

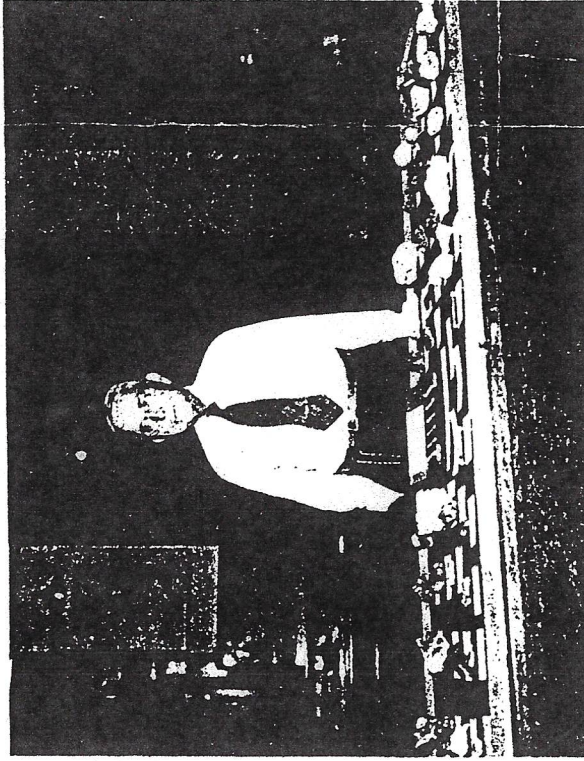
April 1960

The Silver Bullet Mystery

By Ida Smith



A 57½-ounce silver nugget found in Richmond Basin-Globe area, and similar to that from which Apaches in that vicinity made their silver bullets. (Photo courtesy Mr. and Mrs. Byron Rohde.)



Arthur L. Flagg was a mining engineer over 50 years, is author of two books and numerous articles on mineralogy, was co-founder of the Mineralogical Society of Arizona, and for 19 years edited their *Rockhound Record*. (Photo by Moulton Smith.)

ONE NOVEMBER DAY a sharp reporter from one of the Phoenix newspapers sauntered into the mineral building during the state fair and spied a curious silver nugget. The nugget fastidiously examined him and he began making inquiries.

"It came from Richmond Basin northwest of Globe," explained Arthur L. Flagg, superintendent of mineral exhibits. "It is similar to the surface ore from which the Apaches made their silver bullets, so I'm told."

The next day an interesting little story appeared in the local papers about Apache bullets made of silver from Richmond Basin. The United Press picked it up.

Fran Striker, originator of the Lone Ranger, clipped it from his home town newspaper in the East and wrote Flagg a letter. He said, "During past years I have had to defend the logic of the Lone Ranger stories where the silver bullets were concerned, and would be delighted if you could send me any information beyond that which is mentioned in the clipping. I am interested in the fact that Apaches were able to fashion bullets out of silver."

Flagg, his own interest aroused, set out to collect data that would substantiate the story of the silver bullets. Meanwhile he sent Striker some Arizona specimens for his Lone Ranger Museum, and promised, if possible, to add a silver specimen from Richmond Basin. Striker had expressed interest in mementos from the southwestern states, as they were most often featured as background for Lone Ranger stories.

The brief data which Flagg was able to obtain relates first to a Mexican named Jose Antonio Acuna who was a captive of the Apaches for many years. Upon his escape he organized a party to explore the vicinity between the Salt and Puerco Rivers where he said there was a large deposit of "pure lead" from which the Apaches made their bullets. The Mexicans, knowing that lead is never found in the pure state, decided it must be silver. Within a few miles from the locality they were attacked by Indians and driven back.

THE REPORT reached California and American adventurers attempted, without success, to find the fabulous deposits.

King S. Woolsey, prominent Arizona pioneer, had discovered that the Apaches in the Globe area were shooting silver bullets. He told Gip Chilson, who made his way to the Apache Peaks. In a small basin nearby he found a fine spring of water, and silver nuggets, from small flakes up to ten pounds. He staked a claim and named it the Silver Nugget. Two other claims he named the Rifleman and the Hoodo. His first shipment of silver ore netted him \$10,000. Subsequent shipments averaged \$4,000 per ton.

With eventual exhaustion of the silver, the mines were abandoned. The Apaches had established homes on their reservation, and the trails to Richmond Basin became obliterated with desert chaparral.

THEN ONE DAY a rancher, riding the range not far from the vicinity, eyed a

queer-looking boulder on the other side of the barb-wire fence. He'd ridden past the thing for three years and hadn't bothered to get off his horse to kick it over. This time he did. It was a 570 ounce silver nugget.

