

THE ETERNAL SEARCH FOR 'LOST' GOLD MINES

ARIZONA HIGHWAYS

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Newest
Desert Preserve

First Peek at
**KARTCHNER
CAVERNS'
BIG ROOM**

The Lure of **WILD
ORCHIDS**

**GOLD, GOLD
EVERYWHERE**

Tucson's Noted Exhibition



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COVER/PORTFOLIO

Desert Preserve

Our new Sonoran Desert National Monument protects a significant history of pioneers, explorers, backcountry travelers, Indians and soldiers.

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Stalking Wild Orchids

Passionate admirers of these fascinating beauties of the flower world hunt Arizona's 26 native varieties.

[THIS PAGE] Yei-bichei formation and its northernmost spire, Totempole, frame a perfect blue sky above the rippled sands of Monument Valley on the Navajo Indian Reservation. CHUCK LAWSEN [FRONT COVER] A stand of saguaro cacti flaunts a distinctive variety of profiles before the rising sun in the Sonoran Desert National Monument. For more on one of our newest protected monuments, see the portfolio on page 20. JACK DYKINGA [BACK COVER] Dawn bursts through fog-shrouded ponderosa pine trees near Big Lake in the White Mountains of eastern Arizona. RANDY PRENTICE

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GENE PERRET'S WIT STOP

If there's a hex on misappropriated petrified wood souvenirs, our author's the last guy to admit it.

ONLINE EXTRA

Gold Mining in Arizona

In 1858, men with visions of treasure began a rush into what would become Arizona Territory after news of rich deposits on the Gila River ignited their imaginations.

WEEKEND GETAWAY

Fort Lowell Park

This tree-lined, activity-filled park in Tucson once was home to ancient Hohokam Indians, and more recently to an Old West garrison of U.S. Army troops. The park's museum displays relics from both cultures.

EXPERIENCE ARIZONA

A festival of fun cold-weather events in Flagstaff and a cowboy poetry and music gathering in Sierra Vista are among Arizona's February activities.

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Cemetery Remembrance

In the September 2003 issue, I read the "Along the Way" column on Camelback Cemetery.

A few days before Christmas in 1932, we buried my father in Camelback Cemetery. I was probably three weeks away from my 13th birthday. I was the oldest of six children.

My aunt, who was Daddy's sister, and her husband took my mother and all of us children to the cemetery after the services. She wanted us to see where Daddy was buried so if, after we were grown and wanted to show our own children where their Grandpa George Thaggard was buried, we would know how to find the grave.

My mother took a camera along and stood us at the head of Daddy's grave, on the left side of a grave with a marker that read "Laura Dunne Stanley and Baby." So you can see why it brought back memories.

As far as I know, my Dad's grave is unmarked, but in standing in front of the two graves, Daddy's would be on the left side of Laura Dunne Stanley.

Sybil Thaggard Sammons, Los Banos, CA

Satisfied Readers

I subscribed to *Arizona Highways* on a whim last fall when the junior class at our high school held a magazine drive. I wanted a magazine that showed me the West. *Arizona Highways* does just that. Your magazine brings to life in its beautiful photography the places I've visited only in books. In fact, I liked the magazine so much I purchased several of the Wild West books you publish and thoroughly enjoyed them.

Karen Collins, Twin City, GA

After almost 40 years of receiving *Arizona Highways*, I ask, "What can it publish that I haven't already seen?" And every month I wait with anticipation for the arrival of yet another issue, and I am never disappointed. There is always something new and interesting to see and read.

Hilda Desmond, Fairport, NY

I have been a reader of your wonderful magazine since 1950. I am continually amazed at the gorgeous photos that show up each month. It seems your newest issue outdoes the previous one in pictorial displays.

Aubrey D. Brown, Mesa

Receiving letters like these really invigorates the poor old editor. They're much more effective than taking a short nap.

Charitable Act

While camping at Lee's Ferry, I was reading your September 2002 issue when I came upon an article

about the Cameron Trading Post in your "Destination" department. Knowing we would be passing through there on our way to Sunset Crater, I said to my wife, "Let's stop there."

We did so and I asked if that was Elsie Glander (a Navajo woman featured in the story) sitting over there weaving a blanket, and was told, "Yes, she is."

I walked over and asked if she had seen the article about the Cameron Trading Post, and she said she had but only had one copy. I gave her mine, and she was so thrilled you would have thought I gave her a million dollars. It made my day.

Bobby and Faith Brown, Fort Mohave

Magazines to Iraq

We now send our copies of *Arizona Highways* on to our grandson who is serving with the Arizona National Guard in Iraq.

