

# The Quarterly

Remembering the Southwest Valley

Three Rivers Historical Society

Salt • Agua Fria • Gila

## The Sunday Drive

Being sidelined by the Covid-19 outbreak, just like everyone else, and tired of looking at these four walls, the old-fashioned Sunday drive came to mind. Did your family do that, too? Back then, most people still considered Sunday as a day of rest and so rather than tackle cleaning the garage or some other undesirable task, we went for Sunday drives.

The family members climbed into the car amid discussion about where to go, what to see. Sometimes it was to check out something new being built as far away as Phoenix or Glendale. But in the spring, it often ended up in one of two places, either the Japanese flower gardens along Baseline Rd. or a tour of the desert in search of wildflowers.

The Japanese flower gardens were found along Baseline Rd. from 48th to 32nd Streets. They began when the Japanese were released from the internment camps of WWII. They left the camp with few possessions having lost their homes and farms during their confinement. Some returned to Phoenix and found land near South Mountain that most folks passed up because of the rocky condition of the soil. At that time non-citizens were barred from owning property so most tilled soil they leased. These families



worked hard to clear the rocks and established irrigation. They found that the land was fertile. They were able to farm again. They initially grew vegetables, a few planted flowers. The flowers became a valuable crop and a tourist attraction.

I can remember turning onto Baseline Rd. anticipating the

wonderful sight of fields full of carefully tended rows of different colors of a flower called stock or Matthiola Incana. Sometimes the sweet aroma would assail your senses before you could see them. The fields looked like a rainbow of color. There would be 4-5 rows of white, then yellow, pink, lavender and purple. Each of the farms had a stand where you could buy flowers. Many churches had big arrangements of stock for their Easter services; many spring brides had stock in their bouquets.

As the area attracted more visitors, the farmers added other merchandise for the tourists. The Japanese American flower growers credited the microclimate at the foot of South Mountain for their success. The mountain created a down draft that kept the warm air on the ground to protect the valuable crops. By the 1980s business began to fade. The farmers could not compete with the booming flower industry in South America. Most farmers began selling their land to home developers.

Our trip to the desert in search of wildflowers was not as predictable. The display of wildflowers depended on the amount of winter rain we received. Some years we were lucky to find a meager display in some protected canyons; other years a whole hillside would be blanketed in the yellow orange of the poppies. Good old brittlebush seems to bloom no matter how dry the winter has been so the trip was not a complete waste of time. A stop along the way for an ice cream cone signaled the close of a perfect day!



## 3 Rivers Mourns

It has been a tough spring so far. We have lost two treasured members: **Mary Jo McCully** and **Ron Lord**.

Mary Jo McCully had lived in Goodyear nearly forever. Born in Wichita, TX, she attended Kilgore College and became a charter member of the Kilgore Rangerettes, a precision dance team. She came to this area to work as a riveter at Goodyear Aircraft during the War. She was the oldest remaining "Rosie the Riveter" in the local chapter. After Goodyear Aircraft closed in 1946, she worked at the Poston Japanese Internment Camp. That is where she met her husband, Max. Her job at Poston was to do the needed work to close it down. Later she worked as a floral designer at White Shears Florist, often asking her kids to help when it was busy. Mary Jo was our most faithful member of Three Rivers Historical Society. She, her son, Perry and wife, Betty Ann, were at almost every meeting.

A few days later Ron Lord died.

We had the pleasure of hosting Ron as a guest speaker in November, 2019. He entertained us with his stories of his service as a fighter pilot in the Air Force. But always looking for new challenges, he also flew for the Army and the Navy during his long career serving his country. He told of so many "close calls" in his fighter jet: sometimes returning with damage to his plane but surviving unscathed himself. He was so animated in telling his story, you knew he loved every minute of it! He told how wonderful his wife and kids were supporting him throughout his whole career. He also talked of tours at the Pentagon, in Bonn, Germany and the Netherlands with his wife, Georgia, by his side.

In 1966, the Lords made Goodyear their new home. They quickly made friends and became active in the community of Pebble Creek and the City of Goodyear. When Georgia became a council member, and then the mayor of Goodyear, Ron was happy to be the "First Dude" and support her new career.



