

Vol. No 10 Issue No. 2, April, May, June 2013 * <http://threerivershistoricalsocietyaz.org>

Adobe – Building Material for all Ages

Adobe, a simple mixture of earth, water and a little straw has been used as a building material in the southwest since the Hohokam used it to build the “Big House,” now Casa Grande National Monument. Both San Xavier del Bac and San Jose Tumacacori were built with this durable building block. Adobe was used extensively in the building of the early dwellings and public buildings as the southwest was becoming first a

Territory, and at last, a State. Nolan Hester, in the Arizona Highways, June 1974 issue states that the art of producing adobe bricks to construct building goes back to the 15th and 16th centuries when the Spanish learned the trade from the Moors. Their technique of making unfired adobe bricks has survived virtually unchanged. Adobe bricks are formed when a soupy mixture of clay, sand, water, and often a little straw is poured into square wooden molds. These bricks harden quickly in the hot sun of our area. They are removed from the molds and cured for a day or two then tilted on end for the final drying.



Adobe construction was ideal in the early days of the southwest before evaporative coolers, air conditioners or central heat. The thick adobe bricks even out the interior effect of the extreme temperatures outside. With careful attention to the orientation of the building toward the sun, overhangs that provide shade and good air circulation adobe buildings were very energy efficient and comfortable.

Florence, Arizona holds a remarkable array of adobe; hundreds of homes, downtown businesses and even Pinal County’s first courthouse, built in 1877. Tucson is another city that can be proud of its adobe heritage with many preserved in the Barrio Historico and El Presidio historic districts. In 1936, resort pioneers Jack Stewart, John C. Lincoln, and Edward Bowes used adobe bricks made on site to cut construction costs when building the Camelback Inn. The original adobe remains the elegant basis of the current resort.

Avondale can boast of buildings built of adobe, too, many of them constructed of adobe bricks made by Tomas Aragon. The Tomas Aragon home on 4th Street, the Avondale Liquor Store on Western Ave., and the Ludlow home on Kinderman Drive are examples of his work. There is another group of homes on Southern Lane, east of Central Avenue that were built of adobe in the late 1940’s by their owners. These homes and businesses are still occupied and looking good, a testimony to their solid construction.

Salt  **Agua Fria**  **Gila**
Three Rivers Historical Society

JIM KING

Eighty-eight years is a long life and difficult to sum up in a few words. I am Jim's second wife, so a lot of what I know of his early years is what he told me. If you are a West Valley resident who goes back sixty years or more, you would call him, "Jimmy."

His father, Elmer, was blind since seven years old and his mother, Harriet, was legally blind. This was not considered a handicap by them. To find work, the young family decided to leave Illinois and "Go West!" A washed-out bridge stopped them in Arizona, so they rented a house in Tempe and stayed for a while. But, they didn't give up on plans to go to California. His father couldn't drive so, half blind, his mother drove the car full of kids, mother-in-law and dog! Twelve-year old Jim patched blown-out tires.

Hard workers and creative, they began selling "Cherry Ann" at roadside stands, and delivered gallons of the drink to many other outlets. A newspaper reporter asked for the recipe and was told, "It's a family secret." Not a secret now - it was cherry flavoring added to apple cider. It made a lot of money for them. Eventually they purchased an old hospital in Redlands, CA and remodeled it into a boarding house. Jim a teenager the oldest of four children, learned about responsibility at an early age.

After Arizona State Teachers College, he married Esther Ziilch and they had two sons and two daughters. WWII brought them to Goodyear where Jim worked in the aerospace industry. He helped re-design the tail section of the aircraft empennage for guns. Goodyear did not manufacture the guns.

Jim would be called a Visionary and Pioneer of the West Valley...for good reason! Thinking it was a terrible waste of time for farmers to have to go to Phoenix for jeans and work boots, he opened Kings Department Store. Ladies could purchase fabric for 39 cents a yard and patterns for a quarter. The store grew to include larger items such as TVs, radios, and other appliances. These items were shipped via train and had to be picked up at the depot on Route 80...but Jim had a better idea: He opened a Railroad Express Office in the store and they delivered the items to him for 13 years! He had a fabulous memory and years later he could recall names of people who worked in the department store.