Max and Shirley Crandall, Traverse City, MI

Many of our readers are doing the same, sending a touch of home to our soldiers serving in harm's way. It is a tradition of sorts that began during World War II. And judging by our mail, the troops really appreciate it.

Kartchner Caverns

I was in Bisbee recently visiting my sister, and we took a side trip to Kartchner Caverns. I was left speechless, it was such a beautiful place. I would tell anyone visiting Arizona that a trip to the caverns is a must.

Mary Romero Sabato, Philadelphia, PA

Need More Maps

As a loyal subscriber for 30 years, I have never written you a letter, even though I occasionally wish you might do more of certain types of articles. I realize you have a lot of interests to please.

But one thing really irritates me. You do not put enough maps with stories that call for them. I am presently reading the stories on the Kofa Mountains ["You Can Almost Smell the Water," September '03]. This type of story screams for a good map.

I think you once mentioned that maps take up space. But a map would take up no more space than a picture takes. I'll trade one picture for a map anytime. Additionally, maps are works of art that would enhance the article's enjoyment.

John F. Mueller, Toledo, OH

The poor old editor sympathizes with Mr. Mueller and all the others who want more maps. I agree some stories scream out for maps. Believe me, we are trying to find ways to provide more maps and to do it without affecting the photographs. And we are getting closer, but we're not there yet. Bear with us.



For 75 Years, the Arizona Biltmore Has Brought Out the Song in Everyone

When the Arizona Biltmore resort opened on February 23, 1929, newspapers hailed it as an example of lavish living in a great oasis. But its location—8 miles northeast of downtown Phoenix—scared some parents, who refused to allow their daughters to stay in employee dorms, so distant from civilization.

Although no one considers the "jewel in the desert" remote



Clark Gable (in black) and friends golfed at the Biltmore in the 1940s.

anymore, the hotel remains a hallmark of luxury and legend.

Almost every celebrity imaginable has stayed there. Ronald and Nancy Reagan honeymooned at the Biltmore, and so did Carole Lombard and Clark Gable, who became frequent guests. Gable once lost his wedding ring on the golf course. An employee found the ring and returned it to him.

In the mid-1980s, Frank Sinatra, Sammy Davis Jr. and Liza Minelli gathered at the Biltmore's grand piano after midnight for an

impromptu concert. Guests poured from their rooms on hearing the commotion, prepared to complain about their interrupted slumber.

They calmed down when they saw Sinatra and his friends. The kibitzers crowded onto the second-floor promenade, tapping their toes. Bing Crosby had created a similar sensation years before.

Brothers Charles and Warren McArthur built the hotel to complement their tour company. They'd moved west from Chicago, and by 1913 had started a successful Dodge dealership in Arizona.

Albert Chase McArthur, older brother of Charles and Warren, designed the building, with help from his mentor, Frank Lloyd Wright. But the McArthurs lost heavily in the 1929 stock market crash, leaving investor William Wrigley Jr., the chewing gum magnate, as sole owner, according to a hotel history written by Candice St. Jacques Miles.

With its copper roof and gold-leaf ceilings, the construction tab ran to an unheard of \$2.5 million. The Catalina pool, which was a favorite of Marilyn Monroe's, sported tiles—at

\$1 each—from California's Catalina Island, which Wrigley owned.

Songwriter Irving Berlin, another poolside regular, used the Biltmore as a working retreat. In 1939, an *Arizona Republic* reporter caught up with Berlin as he lounged in trunks and dark glasses. Berlin had been there a week and had already written six songs, as well as the score for the movie *When Winter Comes*, starring Sonja Henie.

The composer said lyrics came to him more quickly in Phoenix than anywhere else. "When I'm working like this, the sunshine is vital to me," he said.

Maybe the sunshine made him think of snow.

In her book, *The Complete Lyrics of Irving Berlin*, daughter Linda Berlin

Emmet said he might have written his biggest hit—one of the most popular songs ever—at the desert-bound Biltmore.

The title? "White Christmas." Information: (602) 955-6600.



The Biltmore lobby circa 1930s (above) and as it appears today.



THIS MONTH IN ARIZONA

1848
 The Mexican War ends with the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo.

1862
 Capt. Sherod Hunter and his Confederate troops occupy Tucson without firing a shot.

1863
 Arizona Territory is created by the U.S. Congress.

1871
 Maricopa County is created from portions of Pima and Yavapai counties.

1878
 C.T. Rogers establishes a 160-acre ranch at the base of Bill Williams Mountain. The site is later incorporated into the city of Williams.

1901
 Arizona's first union—the Phoenix Typographical Union—is created.

The Capitol building is dedicated by Governor Nathan Oakes Murphy.

