

Sky Island Righteousness above a Desert of Sin: “Donnellite” Seeds in Sunnyside Canyon

Sunnyside canyon reaches up into the Miller Peak Wilderness Area. Miller Peak is 9466 feet above sea level; its sister, Huachuca Peak, is 8410. The south end of the Huachuca Mountains reaches to the border of Mexico. The range is called a "Ski Island," an oasis of cool pine, oak, and juniper above the Sonoran Desert below. One of the earliest recorded references to this area of Southeastern Arizona, comes from the journal of Captain Juan Mateo Manje, a frequent companion of Father Eusebio Kino. Writing in June of 1694, he made passing reference to a campaign that had occurred some six years earlier in "Sierra de Huachuca."¹ The Huachucas, "Thunder Mountains" the Indians called them, have retained their aboriginal name and have always been just a little off the path.

On the East Side of their crest lies Fort Huachuca. Founded to protect settlers from Apaches, the army base now listens to communication waves from around the world. The clear heights of the sky islands are favorite places for telescopes, communications towers, and satellite receivers. On the West, the mountains are remote, isolated, and what roads there are, rough and rocky. The slopes that face the setting sun overlook the San Raphael Valley, the headwaters of the Santa Cruz River. Here the river flows south into Mexico before it turns back north to Nogales following Interstate 19 to Tucson and then along I-10 until it joins the Gila. Some historians argue that the Upper Santa Cruz was Coronado's route. Rather than the San Pedro on the east side of the Huachucas, they argue he took his expedition up the Santa Cruz, through the

¹ John P. Wilson and Historical Society of New Mexico., *Islands in the desert: a history of the uplands of southeastern Arizona*, 1st ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995): 9.

San Raphael Valley with its many springs, and then across the Canelo Hills.² Whether his expedition of 1540 skirted the East or the West side of the range, the Huachucas were the first mountains encountered by the expedition in what is now the United States. Coronado may have sent hunting parties into the mountain's hills, but like most that would pass by over the next centuries, the mountain heights were out of the way.

About eight miles south of the border hamlet of Lochiel, where the river makes its way into Mexico, Father Kino founded the mission of Santa Maria de Soamca. A Pima village existed there, and in 1697, Captain Manje counted 200 Indians living there.³ In 1787, the Spanish established a garrison at the mission site, which by then had been abandoned. Named the presidio of Santa Cruz, it took its name from the river. Decades later, the poor little village became an important place for forty-niners to buy supplies on their way to the California gold fields. Santa Cruz was one of the few inhabited towns along this section of their route. Many of the prospective miner's diaries mention the Huachuca Mountain's beauty; they all recognized that continual Apache attacks were responsible for the neglected and forlorn look of the village. From its founding in the late 1700s until the late 1800s, Santa Cruz survived in a state of continual siege, and all the ranches in the surrounding area were abandoned time and time again due to Apache raids.⁴

Even so, the Spanish had mines in the Huachucas as early as the 1760s. When the Marqués de Rubí passed south of the mountains in December 1766, he noted that mines in the

² Douglas Preston, "Following--Painfully--the Route of Coronado after 450 Years," *Smithsonian*, 1990, 40-53; and John Russell Bartlett, *Personal narrative of explorations and incidents in Texas, New Mexico, California, Sonora, and Chihuahua, connected with the United States and Mexican Boundary Commission during the 1850, '51, '52 and '53* (New York; D. Appleton, 1854).

³ Diana Hadley, Thomas E. Sheridan, and Colo.) Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station (Fort Collins, *Land use history of the San Rafael Valley, Arizona (1540-1960), General technical report RM ; 269.* (Fort Collins, Colo.: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Forest Service Rocky Mountain Forest and Range Experiment Station, 1995): 7.

Huachucas were "producing good silver, notwithstanding the scarcity of people and the excessive risk." The risk, even this early, was Apaches. It is hard to be precise about when and what aboriginals lived or used the Huachucas before the Apache. But by the 1730s, only Apaches survived outside the areas of Spanish settlement, and the Huachucas provided an excellent hiding place from which to attack missionaries, miners, and encroaching settlers. The mines the Marqués referred to are in Cave Creek Canyon at the south end of the range. They would create excitement again when United States miners rediscovered them over a century later in 1879, but the Spanish miners did not stay long there in the 1760s. Most Spanish mines in the area were abandoned because they exhausted the minerals or the Apaches drove them out.⁵

The Huachuca Mountains resisted both missionaries and miners for a very long time, but after Cochise's death in 1874, Apache attacks in the area began to decline. Even so, in June 1876, two cowboys, George Price and Pete Sherman, were killed by Apaches in Parker Canyon. They were some of the first to try settling in the Huachucas. It would be another decade before Geronimo's surrender in 1886, and Apache resistance ended.⁶ By that time, miners and soldiers were high in the Huachucas, cattle filled the San Raphael Valley below, and a fierce missionary was about to find his way to the highest reaches of the mountains. His name was Sam Donnelly, a fundamentalist Protestant. Unlike the Catholic priests that skirted the mountains building missions before him, he was not there to convert pagan Indians. It was 1888, and the Indians were gone. Unlike other miners in the mountains, he was not there just for the precious ore in the rock. Donnelly believed he was climbing to the mountaintops of the Huachucas to mine the mind of God, as well as His rocks.

⁴ Hadley (1995): 30.

⁵ Wilson (1995): 37, 46.

⁶ Hadley (1995): 69.