Col Ron Lord

Ron never met a stranger that did not quickly become a friend. He will be missed by all.

## Avondale's Doctor

Sally Kiko

**Dr. James Martin** was an osteopathic physician. He came to Avondale in 1947 to take care of the families that had settled in this area.

Doctor Martin was born in Belfast, Ireland, in 1914. His family emigrated first to Canada and then to the United States in 1922. The whole family received U.S. citizenship in 1929. He attended college in Michigan. He met his wife, Doris, who was from Tennessee, in 1939; they married in 1942 while he was still in medical school.

After completing his residency, he went to California to practice medicine, but decided to start a family medicine practice in Avondale, AZ, arriving in 1947. He had wanted to start a practice in a growing community that needed a doctor. Dr. Ralph Penn, after caring for the families in Litchfield Park, came to Avondale in the early 1940's. I have been unable to find when he left or died.



In those early days, many families struggled to make ends meet and Dr. Martin was known to accept produce or eggs in exchange for his services. Avondale had just incorporated in 1946 and the growing town was happy to welcome him.

His first office was in his home near Dysart Rd. and Western Ave. In 1951, he built an office on Western Ave. across from Avondale School and west of the Community Church. Avondale was quick to accept Dr. Martin, who was always available to treat their illnesses, do sports physicals and serve the community. It was here that he and Doris raised their children: Dixie, Pat and Terry. He served on the Chamber of Commerce and was an active member of the Rotary Club.

When Agua Fria High Union High School opened, he volunteered his services as the team doctor and served for over 20 years. He was also one of the early FAA certified physicians in Arizona, certified to do physical examinations for pilots.

Over the years, Dr. Martin became a fixture of the Avondale/Goodyear communities. "Doc" Martin was both friend and physician to many people.

My thanks to **Paul Faith**, **Dr. Bob McMillan** and **Frank Ross** for helping me with information about the early doctors in the area.

# 3RHS Confers Honorary Lifetime Membership

On February 18, 2020, at our monthly meeting, Three Rivers Historical Society conferred Honorary Lifetime Membership to **D. J. Burton**, Development Manager of Flite Center. The organization wanted to acknowledge his support of our mission.

From our first time meeting him we were impressed with his love for the history of the property he manages, the former Goodyear Aircraft. He continues to discover pieces of history as he refurbishes the buildings. Because of the importance of Goodyear Aircraft's contributions during WWII and their and Lockheed Martin's later innovations that led to space exploration, he takes care to preserve the integrity of the buildings. He knows how important this property is in the history of Goodyear and the West Valley.

D.J. hosted one of our meetings and presented his plans for the future of the campus. He then offered us space in the basement of his building to store our archives. This was a huge gift as we were paying monthly rent for three storage units. He even sent his men to help us move.

It was only fitting that we honor him for his generosity and support. Our sincere thanks, D.J.



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## Francis W. Donnell

This is a name you may not have heard of in the history of Goodyear; but as an amateur historian he is a great friend of mine! I can't find any information on his early years, prior to coming to Goodyear Aircraft in Goodyear, AZ, but it is probably safe to say that he came from the company's Akron plant. I know that one of his positions at Goodyear was Director of Public Relations.

He generously left us a great document entitled, "History of the Arizona Division of the Goodyear Aircraft Corporation, Litchfield Park, Arizona, 1941 to 1953". This document covers the start of the Arizona plant, the establishment of the Naval Air Facility Litchfield and the closing of the plant following the end of the War. It also recounts how Goodyear purchased the plant in 1949, assembled airship envelopes and the various other contracts the company acquired. It tells about the flood of 1951, the flight test program, research projects, plastics, laminates and fuel tanks.

Another legacy he left us was what he and a committee of early residents did to improve the lives of those pioneers who left the city of Akron behind and settled here in the desert with very few amenities. These volunteers met monthly and worked to get improved mail service before Goodyear had a post office, home delivery of milk, established a teen club, obtain street signs, sponsored a volunteer fire department, created Goodyear's first logo and established the boundaries of the town.

