

Fall  
2014

# Litchfield Legends

A publication of the Litchfield Park Historical Society and Museum

## *Los Campos de Litchfield Park*

New Exhibit

GRAND OPENING

Sunday, October 26, 1:00-5:00 p.m.

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When Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. established its Southwest Cotton Co. subsidiary in 1917, one of their immediate requirements was a work force. In the early days most of these employees came from Mexico. They worked for six months in Arizona and then returned home for the balance of the year. Because of this, housing became a priority. Within a year of the first company settlement, almost everyone moved into what is now the center of Litchfield Park; and an early general plan for the Litchfield Townsite (1918) shows a section of the settlement devoted to its Mexican employees. This area was located just north of the present-day commercial area and south of the Air Line Canal. Along with small houses (300 to 500 square feet) built of wood and adobe, there was to be a Mexican Court and a Mexican Plaza (pictured in an early architectural drawing). Just north of the Air Line Canal and adjacent to this section, an adobe classroom was built and used as a school for the Mexican children.

However, circumstances abruptly changed after the cotton crash of 1920; and the Southwest Cotton Co. had to find a new purpose to remain in business. During the 1920s and 1930s, the company began to lease out their Marinette (Sun City) and Goodyear (Chandler) Ranches, eventually selling both; and their Litchfield Ranch was diversified and reformed into an experimental farming operation. They called this new business Goodyear Farms. Their efforts at this site profoundly impacted both national and

international farming methods; and drew visitors from around the world to study their agricultural techniques.

These changes also affected the subsidiary's workforce during the 1920s and 1930s. Goodyear Farms grew as operations were consolidated to the Litchfield Ranch site – drawing employees from the Marinette



and Goodyear Ranches. While many of the original Mexican employees had returned to Mexico, a number of them became citizens of the United States. Another group was born at Litchfield Ranch, eventually working for Goodyear Farms as adults. Some even dropped out of school after sixth or eighth grade to work in the fields in order to help their families survive. And a final group was added to the mix. These people, many of whom were of Mexican heritage, came from other parts of the country such as Texas, California, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and southern Arizona – especially during the Dust Bowl years. This required more housing. Then in 1929, the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. opened The Wigwam (originally

*Continued on page 3*

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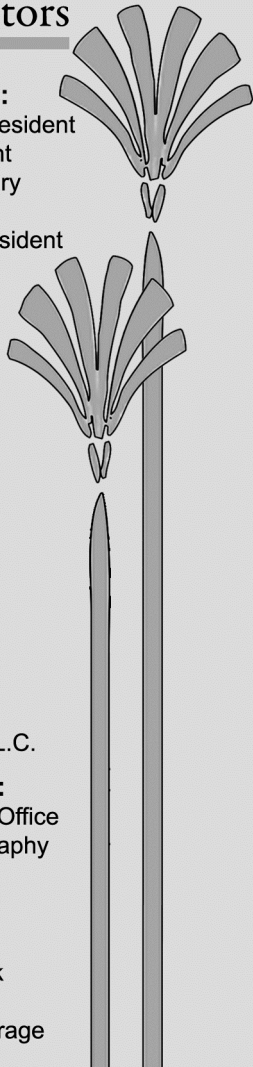
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### Special Thanks:

The City of Litchfield Park  
Tim Bake, LandCare LLC  
Palm Gate RV & Self Storage



## Letter from the President

Normally, at this point I would update you with all the exciting happenings coming soon to the LPHS and Museum. But this time I would like to tell you about our dear friend **Barbara Robey**, who passed away early this summer.

I grew up knowing Barb as Dr. Robeys's wife, and Pam and Dave's mom; a fearless and avid skier, a killer doubles partner in tennis, and a business partner with my mother in the little tennis shop they owned. It would not be until I was older that I would recognize that Barbara was the quintessential "Renaissance Woman."

She gave back to the world in so many ways. In education, she served on the Litchfield Elementary School Board for 20 years and the Arizona School Boards Association. Subsequently she became a lobbyist for education at the Arizona State Legislature. She was actively engaged in the incorporation of the City of Litchfield Park and served on the first City Council as Vice Mayor. Ten years later she became the Mayor. She served with the Arizona Medical Association and initiated a training program for baby sitters, which was the first one of its kind in the country. She was instrumental in the creation of ASBAIT, an insurance trust for Arizona teachers. ASBAIT allows over 35,000 educators and their families to purchase insurance at a reasonable cost. In her most recent years, she became one of the LPHS's most active volunteers and board members. She served on the Finance Committee and was dedicated to increasing our financial sustainability.



