

# ROAD BUILDING DURING THE TERRITORIAL PERIOD 1864-1911

The early officials of Arizona Territory were in a difficult position when it came to building roads. Arizona was a sprawling territory of 114,000 square miles, much of it rugged desert and mountain terrain that posed serious technological and logistical challenges to road builders. Construction projects were made more difficult and expensive by the distances that separated the Territory's towns, ranches, and mines. Supplies and water had to be hauled to construction sites, and camps often had to be set up for the workers.

At the same time, the financial resources available to the Territory were limited. Arizona was sparsely populated and there was little taxable economic activity. Incomes were low, and the Territory's residents made it clear that holding down taxes should be one of the legislature's first priorities. Furthermore, many legislators believed that road building was the responsibility of the counties, not the Territory. Under these circumstances, it was hardly surprising that progress in improving Arizona's roads came slowly.

## TOLL ROADS

Although Arizona's early legislatures were unwilling to finance the construction of public roads, they did encourage private road development. Six franchises were awarded to toll road companies in 1864. Most were planned to serve the Territory's mines, which were concentrated in southern Arizona, the Prescott-Wickenburg area, and western Arizona. One company, the Tucson, Poso Verde, and Libertad Road Company, had ambitious plans to build three roads, one of which was to connect Tucson with Sonora. At its second session in 1865, the Territorial Legislature authorized two more toll road franchises—one from **Prescott to Lynx Creek**, another originating at the Mowry mine in southern Arizona.

Most of these roads were never built, and those that were proved to be poor investments. Eventually, after relatively short periods of service, all of Arizona's early toll roads were abandoned or converted into public roads.

The most successful by far was the Mojave and Prescott Toll Road, also known as the Hardyville Road. Authorized in 1864 and constructed in 1865, the 161-mile road connected Prescott with Fort Mojave on the Colorado River.<sup>11</sup> In return for gaining the exclusive right to build a road over that route, the company was required to spend at least \$3,000 on construction and follow a toll schedule prescribed by the legislature. A wagon pulled by two draft animals was charged \$2.42 to travel the road, while a horse and rider were charged \$1.21. Native Americans, and anyone traveling by foot, were granted free passage on the road.

11 Acts, Resolutions and Memorials, Adopted by the First Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Arizona (Prescott: Arizona Miner, 1865), 32-35.

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