The nugget passed through several hands and was finally purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Byron Rohde of Shipley's Mineral House at Gem Village, Colo. It was exhibited at the 1958 Phoenix Gem and Mineral Show. This museum piece of pure silver bears silent testimony to the finds of the early prospectors and Apaches in the Globe area.

However, Flagg was unable to find further traces of the silver bullets. Their trail seemed to have disappeared into the desert hills along with the legendary lost mines. Perhaps some day a modern Apache with a special interest in history will recall events related and handed down by his ancestors, and the true story of the silver bullets, used in the Apaches' last attempts to defend their land, can be pieced together.

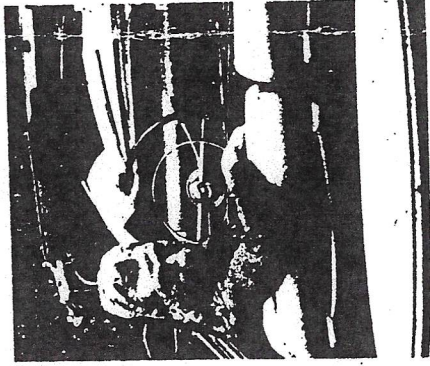
THERE ARE AT least two obscure trails to Richmond Basin today. One leads out from Globe past old mine diggings. The other takes off from the Apache trail a few miles from Globe. It is a dirt road. The hills and canyons are covered with yellow-flowered rabbit-brush, jojoba and other desert shrubs, which hide securely everything but the exquisite beauty of the little desert valley.

Bearing in mind there are always doubters, they should not be permitted to spoil the silver bullet mystery. How-

ever, one point may be conceded to the skeptic who figured this way, "If the Apaches had used silver bullets, more pioneers would have managed to get shot!"

Flagg, chief of the Arizona Mineral Museum in Phoenix and prominent in mineralogical circles, Striker is one of radio's big league writers. He and his family live on a farm in New York state.

More pictures, next page

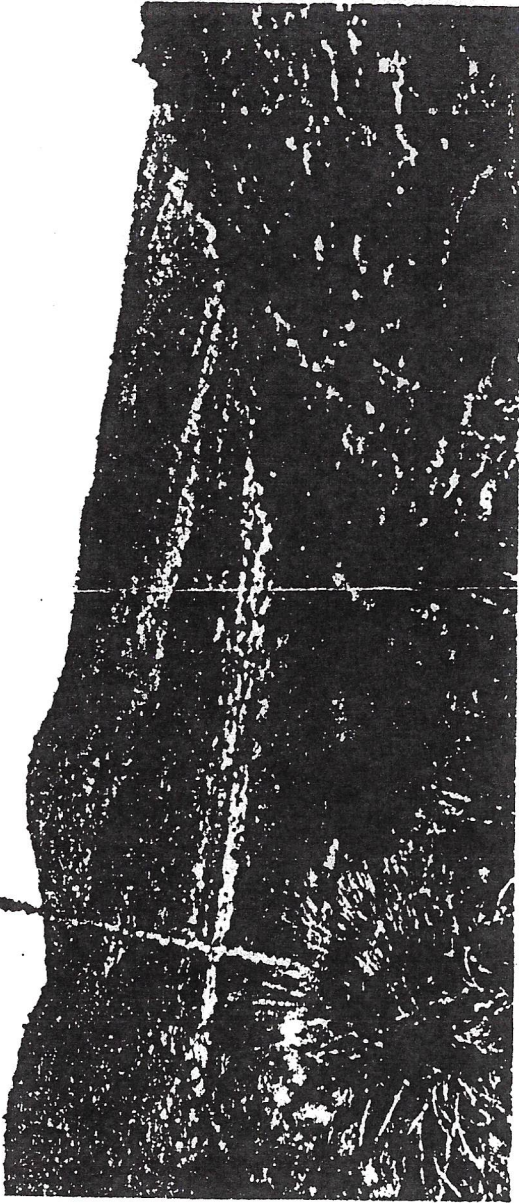


Fran Striker, originator of the Lone Ranger and writer of the Lone Ranger scripts for many years, is one of radio's big league writers. (Photo courtesy Fran Striker.)

Silver Bullet Mystery

Story on preceding pages

Richmond Basin, a pretty little valley, was once the hideout of Apache Indians. From its rich native silver deposits, it is said they made their silver bullets. (Photos on this page by Moulton Smith.)



The road to right is a remnant of an old trail leading into



Storm clouds and shrubs obliterate all traces of the early-day

*Part of the road to Richmond Basin follows
a sandy wash lined with hackberries, juniper
and pinon.*