Sam Donnelly came to Tombstone Arizona a few years before to establish a Holiness mission for the Salvation Army. Tombstone needed a "two-fisted preacher," and Sam was no stranger to boisterous living and hard fighting. His father was Irish, a stern and sharp Presbyterian preacher who had migrated to Scotland, married a Scottish lass, and there, in the spirit of classic Protestantism, he fought the Devil and his Pope. The story is told that Catholics, especially the priests, dreaded and feared the severe parson. Sam was born to the couple in Barrhead, Scotland on November 16, 1852. When he was 12 years old, his father lay on his deathbed, consumed by an illness and too weak even to raise himself up. A Catholic woman who lived nearby was also sick and dying. A priest was called to minister the Last Rites to her. Somehow, the priest got turned around and stumbled into Parson Donnelly's house by mistake. Upon entering the sickroom, the priest accidentally locked the door behind him. Approaching the bed to begin administering the Sacrament, old Donnelly opened his eyes and beheld the priest with his accouterments in hand. The sickened parson, as weak as he was, sprang from his bed yelling, "Thou son of darkness!" The priest turned in terror to flee, only to find the door bolted. The Reverend Donnelly yelled at his son, young Sam, who was there caring for his father, "Give me that knife!" pointing at a butcher knife on the table. Sam grabbed the knife, but used it himself to pry open the bolt and let the priest escape. The exertion was too much for Sam's father, and he died shortly thereafter, leaving the boy to support himself and his mother by working in a textile factory.⁷

At some point Sam joined the English merchant marine. He worked his way to the position of chief engineer, traveled the globe, and tried to further his education during the long intervals at sea by reading. In port, he drank hard, fought hard, and achieved a reputation as a

⁷ Roberta Lamma, *A place called Sunnyside* (Tucson, Ariz.: Pocket Guides, 1982): 5-6, and *Phoenix Times*,

“scrapper.”⁸ Large and powerfully built like his father, “Scotty” called himself a “scientific boxer.” The accounts of his conversion to Christianity are varied. Taken together, his mother’s love of hymns and his father’s fighting spirit both appear to have played a part in his decision to follow the call of Christ.

A *Los Angeles Times* article written about Sam and the community he founded in the Huachucas reported, “When he was of the world, worldly, he was the worldliest of them all.” He did everything “with all his might.” The paper recorded that his conversion had something to do with his remembering singing hymns to his mother as a child from an old hymnbook.⁹ An Arizona travel guide claims, “One night Scotty ducked into a Salvation Army tent on the San Francisco waterfront to avoid a confrontation with some local thugs.”¹⁰ Howell Granger’s, *Arizona’s Names*, recounts that “Donnelly had been a leading patron of the tough San Francisco water-front bars, but began his regeneration when he overheard another patron suggest that Scotty commit a crime at the cost to the other drinkers of a shot of whiskey. Scotty was sober enough to give the men a tongue-lashing. He then wandered out and stumbled into a Salvation Army meeting.”¹¹

The most insightful accounts of his conversion come from the memoirs of two women who were members of Donnelly’s Huachuca Mountain community called Sunnyside. Mary Lucille Hathaway, whose family moved to the camp in 1893 when she was three months old, recounts that Sam was at a Methodist Mission in San Francisco on April 10, 1885. He got up to settle some “rowdies” behavior, when the woman in charge of the meeting said to him, “Brother,

(March 23, 1896)-- *Los Angeles Times* (March 27, 1896) 12.

⁸ Lamma (1982): 6.

⁹ “A Mining Commune,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 1896: 12.

¹⁰ Ben T. Traywick, *Other ghost towns in Cochise County* (np Red Marie’s Bookstore, 1987): 2.

what you need is the love of God in your heart.”¹² The most complete account comes from Biff Lamma, one of the last residents of Sunnyside, who has synthesized a number of accounts. Sam began drinking when he was about 25 and for seven years led a hard life of drinking and fighting. He liked to “set-em-up” for the whole house, and sometimes up to fifty patrons would have a drink on Scotty. One day he entered a bar without any money and expected someone to “set-em-up” for him. But no one in the bar offered to do so, even one man who had often had a drink on Scotty. Enraged when the man refused, even after being asked, Scotty jerked him out of his chair and began to thrash him so severely that, coming to himself, he realized he was about to kill the man. The experience so shocked Sam, that he swore off drinking altogether. Later while singing an old hymn in Fanny Crosby’s tent meeting in San Francisco, he was converted and became a preacher himself.¹³

“Brother Donnelly’s” career as a preacher was no less stormy than his earlier life. He traveled to Los Angeles where his preaching alienated leaders in the Methodist church and soon he found the pulpits there closed to him. He joined a Presbyterian church but found himself at odds with doctrines and practices that he found hypocritical and out of accord with the Bible. Sam’s disagreement with the reform-mission doctrines of the day centered on the relationship between Christianity as social work or Christianity as a relationship with “the spirit.” In the last decades of the 1800s, the “Social Gospel” was growing as a strong force in American Protestantism. A rejection of individual salvation, for an ideology of a “heroic social mission,” had captured the imagination of young Protestants, especially among the Presbyterian and Methodist denominations. The workers in the social missions “savored the warm emotional

¹¹ Byrd H. Granger, *Arizona's names : X marks the place* ([Tucson, Ariz.]: Falconer Pub. Co.: distributed by Treasure Chest Publications, 1983): 593.

¹² Mary Lucille Hathaway, *An album of memories* (Tucson, Ariz.: M.L. Hathaway, 1972): 9.

glow that came from helping the disinherited.” Work in a mission or an institutional church provided a sense of purpose more appealing than the intangible, ethereal promises of salvation by God’s election. Otherworldly spiritual reward shifted to more earthly and immediate sources. The Christian reformers were beginning to reject their parent’s doctrines of predestination and individual salvation for more modern ideas like teamwork, the reassurance of others, and therapeutic social relations.¹⁴

“Brother Sam,” as he was now called, found these doctrines to be self-centered, self-righteous, and contrary to his reading of Paul’s epistles. To Sam, their doctrines reeked of salvation by good works. He joined the Holiness mission in Los Angeles believing their ideas of sanctification by a sovereign work of the Holy Spirit to be more in keeping with the Scriptures. Sam began a Bible study group “in an earnest attempt to search out its truths.” Among the group was a young woman by the name of Lizzie O’Harra who would become an important link to bringing many of the original families to the mining camp Donnelly would one day establish in Arizona. Lizzie’s friends and family as far away as Dodge City, Kansas began to correspond in letters with Brother Sam concerning the Scriptures.¹⁵

It was while Sam was in Los Angeles, trying to sort out his understanding of the Scriptures and their relationship to organized Christianity, that he was called to help out the Holiness mission in Tombstone, Arizona. The rough miners of the town had been hampering the work there, and the “two-fisted” preacher was needed, one who was “as ready to fight for his

¹³ Lamma (1982): 6.

