



Historic Arizona

Take a step
back in time
with this
statewide
history lesson

BY SAM LOWE

ARIZONA'S CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION is quickly approaching, so it's time to reflect on some of the past episodes and incidents that gave our state its reputation and helped shape its destiny. To commemorate the 100th birthday, *Highroads* asked readers to submit their favorite historic moments, events, and sites. We thank all those who put pen to paper and fingers to keyboards to respond. From your suggestions, we are reminiscing about the top 25 historic moments in Arizona, the third installment of a four-part series celebrating the upcoming Centennial.

The first dealt with the 25 items that best represent Quintessential Arizona; the second, Urban Arizona, looked at attractions and hot spots. The final section, scheduled for the November/December issue, will explore Festive Arizona. Let's take a look back.



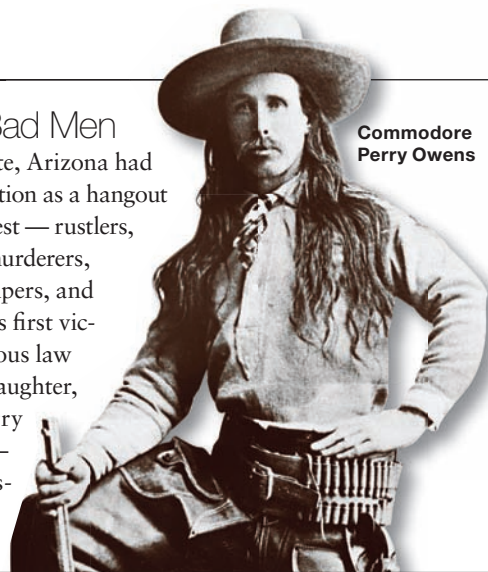
1 **Tombstone**
 Not only was it “the town too tough to die,” it was also the site of the infamous gunfight at the O.K. Corral in 1881, which evolved into the legend that movies are made of. But the city has such other historic attributes as Boothill Graveyard, where many an outlaw went to his final resting place; the Bird Cage Theater, site of what is said to be the longest-running poker game in history; the Tombstone Courthouse State Historic Park, where history was made and filed away; the world’s largest rose bush, now more than a century old; and the *Tombstone Epitaph*, the newspaper that dutifully recorded it all.



4 **Lost Treasures**

The Lost Dutchman gold mine, supposedly located somewhere in the Superstition Mountains, supposedly contains a huge amount of pure gold that supposedly was first discovered by Apaches, then Mexicans, then finally by Jacob Walz. Despite continual efforts and countless treasure maps, nobody else has stumbled across it. Other deposits of supposed hidden wealth also lie, supposedly, under the floor of the Tumacácori National Monument, in a lake near Flagstaff, in the desert near Willcox, buried among the cacti near Yuma, and in the sandstone near Lee’s Ferry. The search continues.

2 **Lawmen and Bad Men**
 Before it became a state, Arizona had a long-standing reputation as a hangout for the worst of the West — rustlers, train, and stagecoach robbers, murderers, con artists, gamblers, claim jumpers, and all the rest. Billy the Kid shot his first victim in Arizona. It took courageous lawmen — including Texas John Slaughter, Carl Hayden, Commodore Perry Owens, and George Ruffner — to clean up the territory by disposing of the outlaws.