This committee also established a library. The library was in the community building in Avondale Circle and was run by volunteers. It was sponsored by Goodyear Aircraft and when Goodyear Aircraft closed, so did the library. In 1947, the Avondale Women's Club reopened the library and it continued to be run by volunteers under their sponsorship for many years. The library eventually became Avondale's City Library.

This committee was the moving force in getting Goodyear incorporated. They were the ones who chose the name , Goodyear. Mr. Donnell also served on the town council in 1954.

Francis Donnell is an unsung hero in the history of the city of Goodyear.



Goodyear City Council 1954  
Francis Donnell bottom far right

# Trinidad Swilling - Mother of Phoenix

Jack Swilling is known as the Father of Phoenix. Trinidad was Jack's wife and played a significant role in Arizona history. An article in the Arizona Republic last September about the Mother of Phoenix piqued my interest.

Trinidad Mejia Escalante was born on April 15, 1849, in Hermosillo, Mexico. Her parents were Ignatus Mejia and Petra Escalante; her grandfather was a Spaniard who moved to Mexico during the Spanish Colonial period. Arizona was part of Mexico until the end of the Mexican American War in 1848. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and the 1853 Gadsden Purchase created new boundaries. The Mexicans living within the boundaries of the new United States territory became American citizens, including the relatives of Escalante in Tucson.

Trinidad's father died when she was 15 years old. She and her mother moved to Tucson to be with their relatives. At age 17, she met Jack Swilling. At the time he boasted to friends that he was going to marry her. They eventually became better acquainted and fell in love. They wanted to get married, but Trinidad's mother objected because of the age difference; she was 17 and he was 34. They lived together until 1864 when Father Aloysius M. Bosco came to Tucson's St Augustine's Cathedral to baptize children and confirm Catholic marriages. Trinidad and Jack officially became man and wife. There were few white women in the Arizona Territory, and it was common for white men to marry Mexican or Native American women. The Swillings had seven children: Georgia, 1865, Matilda, 1867, Leila, 1871, Elizabeth, 1873, Berry, 1874, Matilda Adeline, 1876, and John William, Jr., 1878.

The Swilling family moved to Yavapai County and had a farm at Walnut Grove. They lived there a year and then moved to Wickenburg where they had a farm close to the Hassayampa River. Mrs. Swilling's mother lived with them until her death in 1865. On November 11, 1867, Mr. Swilling founded the Swilling Irrigating and Canal Company in Wickenburg.

Their next place of residence was in the Salt River Valley near where Black Canyon City is now. Mr. Swilling built a small rock home. Here they befriended a family that had become stranded. They helped them get back on their feet. Both families, the Loughs and the Swillings moved to the Phoenix townsite. Trinidad was the first Mexican woman and Mrs. Lough was the first white woman in Phoenix.

In Phoenix, the Swilling Irrigating and Canal Company had 16 investors which included Phillip Darrell "Lord" Duppa and Bryan Phillips. With Mexican labor, they dug an extensive canal system to provide a dependable water supply to the area using the remains of many of the Hohokam's early canals.

The Swillings claimed 160 acres near 32nd Street and Van Buren. They had a farm with an orchard and a vineyard. They prospered and built a 10-room house which also served as a community meeting place. In their home, the first Catholic Mass was held in Phoenix. Fr. Edward Gerard of Florence often came

to Phoenix by wagon to hold Catholic services at their home.

Jack Swilling later established a mill and wanted to establish a new town named Pumpkinville near the mill. As his settlement grew, a debate began over which of the two sites, his or a newly founded site called the Salt River Valley Town Association about a mile to the west, was to be Phoenix. Economic considerations favored the 320-acre plot of land in what became downtown Phoenix. Swilling conceded and finally sided with those wanting the westerly townsite.

It is thought that Lord Duppa proposed the name of Phoenix because of the rebirth of the canals, rebuilt on the site of the Hohokam earlier canals that dated back to the 700-1400 AD. This awarded the title of Father of Phoenix and Mother of Phoenix to the Swillings. In 1868, Trinidad founded the first pioneer home in the Salt River Valley.