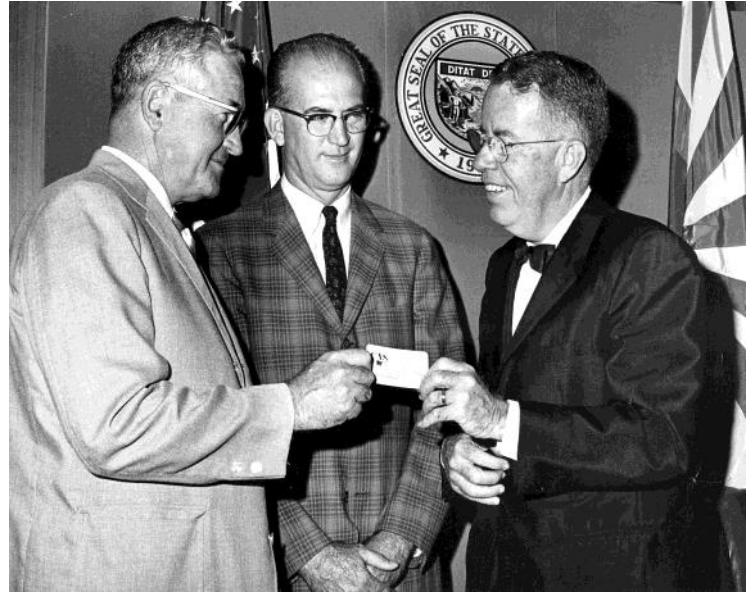


He built The Airline Restaurant on Western Avenue for Russell Stair. Then in 1949, he decided to build next door to the restaurant and Goodyear Hardware and Variety Store was opened for Christmas in 1950. (This building was recently refurbished and is now *Memories*, a museum for a "Walk through the Olden Daze!") Jim opened his real estate office in the back of the hardware store. A key to the fire truck hung right inside the door so the first volunteer to arrive when the siren blew was able to get the fire truck running. The truck was kept at the back of the old City Hall on Litchfield Road.

He built homes in this community and in Phoenix. He helped build the Methodist Church on Western Avenue in Avondale. His Christian faith was fore-most and evident in his business and social life. He built the original building for Raul and Teresa's Restaurant on Route 80 (now Route 85.) Built with concrete blocks and rebar inset in the blocks and concrete poured in the openings, Raul was trying to knock out a wall to enlarge the building and could not break through it! Jim told him that he built it to withstand the earthquakes.

In the late 1960's, the growing community needed goals and planning. While running Kings Department Store and building houses, Jim gathered together people of the community and asked them to be part of **The Westside Coordinating Council**. He listed areas that needed planning and leadership which included; education, transportation, water, religion, recreation, employment, flood control, art and culture, population, pollution, zoning & land use, sewer and medical. This was called the **"Comprehensive Master Plan."** The Executive Board was: J.L. King, Chairman; W.O. Tainter, Vice Chairman; R.S. Stevens, Secretary-Treasurer; H. Porter, H. Doran & L. Eaglin, Directors and S. H. Runyan was Executive Director. A new community needed a chamber of commerce, Rotary and other societies, schools and more.

Jim cleared and leveled hundreds of acres to grow cotton on what is now known as King Ranch. He also had cattle and horses. But, his favorite job was building. In 1964 he began building a home for his family on the side of Estrella Mountains. People thought he was crazy...there wasn't even a road leading to the property and he had to drive through the Gila River to get to it (when it was possible) or take a row boat. In 1965 he and Esther had an open house for friends to see the new home. So many people came that use of the bathrooms filled the septic tank and dirty water backed up into *the very modern sunken tub!* The master bedroom door was closed to further touring guests! No matter, Jim fell in love with the Estrellas when he was an Eagle Scout and assistant to Lattie Coor, Sr, the Scout Master, when they camped in these mountains. He said then; "This is where I want to live!"



