

BLACKETT'S RIDGE TRAIL

The Blackett's Ridge Trail (Trail #48) is located in the Sabino Canyon Recreation Area and is accessed off of the Phone Line Trail (Trail #27). In 1937, Don Everett, a teacher at the Southern Arizona School for Boys, was the first to ride horseback on the entire Blackett's Ridge trail. He was accompanied by Hill Blackett from Winnetaka, Illinois. Everett named the trail after Blackett, though the USGS map still designates the trail as Saddleback Ridge.

The Southern Arizona School for Boys became the Fenster School, which can be seen from any of the southern vistas by hikers climbing the trail. It borders on the Sabino Canyon property and its driveway is clearly labeled and is located just before arriving at the Sabino Canyon visitors' center. Its proximity to the Catalinas obviously provided many hiking and camping opportunities for its students.

Of further interest: the original boys' school's southernmost property became a popular archeological site because of the presence of extensive Hohokam artifacts. They were and are located between the confluence of the Bear Canyon and Sabino Creeks. The school site was written up in a number of professional journals. The Clovis culture appeared in the area 12-15,000 years ago and subsisted primarily on large-hoofed animals such as mammoth, bison, camels and others. When the animals became extinct, the Cochise culture, a hunting and gathering society, replaced the Clovis Indians.

The Hohokams, who were known for their intensive irrigation systems, then displaced the Cochise. Such systems have been found at the southern tip of the school's property. Middens, structure foundations, arrowheads, pottery, bones and other evidence of habitation were also found. The school itself took advantage of the presence of such a natural laboratory for its students. Don Everett, the teacher who named Blackett's Ridge, directed extensive excavations between 1937 and 1950. It is estimated that the Hohokams lived here between 1100 and 1350.

Prepared by Frank Surpless, 2004.