

# Litchfield Legends

Spring 2014

Produced with major support from  
La Loma Village and THE WIGWAM.

a publication of the Litchfield Park Historical Society

## THE WIGWAM: From Necessity to Luxury

**GRAND OPENING: Sunday, April 6, 1:00-5:00 p.m.**

The Wigwam, in its purpose to offer respite to weary travelers, has weathered the winds of **change** – that persistent transformer of history. The Wigwam's colorful evolution takes it through the isolated years of *the company town*, the trying times of the Great Depression and World War II, the prosperous years of post-war America, several rocky years of uncertainty, and today's hopeful renewal. It's a fascinating look at almost 100 years of life in one corner of Arizona.

The first building of what was to become The Wigwam, was a modest adobe structure erected in 1918. Early photos picture it as a lonely building on an empty desert in the midst of Litchfield Ranch (part of the early Southwest Cotton Co. – a subsidiary of Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. in Akron, Ohio). Its purpose was to house Goodyear employees from Akron, Ohio, who were monitoring the activities of the then cotton-growing ranch.

In those days a trip from downtown Phoenix (population – about 25,000) to Litchfield Ranch took almost one full day to complete. Visitors had to make their way on unpaved



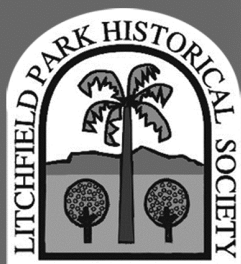
roads by horse and buggy or using a somewhat undependable early version of a car. Named "The Organization House," it contained six rooms allowing visiting guests to stay overnight in some degree of comfort in the middle of a desert. These men often brought their wives along and over the next ten years, room capacity rose to twenty-four. This original building is still a part of The Wigwam today and it's called The Fireplace Room.

The Organization House, still owned by Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co., was opened to the public on Thanksgiving Day of 1929. By then, an addition to the structure had increased guest capacity to 66; and a small nine-hole golf course was laid out for the visitors' amusement. Sporting a new name (The Wigwam Guest Ranch), it appealed to those looking for exotic experiences in comfortable surroundings. The term **wigwam** was really a misnomer since the building structures were reminiscent of pueblo architecture – not wigwams. **See "THE WIGWAM" page 3**

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**Did you know?** That the Goodyear Golf and Country Club Bar and Restaurant burned to the ground in July of 1969.

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## Letter from the President:

You may not have noticed the new signage in front of Aunt Mary's House, the current home of the LPHS and Museum. The words "**and Museum**" were added; and now visitors to the area can easily locate the museum and they appear to have been doing just that as our attendance numbers keep growing. In just the short time we have been open, close to 1,500 visitors have popped in to learn about the unique history of Litchfield Park. Additionally, the LPHS has achieved other major accomplishments since its founding in 2001. We have conducted over 170 oral histories, created four DVD presentations of historical interest, archived thousands of photos and pieces of ephemera, established a museum, mounted nine exhibitions, hosted numerous events featuring local history, and so much more.

But all this does not happen in a vacuum – it only happens with your support. **Consider becoming a member of the LPHS.** It is easy to do – simply complete the form on the back of this newsletter and mail it in with your check! Your support as a member will help us to continue this important work. Finally, if you find items in the attic, closet, or garage that might be of historic interest, give us a call. We love to display unique objects that capture the essence of life in the early days of Litchfield Park. With your help, we can continue to grow and preserve our unique history.

**Lisa Brainard-Watson**

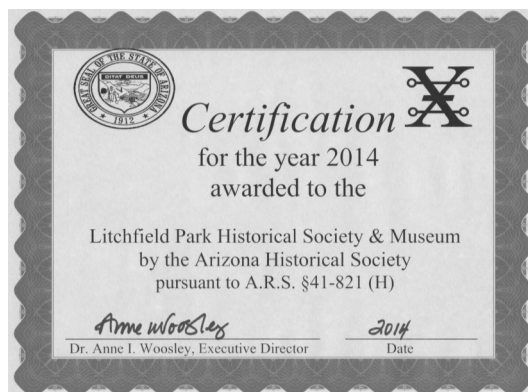
**President – Litchfield Park Historical Society**

## LPHS and Museum Awarded Affiliation/Certification from AHS

We are pleased to announce that on February 1, 2014, the Arizona Historical Society (AHS) Board of Directors awarded the Litchfield Park Historical Society and Museum full **affiliation** and **certification**. Our museum and society is now listed with other museums in the state that have achieved this status; and the LPHS will be given an opportunity to apply for small grants that are awarded annually. In addition, we will have access to AHS resources and workshops.

