



Vol. No 14 Issue No. 3, July-August-September 2017 \* <http://threerivershistoricalsocietyaz.org>

Salt  Agua Fria  Gila  
Three Rivers Historical Society

## 3RHS Ice Cream Social and Program

I sure hope you didn't miss this event! What fun. We had ice cream with a choice of toppings that tasted so good. We were in the Skyway Church and had a lovely room with tables and chairs that encouraged conversation.

Many people were visiting; catching up with old friends and meeting new ones.

We then moved into the Sanctuary and Pastor Greg introduced the guests he would interview. They were his mother, Rose Brown, Lila Schneider, Pat and Dora Aragon. The Brown and Aragon families had moved to



the area in 1928 so their memories were of an earlier time when families knew what hard work was, not only in farming but in housekeeping. They also knew how to celebrate and have fun.

Pastor Greg quickly set our "pioneers" at ease and they began telling us how different things were back then. A question or two would prompt memories and the stories flowed. At the end, the audience was encouraged to ask

questions or make comments.

Some added their own memories. Everyone enjoyed the evening.

Lila brought an enlarged and framed photo of Avondale taken in about 1936. She donated the wonderful photo to the Three Rivers Historical Society.

Thanks to Pastor Greg and Skyway Church for hosting us for a delightful event.



## An Immigrant Story

In the 1880's, a ship from England arrived in America carrying my great-grandfather, Charles Parsons. The ship docked in Maine. He married and his wife gave birth to a son. During the Civil War, he joined the Union Army as an artilleryman and was part of the Maine Regulars. He was wounded in several battles and suffered greatly. At war's end, he made his way back to Maine. The war had changed him and eventually his marriage dissolved. He ended his life in the soldier's home in Orono, Maine.

His wife remarried a man named Ball who wished to adopt the young boy. The boy was teased about the last name, Ball, and ran away from home. This boy, known as Herbert Loring Parsons, grew up and boarded a "school ship" and became a cabin boy in the Merchant Marines.

Meanwhile, another immigrant named Frank Bensburg, came to America by way of Ellis Island, from Frankfurt on Mein, Germany. He was a barber in Maine but later relocated to the Bronx, New York, where he also had a barber shop. He married and raised a family above the shop. He and his wife had seven children; the youngest, a boy, was named Walter.

Herbert Parsons sailed all over the world and after twenty years, he returned to the States, settling in New York. He drove a horse car in the city and befriended Mr. Banger, who worked for the New York City Water Department. Charles fell in love with Mr. Banger's young daughter, Theresa. They married and had seven children. Charles became a motorman on the new subway system called the IRT. One of Charles and Theresa's daughters was named Grace. She met and married young Walter Bensburg in 1928.

The next year the stock market crashed and times were hard for everyone in America. Walter worked for Grumman Aircraft during World War II. Grace and Walter had three daughters. Lenore, the oldest tells this story. After the war, many Grumman workers were laid off, including Walter. He had difficulty finding another job. Grace's sister, Melva, had married a sailor who was stationed at Litchfield Naval Air Facility. She wrote and told them that there were jobs in Goodyear, Arizona. Walter's family moved to Arizona and were able to find a small apartment in the Avondale Circle, housing built for military and defense workers. The small apartments were pretty crowded, but there were lots of children to play with and it was a short walk to school. The weather was hot and we only had "swamp" coolers, but Grace's arthritis gradually improved. She found work as a maid at the Wigwam and Walter worked sweeping out the Avon Theater and selling soft-serve ice cream there. The Avon Theater in Avondale screened two movies, a newsreel, a cartoon and a serial every Saturday for twenty-five cents!

Eventually, Walter was employed at the Navy base as a dispatcher, working until he was seventy. Grace worked for Jim King in his store on Western Avenue. In the early '50's, the Bensburgs bought a lot on Kinderman Drive in Avondale and Walter built a small three bedroom home of cement blocks. In 1957, they moved in and now we enjoyed a short walk to high school.

About that time, the Lutheran families in the area formed a congregation that met in the Boy Scout Lodge on Litchfield Road, until they were able to build Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church at 918 S. Litchfield Road. Their daughter, Lenore, married in the church in 1959.

Walter and Grace lived at 323 Kinderman Drive until the 1980's when they relocated to Good Shepherd Lutheran Home.