**Barbara B. Robey**

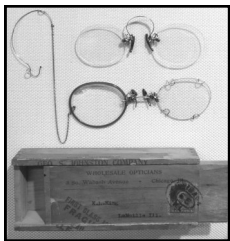
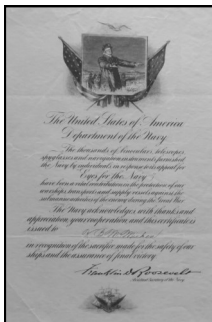
Any one of these accomplishments would have been sufficient to make Barbara noteworthy. But what most marked her character was her optimism and deep compassion for others. Even as she lay in bed battling what was to become her final and greatest struggle, her questions always turned to others – especially the children of the **Barbara B. Robey Elementary School**. The opportunity to touch the lives of the students in the school that bears her name was an honor she took very seriously. From helping to serve breakfast to the students in the cafeteria each morning to reading wonderful books to eager young listeners, Barbara was always the *heart and soul* of the school. She leaves behind a hole in our hearts and is sorely missed.

**Lisa Brainard-Watson**

**President, LPHS and Museum**

## New to the Museum:

Certificate of thanks from the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt to K. B. McMicken. During World War I, citizens lent binoculars, spyglasses and navigation instruments to the U.S. Navy for the war effort in their "Eyes for the Navy" program.



Eyeglasses of K. J. King (grandfather of Nancy King Giebel) sent from Geo. S. Johnson Co. of Chicago. These are pince-nez glasses. They do not have ear pieces and are made to pinch on the bridge of the nose. One pair has a security chain and ear loop connected to it.

## *Los Campos de Litchfield Park continued from page 1*

a company hotel) as a public resort that was designed to appeal to a wealthy and near-wealthy clientele. We believe these are the two reasons that the Mexican-Americans were moved outside of the town of Litchfield Park.

So in 1929 five main communities (or camps) were distributed across Litchfield Ranch and given numbers – Camp 50, 51, 52, 53, and 54 (we have been unable to verify the source of these numbers). The houses were small and built of either adobe or wood. But the 1930s were a difficult time in America. While wages were low at Goodyear Farms, employees received free housing and utilities – a big draw for hungry people trying



to survive during the Great Depression. These residential communities were inhabited almost exclusively by Mexican-Americans; and soon these communities evolved into urban *colonias* that nurtured a population that has contributed significantly to the greater American culture.

The stories of the five main camps and one or two smaller ones certainly reflect early 20<sup>th</sup> century attitudes toward various immigrant populations. However, Goodyear Farms did sponsor baseball teams for their employees as well as fiestas in the town's center called *la placita* (where the library is now); and after 1929, there was a complete integration of the Mexican-American children into the Litchfield school. The one exception was a kindergarten class where the young students were required to learn English. Dubbed *the baby class*, young scholars worked hard to become fluent in English so that they could move on to the classes that everyone else was taking. Nevertheless, there were still incidents where cultural prejudices erupted. However, it was within the camps themselves, that residents could celebrate their cultural heritage without being confronted by prejudice. It was here that these people kept their faith, their music, and their culture alive; and passed their traditions on to their children. These children and grandchildren remember a strong sense of *community* that they feel has been lost in today's America. Often visitors to our museum, who either grew up in the camps or are descendants of former camp residents, say to other visitors, "I'm from Camp 52" – or – "My parents came from Camp 53. Where are you from?" Immediately a discussion ensues that still brings smiles to their faces as they



remember a time when things were slower and everyone took care of each other.

For decades this Mexican-American community toiled long hours digging the canals, clearing the land, planting the crops, raising the livestock, training the horses, and reaping the harvests in the Southwest Valley of Phoenix. The stories of their families – the weddings, fiestas, food, gardens, church, cemetery, and allegiance to their country – America – during World War II are not to be forgotten. They left a lasting imprint on the area and their legacy can be found in many of today's annual celebrations, street names, restaurants, music, and most especially in the contributions of their descendants.

