

QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

SCOTTSDALE
Historical
MUSEUM



November 2020

A Publication of the Scottsdale Historical Society

President's Letter

Greetings Members and Volunteers,

As you know, the museum remains closed due to COVID-19 and we don't anticipate opening until at least the first of next year. Special thanks to our landlord, the city of Scottsdale, for their ongoing support during this pandemic. The citywide volunteer program remains suspended for the safety of the volunteers and the public and we are following their lead to prevent potential exposure and spread to the community. We are also grateful to the city for the recent Scottsdale AZCares grant that will enhance our outreach to the community.

We are taking advantage of this down time to do some significant changes to the displays. A team of board members, led by Bob Fowler and Janet Larkin, have spent many hours changing the look of the two walls that face the lobby area that they have dubbed our "wow" walls. This is the first significant change to occur in this area for several years. We are looking forward to being able to hold a re-opening event to unveil their work once it is appropriate.

I'd like to thank all of you that are continuing your commitment to volunteer and support the Society in our mission. My best wishes are with you all for a healthy and joyful holiday season. I hope to see everyone after the first of the year.

Regards,

Steve Randall
Board President



Little Red Schoolhouse Original School

◆ Visit Us Online:

www.scottsdalehistory.org

While the museum remains closed during the pandemic, please visit us online to learn more about our renovations and ways that you can help the museum.

◆ Civil War Roundtable

On Tuesday, December 8th at 6:00 p.m. via ZOOM the Scottsdale Civil War Round Table presents: Dr. Fields portrayal of "Captain Grant: From Failure To Colonel"; the years from Grant's resignation from the U.S. Army 1854 to his obtaining a commission in the Union Army in 1861.

ZOOM Meeting Details:

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84900847764?pwd=eHpPZXlyZzE3QzBXcnE4S0xkMXFmdz09>

Meeting ID: 849 0084 7764
Passcode: 174279

Scottsdale Historical Museum Exhibit Renovations

At the August 5, 2020, meeting of the Board of Directors of the Scottsdale Historical Society, President Steve Randall proposed that the Board authorize money to engage a consultant for proposing changes to the exhibit space in the Museum. This would include a modernized look, use of video and touch screen displays, and adding displays on more recent history including the 1950s through the 1990s. There was wide spread support for the proposal to explore possibilities for updated historical exhibit content and infrastructure changes to improve and enhance the visitor's experience. Bob Fowler agreed to chair the Museum Renovation Committee.



Exhibit Visioning

Since then, the Committee meeting weekly, has discussed ideas about updating displays, and has consulted with a professional museum exhibit designer about ideas for modernizing the museum. The Committee has developed the story of Scottsdale, “Scottsdale began as a farming community and has grown with ranching, tourism, and arts into a vibrant residential and business center” and has defined the following story lines:

- ◆ Scottsdale's Beginnings
- ◆ Winfield and Helen Scott
- ◆ The Little Red Schoolhouse
- ◆ Providing Water to Scottsdale
- ◆ Scottsdale as a Farm Town
- ◆ Scottsdale as a Haven for Arts
- ◆ Scottsdale as a Tourist Destination
- ◆ Scottsdale expands with Industry and Housing
- ◆ Scottsdale as a Health Community
- ◆ Scottsdale Creates a Civic Center
- ◆ Scottsdale Creates the Indian Bend Wash Greenbelt
- ◆ Scottsdale Creates the McDowell Sonoran Preserve
- ◆ Hall of Fame recipient stories

The goal of the process is to have displays that draw people into the museum and give them a reason to walk around to see all of the exhibits. We want people to walk in and say “let's look around”. We have defined WOW Walls for this purpose, the wall opposite the museum entrance and the wall at the right behind the Docents table.

The Board of Directors has approved funding for the design phase of the project as proposed by the Exhibit Designer. Assignments have been made for story line writers, and the goal is to have the proposed story lines ready for review on November 2020. When all story lines are finalized, the Exhibit Designer will propose the displays for the stories using 3D software that will visualize his proposal. Based on that proposal, the Board of Directors will discuss funding for implementation. The schedule for completing the project has not yet been defined.