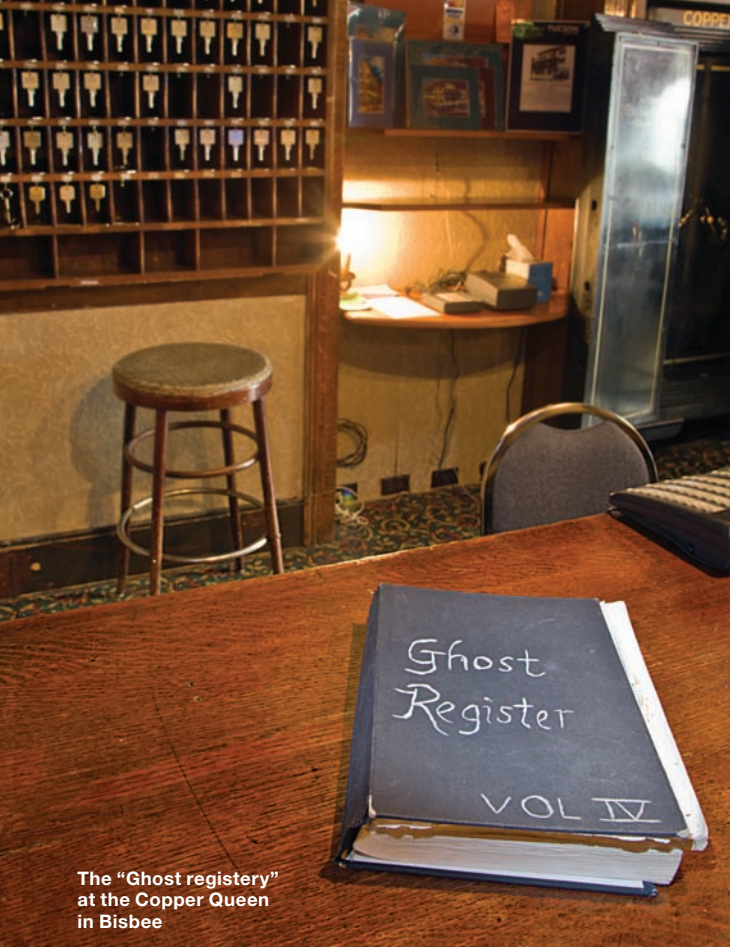


Commodore Perry Owens



3 **The Hashknife Gang**

Before the territory was deemed habitable for decent citizens and common folk, cattle ranching became a major industry. Shortly after the arrival of the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad (Santa Fe), the Aztec Land and Cattle Company ran 60,000 cattle on 2 million acres of northern Arizona range land. The company became known as “the Hashknife Outfit,” and some became involved in shady dealings. Today, the Hashknife Gang is a peaceful group of volunteers who make an annual Pony Express ride, delivering mail from Holbrook to Scottsdale.



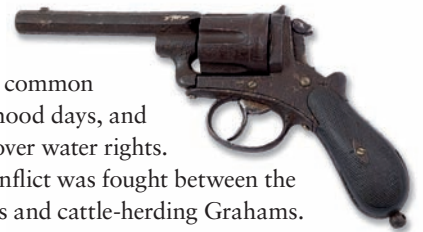
The "Ghost registry" at the Copper Queen in Bisbee

6 Spanish Missionaries

As early as the 1500s, Spanish explorers were roaming across what was to become Arizona, bringing missionaries along with them to "civilize" the natives while plundering their lands. Some of the monks and friars left lasting marks in the state. The most notable is San Xavier del Bac, a glistening church also known as "the white dove of the desert." Father Eusebio Kino founded the original mission in 1692; the church was built between 1783 and 1797. Located just south of downtown Tucson, it still serves the native people.

7 Pleasant Valley War

Range wars were common back in pre-statehood days, and they were usually fought over water rights. But the Pleasant Valley conflict was fought between the sheep-herding Tewksburys and cattle-herding Grahams. The two feuding families squared off in a nearly decade-long battle that eventually left as many as 18 men officially declared dead, and twice as many suspected killed. The war extended across Gila, Navajo, and Apache counties, and both sides used hired gunmen and ambushes before the last known killing occurred in 1892.



5 Historic Hotels

All those people moving into and visiting Arizona back in those early days, before and after statehood, needed places to stay, so hotels sprang up in almost every town. Most of them are gone now, but a few have survived. The most popular of these, as voted by *Highroads* readers, are the Hotel San Carlos in Phoenix, the Copper Queen in Bisbee, the Gadsden Hotel in Douglas, the La Posada Hotel in Winslow, the Hassayampa Inn in Prescott, the El Tovar Hotel at the Grand Canyon, and the Hotel Monte Vista in Flagstaff.