We hope all of you (both the Litchfield Park community at large and LPHS membership) are as proud of this accomplishment as we are – and we want to thank **ALL** of **our faithful volunteers** for making us look good. **We couldn't have done it without you!**

**The Board of Directors of the LPHS and Museum**



**Did you know?** That the Wigwam stables provided horses and accomplished horsemen to lead trail rides until the late 1980s.

**“THE WIGWAM” Continued from Page 1**

But the name has stuck throughout the resort’s history. Advertisements used phrases like *“rugged White Tank Mountains”* and *“rich in ancient Indian lore,”* along with *“modern comfort,”* *“realize your dream,”* and *“this American Shangri-La.”* It enticed the wealthy, and near-wealthy, to *“a sunny oasis where the brilliant green of palms, citrus trees, and velvety lawns”* was a vision to behold. It also offered opportunities for experiencing *“a private all-grass golf course, riding, swimming, tennis, deck and lawn games, hiking”* and *“loafing under a generous, life-giving Arizona sun.”* Entertainment around a camp fire was provided by individuals with names like *Yellowstone Chip, Powder River Jack, and Pretty Kitty Lee.* While guests’ children would be cared for by the family nurse or governess, the parents would have a glorious winter holiday on a *real* southwestern ranch of 17,000 acres. How could anyone resist such enticement? Due to the intense summer heat, the facility was only open from December 1<sup>st</sup> through May 1<sup>st</sup> and operated on The Full American Plan – lodging plus three meals a day. Single rooms went for \$9 to \$15 and doubles were available for \$16 to \$26 – a hefty price during the Great Depression; and profits from the Guest Ranch went into the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. coffers.

The Wigwam’s history changed abruptly for a short time – 1941-1945. World War II was raging and the country devoted itself to winning it. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. committed most of its business to the war effort – including their winter resort. All of the hotel rooms were closed to the public and made available for the pilots from neighboring Luke Field.

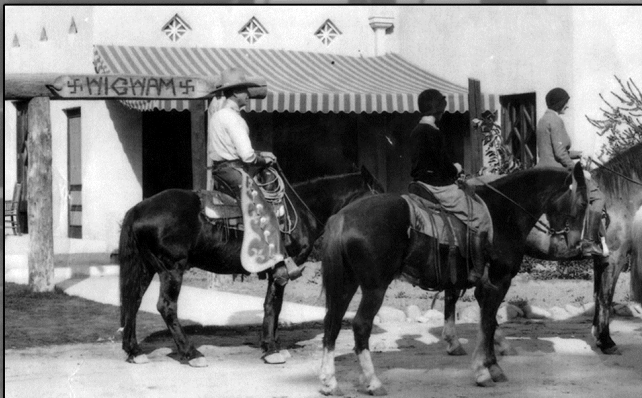
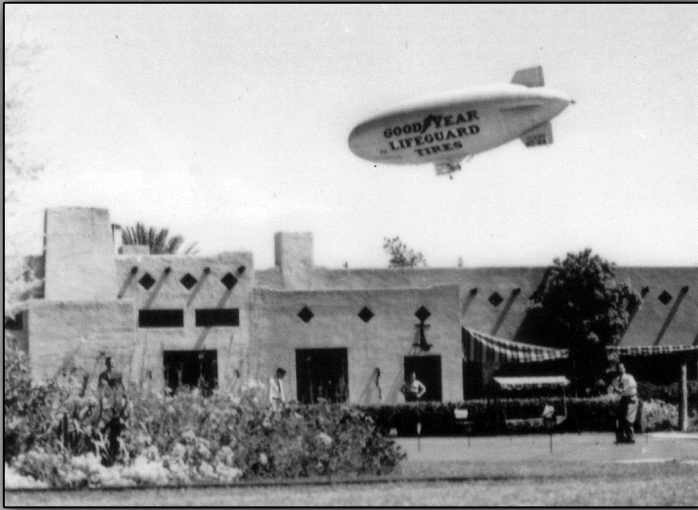
A time of tranquility settled in after the war. After a lengthy depression and a massive world war, Americans found themselves turning to more pleasurable pursuits. The Wigwam facility was expanded; and the original nine-hole golf course was increased to eighteen. These modest efforts ushered in The Wigwam’s *Golden Years* (1951-1986). During the 1950s, room expansion exploded; and a second and third 18-hole golf course drew golfers from coast to coast. The Gold Course was touted as *“one of the 100 best sets of links in the world.”* It was also during this time period that The Wigwam drew an abundance of *movers and shakers* from all walks of life. Hank Aaron, Cybil Shepherd, Billy Joel, Minnie Pearl, Senator Estes Kefauver, Robert Mitchum, Shirley Booth, President Gerald Ford, Bob Cummings, Arnold Palmer, Mickey Mantle, Yogi Berra, Paul Newman, Rita Moreno, Magic Johnson, Jessie Owens, John Raitt, Phil Harris, Henry Kissinger, Gary Cooper, Glen Campbell, and Hal Holbrook are just a few of the individuals who made their way to the resort. The list is long – celebrities who wanted to enjoy the quiet and anonymity that the staff provided for them – a highly valued commodity for people of fame and fortune.

