DE ARMITT, BERRY HILL, born at Hollidaysburg, Huntingdon (now Blair) County, Pennsylvania, March 20, 1838; probably a - - of John De Armitt of that County who was of French Huguenot ancestry; married, Maria Garcia Ortiz (1831-96) at Pitique, Sonora, Mexico, in 1856; children, Charles, Juan, Magdalena (Mrs. Pablo Yescas), Margaret (Mrs. Jesus Garcia), Matilda (Mrs. Feliciano Contreras) and Julia (Mrs. Jesus Alvaros).

Was in San Francisco, California, in the summer of 1864 when Edward E. Dunbar organized the Arizona Mining and Trading Company to engage in the development of mines in the Gadsden Purchase and was one of a party which left there in October on the steamer Senator for San Pedro; - Los Angeles; they obtained horses and pack mules and crossed the desert to Fort Yuma; a narrative entitled "An Arizona Adventure", by "W", printed in the Yuma Arizona Sentinel of March 30, 1878, states that:

"Of the 20 young men that came down into this wilderness, there are but 3 left, Pete Brady, new Sheriff of Pinal county; R. Hill Dearmit, of Florence, Arizona; James Deten, of Yuma; J.R. McIlroy, a miner of Calaveras County, California; Jas. Porter, of San Francisco; Oliver G. Hayward, now farming in Canada; Joe Ransby, a rancher in San Diego; and the writer, who is a most accomplished vagabond, always on the go, looking for something better and never finding it.

Our original intent was to go by Tucson and from there to the Rancho de la Arizona, where we were to make our headquarters, but Pete Brady had come through Soncita with Col. Gray, on the first transcontinental railroad survey in 1862, and while there had seen a mine, very rich specimens of copper ore, rich in silver and gold, so we decided to go by Soncita and to relocate the Ajo - if it was unoccupied, if it had been originally located by a company in Sonora, of which Governor Gadsden was one, but the 60% who had been sent to work the mine, had been murdered by the Indians, and the company had never sent a second force out to the mine.

At Soncita we found some specimens and a guide. He was the mayor, Don Chico Redondo at his ranch at Soncita, and the only man who knew where the mine was, as he was the only man who S - when the Indians jumped the mine in 1850, volunteers were called for to hold the mine, while the main body went on to search for the great Manchas de Plata, O. G.-d, James Porter, R. H. Dearmit, Shepard and the writer (five of us) volunteered to go and take possession of the great Ajo mine; and it is a great and rich mine."
The first ore that we took from the vein was a native and red oxide, working 75 percent of copper, and giving 5 ounces of gold and 14 ounces of silver to 100 pounds of ore. After we got returns of the assay, we built great air castles and made plans for enjoying our great wealth. Having bees a sailor, I was going to build a copper steam-yacht, and travel as a gentleman of leisure. But the sweets of expectation were beginning to wane, and we were needing some excitement, when it came with a crash to our feelings, in the form of a demand from Governor Gandara, of Sonora, to vacate instantly, as his company was coming to work the mine.

Several letters passed between us and the Governor of Sonora, and we finally found that he wanted business. We learned that a Company of soldiers was on the way from Ures, to drive us off the mine. Then we sent a dispatch to the main body of our Company. They sent down 4 men; that made 9 of us to fight 100, which was the number we heard were coming. However, we were determined not to give up the mine; we had every right to it; the former claimants had abandoned it for more than the time allowed by the Mexican laws; and it was fully forty miles this side of the new boundary.

After the enemy arrived at Soncita, we kept a sentinel out all the time. One morning, a little after sunrise, he came rushing in with the news that the enemy was in sight. We had built us a breastwork at the water, and were all there waiting. Presently they came in sight and ranged themselves on a hill about 200 yards off, and then sent in the same men who had guided us out, with a flag of truce. He came calling to Charlie Hayward not to shoot. He delivered his message from the commander, that he wished to send his second-in-command in to treat with us.

They numbered 42, but we afterwards found that 6 were miners, leaving 36 soldiers; making four to one, as there were but 9 of us. But what we lacked in numbers we made up in arms, as we had 64 shots, without stopping to load, and we all, with one exception, had been in business before.