1912
 On the last day of his administration, Governor Sloan pardons eight convicted murderers serving life sentences.



COURTESY STONEMAN LAKE LODGE

A Dog-friendly B&B

Travelers who don't wish to kennel their pooches have a new option in Arizona. The renovated Stoneman Lake Lodge Bed and Breakfast, about 100 miles north of Phoenix, offers varied accommodations, including rooms with entrances and runs for canine companions. The lodge also has a corral for horses arriving to explore the great outdoors with their owners.

The bunkhouse, just right for families or large groups, sleeps 10 and the cost starts at \$210. Inside the lodge are eight bedrooms with private baths that start at \$75 a night including a gourmet breakfast. Visitors have the delightful

choice to take it easy and lounge on the lodge's spacious rustic porch, or put on some hiking shoes and explore the surrounding Coconino National Forest.

Information: (480) 239-0254; www.stonemanlakelodge.com.



Cowboy Talk

Cowboys, with their saunter and slang, have inched their lingo into everyday English. Consider "panhandler," "maverick," "runt," "hog-tied," "rustler," "roundup," "cowed," "hoofing," "hightailing" and "outfit." They all originated on the range.

And let's not forget the term "necking." In cowboy terminology, necking refers to the practice of tying a frisky steer to a gentler animal with a short rope to calm the troublemaker.

We wonder how this term found its way into a teen-ager's vocabulary.

Flavors of Flagstaff

Check out the recent cookbook, *Flavors of the Colorado Plateau*, at the Museum of Northern Arizona bookstore. Compiled by the museum's staff, docents, volunteers and friends, the nearly 300 recipes range from traditional

Indian dishes to Southwestern to "old country" specialties. Profits from the sale of the cookbook support and expand education about the Colorado Plateau region.

Information: (928) 774-5211 or www.musnaz.org.

CHICKEN FAJITAS

1 pound chicken breasts, cut into 1-inch cubes
 ¼ cup oil
 2 to 4 tablespoons honey
 1 teaspoon cumin
 2 garlic cloves, minced
 flour tortillas

Mix oil, honey, cumin and garlic and pour over cubed chicken. Marinate overnight. Cook on stovetop until chicken is no longer pink in middle. Serve on warmed flour tortillas. Top with lettuce, chopped tomatoes, chopped onion, shredded cheese, salsa and sour cream.

The Cactus Critics' Choice

Located down the road from the extraordinary Arizona-Sonoran Desert Museum near Tucson, one might think the Red Hills Visitor Center 18 miles west of Tucson in the Saguaro National Park West would be outclassed. No way.

"We get rave reviews from the visitors who come in," says



KEVIN KIBBEY

Park Ranger Chip Littlefield.

The center offers a gentle first taste of the Sonoran Desert through hands-on and photographic displays, two easy trails and an extensive bookshop dedicated to the region. The center also offers an automated slide presentation.

Playing in the center's theater, the show presents the Sonoran Desert through the eyes, the legends and the voices of native people of the Tohono O'odham Nation. Be prepared for a surprising and touching ending.

Also be prepared for the price of admission — free.

Information: (520) 733-5158.

LIFE IN ARIZONA 1990s - 2000s

ARIZONA UNDERGROUND

Tombstone's Boot Hill Cemetery might be one of the most famous graveyards in the Southwest, but its formerly rowdy residents aren't the only interesting personalities resting in Arizona's graveyards. Here are some famous favorites:

Hadji Ali a.k.a. Hi Jolly (unknown-1902). A monument in Quartzsite holds the remains of this Arab camel driver who led the failed U.S. Army desert camel experiment.

Mary Cummings a.k.a. Big Nose Kate (1850-1940). This infamous madame and girlfriend of Doc Holliday died at the age of 90 in Prescott and is buried in the Arizona Pioneer Home Cemetery.

"Lord" Bryan Philip Darrell Duppa (1832-1892). The gravesite for this eccentric, dipsomaniacal Englishman, who reportedly named Phoenix after



Big Nose Kate

the mythological bird that rises from its own ashes, resides in the Pioneer and Military Memorial Park in Phoenix.

U.S. Senator Barry M. Goldwater (1909-1998).

Known as an icon of Arizona politics, a captivating photographer and a shrewd businessman, Goldwater is interred at The Christ Church of

Ascension in Paradise Valley. **Sharlot M. Hall (1870-1943).** Arizona's state historian and the founder of the Sharlot Hall Museum is buried at the Arizona Pioneer Home Cemetery in Prescott.