¹⁴ Susan Curtis, *A consuming faith: the social gospel and modern American culture, New studies in American intellectual and cultural history*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991): 69.

¹⁵ Hathaway (1972):8.

new faith with his brawn as with his eloquence.”¹⁶ In Tombstone, Donnelly spent hours every day studying the Scripture. He found himself still at odds with the various denominations and their activities. In one of his pastoral letters he wrote, "Episcopalians, Baptist and Methodist fight against each other so much and so bitterly in the letter of the word that they cannot see the Lord Jesus Christ the blessed spirit of the word."¹⁷ Their arguments and conflicting doctrines divided people and spread confusion. He was beginning to view even the Holiness church as trusting in their ability to live the letter of the Scripture rather than trusting in the Grace of Christ's sacrifice. Paul's epistles engaged him; he studied justification by faith and sanctification by relationship with the Holy Spirit. Human ability to reform produced emptiness for him; the letter of the Scripture without the Spirit was empty. "The letter of the word is no more life without Christ the spirit of the letter than the dead body of a man is life without the spirit of God," he wrote, "or to put it another way, put seed, wheat, into the ground, give it no water from heaven and all your plowing, sowing and cultivation is in vain."¹⁸ All the preaching, the praying, and the social reforming of the Churches he had been a part of seemed to him like the religious gyrations of the Pharisees of old, and he wanted no more part in it. Donnelly wanted only the Spirit of the Word to guide him, but his passion for the Spirit of Truth kept taking further and further from religious places and closer and closer to wild places.

Donnelly's teachings in Tombstone had a profound effect on two men in particular. While in the rough gunfighter town, he lived for a time across the street from the famous Bird Cage Theater in a livery stable. He met Ed Langford in the raucous town. Ed was an ingenious

¹⁶ "A Mining Commune," *Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 1896: 12. Lamma (1982): 6; Alma Ready, "The Copper Glance Colony: A Communal Religious Group Mined and Lumbered the Huachucas," *Arizona Magazine*, May 28, 1967, 22-26: 24.

¹⁷ Donnelly, Sam. Transcribed letters and letter fragments (1888-1900): 317.

and trusting man who worked at the time as a blacksmith. He was an inventor, a kind of machinist, who could fashion things with his hands. Although he was converted to Christianity by Donnelly, Mrs. Langford, who was a Methodist, refused for a long time to even hear the charismatic teacher, believing him to be solely engaged in breaking up churches.¹⁹ It seems Donnelly's reputation among church-going people was already tarnished, even in a town as rough as Tombstone. The second man to commit himself to Donnelly's teaching was Albert Gattrell, an ex-saloon keeper from the dying mining town of Charleston, Arizona. This town had been the headquarters of the Clanton gang, and Albert was well known for his shooting ability, which served him well as a barkeep in the lawless town. He had also owned a bank that had been robbed so many times that he went bankrupt. He turned to prospecting hoping to make enough to pay back some of the people who had lost money in his bank.²⁰

Gattrell had an interest in a mine in the Mule Mountains in conjunction with a short, heavy-set assayer named Ellis Sinclair. Ellis was said to be stone-deaf from the repeated whistle of a Mississippi steamboat on which he had been the engineer.²¹ During his studies of the Scriptures in Tombstone, Donnelly came to be convinced that the Holiness teachings were as filled with self-righteousness as the other churches with which he had been involved. They did not look toward their social service and reform actions for fulfillment, but to their ability to live a holy and sanctified life. A Christian, he said, is "a union of the letter and the living spirit of the word," a living and eternal relationship with God was the center of a "Spirit-filled" life. Donnelly believed a Christian was not someone with a will strong enough to keep the letter of

¹⁸Sam Donnelly, "The Donnelly Letters," (unpublished collection of Biff Lamma, 1888-1900). Lamma (1982): 48.

¹⁹Lamma (1982): 11; Ready (1967): 22, Alma Ready's article contains numerous errors, and she records Mr. Langford as "Tom Langford, a burly former blacksmith of that tough town, Tombstone."

²⁰Lamma (1982): 5.

the scripture, someone who could keep rules, but one who “united to the seed of Christ [through] the Holy Ghost, the result is spiritual fruit and spiritual identity.”²²

Donnelly, Langford, Gattrell, and Sinclair all went up to work the mine in the Mule Mountains. As Mary Hathaway tells the story, Sam “built a long ramada of brush and found by walking back and forth he could memorize better. He wore a deep ditch in this place while practically memorizing the Bible and lost all interest in the other teachings, having seen so much error in them.”²³ They were up in the Mule’s for nine months, but the mine proved unproductive.²⁴ It may not have produced the ore Gattrell needed to pay off creditors, but Sam seems to have found pure ore in his Bible. Nevertheless, the men continued their search for the precious rocks of the mountains. On October 13, 1887, E. W. Sinclair located another mine in the West Huachuca Mountains. The deed was recorded on November 15, at 2:45 P.M. and was witnessed by A. J. Gattrell in front of W. F. Bradley the County Recorder.²⁵ The men relocated to the Copper Gance Mine. Concerning the move, Sam later wrote, "After I was delivered from the mules I trusted the Lord to open the way for me to preach his gospel if I was ready, but the way was entirely blocked up in every direction but one and there the way was clearly opened to the mountains, again everything supplied that was needed." Sam believed providence was leading him up into the Huachucas. The letter was written on January 15, 1891, after the men had been in the Huachucas for three years. And at the beginning of 1891, Sam still thought the Holy Spirit would keep him in the mining camp for "still another year of Holy Ghost training."²⁶

²¹ Hathaway (1972): 30.

²² Donnelly, “The Donnelly Letters.”; Lamma (1982): 48.

²³ Hathaway (1972): 10-11.

²⁴ Katie Crawford in Lamma (1982): 11.

²⁵ “*Index to Names of Mine Locators, Book 8, 1881-1894.*,” (*Bisbee, AZ: Cochise County Recorder, 1881-1894*), 630-631.

²⁶ Donnelly, Sam. Transcribed letters and letter fragments (1888-1900): 159.

