

Ranch Creek Investigation October, 2004

Purpose: To find the likely location of the Indian trail followed by Whipple, Carson, and Kearny between the Ranch Creek and Dripping Springs valleys.

On October 10, 2004 I visited Globe and the upper Ranch Creek valley to learn more about possible early routes through the area. I visited Bud and Lenora Clark who own a ranch just east of highway 77. Bud has lived in and ranched in this area for at least 50 years. His father worked for an area rancher who leased a large tract of land from the San Carlos Apaches. This tract included Ranch Creek, Mescal Creek, and Dick Spring Canyon. Bud does not know anything about early trails in the area and suggested I talk to Lynn Sheppard. Lenora mentioned several Indian ruins on hills along the south side of El Capitan mountain just north of their ranch.



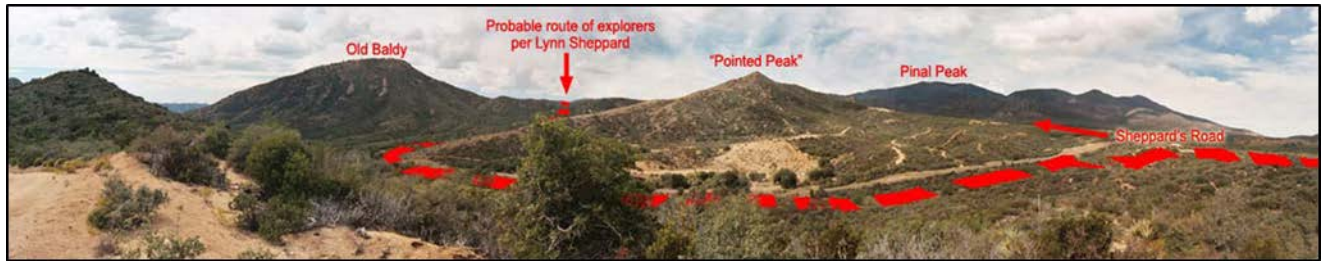
After speaking to the Clarks I drove to a couple of hilltops overlooking highway 77 to take photos and then drove into Globe to meet Lynn. We spoke in his truck for a while and then he drove me out to the mountains. He told me that he built the road north of "Pointed Peak" (my place name) to access his ranch on Pioneer Creek. I asked how early residents traveled between the Ranch Creek and Pioneer Creek valleys. Lynn said as a boy he used the trail that crosses the ridge north of Old Baldy. This is only a jeep trail on today's maps. [Click here to see a map](#)

of the area.

When I mentioned Kit Carson he told me that Carson (and Kearny) crossed the highway 77 alignment about where the gate to Clark's Ranch is today. It turns out that years ago some person or organization erected a historical marker to that effect right across the highway from his road. Today that marker has been moved about a mile north to the viewpoint at Pinal Pass.

Lynn also mentioned a place called the Swiss Farm (the Bar F Bar Ranch on the map) and suggested I go meet its owner Walter Grantham. This farm used to provide dairy products and produce to early residents in the area. I stopped at the ranch later and spoke to Walter's son Bain who said his dad would have lots of stories to tell me. Walter was not at home.

The photo below shows the view toward the west from one of those hilltops. It shows Old Baldy, Pinal Peak, and an unnamed mountain I've dubbed "Pointed Peak." I've drawn in the route that Lynn Sheppard told me was the early trail leading west and which is a likely route of Carson, Kearny, and Whipple on their explorations. I've also noted the location of the road built later by Sheppard to access his ranch in the Pioneer Valley west of here. Ranch Creek heads approximately at the right edge of the photo. Perhaps my "Pointed Peak" is Whipple's "Fool's Head?" From another angle it has a double peak.



Panorama from a hill at N33 13 55, W110 47 00 looking westward.

El Capitan Creek begins near the base of the hill I was on and flows south to the valley but its course is narrow and rugged and so it is not a likely route for travel. This area of upper Ranch Creek is choked with brush, making it very improbable that our American travelers would have broken a new trail. Their likely route would be along existing Indian trails. There are several mentions by diarists of a major Indian trail that they followed through these mountains.

--Tom Jonas, October 2004