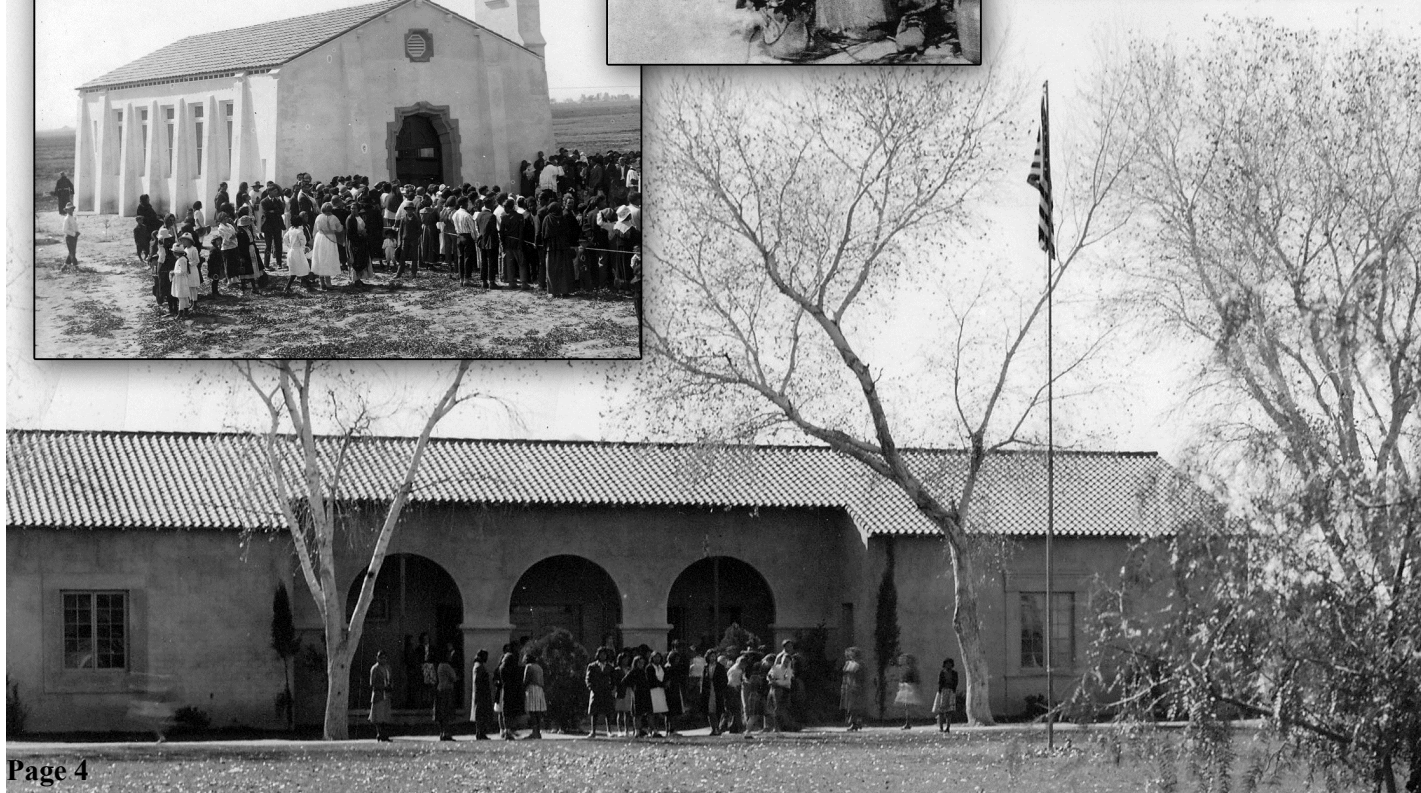
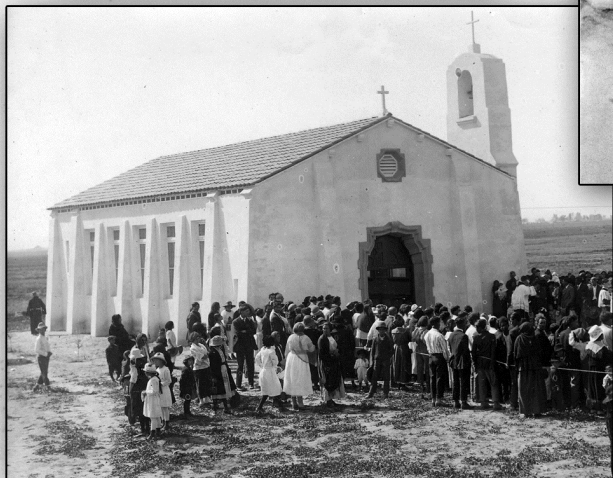
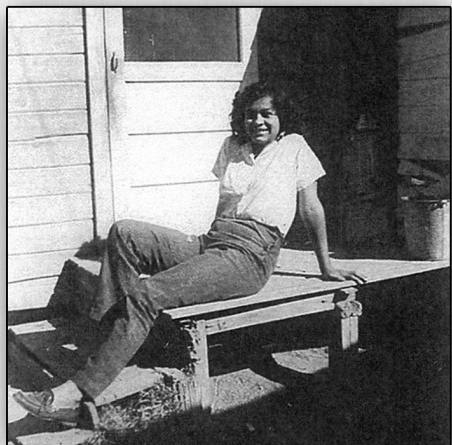
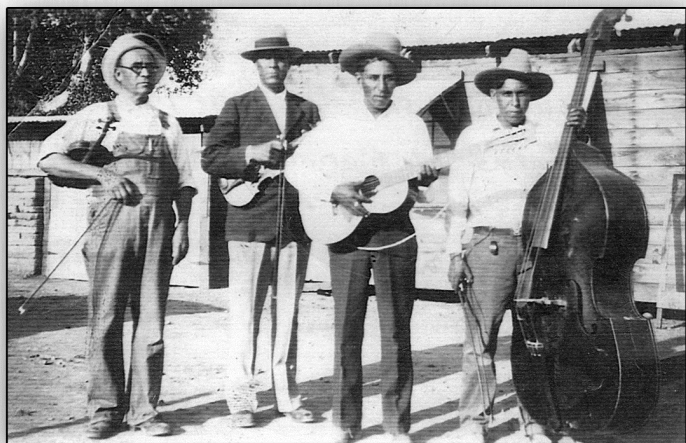
This exhibition tells the story of the camps (*los campos*) of Litchfield Park. It is a tribute to every immigrant who has ever reached our shores and believed (as early camp immigrant Miguel Moreno did) – "*Maybe we'll do better in America.*"