George W.P. Hunt (1859-1934). Hunt, the most-elected governor in U.S. history with seven terms in Arizona, can be visited in Phoenix's Papago Park.

John Slaughter (1841-1922). The soft-spoken, iron-willed Slaughter — former Texas Ranger and lawman of Cochise County — is buried in the Douglas Cemetery in Douglas.

Jacob Waltz a.k.a. The Lost Dutchman (1808-1891). This German-born prospector, whose cache of gold in the Superstition Mountains remains lost, can be visited at his final resting spot in Phoenix's Pioneer and Military Memorial Park.

BOYER COLLECTION SHARLOT HALL MUSEUM



LINDA LONGMIRE

Question of the Month

Q What Arizona town built the nation's first municipal airport?

A In November 1919, Tucson opened the first municipally owned airport in the United States, boasting machine shops and a hangar that could accommodate 10 planes.

Tucson Architecture Guide

If you've ever wondered what gives a city like Tucson a sense of "place," you'll want to pick up a copy of Anne M. Nequette and R. Brooks Jeffery's *A Guide to Tucson Architecture*. Infused with the authors' zeal to preserve Tucson's rich architectural history, the book guides readers from the 10,500 B.C. camps of nomadic hunter-gatherers to the large malls of today.

Both architects and faculty members at the University of Arizona, Nequette and Jeffery express a nostalgic sense of loss for the sensible thick-walled homes surrounding cool, shaded communal courtyards in Spanish Colonial buildings like those remaining in the Telles Block, home of the Old Town Artisans shops

in the original Presidio area.

Describing the influences that resulted in structures like the Henry C. Trost-designed 1898 first Owls Club, home to the brotherhood of Tucson's elite bachelors and the Art Deco facade of a private residence on University Boulevard, the authors call the reader to refocus on Tucson as an "urban city."

The book details 13 geographic areas in the city, with maps for walking or driving tours and information on the significant architecture