Mrs. Monroe offered Jim 400 acres of her land for \$2500.00. The property is contiguous to his property. He wanted to buy the land but he had another plan...it would be perfect for the community to have a park. After many meetings, negotiations and struggles, it became Estrella Mountain Park and Golf Course. Jim and his young sons, Jim, Jr. and Ed, tied yellow ribbons to brush and trees to show where roads should be graded. Drivers of Caterpillar heavy equipment from the proving grounds in The White Tank Mountains donated their time and equipment. These are the roads still used today. He secured donations of trees, water, electricity, tables and benches. People love their park! Jim served on the Parks Commission for a number of years and the records he kept are on display at *Memories*.

The Boondockers, about 35 of them, were held annually on the King Ranch. Originally, it was just family and friends. Then Jim thought that Rotary should have this event to use for a fundraiser. This was a big success and eventually over 300 people showed up for the BBQ and Western Dance out in the boonies. A hayride took guests to the site where huge campfires were glowing in the moonlight.

Jim and his first wife, Esther, had four children: Rosemary (married Mike Harbushka), Jim Jr. (married Lisa Doubleday), Edward (married Loree Cochrane) and Wendy, (married Ayres Boyd).

He married Gloria in 2001 and they lived on the ranch. Always learning new things, at the age of 85 Jim and Gloria (72) took piano lessons. A cruise to Alaska, another of his goals, was cancelled due to kidney problems which eventually put him on dialysis. He passed away in 2006 after a full and happy life.

By Gloria King

Note: Photos show Jim King on the right in his Department Store, with A.J. Bayless in the middle and David Parenteau. The other photo has Jim King in the middle with Bill Tainter on the left and Gov. Jack Williams on the left. Mr. Tainter is holding CAS West tickets. CAS (Cultural Arts Society) was a precursor of our present West Valley Arts council.

H. S. “Casey” Abbott – Early Rancher

A rancher, yes, but so much more! He was determined to preserve the beauty of the area and worked diligently to preserve Camelback Mountain from commercial and residential development. He was the first chairman of the Maricopa County Planning and Zoning Commission which was created in 1949 and served on it until his death in 1962.

Born Harrison Scott Abbott on October 1, 1883, at Florence, Wisconsin, Casey earned his nickname in high school. A shortage of funds caused him to leave college after two years. His first job was as a reconnaissance engineer for a mining company in Goldfield, Nevada. He soon grew weary of the lonely, nomadic life and went to Los Angeles where he was given the opportunity to supervise the development of farm land in Baja California on a lease from the Mexican Government.

He lived in the nearby border town of Calexico, California and for the next seven years made the Mexican farming project very successful. He was elected Calexico’s mayor in 1921. It was there that he met Sarah Ellen “Sally” White and made her his wife. They had two children, John Scott and Sarah Ellen, but both died as infants.

In 1923 it appeared that the Mexican government was about to take over the Baja ranch so he moved to Gila Bend where land was being cultivated for the first time. After four years they moved once more to Phoenix where Casey managed ranches for the Babbitts.

The next move took the Abbotts to the Avondale Ranch where Casey leased 2,000 acres that prospered under his management. They lived in the ranch house for the fourteen years they were there.

Their last move took them to 117 Los Robles, Goodyear, a cozy home on a street full of shade trees. From there he continued to operate Abbott Ranches which included 150 acres near Roll, AZ and 850 acres in the Goodyear area.