Donnelly described his approach to the Huachucas on his way up to Sunnyside Canyon one morning in this manner:

I started at 3:30 a.m., a very clear, cold a.m. So cold that as I came Jack Frost made very determined advances on my nose and ears, but above all, he got my feet and showed me no mercy. Just as I neared the foot of the mountains the light of day began to peep above the horizon in the East. I watched the increasing light and the manner in which the darkness receded before the waves of glorious light. I had never seen such a light before; it came in great waves over the earth, just like the waves of the sea, as the tide comes in rolling its mighty billows over the nude rocks, now clothing them with his majestic reefs of white foam embedded in deep blue. Just in the same way the glorious waves of light from the sun of day clothes over nude Mother Earth shivering in the early morning. As the waves of light sweep the mountain tops, which a little while before had looked so cold and dreary, they are now looking radiant in their bright morning robes. I watched the waves of light rolling over the desert-looking earth until the grim darkness of the night had receded before the glorious sun of the day and the thought came, what a beautiful type of Christ, whom steadfastly beholding, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory. So as by the Spirit of the Lord in the early morning of our Christian experience we stand in the desert cold and dark watching the glorious beams of light of the Son of God shining in our darkened hearts; we rejoice in the light, but as we press onward the rising Son of Righteousness, the Glory of His Presence fills our hearts and the warmth of His Eternal Love dispels the gloom and the host of Spiritual darkness that reigned through the night of Sin, receded in sullen fury before the glory of the Son of God.²⁷

For Sam Donnelly, the Huachucas had become a metaphor for what he had concluded about the nature of Christ. The Thunder Mountains embraced the thunder of the Apostle Paul's message to this preacher, who from his days leading the Bible study group in Los Angeles, had searched so diligently for the essence of the "Truth" of the scriptures. The satisfaction of Christianity came not from social relationships, not from the ability to follow the precepts of the letter of the law, but through the continuing approach of the overwhelming presence of God. Like the light of day pushing back the cold and dark of the desert night bringing its radiant warmth to the very tops of the Huachucas, so Sam Donnelly began his mountain wilderness church, free from the dark, cold vice of the world below and free from the denominational strife

from which he sought divorce. Sam Donnelly became a voice of one crying in the wilderness high atop the Huachuca Mountains. From this point on, the mountains and their hidden treasures became metaphors by which he would explain and expound the deep riches of the Scriptures he so loved. He possessed a desire to take his epiphany from these mountains to the world, but he would never leave them for long again; he would spend his life scattering his seed in Sunnyside Canyon.

A few of Sam's converts came to the Copper Glance mine for religious reasons, to hear “the best expounder of the Gospel in the Southwest, its most thorough Bible student and most eloquent speaker [whose] sermons are of the kind one does not mind being long.”²⁸ A few came to the camp from Los Angeles. One said, “I had belonged to several churches in Los Angeles and found in them something lacking, a hollowness and dissatisfaction in it all. I took part in socials and other means for the Pastor’s fund, but that did not help me. I left the Methodist church and tried others. At last I heard of Brother Donnelly, and the good work he was doing. Here, I said, is what I have been looking for.”²⁹

In October 1890, Will Crawford and his new wife Katie came to the camp. Katie had been a piano teacher in Dodge City, Kansas. When she was fourteen years old, her older sisters married and her parents moved out to western Kansas. Katie stayed in Dodge City with the McIntyres, an affluent family, while she took over her sister’s students as their piano teacher. Louis McIntyre was politically active and even ran for office on the Prohibition ticket but was defeated by a saloon-keeper.

²⁷ Donnelly, “The Donnelly Letters.”:113-114. Letter, in Hathaway (1972): 16, and Lamma (1982): 49.

²⁸ “A Mining Commune,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 1896: 12.

²⁹ Katie Crawford in Lamma (1982): 11; and “A Mining Commune,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 1896:

McIntyre had a growing dissatisfaction with his church, as he had been introduced to the Holiness doctrine of sanctification as a second-definite work of grace. He began to talk with a Sunday school teacher from another church named Moore. Moore's daughter, Lizzie O'Harra, was in Los Angeles in Donnelly's Bible study group. Through this acquaintance Donnelly and the McIntyres began to exchange correspondence.³⁰ Sam's letter congregation was continually growing as he sent long letters filled with spiritual instruction across the country from his mountain retreat in the Huachucas. This correspondence eventually brought Katie the music teacher to the camp. She was the second woman to join the group, and she became the camp's exquisite pianist. The men of the camp brought her an elegant Rosewood Chickering square piano around the mountains from Fort Huachuca carrying it on their backs up the last hill to the camp. He piano filled the canyon with "sacred music" from her "sympathetic touch."³¹

Three years later the McIntyres followed Katie and her husband Will down to Arizona, not only because they coveted Brother Sam's teaching, but also because Louis had lost everything in the depression of 1893. Louis McIntyre had gone from riches to rags. For Louis, Brother Sam's mining camp held the promise of family, fellowship, and the Word of God. The year of the depression brought many more to the camp. The work was hard, but there was work, not to mention the attraction of Brother Sam's teachings. But 1893 was not a year of depression for Sam. He and Alvine Caroline Swartz were married on May 4, at Fairbanks. They had three children in the next few years, Raymond, Laurence and Alvin.³² Brother Sam's old friend

³⁰ Hathaway (1972): 8-9.

³¹ Lamma (1982): 18-19.

³² "Affidavit of applicant for marriage license, Territory of Arizona, County of Cochise: Samuel Donnelly and Alvine Richards HEE Swartz," (Phoenix, AZ: Arizona State Archives, Department of Library, Archives and Public Records, 1893). and Hathaway (1972): 19.

According to the license, Rev. Charles R. Nugent A.M., Pastor First Presbyterian Church of Tombstone, AZ., conducted the marriage at Fairbank in the presence of Edwin R. Langford and A. L. Gattrell. Lucille Hathaway thought the minister was Hugert Prichard of Tombstone.

Lizzie, who had helped him organize Bible Studies when he lived in Los Angeles, was drawn to the Huachucas in 1893 also.

