

129th Anniversary of Stott, Scott and Wilson Hanging

By Anne Groebner

If you read the back issues of Get You Mountain On Arizona (or go to <http://www.getyourmountainonaz.com/az-history.html>), you will discover many, many parts of a series that documents the hangings of three young men on the morning of August 11th of 1888. This year, on August 11th, 2017, Robert Hutchison, the author of the “Hanging Tree” series, along with help from his friends, took an anniversary horseback ride to the graves of James Warren Stott, James Scott and Jeff Wilson. I was invited along to document the ride and, as a long-time history buff, was inspired by an area on the Rim that is layered in bloodshed and tears from the wild west days when the law was almost non-existent. I wasn’t alone. The first of two rides were totally filled with about 19 riders, including myself, and I’m not sure how many were on the second ride.

We started at the hanging tree, which is located at the intersection of the 300 (Rim) Road toward Black Canyon Lake and the 196 road. It’s a tall pine with a distorted limb that has, over the years, lost all its smaller branches and seems to be withering with age. According to Hutchison, it is the limb that all three boys were hung on. Wayne Ramey of Ramey Ranch in Heber-Overgaard trailered almost all the horses used on the ride. He saddled me up with a horse named Soccoro, who I fell in love with. She was feisty and would nip at all the younger horses who tried to get ahead of her. I found out later that she was a 22-year-old matriarch that was just keeping the others in line.

We traveled down the Rim Road following an old route that was constructed for the Calvary, back when George Crook was the head of the Department of Arizona and traveled from Camp Verde to Fort Apache. The Apaches nicknamed him *Nantan Lupan* which means “Chief Wolf.” Some associate him with the capture of Geronimo but Geronimo slipped out of Crook’s hold and lost Crook his command. You can see the chevrons that mark the trail. Another trail that can be seen from the Rim Road is the Hangman’s Trail. This Trail will take you to a cemetery containing the three graves of Stott, Scott and Wilson. Since I was being guided by folks who had vast knowledge of the area, we skipped the trail and cross-country’d it on horseback. The landscape is pretty amazing.

It was a three-hour-long ride through some of the most beautiful landscapes. Along the way we spotted wild/feral horses that were grazing on the side of a knoll with the head stallion they have named “Buckskin Dunn.” It was an incredible ride with some pretty amazing people. I listened to stories of the past told by many of the researchers who were on the trip. They are planning other trips back in time. If you are interested in signing up or if you are interested in just taking a ride through time with Ramey Ranch in Heber-Overgaard, you can contact them at 928-242-5062.

While I am writing this, Robert is, once again, finding new discoveries of the past. He is venturing down the old wagon trail that was used to haul the bodies of the three boys. He keeps texting me and, from the sound of it, another story in the on-going investigation of the murders on the Rim may be in the making. Stay tuned....