## **Photos Needed**

**Cruz Pariga Dominguez** (left) and **Belen Soto Moreno** (right) are shown here signing a contract with Arcadia Publishing to write a book on the **Mexican-Americans of Litchfield Park**. The target date for the book's publication is November of 2015. If you have any photos that you would like to submit for possible inclusion in this book, contact the **LPHS Museum** at **623-535-4414**.











# *Bodas en los Campos*

## *(Weddings in the Camps)*

Everyone loves a wedding! There aren't many events in a person's life that offer such a time of celebration – feelings of hope for the future and the experience of sheer joy as everyone shares in the couple's happiness. This exhibition displays photos from many of the weddings that took place in the camps of Litchfield Park.

A Roman Catholic wedding is a sacrament of the church; and because it is a commitment that is to last a lifetime, great care was taken in the preparation for these ceremonies. Weeks were spent in either sewing the wedding dresses or traveling to downtown Phoenix to look for *just the right ones*. Wedding parties were large and often included a number of young children, reflecting the importance of family to this Mexican-American culture.

Two traditions used in many of the wedding ceremonies were brought here from Mexico – *el lazo* and *una bolsa pequeña*. A *lazo* was made from beadwork in the shape of a large figure eight. It was carried into the church by the maid of honor. At the appointed time during the wedding ceremony, the maid of honor and the best man placed *el lazo* over the heads of the wedding couple – one part of the figure eight over the bride and the other over the groom. This was a symbol of the joining of two families into one. *El lazo* was removed before the ceremony ended and the maid of honor once again took charge of it.



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Another custom was *una bolsa pequeña*, a small pouch made of fabric and ribbon that contained dimes. It was given to the bride by the groom during the ceremony. The symbolism of this act was that the groom would provide for his bride and their future family, and the bride was to watch over the money carefully and not waste it.



The weddings were held in a variety of places – some actually in the camp home, a few at St. Thomas Aquinas Mission, several at St. John Vianney Parish, and many in Immaculate Heart Church in downtown Phoenix. But most of the receptions were held in the camps. Good food and music abounded. The male musicians would seat themselves on hay bales that had been placed on top of a flat-bed truck. Most had instruments – but occasionally the men would be creative in coming up with some sort of homemade instrument. Then, as people used to say many years ago, “*A good time was had by all.*”

This exhibition contains over 30 wedding photos from various decades and a number of wedding artifacts for you to see. Among the artifacts will be wedding dresses and *los cojines* (kneeling pillows used by the bride and groom). After kneeling on the pillows to say a prayer at the conclusion of the ceremony, the couple would present a bouquet of flowers to The Virgin Mary.