Lizzie's husband, John O'Hara, traveled to the 1893 Chicago World's Fair from California. Lizzie asked him to stop in Bronson, Kansas on his way back to Los Angeles to pick up one of their two nieces and escort her to Los Angeles for a visit. Lizzie's hoped to do a little matchmaking and find a wife for one of her sons who was crippled. The older daughter Donna did not want to leave Kansas as she had just gotten her first job as a school teacher, so John took the younger, Laura Nye. The trip to California was unnerving. The train derailed in Lordsburg, New Mexico. Although no one was hurt, Laura was shaken. Then, when they arrived in Los Angeles, her aunt Lizzie greeted her by asking John, "Why did you bring that one?"³³

Laura records that neither she nor her family were very religious, but in Los Angeles with Aunt Lizzie she attended Church and Sunday school developing a desire to understand Christianity. She said, "I was slow at understanding these truths, so Aunt Lizzie took me to many different . . . Pastors [who] tried to show me the way, but I couldn't seem to grasp it. . . . I was under deep conviction. Aunt Lizzie said, 'I know what I'll do. I will take you to Arizona to the Huachuca Mountains. There is one that can deliver you, and if he can't, nobody can.'" She arrived in Arizona on her 22nd birthday and stayed.³⁴

Contacts with Lizzie O'Harra encouraged a good number of converts to join the camp. Yet, most who came to the Huachucas did not arrive looking for the Word of God. Rather, work drew them to the mine. Donnelly had a reputation for benevolence as well as paying higher than average wages. In November of 1894, three prospectors came to the camp broke, destitute, and looking for work. At the time, the camp was not in need of more laborers, but Donnelly packed

³³ Lamma, Roberta Almyra Nye. Biography of Annie Laura O'Harra Blomberg Nye, (unknown date).

their animals with a quarter of beef along with other staples. One of them, a man named Herndon, refused to accept the charity and insisted they work to pay for the goods. Donnelly allowed them to work for a few days in payment. Herndon proved to be an industrious fellow, and Donnelly retained him. The other two were sent on their way, their work not proving to be acceptable.³⁵

In this manner, the camp grew, some for work and a meal, some for the Seeds of eternity to be planted in their hearts. At one time the community had in excess of 80 residents. The camp's structure was communal. Maybe there was a spirit of altruism in Sunnyside Canyon, or maybe it was just the most practical way of life for a wilderness mining camp. Those who joined Brother Sam's camp and proved their worth could stay. It would have been all but impossible, as remote as the camp was, to pay each individual, then take separate supply and food orders for each family, keep track of the separate moneys, and maintain completely separate living quarters. This was a wilderness camp, some eight miles from the nearest wagon trail. Eating together and holding supplies in common was only logical, and over time it simply became the norm for the community. Even later, when the mines began to play out and the camp moved down into the meadow below and built Sunnyside, they continued their communal structure. Those who were hired were paid wages and given board, but if they did not work hard, or after a time showed no interest in understanding the Scriptures, were paid their wages and asked to leave. This was at no loss to them, as the camp paid generous wages.

The Copper Glance consisted of an "Upper" and "Lower Camp." Each camp had a hand hewn log house whose construction was overseen by Ed Langford and Joe Branch. Makeshift cabins and tents surrounded these gathering houses. Most of the families with children lived in

³⁴ "Biographical Sketch of Laura Nye," in Hathaway (1972): 265-266.

the houses, the others in the tents. Donnelly saw his role first as the Pastor, and Langford and Gattrell conducted the business of the mine.³⁶ On Sunday, Sam held two or three meetings in the house at the Lower Camp, as work at the mines was suspended for the Sabbath. Children were not required to attend the services and were usually allowed to “go their way and play.” Bible study and meetings were not only confined to Sunday. Sam had an informal style, and he maintained a certain comfortable presence with the people of the camp and the Scripture. He taught the Words of the prophets in a practical manner, using examples from the mine, the mountains, and the camp’s everyday life. Questions were always allowed, even welcomed. Mary Hathaway remembered Sam’s manner of teaching saying: “Anywhere, anytime when a few were gathered together and Brother Sam was at hand he would talk to them; maybe in the kitchen a little sermon would be given or at the mine where the men were working, or under the trees. It was all very informal and natural.”³⁷

Sam often used the mine as a metaphor for his teachings, like he used the mountains and their surrounding deserts. He compared their community to the deposit of ore they worked to uncover. “You understand the principle of assaying a sample from a great mine,” he said one day. You can’t assay the whole mass or know all its contents or value, he went on, “But, you can cut through it in various places and having taken a sample of the great mass, a ton or more; you grind it all up, and a small amount is melted by fire.” This small sample represents the whole mass. “The smelter . . . must know not only the precious metals that are in the ore but also everything that is base and rebellious in it,” he taught. In the world it is the same. There is an excess of evil and rebellious souls and spirits. When the flux is good the precious gold of the

³⁵ “A Mining Commune,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 1896: 12; Lamma (1982): 8-9.

³⁶ Hathaway (1972): 19.

³⁷ Hathaway (1972): 41; and Lamma (1982): 11.

spirit “sinks to the bottom and the slag of science and worldly wisdom rises to the top.” But also “the white quartz of self righteousness and the zinc of creeds can cause the furnace of God . . . to become frozen.” He went on to compare this lesson directly to their mountain community. “You will understand by this why we have been so long in the mountains and why so many strange things have happened to us,” he said. We have feed tramps and squandered money upon the vicious, idle, and malignant. We suffered adversity, and our fellow man seems at times to be a boiling cauldron of hate and malice against us. But we should not be discouraged or afraid he exhorted. “We are in the midst of the furnace, heated seven times by sin," but it is only God’s test to see “whether the gold of the love of God and men were [sic] in us or not.”³⁸

Sam hated the self-righteous hypocrisy of religious people and religious divisions and dead doctrines. He saw them as the greatest threat to the Word of God. They could freeze the furnace causing God’s plan to be aborted, causing His Word to be of no effect. He wanted the pure gold of God’s Word to come out in his flock. He found out that the letters he had written to people when he had first come up to the Copper Glance mine were being copied by some in the camp and sent to friends and family of the one he had first sent the letter to. This made him very angry. He called for everyone in the community to whom he had sent letters to bring them out to him. Sam proceeded to stuff them into two gunnysacks, and then, he struck a match and set fire to them in front of the whole congregation. He explained that he did not want a denomination called the “Donnellites” to spring up after he was gone from this earth. His desire was that the Word of God would be planted in their hearts, a living Word in each of them as individuals, and