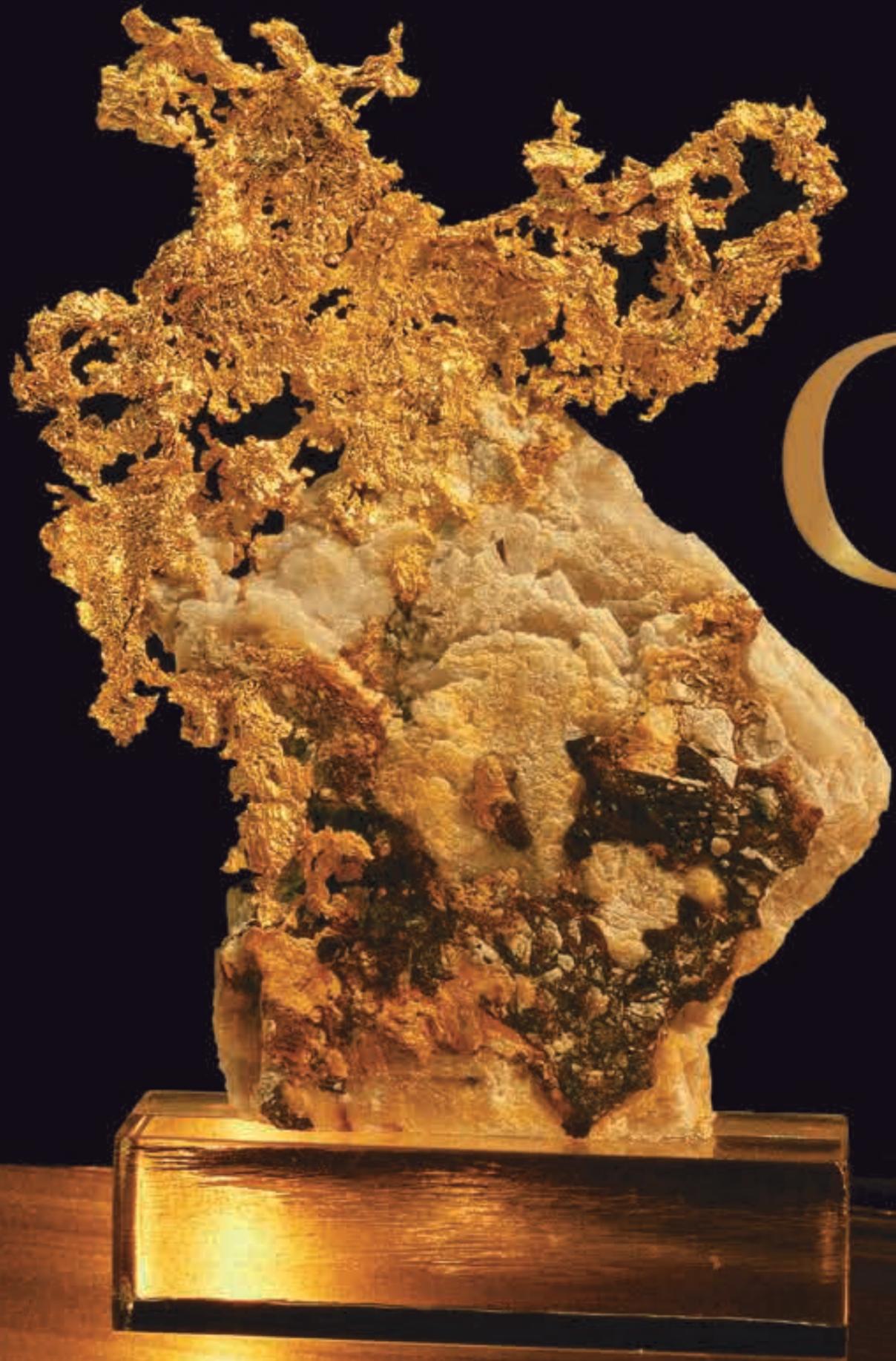
RICHARD MACK

The first Owls Club, at 300 N. Main Ave., was designed by architect Henry C. Trost, as was the second in 1902.

in each of its neighborhoods.

Nequette and Jeffery hope that Tucson's residents won't relinquish the unique diversity of their architecture for a contrived Southwestern style. The authors conclude, "Tucsonans have a responsibility to be stewards of their natural and cultural heritage for future generations to enjoy."

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*Tucson Gem and Mineral Society
Celebrates its 50th Show*

TEXT BY LEO W. BANKS

GOLDEN

ANNIVERSARY



EVEN IF YOU'VE NEVER experienced gold fever, never considered yourself susceptible to this ancient curse, you'd best watch out. Gold speaks to everyone, knows every language. Its peculiar power can creep over you at any time.

Like this month, for example.

The Tucson Gem and Mineral Society will celebrate its 50th anniversary show in February, with gold as its theme. Dealers, collectors and museum curators will display a king's cache of the precious metal in every size and form imaginable—gold in the shape of seahorses and dragons. Gold that looks like seaweed. A gold boot. A gold flame. A spectacular gold horn, measuring 4.5 inches in length.

When workers completed the first transcontinental railroad at Promontory, Utah, in 1869, the final spikes they drove were pure gold. One of those

5-inch golden spikes will be on display in Tucson.

Feeling the weakness yet?

Just as alluring will be some of the stories surrounding these specimens.

Example: Back in 1887, miner Tom Groves found a 13.7-pound hunk of gold in Breckenridge, Colorado. He wrapped his precious find in a blanket and went from saloon to saloon, tossing back whiskeys and showing it off.

It came to be called "Tom's baby." The find, now in two pieces, is Colorado's largest surviving gold specimen.

Although tiny by comparison, also expect to see the original nugget that James Marshall discovered while building John Sutter's mill on the American River in 1848, touching off the California gold rush.

This bantam beauty, only half the size of a thumbnail, changed America in ways we're still measuring.

If you like big samples, look for the largest gold bar ever cast—weighing 80 pounds—from the *SS Central*

America, which sank off the Carolinas in 1857.

This year's show features an additional treat for history buffs — the original survey of the land acquired through the Gadsden Purchase, loaned from the Arizona Historical Society, and the original purchase document, on loan from the National Archives and Records Administration.

In 1853, our government purchased from Mexico a 30,000-square-mile strip of what became New Mexico and southern Arizona below the Gila River. This year marks the 150th anniversary of the deal, which made Tucson part of the United States.

The city plans to celebrate the opening of the Tucson Gem and Mineral Society's show — and the 30 or so satellite shows that take place simultaneously — with a fireworks display on A Mountain, west of downtown, the evening before the show opens. Some 50,000 visitors will attend the show, including 3,200 dealers.

According to Bob Jones, a member of the permanent show committee and author of a book-length history of the event to be published this month, the shows will display roughly 7 million gem and mineral specimens on 9 miles of table space.

The show didn't start out so grand.

The show's first home, the cafeteria of the Helen Keeling Elementary School, accommodated eight dealers. The three men who organized that 1955 weekend event — Dan Caudle, Clayton Gibson and Harold

This year's show will include more than 60 pieces from the Harvard Collection, including its curving gold horn, possibly the most famous specimen of wire gold in the country.

Rupert — did so without approval from the Tucson Gem and Mineral Society board members.

