

# Why I Never Went Prospecting: The Account of an Arizona Pioneer

By John H. Cady

*The following is excerpted from an account of John H. Cady's experiences in territorial Arizona. Cady owned and ran a series of stores, restaurants, saloons and dance halls, mostly in southern Arizona, catering to gold prospectors while studiously avoiding the lure of prospecting himself.<sup>1</sup>*

It was astonishing how little was required in those days to start a stampede. A stranger might come in town with a "poke" of gold dust. He would naturally be asked where he had made the strike. As a matter of fact, he probably had washed a dozen different streams to get the poke-full, but under the influence of liquor he might reply: "Oh, over on the San Carlos," or the San Pedro, or some other stream.

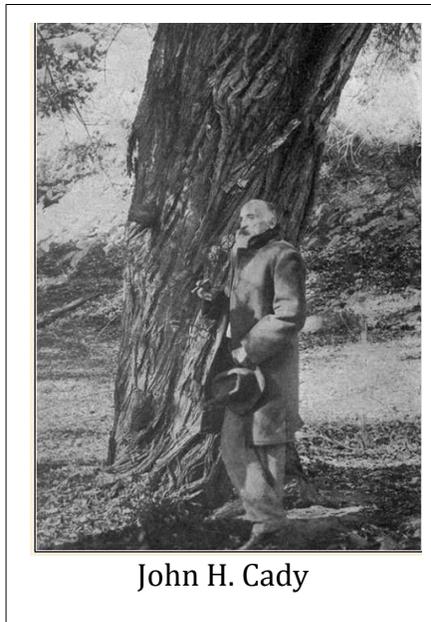
It did not require that he should state how rich the strike was, or whether it had panned out. All that was necessary to start a mad rush in the direction he had designated was the sight of his gold and the magic word "strike." Many were the trails that led to death or bitter disappointment, in Arizona's early days.

Most of the old prospectors did not see the results of their own "strikes" nor share in the profits from them after their first "poke" had been obtained. There was old John Waring, for instance, who found gold on a tributary of the Colorado and blew into Arizona City, got drunk and told of his find:

"Gold! Gold! Lots o'vit !" he informed them, drunkenly, incoherently, and woke up the next morning to find that half the town had disappeared in the direction of his claim. He rushed to the registry office to register his claim, which he had foolishly forgotten to do the night before. He found it already registered. Some unscrupulous rascal had filched his secret, even to the exact location of his claim . . . and had got ahead of him in registering it. No claim is really legal until it is registered, although in the mining camps of

the old days it was a formality often dispensed with, since claim jumpers met a prompt and drastic punishment.

In many other instances the big mining men gobbled up the smaller ones, especially at a later period, when most of the big mines were grouped under a few large managements, with consequent great advantage over their smaller competitors. Indeed, there is comparatively little incentive now for a prospector to set out in Arizona, because if he chances to stumble on a really rich prospect, and attempts to work it himself, he is likely to be so browbeaten that he is finally forced to sell out to some large concern.



John H. Cady

I have never, curiously enough, heeded the insistent call of the diggings; I have never "washed a pan," and my name has never appeared on the share-list of a mine. And this, too, has been in spite of the fact that often I have been directly in the paths of the various excitements. I have been always wise enough to see that the men who made rapid fortunes in gold were not the men who stampeded head-over-heels to the diggings, but the men

who stayed behind and opened up some kind of business which the gold seekers would patronize. These were the reapers of the harvest, and there was little risk in their game, although the stakes were high.

I have said that I never owned a mining share. Well, I never did; but once I came close to owning a part share in what is now the richest copper mine on earth—a mine that, with the Anaconda in Montana, almost determines the price of raw copper. I will tell you the tale.

Along in the middle (eighteen) seventies—I think it was '74, I was partner with a man named George Stevens at Eureka Springs, west of Fort Thomas in the Apache country, a trading station for freighters. We were owners of the trading station, which was some distance south of where the copper cities of Globe and Miami are now situated.

We made very good money at the station and Stevens and I decided to have some repairs and additions built to the store. We looked around for a mason and finally hired one named George Warren, a competent man whose only fault was a fondness for the cup that cheers.

Warren was also a prospector of some note and had made several rich strikes. It was known that, while he had never found a bonanza, wherever he announced "pay dirt" there "pay dirt" invariably was to be found. In other words, he had a reputation for reliability that was valuable to him and of which he was intensely vain. He was a man with "hunches," and hunches curiously enough, that almost always made good.

These hunches were more or less frequent with Warren. They usually came when he was broke for, like all prospectors, Warren found it highly inconvenient ever to be the possessor of a large sum of money for any length of time. He had been known to say to a friend: "I've got a hunch!" disappear, and in a week

or two, return with a liberal amount of dust. Between hunches he worked at his trade.

When he had completed his work on the store at Eureka Springs for myself and Stevens, Warren drew me aside one night and, very confidentially informed me that he had a hunch. "You're welcome to it, George," I said, and, something calling me away at that moment, I did not hear of him again until I returned from New Fort Grant, whither I had gone with a load of hay for which we had a valuable contract with the government. Then Stevens informed me that Warren had told him of his hunch, had asked for a grub-stake, and, on being given one, had departed in a southerly direction with the information that he expected to make a find over in the Dos Cabezas direction.

He was gone several weeks, and then one day Stevens said to me, quietly: "John, Warren's back."

"Yes?" I answered. "Did he make a strike?"

"He found a copper mine," said Stevens.

"Oh, only copper!" I laughed. "That hunch system of his must have got tarnished by this time, then!"

You see, copper at that time was worth next to nothing. There was no big smelter in the Territory and it was almost impossible to sell the ore. So it was natural enough that neither myself nor Stevens should feel particularly jubilant over Warren's strike. One day I thought to ask Warren whether he had christened his mine yet, as was the custom. "I'm going to call it the 'Copper Queen,' " he said. I laughed at him for the name, but admitted it a good one. That mine today, reader, is one of the greatest copper properties in the world. It is worth about a billion dollars. The syndicate that owns it owns as well a good slice of Arizona.<sup>2</sup>

*Prospecting* is continued on page 26