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COCHISE COUNTY'S LEGENDARY PAST SPRANG FROM THREE Rs: RICHES, RAILROADS AND 'ROUGHS'

COCHISE COUNTY, ARIZ. – Legendary figures like Apache leaders Cochise and Geronimo, lawmen Wyatt Earp and Doc Holliday and rancher Texas John Slaughter have long gone, but their spirits live on in southern Arizona's **Cochise County**. Visitors can explore these legends and more in **Benson, Bisbee, Douglas, Sierra Vista, Tombstone** and **Willcox** to see why it is called the "**Land of Legends.**" Owing much of its character and development to mineral wealth, the railroad's westward expansion and "roughs" who put the wild in the Wild West, the county is ripe with fascinating stories.

Mineral Riches and Prospectors

Stories abound about prospectors heading west to strike it rich. But before it was the Wild West, famous explorer Francisco Vásquez de Coronado of Spain trolled the area for riches. The **Coronado National Memorial** near **Sierra Vista** pays homage to his quest with a Visitor Center full of artifacts and cultural interpretations of the Spaniard's quest for the *Seven Cities of Cibola*.

Now famous, Ed Schieffelin's friends ridiculed him in the late 1800s, saying he'd find only his death, but soon the prospector unearthed a rich silver vein in the Arizona Territory. With whimsy or perhaps a touch of spite, Schieffelin named the mine **Tombstone**, which the town later adopted. Changing from its original name, Goose Flats, it was well on its way to becoming the "Town Too Tough to Die."

Hugh Jones was first to discover that **Bisbee's** wealth was copper, but he left, disappointed that it wasn't gold. Savvy prospectors later foresaw copper's importance to electricity and helped Bisbee grow into a bustling city, the largest between St. Louis and San Francisco. Through its **Queen Mine Tour**, visitors can explore the depths of the mine, then learn about mining life at the **Bisbee Mining and Historical Museum**, a Smithsonian Institution affiliate.

Though no substantial ore deposits were found in **Douglas**, its heritage is integrally related to the mining industry. Phelps Dodge established a smelter in 1900. Many a mining executive stayed in Douglas at the **Gadsden Hotel**, complete with Tiffany-stained glass mural, an impressive stained glass dome and Italian marble stairs. Rumor has it that Pancho Villa rode his horse up that famed stairway.

Before the smelter was built, the Douglas area was fertile ranching land. John Slaughter, a former Texas Ranger, moved to the area and found his riches in livestock. He purchased one of Arizona's great cattle ranches, San Bernadino Ranch. That lush acreage is on display at the **Slaughter Ranch Museum** and includes his 1890s house and restored structures.

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Railroad Expansion Brings Settlers West

In the late-1850s, before railroads transformed the nation's landscape and **Benson** became a city, the **Butterfield Overland Stage Coach** ran through Cochise County, creating a link from St. Louis to San Francisco. Then, in 1880, the Southern Pacific Railroad opened in Benson, and it quickly became a bustling railroad town. A replica of the railway station houses Benson's Visitors Center, where visitors can learn about the town's pre- and post-railroad days.

Willcox, was first known as Maley's Camp, a construction camp for the Southern Pacific Railroad. Afterwards, ranchers frequented the town to re-supply and ship goods. Now agriculture is the town's main draw, with its abundant U-Pick farms. Nearby **Fort Bowie** was the base of operations for the U.S. military against the Chiricahua Apache. The fort was established to protect travel through Apache Pass, site of the Bascom Affair, which ignited 30 years of wars. A National Historic Site, Fort Bowie is maintained by the National Park Service and can be reached by an easy 1.5-mile hike.

"Roughs"—Rambunctious, Respected and Revered

In the 1860s and '70s, Apache raids threatened new settlers' homesteads, and **Cochise** led the "Indian Wars" that threatened the natives' homelands. Though conflicts were often bitter, peace was finally negotiated in 1871. Ten years later, settlers showed their respect by naming the county in his honor. Upon his death, Cochise was secretly buried in the mountains, the exact location never revealed. Now part of the Coronado National Forest, **Cochise Stronghold**, where the fearless leader and more than 200 of his men hid out, is an awe-inspiring series of boulder-filled canyons that offers visitors places to hike, camp, picnic and contemplate his legacy.

Located in **Sierra Vista**, **Fort Huachuca**, founded in 1877, is best known as home of the Buffalo Soldiers. Nicknamed by the Plains Indians after the Civil War, when African-American troops were moved westward to expand the frontier, the 9th and 10th Cavalry arrived in their new Arizona headquarters in 1886. Today the fort is a National Historic Landmark and an active military installation. Two museums on the post, the **Military Intelligence Museum** and the **Fort Huachuca Museum**, housed in three buildings, are open to the public.

They worked hard. They played hard. Wherever mining camps dominated, entertainment in the form of saloons, brothels and gambling were sure to follow. Legendary haunts like Bisbee's **Brewery Gulch**, Tombstone's **Bird Cage Theatre** and **O.K. Corral** were the sites of countless brawls, poker games and exchanges. Many of those sites still exist, with plenty of libations flowing.

Other historic topics to explore in Cochise County:

- Archaeology – Murray Springs Clovis Site
- The Native American experience – Amerind Foundation Museum, Chiricahua Regional Museum and Research Center and the Petroglyph Discovery Trail
- Cochise County Ghost Towns – Camp Rucker, Charleston, Contention City, Courtland, Dos Cabezas, Fairbanks, Gammons Gulch, Gleeson, Millville, Paradise, Pearce and Sunnyside.
- Other museums – Douglas/Williams House Museum, Henry Hauser Museum, Muheim Museum, the Rex Allen Museum and the San Pedro Valley Arts and Historical Society Museum

Located in southeastern Arizona, Cochise County is one of the most culturally, historically and geographically diverse areas in the American Southwest. Its legendary communities—Benson, Bisbee, Douglas, Tombstone, Sierra Vista and Willcox—were strategically located less than a day's journey by stagecoach and are now just a short drive from one another.

For more information about Cochise County, visit the Cochise County Tourism Council's website at www.explorecochise.com.