³⁸ Donnelly, Sam. Transcribed letters and letter fragments (1888-1900); Lamma (1982): 46-47.

that they would be epistles where ever they went, that they would pass that Word to their children and to their children’s children.³⁹

As comfortable as Brother Sam was with teaching in the camp, and though he wanted no written doctrine to leave his camp, he always envisioned taking his message from the wilderness to the world. The little group looked to the mine as the means to bring Brother Sam’s oratorical powers on a “crusade” that would “have no affiliations with churches, creeds or Salvationists.” They dreamed of a tent that would seat 10,000 people, their own train cars to travel from city to city, advertising and an itinerary in the United States and eventually Europe, all financed by the bounty of the mines. In 1896, they thought it would only be one or two years before they could set forth.⁴⁰ But Sam's dream of leaving the Huachucas was never realized. The first carloads of ore in the early years produced as much as three thousand dollars a car, but the ore was diminishing by 1895. Like the Spanish miners who had mined the mountains over a century before them, they found the Huachucas did not give up their treasure for long. In fact, the Sunnyside mines never produced more than enough for the community itself to survive.

Dwindling ore and supplying the camp were not Sam's only challenges or "attacks of Satan," as Sam deemed them. On February 27, 1897, the Bisbee *Weekly Orb* printed an article entitled: “A FALSE REPORT. A MAN WHO CLAIMS TO BE A DIVINE TEACHER SENT BY GOD. He Rules By Hypnotism. His Following Consists of some Twenty or thirty Persons. An Investigation Needed.”⁴¹ The defamatory article presented a grisly picture of Donnelly and his mining camp. Sam Donnelly sued J. Rex Hall and Thomas Collins, editors of the paper, for

³⁹ Lamma (1982): 28.

⁴⁰ “A Mining Commune,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 27, 1896: 12.

⁴¹ “*In the District Court of the First Judicial District of the Territory of Arizona, in and for the County of Cochise. / 666666666666 Territory of Arizona, Plaintiff vs. J. Rex Hall and John Doe Collins, whose true name is*

libel. The article accused Donnelly of being “expelled” from the Salvation Army “on account of some shortness in money matters.” He supposedly retreated to the Mule Mountains “(an appropriate place)” the paper said, “where he claims he received communications from God telling him he was a direct teacher from God.” After two years, he moved to the Huachuca Mountains “where he gathered around him some twenty or thirty people, men and women, who are as completely under his power and influence as are the serfs of Russia or the peons of Mexico.” The members of the camp, claimed Hall and Collins, work the mines for “Mr. Donnellh’s [sic] enrichment.” In stark contrast to a *Phoenix Times* article from the year before, which had been reprinted by the *Los Angeles Times*, describing the camp structures as “uncouth without, but cherry within,” the *Orb* described the buildings at the mining camp as cramped and without privacy. The *Orb* went as far as to claim, “Mr. Donnelly has the entrance of these private rooms, at all hours, without knocking.”⁴²

The article made the members of the camp out to be deluded prisoners. “All who join the camp must . . . leave friends, relatives, children, wife or husband and follow God and Donnelly.” They must also give up all their property to him, claimed the *Orb*. Donnelly supposedly named all the children born in the camp, the parents having no say. One women, the piece asserted, was being held against her will while her husband, who had left the camp to work in another mine, was desperately trying to retrieve her. Donnelly, allegedly, pulled a gun on several men and used violent threats. The fierce man whose passions were not kept in subjection was accused of adultery with the claim: “When he goes to Tombstone or Fairbanks . . . he takes with him the wife

unknown, Defendants. Case # 554,” (Phoenix, AZ: Arizona State Archives, Department of Library, Archives and Public Records, 1897).

⁴² “*In the District Court of the First Judicial District of the Territory of Arizona--Plaintiff vs. J. Rex Hall and John Doe Collins (1897): 3.*”

of any of his members whom he pleases.” Donnelly was pictured as getting rich on the ranches and mines of others while he sat and dined on champagne in Los Angeles or El Paso.

Finally, the *Orb* called its readers to action: “We believe this camp should be investigated by the authorities and cleansed, as Mr. Donnelly says he will soon have the power to command the sun or moon to stand still, and it will be done. We are in favor of visiting the camp at once ere Mr. Donnelly stops the sun in mid-heavens and makes our days of many hours duration.”⁴³

The article made the Copper Glance Mining Community out to be a fanatical group of zealots led by a hypnotic, deceitful, vision crazed tyrant, but the article was simply not the truth.

Bench Warrants were issued for J. Rex Hall and John Doe Collins in the District Court of Cochise County in the latter part of May 1897. When Collins appeared before the Bench, he stated that his name was Thomas Collins and not John Doe as stated in the indictment. Both men pleaded not guilty and bail was set at five-hundred dollars each.⁴⁴ The case never came to trial.⁴⁵ Allegedly, the two men disappeared from the territory. A year later, the case was dismissed by the court. However, having his name defamed in the local press was not the full extent of Donnelly’s problems that spring. At the same time he stood in the court of Cochise County as plaintiff in the libel suit, he stood before the bench as defendant, charged with aggravated assault on a child.

The Grand Jury of Cochise County, upon hearing rumors that children were being treated cruelly at the camp, investigated the matter. No doubt, the article in the *Bisbee Weekly Orb* played a great part in communicating the “rumors.” At one point, the article read: “A woman,

⁴³ “*In the District Court of the First Judicial District of the Territory of Arizona--Plaintiff vs. J. Rex Hall and John Doe Collins 1897*”: 6.

⁴⁴ “*Minute Book no. 7,*” (*Bisbee, AZ: District Court Arizona Territory, Cochise County Clerk of Court, 1897-98*), 484.

who had been a member of the camp but became disgusted at the actions, ran away but was forced to leave her child there. She sent four men out after the little boy, but they were met at the top of the canyon by eight or ten male members armed with rifles.”⁴⁶ The woman and little boy described here were likely Mrs. Fannie Warrington and her son Joe.