Jack Swilling continued prospecting in the Bradshaw Mountains. The family moved to Gillett where they owned a few businesses, one of them a real estate company. Gillett is now a ghost town but is located about a mile from the current Lake Pleasant Park on the Agua Fria River. They later moved back to Black Canyon City. He built an irrigation ditch from the Agua Fria River to provide water he needed to raise cattle. The house became a stage stop for those who traveled from Prescott to Phoenix.

for the robbing of a stagecoach near Wickenburg and the shooting death of six men. He was taken to the Yuma Territorial Prison. Much of his adult life he had mixed liquor and narcotics to relieve the pain caused by old injuries. The terrible conditions at the jail and August heat made his condition worst and he was released to the Hodges family, friends of the Swilling family. He died in their home. He was buried in the Yuma Cemetery. The real culprits were later found, proving his innocence.

After Jack's death, Trinidad spent a few months in Gillett before she returned to Phoenix. She was financially destitute when she arrived. She found work as a seamstress to support her family. She met Henry Schumaker, a German immigrant, and married him on September 28, 1887. Together they had three children. Mr. Schumaker committed suicide in March 1896.

Trinidad died in her home on December 27, 1925. Her funeral was held in Saint Mary's Church and she was buried in St. Francis Cemetery.

In 1931, the Maricopa Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, dedicated a fountain to the memory of Jack and Trinidad Swilling. The fountain stands in the park directly in front of the courthouse building in Phoenix. The inscription on the bronze plaque reads, "In memory of Lieutenant Jack W. Swilling, 1831-1878, who built the first modern irrigation ditch and Trinidad, his wife, 1850-1925, who established in 1868 the first pioneer home in the Salt River Valley".



# The History of Toilet Paper

The recent Covid-19 virus and the run on toilet paper became the subject of many jokes and cartoons. But, did you ever wonder how it all began?

Back in the caveman days, they used whatever was handy: leaves, grass or corn cobs. Ancient Romans used a sponge on a stick that sat in a bucket of salt water and was shared by all. As time marched on, Americans were thrifty and were into re-purposing; they used the *Sears & Roebuck catalog* and *The Old Farmer's Almanac*. In fact, the Almanacs from the 1800's came with a hole in the corner so it could easily be hung up in the outhouse.



1939 Magazine Ad

Specific paper for use in the toilet dates to medieval China. By 1857, a commercially packaged toilet paper was made by **Joseph Gayetty**. It was sold as a medical product and claimed to prevent hemorrhoids. It was unsuccessful because the price was too high to be practical.

Perforated rolls like what we use today were patented in 1871 by **Zeth Wheeler**. The Scott brand made rolls of toilet paper popular beginning in 1890 because it was sold to hotels and drug stores. People were reluctant to buy it because Americans at that time, were embarrassed by their own bodily functions. It should be noted that until the 1930's, toilet paper could be uncomfortable because it contained occasional splinters!

Flush toilets moved inside the homes in the late 1800's and early 1900's. Americans then had to deal with their embarrassment to prevent clogs and damage to pipes. Another advancement came when the Hoberg Paper Company introduced **Charmin**. Because they gave it a feminine logo and advertised the softness, it was extremely successful. Toilet paper became a necessity rather than a luxury.

Finally, do you remember when colored toilet paper was the rage in the '50's? In the 1980's doctors expressed concern about the effects of the dye on your skin; environmental concerns were raised about the long-term effect of the dyes used to color the paper. We rather quickly returned to the standard white tissues.



**Avondale Post Office, 1946.**

The Avondale Post office by 1946, had moved from the inside of Coldwater Mercantile to a new addition on the west side of the building. This is where both Avondale and Goodyear residents received their mail until the Goodyear Post Office opened in 1944.



**Avondale's First Mayor**

Avondale's first mayor, **Dorsey Chisum**, is pictured here receiving congratulations from **Senator MacFarland**. **Russ Brinker** look on.



**Avondale Fire Station No. 1**

To house the fire trucks, equipment, and firefighters, the city constructed Station One, located at the southwest corner of Western Avenue and 6th Street.



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Three Rivers Society Meetings  
We meet on the third Tuesday of each month at 5pm.  
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