
ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

949 East Second Street
Tucson, AZ 85719

Library and Archives
(520) 617-1157 ahsref@azhs.gov

**MS 0053
Buster Bailey
Memoirs, 1927-1984**

DESCRIPTION

This collection is a series of handwritten memoirs by Buster Bailey, who wrote of his life in the Santa Catalina Mountains, northwest of Tucson. Each folder deals with a different period in Buster's career on the mountain, from a description of Tucson when he arrived in 1927, through his bootlegging days, to his friends and neighbors "on the back side" of the Catalinas, including high points in their lives such as hunting accidents, treasure clues and cave explorers. Included is a story of his near fatal descent into a mine to repair it. "Cowboy Boot and Other Stories" includes a piece on how to avoid being "drug to death" behind a horse, as well as poetry to coffee, whisky and coyotes.

1 Box, .25 linear ft.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Buster Bailey was born in Odessa, Texas in 1911. He lived with his parents until he was sixteen when the family came to Tucson in 1927. Buster's father bought two parcels of property in Canyon del Oro, one on each side of what is now Oracle Road. He built a residence on the east side and later a business on the west side of "Florence Highway." The business did not survive and Buster's parents returned to Texas, but Buster stayed. Buster became a handyman, mechanic and windmill maintenance man for the Willow Spring Ranch. He was a bootlegger before serving in the Pacific during World War II, after which he returned to Tucson. He bought a homestead in Santa Catalina Park area where he raised horses and gave guided horseback tours through this wild area. Buster lived fifteen years in the canyon, after which he wrote his memoirs. He died in Tucson on November 5, 1995 at the age of 84.

ACQUISITION

Donated by Ted Knipe in November 1990.

ACCESS

There are no restrictions on access to this collection.

COPYRIGHT

Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be addressed to the Arizona Historical Society, Tucson, Archives Department.

PROCESSING

Processed by Joanne Callender in March 1992. Updated by Nancy Siner in March 2009.

Box and Folder Listing

Box 1

- f.1 Black and white photograph of Buster Bailey
- f.2 Handwritten manuscript: "Tucson, Arizona 1927-1983," 5 pages
- f.3 Handwritten manuscript: "Friends and Neighbors of the Canyon del Oro - During My First Years in the Area," 18 pages
- f.4 Handwritten manuscript: "Hand Dug Wells of Day Gone By," 10 pages
- f.5 Handwritten manuscript: "The Cowboy Boot," 14 pages
- f.6 Handwritten manuscript: "(Memories) to the Best of My Memory, June 1927 to January 1943," 19 pages
- f.7 Handwritten manuscript: "My Experiences with Rivers and Washes and Flash Floods in Arizona, 1927-1981," 8 pages.
- f.8 Handwritten manuscript: "Arizona Cactus: Good or Bad?" 3 pages
- f.9 Handwritten manuscript: "The Pros and Cons of the Lowly Burro in My Views," 10 pages
- f.10 Green composition book: "Memories of the Bootlegging Days in the Pusch Ridge and Canyon del Oro Area," July 16, 1982
- f.11 Legal pad: "The Steam Pump Ranch As It Was and Is In My Time In This Area - In Ans. to Questions I've Been Asked," 3 pages
- f.12 Cassette tape of Col. Leonard Drazen's reminiscences of Buster Bailey