The charges against Donnelly alleged that he had taken the six-year-old Warrington boy and, tying a rope around him, had degraded and humiliated him in the presence of the whole community by throwing him in a pond and dragging him out crying and screaming in fear for his life. The mother claimed Donnelly did this three successive times and then took the child, dripping with water, into a room, and there, whipped him with a buggy whip until his back and legs were covered with welts.⁴⁷ Mrs. Warrington had given over discipline responsibility to Mr. Donnelly, but the prosecution held that even so, not even a parent has the right to inflict such cruelty on a child, and of course can delegate no such authority to anyone else.⁴⁸ Donnelly lost the case in Cochise County and was forced to appeal to the Supreme Court of the Territory of Arizona.

The Supreme Court Brief of Appellee is written in a tone that echoes the tone of the *Weekly Orb*'s defamatory article. The Brief begins saying:

This is a most remarkable case: The defendant was charged with an aggravated assault upon a child. The evidence in this case discloses the fact that up on top of the Huachuca Range of Mountains, is a community located so that a wagon road will not come nearer than eight miles of the camp, and the balance of the way taken on foot or

⁴⁵ “*In the District Court of the First Judicial District of the Territory of Arizona--Plaintiff vs. J. Rex Hall and John Doe Collins (1897)*.”

⁴⁶ “*In the District Court of the First Judicial District of the Territory of Arizona--Plaintiff vs. J. Rex Hall and John Doe Collins (1897)*: 5.

⁴⁷ “*Samuel Donnelly vs. Territory of Arizona, Case number 124 in the Supreme Court of the Territory of Arizona; Appellant's Abstract, Jan. 6, 1898,*” (*Phoenix, AZ: Arizona State Archives, Department of Library, Archives and Public Records, 1898*): 2.

⁴⁸ “*Samuel Donnelly vs. Territory of Arizona" Brief of Appellee, (Jan. 19, 1898)* 2.

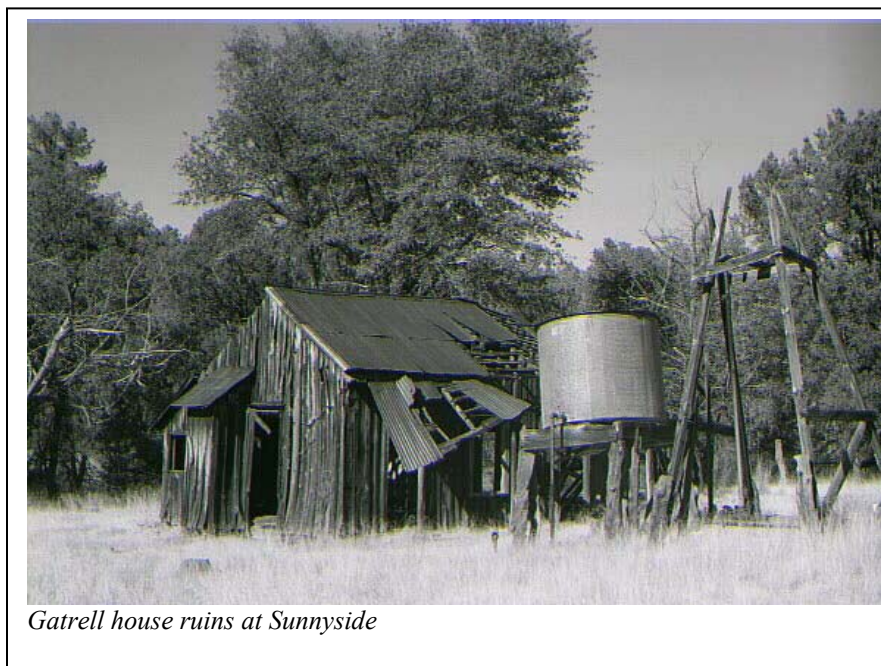
on the backs of animals. So isolated, this man Donnelley [sic] has surrounded himself with a community of religious zealots who have surrendered to him absolutely.⁴⁹

Even with these kinds of credibility and image problems, Donnelly, in a manner of speaking, won the case in the Supreme Court of the Territory of Arizona. Witnesses for the defense testified that Donnelly had not whipped the boy, nor tied a rope around him. Alice Branch testified that the “defendant placed one foot on the rock at the edge of the pond, and his other foot on the shore, and he took and ducked him [the boy] in and lifted him up and gave him to his mother.”⁵⁰ Thomas Duncan, a blacksmith at the camp, testified that the water was only 15 to 20 inches deep where Donnelly ducked the boy, and he saw no whipping, even though Donnelly spent some time immediately after the ducking helping the blacksmith do some measuring. He also said that no buggy whip was kept in the shop. He ended his testimony reiterating, “I swear that there was no whip in the camp, none that I know of, and if there had been one there I think that I would have known it.”⁵¹

The Court did not completely exonerate Donnelly, but decided that first, Donnelly had no right to discipline the child, even if Mrs. Warrington had asked him to do so. Common law supposes that schoolmasters may discipline students while in their care, “provided, always, that the chastisement be reasonable.” Whipping has always been considered assault and can only be justified by the relationship between the child and the adult. Even though Donnelly was “called teacher” by all those in the camp, and the mother had instructed him to discipline the child, he did not necessarily possess such a role legally. Nevertheless, the Supreme Court felt that the lower court had erred in taking into consideration that Donnelly thought he possessed such a role, and therefore, had no violent intent. The lower court had excluded evidence that the

⁴⁹ “*Samuel Donnelly vs. Territory of Arizona*” *Brief of Appellee*, (Jan. 19, 1898) 1-2.

punishment of the child was at the request of the parents, and the jury should have been allowed this evidence before making their judgment. The evidence reflects directly on whether the defendant was guilty of simple or aggravated assault, ruled the court. The High Court also ruled that the six-year-old boy's testimony at the trial should not have been allowed. He was obviously coached, and the court determined he did not realize the consequence of perjury. The case was therefore returned to Cochise County for retrial.⁵² The County did not retry the case but dismissed the charges on May 9, 1898, two months after the High Court's ruling. In his youth, Donnelly fought with his fists and won; now he fought with words and the winning was bittersweet.