By Lenore Bensburg Semmler

## **The Salt and Verde Rivers**

The Salt River is a stream that is about 200 miles long and is the largest tributary of the Gila River. It is formed by the confluence of the White and Black Rivers in the White Mountains. These rivers drain the region between the Mogollon Rim and the Natanes Mountains and Plateau. Tributaries of the Salt River also drain the Matazal and Sierra Ancha Mountains. The Salt and Black Rivers form the boundary between the Fort Apache Indian Reservation and the San Carlos Apache Indian Preservation. Below the confluence of the Black and White Rivers are salt banks which raised the salinity of the river providing an apt name for the river. The Salt River has a number of dams that help protect the Valley from flooding and store water for municipal and agriculture use. The dams are the Theodore Roosevelt Dam, Horse Mesa Dam, Mormon Flats Dam and Stewart Mountain Dam. The reservoirs are a part of the Salt River Project and provide water used by the Phoenix Metropolitan area.

The Verde River is the largest tributary of the Salt. It begins in Yavapai County and is fed by Big Chino Wash and Williamson Valley Wash and continues for 125 miles until it joins the Salt River near Fountain Hills. The Verde has two dams and reservoirs, Horseshoe and Bartlett.

In 1984, portions of the Verde were declared Wild and Scenic. The scenic portion extended from Beasley Flats to the northern boundary of the Matazal Wilderness. The wild portion ran through the Matazal Wilderness to the mouth of Red Creek. In 1986, a portion was designated a Critical Natural Resource; the section from Clarkdale to the Bridgeport State Route 89A bridge. It is now part of the Arizona State Parks called the Verde River Greenway State Natural Area.

Below the confluence of the Verde River lies the Stewart Mountain Dam which forms Saguaro Lake. The final dam on the Salt is the Granite Reef Diversion Dam. This dam diverts the remaining water to the Arizona Canal and the Southern Canal. This dam can also allow release of water after winters that experience heavy rain and snow fall.

The Salt converges with the Gila River near Monument Hill at the south end of Avondale Boulevard. The Salt River, with the exception of Tempe Lake is usually dry below the diversion dam, as is the Gila River.

## **Welcome New Lifetime Member**

Welcome new lifetime member, Ailene Hardesty. She has been a member for years, but joined us as a lifetime member last month. Thank you!

Thanks, too, to the City of Goodyear who renewed their business/professional membership.



## Goodyear Incorporates



Many newcomers wonder why the interwoven cities of Avondale and Goodyear are not one city. Who would think that there would be intrigue and dark of night antics involved in the incorporation of a town of 1250 residents? That is part of the story of Goodyear, Arizona's, incorporation and the "rest of the story".

The towns of Goodyear and Avondale had existed side-by-side for about five years. Avondale, formerly known as Coldwater, could trace its beginnings back to the 1880's when it was a stagecoach stop. Avondale was a town with rural roots. The early settlers were homesteaders and the majority of the businesses supported the farming community. Goodyear was a relative newcomer; the first inhabitants arrived in 1941, attracted by a new defense installation, Goodyear Aircraft Corporation and soon after, Litchfield Naval Air Facility. Most of these newcomers were from Akron, Ohio, and transferred here to do the engineering and management jobs for Goodyear Aircraft.

In early 1946, the residents of both towns began circulating petitions for incorporation; some felt that combining towns made a lot of sense. Goodyear Aircraft was the largest industry in the area and would be a good tax base to give a new town a sizeable assessed valuation. Goodyear Aircraft lawyers could see no advantage to being part of either community. An important fact about Goodyear in 1946 was that most of the residents worked for either Goodyear Aircraft Corporation or Southwest Cotton Company (Goodyear Farms). Both companies were owned by Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company. This made Goodyear a "company" town. Petitions were circulated quickly, reportedly on a weekend and at night, and taken to the Board of Supervisors. Goodyear was incorporated on November 19, 1946. At that time Goodyear could boast of 151 single-family homes, 250 apartments, twenty-five Wingfoot homes, a trailer park, and a very limited business district.

Many have speculated about why Goodyear leaders moved so quickly, beating Avondale to the punch. Was it to save Goodyear Aircraft Corporation from being part of the tax base for a combined community? Was it socioeconomics; were there racial considerations? In 1946, Goodyear was made up of new housing areas with paved streets and Avondale's streets were still largely unpaved.

Goodyear's town council was appointed by the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors. The appointed councilmen were Perry Burdick, Henry Raymond, William Killip, James Nesbit, and

(continued from pg 4)

Cecil Palmateer. The first order of business for the new council was to elect a mayor from within their ranks. William Killip became the first mayor. The council met in the Boy Scout Lodge until 1948, when the new Town Hall was completed.