The leaders wanted nothing to do with such a crazy idea and refused to put up money to fund it. Caudle and his cohorts went ahead anyway, borrowing display cases from jewelry and drugstores, and from the University of Arizona.

"Boy, were they heavy," remembers Caudle, the only surviving member of the organizing group. "We set everything up ourselves." But the three paid their bills and cleared a handsome \$10, which they donated to Keeling Elementary. That precedent continues today. The society donates about \$20,000 per year to local charities and to the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum and the University of Arizona.

The second year, the show moved to a World War II-era Quonset hut located at Tucson's southside rodeo grounds. Caudle, now 81, had to sleep in his truck inside the hut, his shotgun handy, to provide security for the specimens.

"Everything was real seat-of-the-pants in the beginning," says Caudle. "But it kept getting bigger and better. Every year we'd think, 'How in the world will we top this?'"

They always did, says Jones, adding that volunteers still do all the work, the only thing that hasn't changed since 1955. The show crossed a threshold in 1961 when the Smithsonian Institution brought an exhibit to town, the first time that prestigious museum had participated in any club event. The British Museum followed suit in 1970.

More milestones followed almost every year, including the ring meteorite's return to Tucson. This 1,400-pound space monster provided a wonderful story around which to promote the show.

Sometime in the early 1800s, settlers found the ring-shaped meteorite, along with a smaller fragment, in the Santa Rita Mountains. After the ring was hauled to the presidio in Tucson, Mexico's military blacksmith used it as an anvil.

In 1857, shortly after Mexican forces withdrew from Tucson, Lt. B.J.D. Irwin, a U.S. Army medical officer, found the meteorite half-buried on a side street and recognized what it was. He shipped his find to the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., where it remains today.

The ring meteorite's reappearance in southern Arizona profoundly impacted the 1972 show, swelling the crowd to a then-record 19,000.

But the most important factor in building the show's early reputation was the variety and quality of the specimens on display. Collectors adopted the habit of saving their best for Tucson.

"Items would be shown here that had never been shown before," says Gene Schlepp, an exhibitor at the 1955 show and now president of the Tucson Gem and Mineral Society. "The anticipation built every

[PRECEDING PANEL, PAGES 6 AND 7] Since its humble beginning in 1955, the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show now draws collectors from around the world and spreads its displays through miles of downtown venues. At left is a conglomerate of crystallized minerals and gold, valued at approximately \$50,000. EDWARD MCCAIN
The distorted octahedral crystal of gold on the right comes from the Harvard Collection. BOB JONES
[BELOW] The collection of Wayne Leicht, proprietor of Kristalle in California since 1971, has been featured in many fine-mineral publications. EDWARD MCCAIN



year. Coming to Tucson was like a trip to Mecca."

But gold has never played a big part in the Tucson show. Until recently, buyers could find little of it at reasonable prices, and getting at new pieces proved unprofitable because it appears so sporadically in rock.

However, with an increase in the price of unusual gold pieces, known as specimen gold, it began to pay for individual miners to seek out rare crystallized samples that could be sold for large amounts. Crystallized gold develops from what is called a hydrothermal solution — hot water that surges up from the interior of the earth, dissolves and brings minerals with it — in

