since 1881). A little museum in the WPA-era schoolhouse preserves an excellent newspaper account of Nana's raid through the neighborhood.



The county road up Berrenda Creek is now Kaytenna Trail, indicating some knowledge of local history. Nachee (more commonly spelled "Naiche") was the son of Cochise and at least nominally chief of the Chokonen band; I haven't found any indication he was one of Nana's raiders.

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