8 The Legend of Apache Leap

The imposing peaks east of Superior are the focal point of one of Arizona's most enduring legends. According to folklore (and some historical fact), a group of Apache warriors were surrounded by rival tribal members and some U.S. Army personnel atop the mountain. Rather than surrender, several Apache men leaped to their deaths off the cliffs. The legend says that when the women of the tribe found the bodies, their agonized tears turned to stone and today those stones are known as Apache Tear Stones. Geologists say the stones are actually obsidian. But the legend persists.



9 Hoover Dam

To deal with the increasing need for irrigation and hydroelectric power in the relatively new state, President Coolidge approved the Hoover Dam in 1928. Construction began in 1931 and was completed in 1936 at a cost of \$49 million, and 96 lives (more if you include nonindustrial fatalities). The dam impounds Lake Mead, which contains more than 28 million acre feet of water, gathered from a catchment area of 167,800 square miles, while providing irrigation and electrical power to Arizona and adjoining states. The structure stands 726 feet high and welcomes more than 1 million visitors every year.

PHOTOS: THINKSTOCK; © COLLEEN MINJUK-SPERRY



Fort Bowie ruins

10 Old Forts

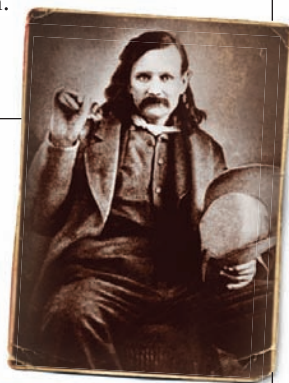
When the settlers first arrived, they were pretty much unprotected against the natives who objected strenuously to the loss of their lands and expressed that displeasure by waging war against the newcomers. So the U.S. Army built a series of forts across Arizona to house the troops brought in to combat the ongoing raids. While the wars have ended, some of the forts have survived. The best preserved are Fort Huachuca, Fort Verde, and Fort Whipple. Fort Bowie commemorates the conflict between Chiricahua Apache and the U.S. military, but there's not much of it left.

11 Camels in the Desert

While surveying Arizona Territory for the construction of transcontinental railroads, the U.S. Army imported camels from the Middle East to haul goods across the arid land. Lt. Edward F. Beale led the experiment, but the Civil War put an end to the surveys, so the camels were turned loose in the desert. One became known as the Red Ghost and allegedly killed at least one person before being shot by a farmer who spotted it eating his garden. Wild camel sightings were common in Arizona for several years afterward.

12 Eternal Canals

Some of the canals that provide irrigation water for parts of Arizona are relatively new, but others are centuries old. Ancient tribes, now known as the Hohokam, originally dug them as far back as the 1400s. Soon after gold was discovered in the Bradshaw Mountains, entrepreneur Jack Swilling cleared out the old Hohokam canals in the Salt River Valley, diverted water from the Salt River, and started the farming operations that laid the groundwork for what eventually became the Valley of the Sun.



Jack Swilling

13 Buffalo Soldiers

During and after the Civil War, African-American soldiers played major roles in Arizona's military history, and some along the American frontier became known as the Buffalo Soldiers. They got the name either because their curly hair reminded the Native Americans of a buffalo's mane or hide, or because they fought like buffalo. A statue and museum at Fort Huachuca in Sierra Vista commemorate their contributions. Other museums at the fort trace its history as an Army intelligence and technology development center. Regular tours allow visitors a peek at the nonsecret stuff.

Buffalo Soldiers



14 The Five Cs



Historically, much of Arizona's economy was, and continues to be, built around the Five Cs: copper, citrus, cotton, climate, and cattle. Four of them are still major economic factors, but housing developments have reduced the number of citrus groves. Ironically, citrus is one of the two Cs missing from the seal on the floor of the State Capitol Rotunda. The other is cattle. The Ohio artist commissioned to do the work apparently forgot to do his homework.