A Letter from the Archives

While masked, socially distancing, and washing hands when appropriate, a small group of us have been working in the archives over the past seven months. The faithful have been, Bob Fowler, Janet Larkin, Joanne Lane, Barry Bader, and Bob Breen. Don Hadder pops in often with his long knowledge of Scottsdale and Joan Fudala is our “go to” expert as well.

This summer Sandi Dimitro along with Quester friend, Sandy Nagy, went through all of the clothing, repairing and documenting what hadn’t been done before. Sandi says that the Scottsdale Historical Society is fortunate to have such wonderful vintage clothing and accessories that have been donated over the years. The collection includes clothing from the turn of the century through the 1990s.

We did take a short time off while we got a grip on whether we could do this safely, but for most of the summer and now into the fall, twice a month we entered the basement of the Little Red Schoolhouse accessioning documents and photographs. The process has been done using our recently acquired Past Perfect computer program (thank you Charros) where the important information about the photo, document, or artifact is entered into the correct spaces on the form and tabulated then by categories. Bob Fowler, our computer guru, set this all up with Barry Bader quickly jumping in to assist with entry and ways to improve the process. Bob had already entered thousands of our photos onto the Library website, until the library was shut down to volunteers.

The fun part is finding a letter, invitation, menu or maybe a program or photo from the 1950s, 60s and even more recent years. While the information is entered digitally now, the item is filed with its number in an archival box and shelved. Once it’s been entered, it will be easier to find the item when it’s needed for display or anyone wants some information about it. Photos can always be downloaded from the library website for free. Check that out!



Archives

**Many Thanks to Our
Scottsdale Historical Society Advisory Board**

Joan Fudala

Lois McFarland

Paul Messinger

Don Prior

Marion Saba

Rachel Smetana

Jean Shipp

Tom Silverman

Diana Smith

Mignon Trice

Marshall Trimble

Arizona State Fair: The Depression Remade the Fairgrounds

By: Max Beall

During the week of December 4, 1905, heavy rainstorms forced state officials to reschedule Arizona's first territorial fair. Weeks later, on Christmas Day, the fair opened its doors. Governor Joseph H. Kibbey made a few opening remarks to more than 2,000 Arizonans who had arrived by train to partake in the festivities. Throughout the week, horse racing took place along with competitive company drills and other military exercises.

Beginning in 1905, the Arizona State Fairgrounds--located at McDowell Road and 17th Street--have changed dramatically. Once a rural outpost at the edge of Phoenix, the fairgrounds were eventually surrounded by housing and suburban sprawl and located in the central core of the Phoenix region. Likewise, the facilities have expanded their usage beyond being a centerpiece of the region's agricultural economy; eventually hosting concerts, movies, and other various forms of entertainment. In the 1930s, when state officials suspended the state fair during the Great Depression, the fairgrounds became home to the state's efforts to spur recovery during the New Deal. The fairgrounds housed the Works Progress Administration (WPA) office.

In the early 1930s, Arizona Governor Benjamin Moeur convinced FDR and the federal government to allocate funds for public works projects in the state during the Great Depression. The WPA eventually opened its state headquarters at the south end of the State Fairgrounds and funded a variety of projects throughout the state between 1938 to 1943. The WPA funded hundreds of projects with the intent of putting Americans back to work and improving the country's infrastructure. Between 1935 and 1942, the WPA put 8.5 million Americans back to work and spent more than \$10 million during the Great Depression. The agency funded numerous public works projects that included roads, bridges, schools, libraries, botanical gardens, memorials, and city halls.

In Phoenix, for example, the agency widened and resurfaced over 1,000 blocks of city streets, including five miles of Central Avenue from the Salt River Bridge to South Mountain Park. Throughout the city, workers excavated twenty-eight miles of ditches along roadways, fifty-eight miles of curbs, eighty miles of sidewalks, and five miles of gutters. The agency also planted hundreds of palm and orange trees along Van Buren Street between Phoenix and the Tempe bridge. In Arizona, the agency constructed 690 miles of highway and around 475 miles of miscellaneous city streets. By 1935, the federal government had become the largest employer in Maricopa County, putting \$10 million annually into the local economy. Children around the state benefited greatly from the public works projects of the WPA. The WPA built 38 new schools in Arizona, providing the state's children with better educational facilities. The agency gave Arizona kids 21 new parks and playgrounds to enjoy.