A Los Angeles Times article of the time period described the resort as *“posh.”* While enjoying Mobil Travel Guide’s Five Star rating for 19 years, The Wigwam continued to harken back to a time of graceful living and quiet elegance; it provided an environment of serenity and a place to rest one’s nerves while soaking up the Arizona sunshine. Plush suites were added and The Wigwam flourished. While cookouts and horseback riding were still popular, fashion shows were frequent and dinner dances were held nightly; and resort restaurants provided exceptional dining. Linen table cloths and napkins were the order of the day.

**See “THE WIGWAM” Page 6**



**Did you know?** That during World War II, the Wigwam was leased to military forces from Luke Field only.

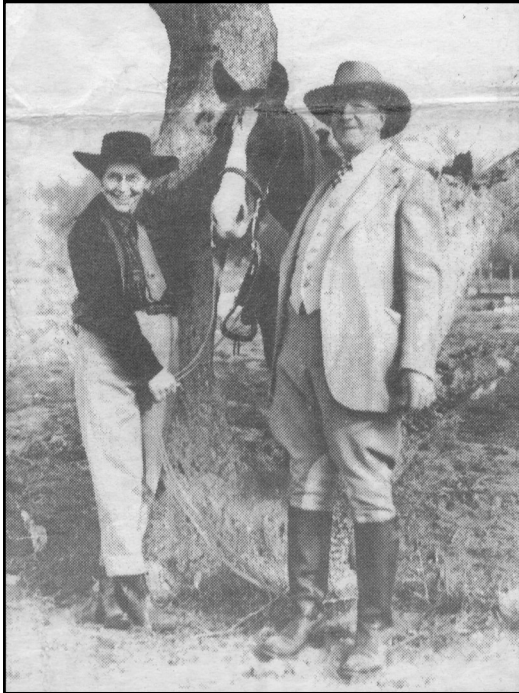




**Did you know?** That the three golf courses were once named Red, Blue, and Gold.



**Did you know?** That the Wigwam was the first golfing resort to offer three 18-hole golf courses on one property.



## The Mystery is Solved ...

Two years ago a mysterious man was pictured in the center of the cover of **Vista** (the West Valley View Spring/Summer 2012 edition). It commemorated the Arizona Centennial. He had been labeled as Paul Litchfield. Area residents assured the paper that it truly wasn't the much admired founder of Litchfield Park; and the paper printed a correction on March 16, 2012. The article's title stated, **"Who was that guy on the cover?"**

Who was he indeed? Well – now we know. That long pondered mystery was solved in February when an LPHS research team was looking through old articles about The Wigwam in preparation for a new museum exhibit. Imagine their surprise when they uncovered that same man photographed alongside a horse and a woman. Identification noted that he was **Powder River Jack**; and he was standing alongside **Pretty Kitty Lee** – both early entertainers at The Wigwam.

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### **"THE WIGWAM" continued from page 3**

A young waitress moved among the tables with a tray of relishes, while a young waiter attentively provided an array of rolls. Women wore hats and dresses; men wore suits and ties. The grounds were immaculate – lush and green and decorated with over \$30,000 worth of flowers planted among the date palms, olive, and pine trees. The golf courses were sown with 120 tons of rye seed each year to keep them from turning brown; and it took 54 gardeners and greens-keepers to maintain the grounds properly. Even the trash was hidden in large cans sunk into the ground at sidewalk level awaiting collection. It was a thriving business even though it was still seasonal. Open from October through May, many of the staff found work in Central City, Colorado, over the summer months.

