

JOHNNY MAKE THE BOX TALK
by Matilda Staker

One summer, in 1885, we were with Father at a dairy on Buckskin Mountain, north of the Grand Canyon in Arizona. The Indians were mad at us, and just waited until my father, who was known to them as "Buckskin Tom", would go away, then they planned to kill all the people at the dairy and burn the house and corrals. This place is now known as Pipe Springs, and the Indians wanted to destroy the buildings that prevented them from getting water at the spring.

Before very long Father and the other men had to take 50 head of cattle to another ranch, and the women and children were left alone. Just before dark a band of Indians came and began building big bonfires around the place. The herd boys and five women and three children who were there went into the house, barred the door and just dropped on their knees and asked God to help them. I can remember looking out the window and seeing the camp fires and the Indians dancing around them. In the house were Phoebe Clark, Lottie Webb, Lue Stolworthy Palmer, Aunt Johannah, Mother, three small boys, Charley Black, 16 years old, and myself. Charley had sneaked out and run to tell Mother's brothers, Silas and Terry Young, who were about five miles away, to come in. It was quite dark when the boys returned, so they slipped in without being seen.

Just before it got light we saw three men ride up to the Indians. They were my father, Buckskin Tom, and Ed Lamb, and Aunt Johannah's father, John Covington. They had been warned of the planned attack by a little squaw, who had run 30 miles to carry the word to them. They had quickly changed to fresh horses and started back.

The Indians were waiting for daylight to make their attack, and had kept up their whooping and dancing most of the night, while we

"Johnny", continued
huddled in the dark house.

Now Buckskin Tom was a friend of the Indians, and tried to talk to them. The older Indians would listen, but the young ones still wanted to kill us all. When Johnny Covington saw that they would not listen to Buckskin Tom, he walked over and stood by a tree and started to play his violin. Now the Indians had never heard music before. They were so thrilled at the sound of the music made by pushing and pulling a stick across the box that they came closer and closer to Johnny. He stepped backwards, a little at a time, the Indians following him, and when daylight came they found themselves far away from the house, and we were safe.

Johnny Covington was always called "Johnny-Make-The-Box-Talk" by all the Indians after that.