The benefits were equally impressive across Arizona more broadly. The federal government built twelve WPA work camps in Arizona between 1938 and 1943. The WPA placed over 16,000 Arizonans on its rolls and, depending on their job skills, paid them \$15 to \$25 per week.



Cactus Cowboy: In 1953, a cactus cowboy graced the cover of the State Fair Premium Book, which listed the rules, regulations, and categories of competition (and competitors) at the fair. Source: Arizona Fair Commission

Arizona State Fair: The Depression Remade the Fairgrounds

The agency also improved the state's highway system. In just five years, the WPA provided funds for 1,714 miles of highway throughout the state of Arizona. Arizona's population grew substantially in the 1920s and 1930s, which meant the state needed additional methods of transportation in order to attract labor and capital. The WPA also funded several cultural projects in Arizona. The Federal Writers program produced a high-quality State Guide, which gave a detailed description of Arizona's history, its major cities and towns, and other notable locations of historical significance. During the Great Depression, the Federal Writers Project hired over 6,000 writers to create pamphlets and books that highlight the history of a given state. The Federal Music project hired musicians from branches of music to perform in concerts for the public to enjoy. This program within the WPA ultimately produced 1,250 free concerts during the Great Depression. In 1936, between January 1 and September 15, over 32 million Americans attended a concert put on by the Federal Music Project. The project hosted a wide range of venues with numerous reputable individual musicians and singing groups, including the Federal Philharmonic Orchestra.



The Arizona State Fair: Shown from the air, perhaps from a ferris wheel, the carnival midway of the Arizona State Fair was laid out in a straight line. The Grandstand and horse racing track can be seen in the left corner of the photo. Source: Ivan Henry.

The WPA funded public works projects at the State Fairgrounds. In March of 1936, WPA workers started building the Grandstand with the hopes of completing it by the end of year. The WPA installed nearly 5,000 different seats on the Grandstand, replacing the old wooden seats that had burned down. The structure itself stood at fifty feet long with an adobe wall on three sides. It featured bas-relief medallions, funded by the Federal Artists Project, that feature scenes of everyday life in Arizona. WPA workers also built a new horse racing track inside the Grandstand. Once the WPA finished the project in 1937, the Grandstand hosted numerous types of events, including horse races, rodeos, demolition derbies, and even mud bog spectacles.

In the second half of the 20th century, the state fairgrounds remained vital, as the state continued to reimagine the fairgrounds for many different purposes. For example, in 1955, Marilyn Monroe filmed a scene from the movie "Bus Stop" on the state fairgrounds. In 1987, while on a trip to Arizona, Pope John Paul II gave a speech at the fairgrounds. Fair officials converted the WPA building into a haunted house, a gem and mineral exhibit, and the base of the Phoenix Roadrunners hockey team.

In 2014, the Arizona Preservation Foundation and other historical preservation groups led an effort to stop the Arizona State Fair and Exposition from demolishing the building. After obtaining a temporary restraining order to prevent the buildings from being razed, preservationists raised public awareness, working with city and state officials to identify opportunities to save the buildings through rehabilitating and reusing them. By 2016, that effort succeeded when the state government committed to returning the structures to their former glory with a \$120,000 worth of funding that was matched by the City of Phoenix. Private sources of funding brought to the table by the preservationists, including both foundation gifts and contributions from small donors, contributed more than \$120,000 in additional money toward the project. In 2018, the Arizona Exposition & State Fair's Board of Directors held a charrette that explored the future possibilities for the fairgrounds .

Scottsdale Historical Museum
PO Box 143
Scottsdale, Arizona 85252

November 2020



The Scottsdale Historical Museum

www.scottsdalehistory.org

Scottsdale Historical Society Board of Directors

President: Steve Randall **Vice-President:** Cindi Eberhardt **Treasurer:** Eleanor Brierley
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Volunteer Coordinator:

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