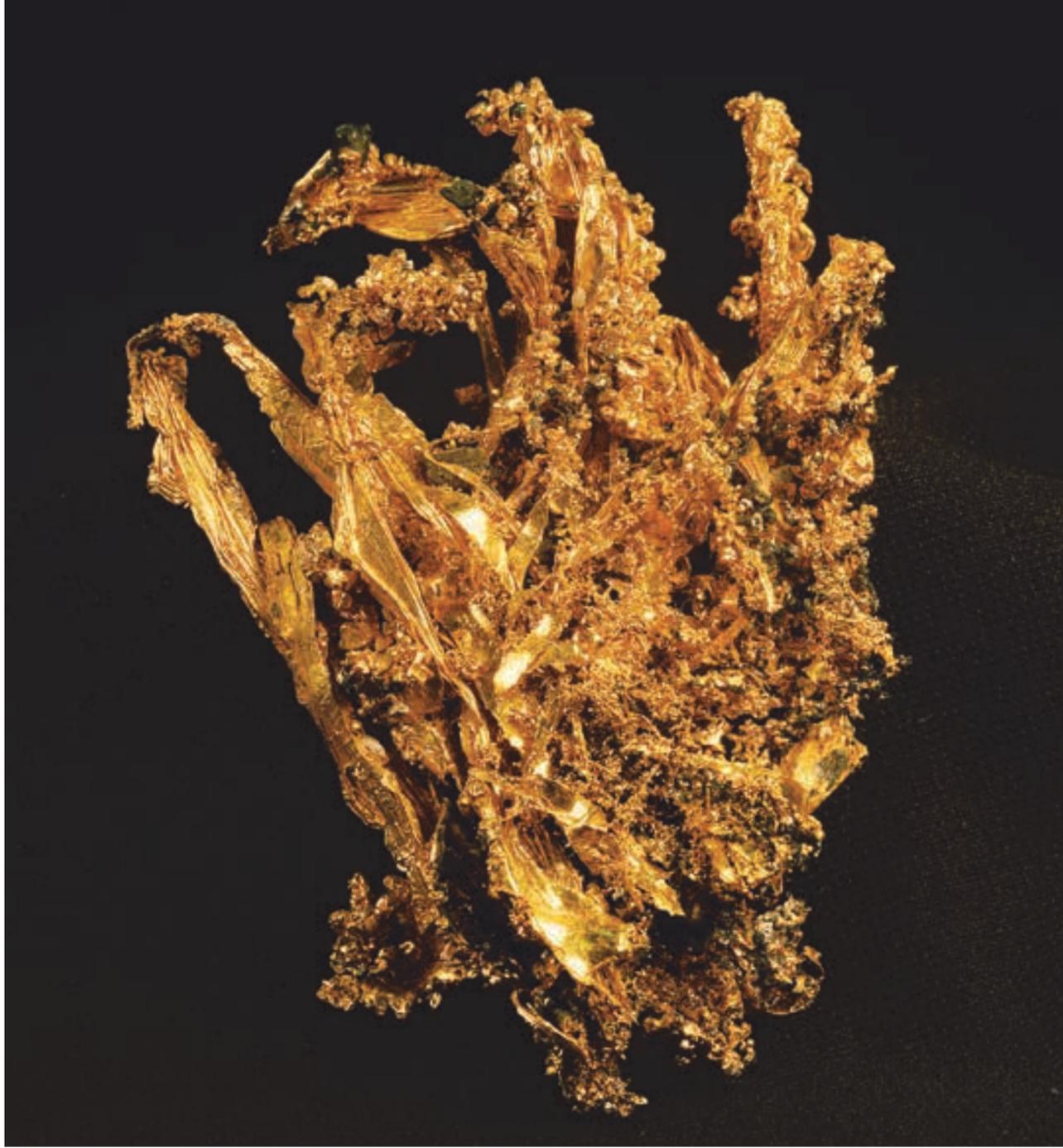
an open pocket of rock, as opposed to nuggets, which are stream-tumbled.

Technology helped, too. New metal detectors in use over the last 20 years allow miners to go underground and scan mine walls for hot spots. More specimen pieces have been unearthed and a sizeable market has flowered.

"Tucson didn't show its first important piece of gold until 1971, when we had the horn of gold from the Harvard University Collection," says historian Jones.

This year's show will include more than 60 pieces from the Harvard Collection, including its curving

[ABOVE] The curling gold "ram's horn" on the left is the largest known of its kind. It is 4.5 inches tall and 1 inch across at the base. The crystallized mass on the right was found at the Wire Patch Mine in Colorado. Both are from the Harvard Collection. BOB JONES



[ABOVE] This natural sculpture of intricately twined and flocked gold crystals with black petzite crystals is 4.5 inches tall. BOB JONES

gold horn, possibly the most famous specimen of wire gold in the country.

Also on display will be the Houston Museum's dragon gold, discovered at the Colorado Quartz Mine four years ago. Careful not to damage it, workers spent three days sawing through the quartz around it with a powerful diamond chainsaw. The piece stands 7 inches high and resembles a sparkling dragon rearing up on its back legs.

Another gold piece, sure to draw public fascination, has a tree root growing through it. In 1959, a miner working at the Red Ledge Mine in Nevada County, California, tipped over a pine tree and found the gold close to the surface beneath it.

"The gold is captive in the root," says gem dealer Wayne Leicht of Kristalle, in Laguna Beach. "You can't

get the root out without destroying the gold. It also has a clear quartz crystal on it, naturally attached to the gold, which is very rare."

Collectors consider it among the most interesting pieces ever found.

Visitors to this year's show might hear any number of fascinating gold-discovery stories. Leicht tells of the so-called Mojave Nugget, a 13-pound specimen discovered in 1977 in an area of the Mojave Desert that most miners figured had played out.

But not crusty, eccentric Guy Paulson. With a metal detector rigged to a long boom dangling in front of his jeep, he inched through Southern California's El Paso Mountains, playing a hunch.

It paid off when the detector squealed and he located the massive nugget high on a canyon ledge. After a few

drinks in celebration, he telephoned Leicht and the two met in the middle of the night in Leicht's shop.

