

## THE LEGEND OF KISSIN' JENNY

Dee Strickland Johnson (Buckshot Dot)

When Arizona was made a territory in 1864, its capital was established at Prescott. In 1867 it was moved Tucson and ten years later was returned to Prescott where it remained until 1889 when the 15th Territorial Legislature, meeting at Prescott, enacted legislation to permanently locate the capital in Phoenix. The debate over the bill was spirited but ultimately the Legislature chose the "upstart" Maricopa town over the more established Prescott in Yavapai County. This, so 'tis said, is the reason Phoenix won.

*My name is "Kissin' Jenny"--and I've earned it, don't you know.  
I'm the foremost Prescott girl of my profession.  
The Maricopa County gents all treated me to drinks  
on the eve of that big shindig of a session.*

*The 15th Legislature, Arizona Territory,  
from the competition, looked like quite a race!  
The delegates from Prescott determined (that's the story)  
to put the capital back in it's rightful place.*

*One of Yavapai's staunch delegates, a regular of mine,  
Was meticulous and vain and very proud,  
He just wouldn't venture anywhere without his fine glass eye --  
much less meet with politicians in a crowd.*

*First he would avail himself of two or three libations;  
Then he'd tap upon my door, and I would heed.  
Then with terms of adulation, he would woo me for awhile,  
And then the evening's business would proceed.*

*On the morning when the session was fixing to convene,  
He awoke and asked me, "Where is my glass eye?  
I put it in a glass of water right here beside the bed!"  
I said, "Bill, the best laid plans can go awry:*

*"In the night I woke up thirsty, and I drank that water down.  
I didn't know that your glass eye was in it!"  
Well, Yavapai's contingent were soon pounding on my door  
Crying, "Hurry, Bill, we cannot spare a minute!"*

*Well, Bill explained the problem--how I'd swallowed his glass eye,  
And had they any reason, then, to doubt it?  
The delegates demanded that I cough the darn thing up!  
Did they really think that I would up and spout it?*

*But I couldn't--or I wouldn't--how were they to know which one?  
And they knew Bill would refuse to go without it.  
And all of you know, surely, how developments transpired--  
Prescott lost without Bill's vote. You've heard about it.*

*Well, Yavapai and Pima both cursed their darn hard luck,  
And Phoenix still remains the capital city  
and all because some floozy got real thirsty in the night.  
(Don't you find that situation kind of witty?)*

*Do you think that I swallowed old William's glass eye?  
Do you think that I was paid to go and hide it?  
Is there buried in the back yard a red lace camisole  
With a glass eye, wrapped up carefully inside it?*

*I suppose that I should tell you--or shall I let you guess?  
It's been, Oh, so many long long years ago!  
Did I really swallow Billy's now famous old glass eye?  
Well, now, wouldn't you just really like to know!*



**Editor's Note:** Variations of this story have been told and retold by Arizona storytellers and others, including reputable historians, for many years. The story is a good one; however, the truth be told, it is just that—a story. According to the lore, the Phoenix supporters won by a single vote due to the absence of a vain Yavapai County legislator who refused to attend the critical voting session because his glass eye had turned up missing. The fact is, the vote was not even close. The Council voted 9 to 2 in favor of the bill (Act No. 1) to move the capital to Phoenix and the House vote, also in favor of the bill, was 14 to 10. Further, all of the Yavapai County legislators were present at the session and voted against the bill. The only member whose vote was not recorded was a Councilman from Holbrook (Apache County) who, according to the *Arizona Weekly Miner* had remained at his home to care for a sick child. In any event, his vote would have made no difference since the Council vote was so overwhelmingly in favor of the bill. See *Miner*, January 30, 1889. See also, George H. Kelly, *Legislative History, Arizona, 1864-1912*, Phoenix: Manufacturing Stationers (1926).