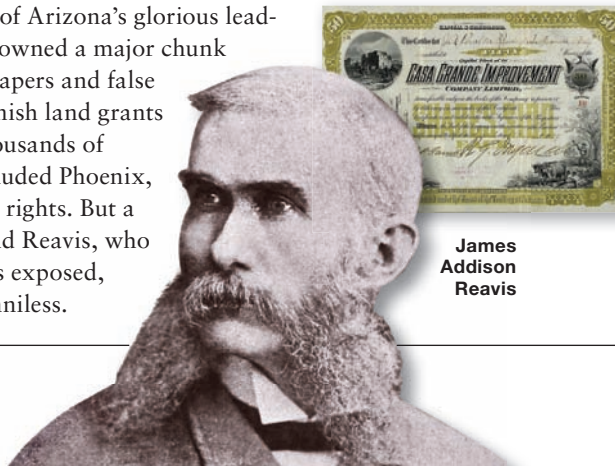
Geronimo,
Apache warrior

15 Apache Wars

The U.S. Army waged relentless warfare against such Apache leaders as Geronimo, Cochise, and Nana from the early 1870s until 1886. Gen. George Crook was ordered into Arizona Territory to bring an end to the wars but was replaced by Gen. Nelson Miles when Geronimo broke an agreement and escaped in the spring of 1886. Using Crook's methods, Miles brought about the final surrender in September 1886.

16 The Con Man

James Addison Reavis isn't listed as one of Arizona's glorious leaders, but in the later 1880s, he seemingly owned a major chunk of the emerging territory. Using forged papers and false documents, Reavis laid claim to old Spanish land grants that allegedly gave him ownership of thousands of square miles. His supposed holdings included Phoenix, railroads, mines, ranch lands, and water rights. But a sharp-eyed clerk spotted the forgeries and Reavis, who called himself the Baron of Arizona, was exposed, tried, convicted, and eventually died penniless.



James
Addison
Reavis

17 Wrigley Mansion

In 1929, William Wrigley Jr. used part of his chewing gum fortune to begin construction of a place where he could spend winters. It took the better part of two years to build the mansion, located atop a 100-foot knoll in north Phoenix. The cost was \$1.2 million, a rather fanciful figure even back then. The new home contained 16,000 square feet of living space, including 24 rooms and 12 bathrooms. However, Wrigley didn't get much use out of his new house; he died in 1932. The mansion is now a private dining club, a Phoenix Point of Pride, and on the National Register of Historic Places.

18

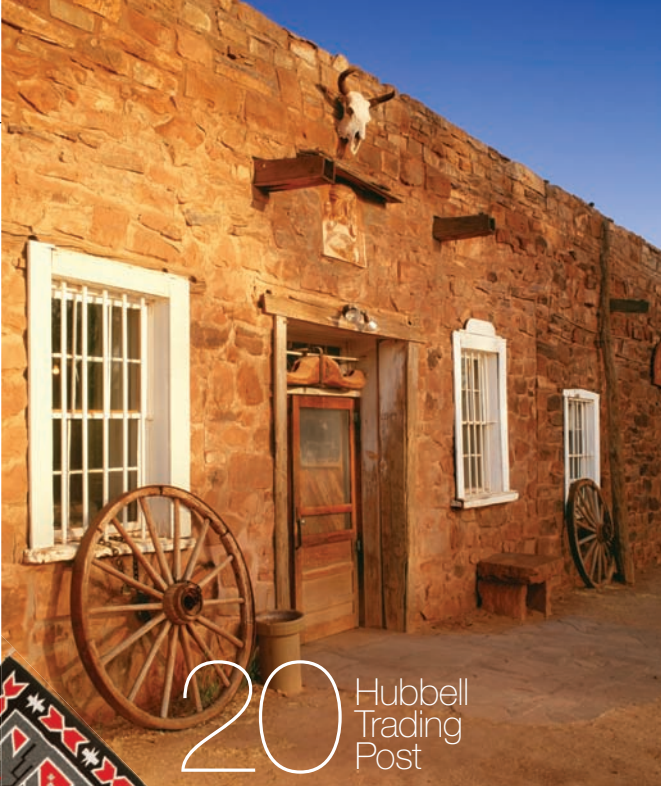
The Moving Capital

Although Arizona wasn't even a state yet, some big fights erupted over where to locate the capital. The first legislators met in Prescott in 1863 and, in 1885, members of the notorious Thirteenth Legislature got into fistfights over awarding state institutions. Phoenix wanted, and got, the state mental asylum, while Tucson had to settle for a university, which upset one local saloon-keeper who moaned that "students don't buy booze." After 1867, the capital was moved to Tucson for 10 years, then back to Prescott, where it stayed until 1889, when it was permanently located in Phoenix.