After 68 years, the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. gave up their resort. In 1986 they sold it to Suncor Development for \$221 million dollars; and for the first time in its history, The Wigwam was open year round. In 1990, a Japanese investor by the name of Kabuto, bought The Wigwam from Suncor for \$70 million dollars. A \$13-million-dollar expansion included 90 new guest rooms and 11-thousand square feet of meeting rooms. However, unsuccessful in managing the holdings, Kabuto had to sell in 2009 after the resort went into receivership.

Today we find The Wigwam in the hands of JDM Partners. These Arizona owners had a desire to return The Wigwam to the historic flavor of its early years. A \$7-million-dollar renovation highlighted and restored some of the original features. Especially prominent is the welcoming wooden arch with **'The Wigwam'** carved into it. It greets arrivals to the resort today – just as it did during the early years of The Wigwam's existence. In a world filled with glossy high-rise resorts with impersonal appeal, The Wigwam remains unique. The atmosphere calms the spirit. The buildings are low and have a human scale to them; and the appointments radiate a warmth that is comforting. When you walk through the lush grounds, you can almost hear echoes from the past beckoning your imagination to remember a gracious and more innocent time.

**Come and view the history of one of the oldest resorts in the Valley of the Sun ... see many of the artifacts from eras past ... and spend some time reminiscing about those bygone years.**

**Did you know?** That the original fireplace in The Wigwam was crafted from horsehair and mud in 1918; and it can be seen today in the Fireplace Room.

## Miniature of Rancho La Loma

The Board of Directors of the LPHS and Museum has commissioned Jeff Alderman, a professional model builder, to recreate the historic 1940s *Rancho La Loma* in miniature. The model will become part of the museum's permanent collection. Visitors will be able to view all of the Litchfield estate in three dimensions – its five cottages, the outdoor swimming pool, Sunset Terrace, the Open Air Chapel, and the beautiful citrus orchard on the south side of the hill. The model can be seen for the first time at the grand opening for the museum's newest exhibit – **THE WIGWAM: From Necessity to Luxury**. The opening is scheduled for **Sunday, April 6** from **1:00-5:00 p.m.** Visitors who come that day will be able to meet Alderman and ask him any questions they have about his work.

Alderman, a resident of Litchfield Park, has built numerous models over the years. He now estimates that number to be more than 1500 – built over a period of 40 years. Four of them were constructed for the Titanic Historical Society in Indian Orchard, Massachusetts. As a professional model builder and owner of Grand Prix Reproductions (his home-based business), Alderman has also put together models of the Queen Mary, the Alvin (a three-person sub), and Le Suroit (the ship on which the Alvin was carried).



Jeff began his interest in model building as a young boy of seven – looking for things to do. After completing his first one, he was hooked for life; and he would do odd jobs to earn enough money to go to the hobby store to buy another model. Now, as a professional, he builds battleships, ocean liners, motorcycles, aircraft, race cars, and houses – virtually anything people ask him to create in miniature. You can view a sampling of his work at [www.GRANDPRIXREPRODUCTIONS.com](http://www.GRANDPRIXREPRODUCTIONS.com)

**Don't miss the grand opening ... and this opportunity to meet Jeff Alderman ... and see this new addition to the LPHS and Museum collections.**

## ??? Love History – Love Antiques ???

Ever heard of **The Questers**? It is a private, non-profit international organization (est. in 1944) whose purpose is to educate people about antiques through research and study – and to donate funds to the preservation and restoration of existing memorials, historical buildings, landmarks, and educational purposes.

The international headquarters for The Questers is located in Philadelphia, PA, and the Firebird Chapter is here in Phoenix. The Arizona State President is Betty Hartnett. She can be reached at 602-317-4438 or [bettchem@cox.net](mailto:bettchem@cox.net) for more information.

**The Phoenix Questers will be visiting our museum in March. We know they'll love it!**

Special thanks to: **The City of Litchfield Park** and **Tim Blake**, LandCare LLC

General Counsel—**Paul J. Faith, Esq.**, Faith, Ledyard, Nickel & Shelsky P.L.C.

Research Consultant—**Dr. Gloria Cuadraz**, ASU Office of Oral History & Ethnography

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The LPHS will recycle them for you. Leave them at the garage door of **610 North Old Litchfield Road, Litchfield Park**. The money realized from their recycling will help the LPHS pay its utility bills.

### MUSEUM HOURS

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

### LPHS 2014 Membership/Special Donation Form

January 1 – December 31, 2014 membership year

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

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

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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 for our organization? ☐ Yes

Do you have historic photographs or artifacts you would like to donate to the LPHS? ☐ 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.