**Come and learn about these Mexican-American families and their traditions – and reminisce about these bygone times.**

# Help Us Thrive

The LPHS would like your help in raising some money for us – **and it won't cost you a dime! It will only take about 5 minutes of your time.** Then pass these ideas on to your family and friends so that they can help us too. We have two opportunities that will help us financially:

## **Number One**

### **Albertson's Community Partners Program**

All you have to do is take a **Community Partner Card** (coming soon in your mail) to Albertson's Grocery Store; and every time you shop at Albertson's, please have them scan it. Albertson's will then be writing a check to the LPHS every quarter for a percentage of what you spend there. **SIMPLE!**

## **Number Two**

### **Amazon Smile Program**

Sign up is simple. If you have an Amazon account already, everything remains the same.

#### **Then...**

Step One: Open <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/86-1041362>

Step Two: Where it asks you which non-profit, type in **Litchfield Park**

**Historical Society** – then click *Select*.

Step Three: Replace your Amazon bookmark with an AmazonSmile bookmark.

(They give you a bookmark to drag to your bookmark bar.) Now you will always open to AmazonSmile.

Step Four: Go shopping.

Step Five: We would be so grateful if you would pass this information on to all of your family members and friends so that they can help us too.

The LPHS will receive a percentage of certain purchases – just like the cash-back rebates on credit cards.

It takes money to run our museum and keep it open to the public. In addition, the LPHS has had a year of unexpected expenses: we repaired the roof on one of our galleries, repaired our air conditioning system, replaced a part in our printer, and are in the process of replacing our computer. So we would be delighted if all of you could send some money our way through these two easy programs designed to assist non-profits such as ours.

**We thank you for your continued support of our museum.**

## ***Second Tin Man Awards Banquet***

When the first-ever **Tin Man Awards** banquet was held two years ago, 500 people came together at The Wigwam to celebrate those who had given their *heart and soul* to not only Litchfield Park, but to the greater West Valley community. The event raised \$25,000 – the profit going to small, non-profit organizations in the area who find it challenging to raise general operating funds. The Historical Society was a grateful recipient; and that money was used to help pay for utilities, exhibitions, and keeping the museum open to the public for **free**.

The **Second Tin Man Awards** banquet will be held **Friday, November 7<sup>th</sup>**, once again at **The Wigwam**. Check out the web site for details *in color*: [www.tinmanawards.com](http://www.tinmanawards.com)

Please support this worthy effort by purchasing a sponsorship, donating a silent auction item, and/or **by attending** this enjoyable event. You will connect with friends that you haven't seen in years. **Tickets are \$75 each** and are **on sale now** at the **LPHS & Museum** – or call **Meredeth Stucky** at **623-935-1117**.

# Sponsors

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## Museum Hours

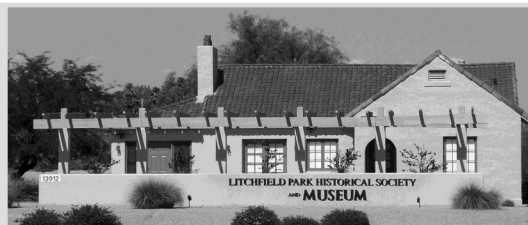
Wednesday, Thursday and Friday  
10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.  
And by appointment - call 623-535-4414

Address: 13912 W. Camelback Rd.  
Litchfield Park, Arizona 85340

email: office@LPHSmuseum.org

### Do you have empty aluminum cans?

The LPHS will recycle them for you.  
Leave them at the garage door of  
610 N. Old Litchfield Road, Litchfield  
Park. The money will help the LPHS  
pay its utility bills.



**Join Us.** It is through your dues and donations that we are able to continue our efforts  
to preserve the history of Litchfield Park. *Become a member today.*

### LPHS 2015 Membership/Special Donation Form

January 1 – December 31, 2015 membership year

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse's Name \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

**Annual Membership Dues** ☐ Single Adult \$20 ☐ Family \$30 ☐ Business/Professional \$60  
☐ Contributor \$125 ☐ Lifetime \$600

**I would like to make an additional Special Donation of:** ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you! Please make your check payable to: **Litchfield Park Historical Society,**  
PO Box 1936, Litchfield Park, AZ 85340

Would you be interested in volunteering to work on a committee or help in the museum? ☐ Yes

The Litchfield Park Historical Society is an official IRS 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation, and membership dues and other donations are tax deductible for persons who itemize.