19 Pioneer Living History Village

An entire 1800s town that spreads across 90 acres northwest of Phoenix, the Pioneer Living History Village attempts to recreate the past. The resurrected buildings brought onto the site include an opera house where Lily Langtree once sang, a blacksmith shop, sheriff's office, jail, and an entire ranch complex. Interpreters in period costumes provide detailed explanations of what went on there and visitors are free to roam around without fear of being hit by a motorized vehicle or inhaling smog.

PHOTOS: ARIZONA HISTORICAL SOCIETY; PERALTA REAVIS REAL LIFE ILLUSTRATED, JULY 5, 1900



20 Hubbell Trading Post

In 1878, a decade after the Navajo Indians were allowed to return to their homelands in northeastern Arizona Territory, John Lorenzo Hubbell bought an old trading post and began the operation that is still going on. In the early 1880s, Hubbell began construction of the adobe building that still serves as the trading post. The Hubbell family ran the operation until 1967, when it was sold to the National Park Service. It has been named as a National Historic Site. The post is located on a 160-acre site at Ganado, and still trades Navajo goods for groceries.



22 Strawberry School

Arizona's oldest standing schoolhouse was built in 1884 after cowboys used ropes to measure the area and settle a dispute about where to place it. Pine logs were cut and hauled to the site, where they were squared and hoisted into place. Workers split cedar shingles for the roof, added a bell over the doorway, and placed a pot-bellied stove in the center of the single room. The little schoolhouse served area students until it was closed in 1916. By 1961, the structure was a mere shell being offered for sale. An area resident bought it and deeded it to the Payson-Pine Chamber of Commerce and volunteers began the restoration process. By 1980, the school was again open to the public. And it still is, from mid-May through mid-October.

23 Mystery Castle

In 1930, Boyce Luther Gulley left his wife and young daughter behind in Seattle and moved to the southern outskirts of Phoenix, where he spent most of the next 15 years building a castle. Using items he found and scrounged, Gulley created a 15-room structure that he left to his daughter, who knew nothing about it until after his death in 1945. Mary Lou Gulley lived in her Mystery Castle, and conducted tours through it, until she died in 2010. Now friends continue her tradition, leading guests through rooms made of an old car, stones, recycled bricks, and anything else Boyce Gulley found suitable. The castle is near South Mountain Park.

24 Some Survivors

When the mining industry was at its peak, before Arizona became a state, boom towns sprung up all over the territory. Most of them vanished, along with the good times. Bisbee and Jerome have not only survived, but even prospered as major tourist destinations. Bisbee's strict building codes have helped it maintain its original funkiness, which helps draw visitors. Jerome became a ghost town for several years before hippies and artists brought it back to life in the late 1950s. Many of the original buildings in both towns have survived.

21 Yuma Territorial Prison

Now welcoming visitors, the Yuma Territorial Prison was once home to the most notorious of Arizona's criminals, including Pearl Hart, the nation's first and only female stagecoach robber. Opened on July 1, 1876, the institution housed 3,069 prisoners, including 29 women, before being shut down when a new state prison opened in Florence. It later served as a campus for Yuma Union High School, whose athletic teams are still named the Criminals. Now it's known as the Yuma Territorial Prison State Historic Park, and recently underwent extensive renovation.



25 Some Non-Survivors

The towns that didn't make it have taken on a charm of their own, either as ghost towns or deserted mining camps. Regardless of what they're called now, they still draw the curious and the historians. Places like Ruby, Stanton, the Vulture Mine, Fairbank, Columbia, Washington Camp, and Walker hold a strange attraction for folks who like to poke around abandoned buildings and rusted equipment in the hope that not all the wealth has been extracted from the surrounding grounds.

SAM LOWE is a freelance writer who has been writing about Arizona for more than 35 years.



PHOTOS: ISTOCKPHOTO/THINKSTOCK; GEORGE H. HUEY