When Maricopa County created the Maricopa County Planning and Zoning Commission, Casey was named the first chairman. While serving on the commission he saved Maricopa County from the blight and ugliness that has occurred in other fast-growing areas. The preservation of the beauty of the county was his passion. He worked with Jim King to get the Estrella Mountain area set aside for a regional park. The active recreational area of the park is named in his honor, and includes the various ramadas, playground, ball fields and the Nature Center. At the time the Park was first constructed there was no development south of MC 85 (Hwy 80) and there was no real concern about development in the area. However, he and Jim King’s foresight preserved the land for all to enjoy.



Centennial Trail Update

It truly is amazing! We scheduled two work days in February and both weekends were brimming with bad weather. February 2, was bitter cold and only one brave soul came to help with the raking. On the February 26, it rained and an intrepid group from Luke AFB braved the weather and began to spread the 175 tons of rock, but had to call it a day when they were quickly soaked to the skin and mud became a problem. So imagine my surprise when I went to the trail a week later to find that most of the rock had been spread! Wow! How did that happen?

During the winter months, Estrella Park has a number of RV'ers that call the Park their home. In exchange for a space to park their RV, these great people pitch in and do all kinds of labor for the Park. This particular week they spread our gravel for us. Now we have a nice trailhead that



begins at the parking lot of the Nature Center and extends to the area behind it. The Park crew has installed our new sign with the latest rendering of the Centennial Trail and announces that it is "Coming Soon!" This sign will be changed periodically to provide progress reports, announce work days and coming events.

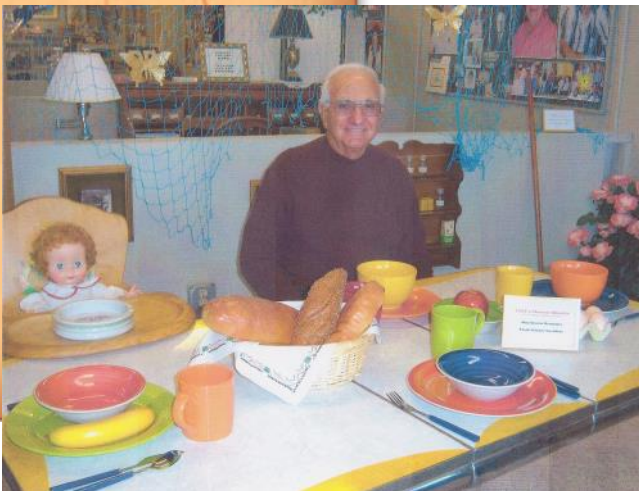
Our ASU Grad students continue to meet with the trail committee and work on renderings of the water feature and the eleven exhibit pads. An Estrella Foothills High School class is working on designing kiosks for each of the exhibit pads that will enhance and protect the disks designed by local high school art students in last summer's Gallery 37 program. And the trail committee continues to search out funding sources.

An Open House held March 15 & 16, allowed the supporters and the public to view the layout of the trail, celebrate the progress made by our tireless volunteers, and see the new designs made by

ASU graduate students from the Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts. The first tree was planted on the trail on March 15, and it was dedicated to the memory of Ray Shuey, who spent many hours working on the trail.

"Memories" are Made of This

Three Rivers Historical Society's February meeting changed venue and met in *Memories* at 116 E. Western Avenue in Goodyear. *Memories*, owned by Gloria King, widow of Jim King, Sr., is located in the former 1950s Goodyear Hardware and Variety Store. Gloria said, "I named it *Memories* because the old-timers who first saw it said, 'It sure brings back memories'." For sure, this is not a New York City type museum. Everything is out in the open. There are thousands of documents in the sorting process and hundreds of antiques and vintage collectibles to help you discover the past or to reminisce.



President, Sally Kiko, and volunteers were on hand at 2:00 PM for a tour before the 3 o'clock monthly meeting. Lenore Semmler, Wendy Neely, Halina Sowul, Bill and Lupe Bedoya were volunteers who greeted visitors and helped explain items on display.

Scott Solliday, Arizona historian for more than 26 years, presented an educational Power Point program. He showed pictures depicting the hardships and determination of pioneers in these parts! 3RHS plans to take his program to fourth graders to help educate and hopefully appreciate, what has been done for them to enjoy.

Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church loaned chairs for the more than 60 people who came to learn about our fascinating history. Respect for the past, prepared for the future!

By Gloria King

Perryville Drag Strip

During the 1950's many local teens rode bikes, hitch hiked, or even walked to get to the best show in town, the Perryville Drag Strip. The drag strip just north east of Yuma Rd. and Airport Rd., started life as a Luke Army Air Corp Auxiliary Air Strip during WWII. But during the '50s this air strip just west of Goodyear and one near Davis Monthan AFB became drag strips to accommodate the popular sport of drag racing.

The following story was sent to me by Al Field who grew up here.

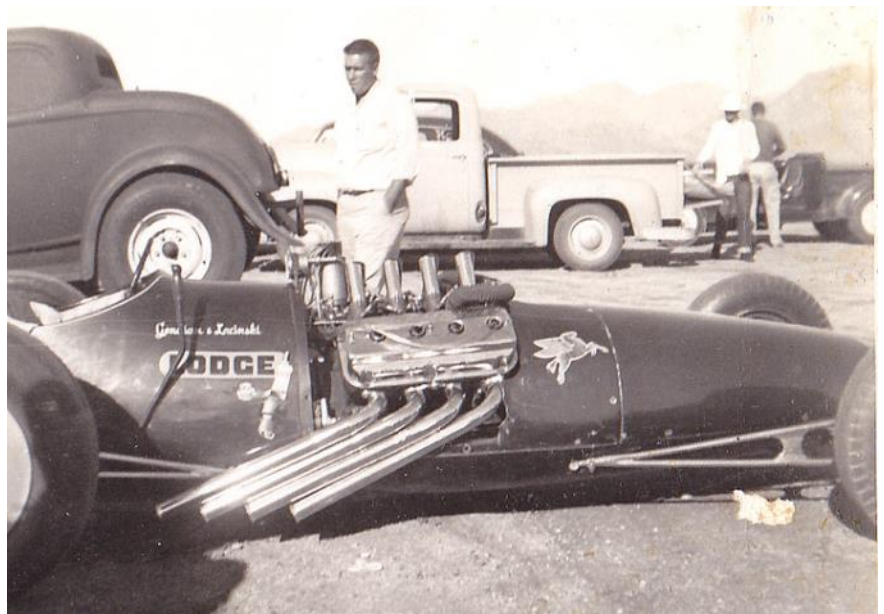
I've always loved cars. Vern Session let me hang around his Union 76 station at Central & Western because I was a friend of Bob Ames, the AZ Republic newspaper District Manager. I had a paper route working for Ames. Bob had a '53 Studebaker, the sporty coupe. He used the air-hose to blow the dust out of his car instead of vacuuming it.

When I discovered (around 1954) that there were drags scheduled every Sunday at the Luke Field AFB Auxiliary strip west of Perryville, I decided to see what they were like. Since I was not old enough to drive, I rode my bicycle. Back then it was quite a trip. The road, called Perryville Road back then, the westerly extension of Western Avenue, now referred to as Yuma Road, was a WPA concrete strip with quite a drop-off if you left the pavement. With all the traffic, I was forced to ride most of the way on the dirt, watching for the wayward car drifting off the pavement. Of course, the 9-mile trip took me past lots of cotton fields and desert, through Perryville, across the RID Canal, past Froggy Bottom and the girls there, and then north a mile to the drag strip. Along the ride, I endured horns, fire crackers, and other terms of endearment by the motorists.