Avondale incorporated on December 16, 1946. Their first town council consisted of Dorsey Chisum (Mayor), Fred Riley, Albert Rex, C. M. Summers, J. H. Shackeford, Thomas Aragon, and G. T. Ross.

Seventy-one years later, the large industry that was Goodyear Aircraft and now houses a remnant of Lockheed Martin, remains a county island that doesn't pay municipal tax to either city.

## **Arizona's Trouble with Governors**

Arizona has a long history of chief executives who have created angst among the voters, embroiled political party members and contended with a hostile press.

It all began when Arizona was a territory. In 1863, President Lincoln appointed John Gurley, an Ohioan, as the territory's first governor. He died before assuming office. John Goodwin was appointed to replace him, but he stayed only long enough to dislike the rough citizens and the capitol building made of un-chinked logs and a dirt floor. He decided to run for territorial delegate and return to a more civilized Washington, D.C. Third governor Richard McCormick incurred the fury of Prescottians by relocating the capital to Tucson.

John C. Fremont, also known as the Pathfinder, also angered the territorial citizens because he spent most of his time back East promoting a number of mining schemes. He was removed from office in 1882.

Conrad Zulick, the first Democrat to be governor, took office under very unusual circumstances. Zulick, a lawyer, was under lock and key in the Mexican town of Nacorazi when appointed. Mr. Donovan, of Cochise County was sent across the border to rescue him. Donovan rode into town at night and found the guards all asleep. Zulick was smuggled out the back door and arrived in Tombstone to a cheering crowd.

The election of 1916 gave Arizona, now a state, two governors! George Hunt, the incumbent, and challenger Tom Campbell both claimed the victory. Campbell out-pollied Hunt by 30 votes. Campbell was inaugurated; Hunt demanded a recount. Hunt continued to occupy the governor's office while Campbell ran the state out of his kitchen. The state treasurer and auditor, both Democrats, refused to honor checks and claims approved by Campbell. Both men gave the State of the State address. Superior Court Judge Rawghlie Stanford ruled that Campbell was the winner. Hunt appealed and in December 1917 was declared the winner. The crux of the matter was that many Democrats marked an "X" choosing to vote a straight ticket, but cast their vote for Campbell. Their intent was to vote for all Democrats except Campbell. The court voided all those ballots and that gave Hunt the victory. Campbell, who had to return the governor's pay that he had received, went on to serve two terms as governor. Hunt was elected governor seven times.



Fast forward to the 1970's and '80's and we find Evan Mecham, an ultra-conservative who ran for governor in 1974, 1978 and 1982. In 1986 he finally won and promptly got himself in deep trouble. In one of his first acts he rescinded Martin Luther King Day. He went on to offend women, Asians, Jews and Hispanics. By November, 1987, citizens had collected enough signatures to force a recall election. But Mecham was indicted on six felony counts related to a \$350,000 campaign loan before the recall election took place. After two weeks of hearings, the House voted 46 to 14 to impeach him. The Senate found Mecham guilty and forced him to step down, the first time in 59 years that a United States governor had been impeached. Rose Mofford served out the remainder of Mecham's term.

J. Fife Symington was Rose Mofford's successor. Symington was a retired Air Force officer and real estate developer. His economic policies brought growth to Arizona. While Arizona thrived, Symington's personal fortunes took a dive. Shortly after beginning his second term as governor, he was forced to declare personal bankruptcy. In 1996, federal officials served him with a 21 count criminal indictment. Convicted on seven counts, he resigned and was sentenced to prison. His conviction was later overturned on appeal and President Clinton granted Symington a Presidential pardon. Jan Hull finished Symington's term.

Arizona has certainly had more than its share of political intrigue. As Will Roger's said, "There's no trick to being a humorist when you have the entire government working for you."

Source: "Arizoniana, Stories From Old Arizona" by Marshall Trimble.

## **Fall Yard Sale – Need Your Donations**



Three Rivers will be holding a Yard Sale in October to raise funds for the organization. We will need help on the day of the sale, but more importantly, we need you to donate things that you no longer need. A yard sale is only profitable if we have a wide variety of goods to sell. As you clean closets, drawers, garages; think of us. Set aside good, usable items and as we get closer to the date will let you know when and where to bring your items.

## Letters to the Editor

The Clothesline story in an earlier issue struck a chord with many readers.