Gatrell house ruins at Sunnyside

Late in 1894, in order to supplement dwindling funds, the community began to operate a sawmill in the meadow they called Sunnyside below the mine. The lumber went to the Washington Camp, a mine thriving across the

San Raphael valley in the Patagonia Mountains. Sunnyside needed the money until their "main

⁵⁰ "Samuel Donnelly vs. Territory of Arizona" Appellant's Abstract, (Jan. 6, 1898) 6.

⁵¹ "Samuel Donnelly vs. Territory of Arizona" Appellant's Abstract, (Jan. 6, 1898) 7-8.

⁵² "Criminal No. 124. Filed February 23, 1898. Samuel Donnelly, Defendant and Appellant, v. Territory of Arizona, Plaintiff and Respondent," in *Arizona Reports: Report of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme*

body of ore" was found. The December 1894 issue of the *Prospector* reported the camp starting up the sawmill, but also said: "Another rich find has just been made in the Huachuca mountains by the Copper Glance Co., said to be better than the mine which has been worked by the Co. for a number of years, in fact, it is described as being a mountain of ore, and astonishingly rich."⁵³ A year and a half later, the *Phoenix Herald* reported: "Mr. S. Donnelly was in town today from the Copper Glance mine. He reports the new strike improving as work progresses. The shaft is down 60 feet and is 12 feet wide at the bottom, all in ore, the hanging wall not being found yet."⁵⁴ Nevertheless, the miners never found their "mountain of ore." Their vision of riches beyond their needs, their dream of sending Sam out from the purity and innocence of the mountains with the pure gold of the Gospel using the precious things of the earth, was not to be.

The manner in which they worked was typical of early prospectors. Their techniques were hardly sophisticated. After all, they had been sailors, craftsmen, businessmen, and farmers before coming to the Huachucas, not miners. They dug following the vein, which often reduced down to the "size of a lead pencil, and they could not be sure at all that they were following it." One wonders if Sam saw his search in much the same way at times as he mined following the vein of God's Word, especially during those times of persecution in 1897 and 1898. The community who sought the precious things of life set their charges at night and waited until morning, when everything had settled, to clear out the ore and debris. One morning, they awoke to find the mine full of water. They had opened an underground reservoir or spring. Now they had to invest in pumps, but no matter how much they pumped, they could lower the water not even an inch. They tried to tunnel in from below and thereby release the water. Their tunnel

Court of the Territory of Arizona From 1896 to April 16, 1898, ed. E.W. Lewis Reporter (San Francisco: Bancroft-Whitney Company, 1905), 291-300.

⁵³ Lamma (1982): 22.

goes into the mountain for quite a way and then branches off into numerous directions, as if they could not decide which way to go.⁵⁵ By the fall of 1898, everyone had moved down to Sunnyside except Brother Sam and his family who had located a few miles away at the Lone Star Mine which the company had established about the same time as the sawmill at Sunnyside.⁵⁶ While Sam and Alvine lived at Lone Star, the Sunday meetings were generally held there, the flock enjoying the picturesque three-mile walk from Sunnyside.⁵⁷

Late in 1900, Brother Sam fell ill from Bright's disease and stomach trouble. He left his flock on April 14, 1901. They buried him at the Lone Star mine, but since it had produced no ore, they dismantled the house there, and Sam's family moved down to Sunnyside. Brother Sam Donnelly would never sow the seeds of God's Word beyond Sunnyside Canyon himself. If the seeds he planted took root in the individuals of the camp, his words would spread anyway. The precious gold, silver, and copper of the mines supported his community while he mined and taught the Bible to his mountain flock, but about the same time the mountain quit giving up its wealth, Sam's voice of gold also fell silent. If his precious seeds were to be scattered, it would now be by those of his flock who, as things turned out, were soon scattered abroad.

By 1903, everyone had left Sunnyside Canyon except an eccentric old bachelor, Cyrus Cooper. He remained with a few chickens, a garden plot, and a rifle until Arizona became a State in 1912. That year a few of Sam's scattered flock returned to try operate a cattle ranch. But that is a story for another time.

Sam Donnelly spent fifteen years in the territory of Arizona. For the most part, he spent them just about as far away from civilization as one could get. The Huachucas were one of the

⁵⁴ "Mr. S. Donnelly was in town today," *Phoenix Daily Herald*, March 13, 1896:3.

⁵⁵ Lamma (1982): 22-23.

⁵⁶ Hathaway (1972): 39.

most remote places left in what Frederick Jackson Tuner thought was the end of the frontier. At the time urbanization and technology were beginning their remarkable climb to ascendancy, Sam Donnelly was truly a voice crying in the wilderness. His letters, his flock, his legacy, have left a unique mark on southeastern Arizona. Conquistadors, priests, gunfighters, cattle barons, miners, and speculators have all left their mark and many still speak from their graves across the Sky Islands of Arizona. Sam's voice is one of the most unusual.

For years an apocryphal story has circulated around the area that when the Donnellites buried Sam, they put a pipe in the ground from his head to the surface. The story goes that they expected him to rise from the dead or speak from his grave. There is probably no more truth to this story than to the *Bisbee Orb's* story Sam challenged in the courts. But if you are going to visit Sam's grave it is not on Boot Hill; it is high atop the Mountains of Thunder, spirit-mountains, in a place we still, almost a century later, call wilderness.

Precious ore has always been elusive in the Huachuca Mountains. When it has been found, the rich firstfruits excited Spaniards and Anglos alike, but challenges to its recovery always sprang up. The ore played out; the Apaches attacked; springs filled the voids. The challenge to the ore Sam mined came not from Indians but city dwellers, but the ore played out when Sam died. The people who lived with Sam never liked being called Donnellites, and their descendents do not appreciate the label either. Sam hated denominations and no denomination ever arose out of his flock. But the descendants of Sunnyside, AZ believe their hearts were filled with springs arising out of the Huachucas, especially those springs that arose out of Sam Donnelly.

⁵⁷ Hathaway (1972): 49.

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