Upon arrival at the track, a person could park their car along the strip and watch the cars as they raced by, roam around the pits or actually stand at the starting line behind the cars as they launched. The only thing separating the folks from the track was a rope fence. Eventually a guardrail barrier was installed. Being more mobile than most, I wander around to all features of the track. There were several slingshot dragsters, some with multiple engines. We usually rooted for the little Chevy motored cars to beat the big Chryslers. Of course there were the stock cars, too, which were really stock back then. Drivers would remove the air filters (air-cleaners back then since they were of the oil-bath variety) to get more air into the engines and remove some weight from the front of the car. Atlas Bucron tires were the hot set up then for the rears. They were made of almost pure butyl rubber. They performed like today's cheater slicks. If you were lucky you could get 5,000 miles on a set they were so soft. But they would stick like glue to the pavement. Later in life I sold them at a Chevron station where I worked nights and weekends.

I recall one time when a dragster lost control and flipped doing over 100 miles per hour. The driver, I believe his name was Simpson, was rushed to the hospital, in Phoenix of course, where I heard he lost a leg. I personally liked hanging out at the starting line where the motors were louder and the action was faster. There were no starting lights then; only a line where you pulled up to, and a guy about 50' in front of and between the cars. He had a green flag in one hand, would point the finger of his empty hand at each driver to get acknowledgement that they were ready to go, and then would wave the green flag as he jumped into the air to start the race. At the other end, someone with a walkie-talkie would send a message to the starting line letting them know who had won. As the process evolved, a set of lights were placed at the starting line and another at the finish line and ETs (elapsed times) were able to be calculated and winners officially recognized.

Some special things stand out in my memory. As I would ride to and from the strip on my bike, I would see W T Gladden (I had no clue what his name was at the time) in a baby blue 1956 Chevy, a 2-door 150 sedan, coming to and from the races. He always had this cute chick cuddling up to him. I later learned that she was one of my classmates, Nikki Hall, whose name W T eventually changed to Nikki Gladden. Another is the Cadillac powered Crosley that was stretched to accommodate the big engine. The car was driven to the strip, raced, and driven home by the owner.



As time passed and I got my license to drive, I attended more frequently. Dragsters became more powerful, stock cars became more than stock as the factories became aware of the interest in winning and other more professional tracks were built. The Money Oldsmobiles, the Woudenberg Wide-Track Pontiacs, along with the Cross-Ram Plymouths were some of the favorites in their day.

The Luke Field AFB Auxiliary strip was eventually closed to drag racing. The Beeline Dragway took its place in most racers hearts. The factories really got involved with altered-wheelbase cars, supercharges, etc., which evolved into today's Funny-cars which race weekly around the country today.

I still love cars and hope to have my 1956 Corvette back on the road in the near future.

Tale of Two Cities Parade

Did you spot Three Rivers Historical Society's entry in the Tale of Two Cities Parade on February 16? I hope so!

There we were, about mid-point in the parade. Lifetime members, JoAnn Gongaware and Ken Wood rode in a bright red Camaro driven by Rusty Maxwell. Estrella Mountain Car Club graciously provided us with a beautiful car to carry Ken and JoAnn and display our logo. Thanks to Rusty, the driver and owner of the car.

Thanks, too, to volunteers, Linda Arnold, Diane Fekete and JoAnn Gongaware for manning our booth during the festival. These events help get community awareness of Three Rivers Historical Society.



Wickenburg – Maricopa County's First Town

Henry Wickenburg, a German mineralogist, was prospecting in the hills above the Hassayampa River in 1863 when he discovered gold. While staking his claim, a vulture watched him from a nearby perch. The greatest gold discovery in Arizona was therefore named the Vulture Mine. The nearby town that sprang up to house and supply the miners was the first town in what is now Maricopa County. Located on the west bank of the Hassayampa River, Wickenburg, named for that lucky gold miner, officially received its name in 1864 and by 1866 was one of the largest cities in the Territory of Arizona.

