

# From the ground up: Stories of Arizona's mines and early mineral discoveries

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By Arizona Governor Jack Williams (1967 – 1975)

## **Fool's Gold in the Bradshaws**

### Crown King area. Yavapai County

Fort Whipple's commanding officer didn't take kindly to the idea of his men spending their spare time on mining claims. If they had signed up for a tour of duty in the U.S. Army, they should be drilling, marching, working around the barracks...not rushing off to dig for gold.

But the law said any claim on the public domain had to be worked to be held. So, when a soldier had a claim, he would hire a local prospector to do "assessment" work, thereby satisfying the law.

One such prospector saw no reason to exert any effort. He figured that most of these claims were worthless, anyway. So when he got an order for some assessment work on a claim near Prescott he decided to pass it on to somebody else for a smaller fee, and pocket the difference.

He wandered over to the Tiger mining camp and found two bullwhackers. "Say," he proposed, "you fellas be interested in working on a claim?"

"Yeah, sure," the men agreed. "Just give us the tools."

Armed with drills and shovels, they started digging. The dirt flew steadily until they reached solid rock. At that point, one partner turned to the other and said, "I don't know how to drill; looks like you'll have to drill the hole."

"I thought you knew how to drill!" the astonished bullwhacker replied. "All I know how to do is dig!"

The men found a softer spot and started digging again. This time, they uncovered a vein about four inches wide, full of sparkling ore that they identified as iron pyrite, or "fool's gold."

Figuring they had done their job by uncovering anything at all, they returned to the mining camp. The prospectors around the campfire greeted them jovially. "Hey, you find anything up there?"

“Nah...just a bunch of them “iron pirates. “See...?” A nugget was thrown across the campfire, glinting in its lighted arc. The miner who caught it stared incredulously, “You found this?”

“Yeah...we knew it was a waste of time digging up there.”

“Man, this is gold – all gold!”

The Crown King area yielded gold strike after gold strike, and Bradshaw City, nearby, grew to a rollicking camp of almost 5,000 people.

Over \$1.5 million in gold was produced before 1901, and some silver, copper, lead, and zinc were mined as well. The developers built a railroad that connected the Crown King with Prescott. Ore was transported along a winding track until 1927, when the railroad was replaced by a highway.

In 1948 production at the Crown King was stopped. But during its rich years, the mine yielded some \$2million of ore – gold, silver, copper, lead, zinc and, if the two bullwhackers are to be believed, maybe even a few worthless nuggets of “iron Pirate.”