When the Lieutenant arrived he delivered a message from his captain to the effect that he had bees sent to take possession, peaceably if he could, but to take possession. He pointed out to his force and told us to compare our numbers with his, and tried to convince us that we could not have a ghost of a show in a combat; and finally told us, if we would give up our arms we might leave in peace. Our answer was, that he might have our arms, but he must come and take them.

That they did not like; and the Captain soon found that he would have to fight if he got the mine. He either had his orders not to go to extremities, or he thought his party would get the worst of a fight. He finally agreed to leave us in peaceable possession, if he would give him and his men water, which we did after they brought in their arms and stacked them in our fort. It was a great bluff they made at us, but they took it all back, and from that time we were not troubled.
Soon after this our President went to San Francisco and got a charter and incorporated, when he returned, we all went to the Gila and settled up our company affairs and received our certificates of stock. Then the boys scattered, some of them stayed at the mine till the working supplies came; then there was more scattering.

The first President (Dunbar) was appointed Superintendent, and he commenced working in earnest, but without accomplishing much; nor did any of the Superintendents who followed him, for the mine is not more developed today than it was 24 years ago. And I say again, that if another company takes hold of it, with money to back them, they can open up one of the finest mines of the Coast.

Went with his family to Arizona City (Yuma) where he was listed in the 1880 Census as Berry E. Hill, occupation - Blacksmith, property valued at $1,500; in the Territorial Census taken in the spring of 1864 at Tucson his name appears as Hill De Armit, occupation - Contractor, resident in Arizona 10 years, property valued at $1,000; in describing a visit to the Papago Country with Charles D. Poston in 1864, J. Ross Browne makes the following mention of him:

We visited the Bahia, a silver lode of extraordinary richness belonging to the Calmabia Mining Company. There are also very fine copper mines in the vicinity. Mr. Hill de Armit, who was a member of our party on the trip to Sonora, is largely interested in one of these and considers it one of the best copper leads in the country - quite - to the celebrated Mariposa lead on the Gila.

Appointed by Governor Goodwin as Hill de Armitte to be sheriff for the 1st Judicial District, April 9, 1864; reappointed by the Governor on December 21, 1864, as the first sheriff of Pima County and served until January 1, 1866; moved to Florence where he was listed in the U.S. Census, 1870, as Berry Hildearmit, occupation - Farmer, property valued at $1,250; appointed by the Board of Supervisors of Pinal County as road viewer on April 19, 1875; registered as a veteran in Pinal County, 1876, as Berry H. de Armit; elected Trustee of the Florence School District, November 21, 1878; joined the Society of Arizona Pioneers at Tucson, March 15, 1884; owned a 20 acre farm near Florence.
at the time of his death which was announced in the *Arizona Enterprise* as follows:

One of the earliest settlers in this valley, B.H. De Armitt, better known as Hill De Armitt, died at the County Hospital on January 24, 1891, from injuries received several months ago in falling from his wagon while returning home from town.

Buried in the town cemetery, 3 miles south of Florence; age at death, 62.

**Sources of Information**

U.S. Census, Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania, 1840.
History of Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, Part 2, pp. 541, 675.
Probate Court of Pinal County, A.T., - Books: No. 123.
The Great Register of Pinal County - November 1, 1876.
Board of Supervisors, Pinal County, A.T., - Minutes, April 19, 1875, and November 21, 1876.
Barney, J.H. - *Political Activities of the Territorial Governors*, 1864-73, Manuscript, pp. 3 and 8.
W.F.A. Historical Records Survey - *Inventory of Pima County Archives*, 1938, Manuscript, p. 4.
The *Arizona Sentinel*, Tuma, March 30, 1878, p. 1, c. 2.
The *Arizona Enterprise*, Florence, January 31, 1891 (obituary).
The *Arizona Daily Star*, Tucson, April 8, 1891.

**DeArmitt, Berry Hill**

Information from the Great Registers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Residence</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Nativity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>Pinal County, Florence</td>
<td>Listed as DeArmitt, A.H.</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>Great Register of Pinal County is Missing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Pinal County, Florence</td>
<td>Listed as D. Armitt, B.H.</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Died at Florence, Arizona, January 24, 1891.