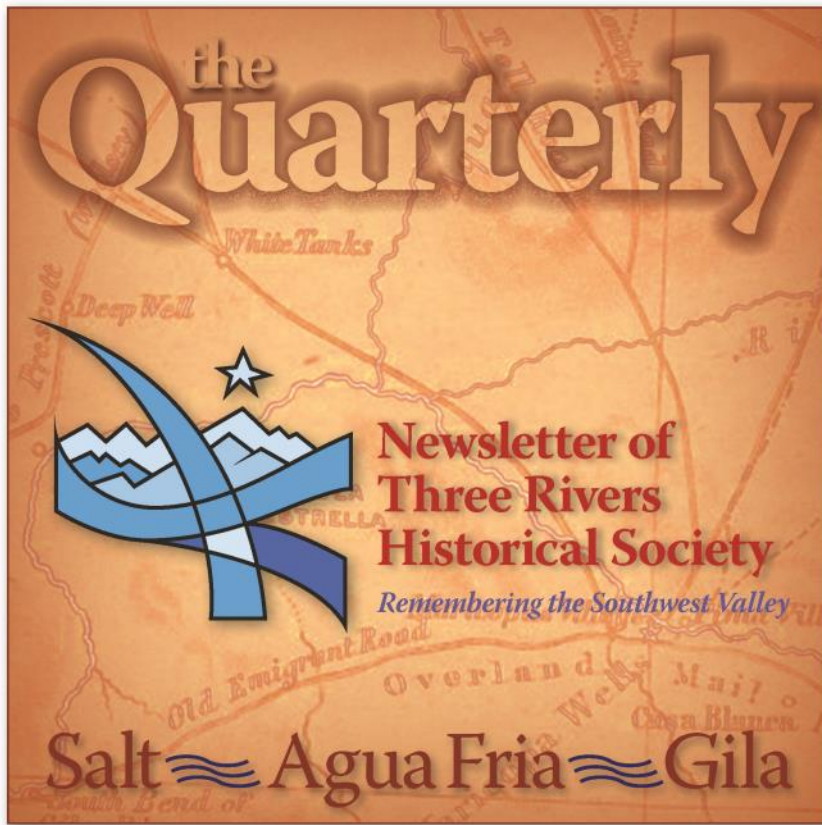
About that time, Jack Swilling was busy re-establishing the Hohokam canals to be used for irrigation in the Salt River Valley. He convinced Wickenburg to invest in the project which would lower the food and forage prices.



In 1867, Henry Wickenburg developed the 54-mile road that connected Wickenburg and Phoenix naming it the Vulture Road. He also brought men and supplies to help with the building of the canals.

In 1909, the Vulture Road became Grand Avenue with the tracks of the Santa Fe Railroad running beside it adding another connection between the two towns. Vulture mine, once the most productive gold mine in Arizona history, closed for good in the mid-1940s.

Source: *Arizona Highways*, June 1974



Yes, I want to join Three Rivers Historical Society!

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student \$5* | <input type="checkbox"/> Single \$15* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$25* | <input type="checkbox"/> Business/Professional \$45* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contributor \$100* | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor \$250* |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifetime \$500 | * <i>Yearly Fee</i> |

Join _____ Renew _____ Call me to volunteer _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ (Evening) _____

Cell _____ e-mail _____

Check enclosed in the amount of \$ _____

A receipt will be issued to you.

Make out your check and mail to:

Three Rivers Historical Society,
P.O. Box 7251, Goodyear, AZ 85338

Three Rivers Historical Society is a 501 (c) 3
non-profit organization



Three Rivers Historical Society

Remembering the Southwest Valley

P.O. Box 7251, Goodyear, AZ 85338

Sally Kiko, President

JoAnn Gongaware, 1st V.P.

Ken Wood, 2nd V.P.

Wendy Neely, Secretary

David Meese, Treasurer

Frank Ross, Past President

Mark Pelletier, Lenore Semmler

The Quarterly

Editor: Sally Kiko

Produced and Printed by

BMD Business Services

3RHS Meetings

We meet on the third Tuesday of each month at 3pm, at Goodyear City Hall, 190 North Litchfield Road, Suite 117, Goodyear, Arizona. Notices of date, location and guest speaker are e-mailed. Be sure we have your correct address. E-mail Sally at: kskiko@cox.net