“Loved your article on clotheslines! Brought back so many memories of my Mom hanging clothes behind our house on Cotton Lane. She would be out back rain or shine hanging those clothes with her head tied up in a bandana. When we were teenagers it was very important (we thought) to have nicely creased Levis to wear. We had those metal contraptions to place in the pants when they were wet and hang them on the line. They worked pretty well but would still press them to be sure they were “just right.” Dolores “got to” press mine for me when I went off to ASU. I’m sure I was called a few choice names when she was ironing!”

Larry Baker

“...hanging clothes on a line. A big time tradition my mom taught me. I still remember coming home from college (GCCanyon) then, and on a Sunday she had to put clothes on the line...and boy was she upset. ...I just wanted to tell you, *The Quarterly* was outstanding. Really a great memory edition.”

Verlyne Meck

## Up-Coming Events

We are excited about the programs we have scheduled for our return in the fall:

September 19<sup>th</sup> – Brent McKeand of the Sun City Museum will be our guest speaker. He will be talking about Del Webb, prominent builder in the West Valley.

October 17<sup>th</sup> – Adam Stoffel will be bringing the restored 1942 Chevy Pumper Truck that was the first fire truck purchased by Goodyear. He will talk about the truck’s history and the restoration of the truck.

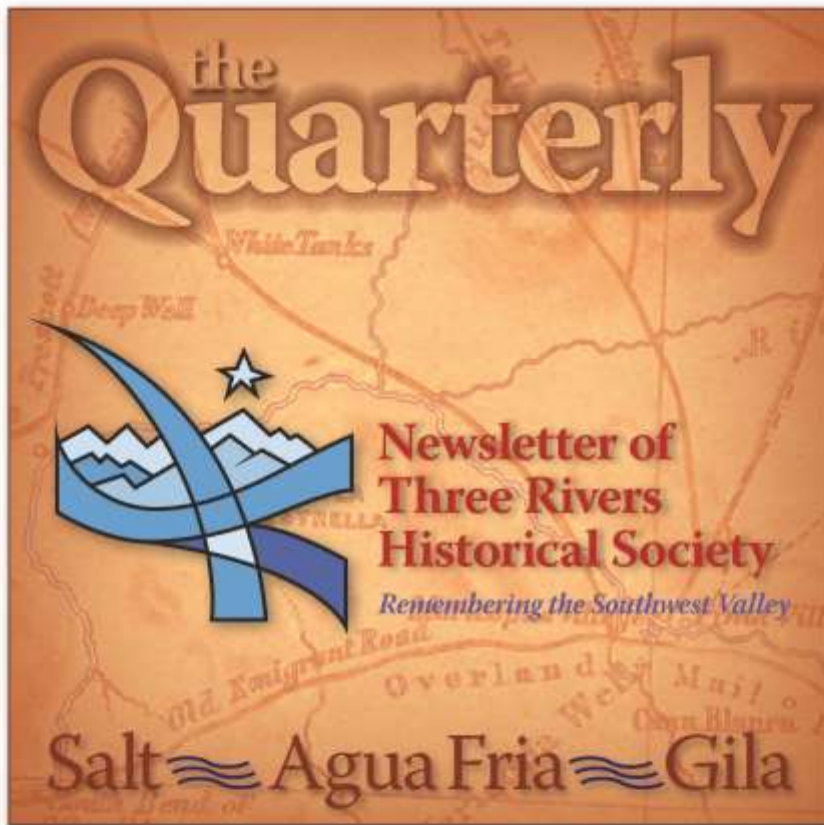
**Note: No meetings July and August!**

## Correction

I must apologize to Ted Wootton. He provided much of the information for the Perryville article in the last issue. I left out a “t” in his last name. Thanks again, Ted for sharing your history with us.

Sally Kiko





## 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     | * Yearly Fee   |

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

*David Meese, President*

*Mark Pelletier, 1st V.P., Assistant Treasurer*

*Laura Kaino, 2nd V.P.*

*Sally Kiko, Secretary*

*Betty Lynch, Treasurer*

### Board Members

*Joann Gongaware, Diane Fekete, Wendy Neely, Al Field,  
David Meese*

### *The Quarterly*

**Editors: Sally Kiko and Diane Fekete**

**Produced and Printed by**

**BMD Printing & Business Services**

### *3RHS Meetings*

We meet on the third Tuesday of each month at 3pm, at Goodyear Library, 14455 W. Van Buren, 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](mailto:kskiko@cox.net)