Paulson had the gold wrapped in his lucky shirt and thumped it down on the desktop. Leicht knew he wanted to buy it, but figured to have some fun first.

"I said, 'Guy, I'm not going to buy this nugget unless you sell me the shirt, too,'" says Leicht, one of the world's top experts in crystallized gold. "But he refused, saying, 'Sorry, I can't do that.' Paulson continued mining, bought an RV and made more frequent visits to his girlfriend in Las Vegas.

Paulson wouldn't say where he found the nugget, telling Leicht only that it was within a 50-mile radius of the town of Mojave. Fifteen years later, Leicht learned the precise location from Paulson's partner.

"People still discover nuggets in that desert, including a recent find of 35 troy ounces," says Leicht. The troy scale is the international standard of weighing precious metals. A troy ounce, based on 12 ounces to a pound, is heavier than the avoirdupois ounce, the measure we commonly use.

Doug Clark's best gold-discovery story dates to the day in 1983, on Valdez Creek, Alaska, when he and his workers pulled 400 ounces of placer gold out of the ground. At \$400 an ounce, that added up to a \$160,000 day.

"But we couldn't stop to celebrate," says Clark, now

'I bought a little 'dozer to shove gravel around, built a sluice box and went out,' says Clark. He had a blast. He also went broke.

in his 30th year of gold-mining in Alaska. "This was September, and we already had icicles hanging off our equipment. We had to keep working to beat the onset of winter."

Except for his unusual success in gold mining, Clark's story proves typical. As a 20-year-old in 1967, he moved with his brother to Alaska, intending to hunt, fish and kill time. Those activities wore out in a few years, so he thought he'd try gold mining.

"I bought a little 'dozer to shove gravel around, built a sluice box and went out," says Clark. He had a blast. He also went broke. But he tried again and eventually made it. He now co-owns two gold properties near Mount McKinley that total 42,000 acres.

"I really enjoy doing it," says Clark, who'll attend the gem show this year. "Every day is like Christmas. Some days it's a good Christmas, and some days it's a poor Christmas."

Steve Rice, of Colorado Nuggets, another successful gold miner, also will attend.

His techniques for finding gold include reading out-of-print government brochures and books about gold mines, and collecting old maps. And he has a way of engaging retired miners in conversation about potential finds they never got around to exploring.

But none of these is the key ingredient. "You need



[ABOVE] Hundreds of gold and mineral merchants, collectors and window-shoppers fill Tucson's convention center each February. EDWARD MCCAIN

imagination to find gold," says Rice.

If he comes across an interesting valley, Rice tries to figure out the landscape and determine where Mother Nature might've hidden her gold.

"If the hills on both sides show evidence of a vein, maybe a glacier cut its way through, splitting the vein," says Rice. "Then I'll look to see if the valley is rounded on the bottom. If so, the gold will be on the sides of the hills. But in a V-shaped valley, the gold probably will be toward the bottom.

"By using my imagination, I've developed a real knack for finding veins."

Hearing that kind of talk at the gem show can bring visions of gold to your eyes. You might even feel the need to lie down. Best not to, though, because then you'll just dream. Of more gold. **AH**

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Tucson Gem and Mineral Society Show will be held at the Tucson Convention Center in downtown Tucson February 12-15. Admission is \$5.50; free, children 14 and under with paying adult. Tickets are sold at the Church Street and Granada Avenue entrances to the TCC.

For more information, call the TGMS office, (520) 322-5773, or visit its Web site: tgms.org.

Leo W. Banks of Tucson has attended the gem show several times, and still has more to see. He also wrote about the "ghost" of Kendrick Peak in this issue.

Tucsonan Ed McCain found some very small platinum nuggets at the gem show for his 10-year-old stepdaughter, Liza, who is obsessed with everything platinum.

A photograph of a desert landscape. In the foreground, a large agave plant with long, pointed leaves is prominent. The background shows a rugged canyon with layered rock formations and sparse desert vegetation. The lighting is warm, suggesting late afternoon or early morning.

'LOST'
GOLD MINES
Are They Really? BY SALLY BENFORD



A MONSTROUS BROWN CLOUD of dust loomed on the horizon as a legendary miner named Perkins rode his horse north of Quartzsite toward the Planet Mine where he worked as superintendent.

New to the area and unfamiliar with Sonoran Desert dust storms, Perkins continued to ride into the growing brown swirl until he could no longer see beyond his horse's nose.

In a wasteland of sand, where one dune looks like the next, Perkins decided to sit down and wait out the storm. Seeking refuge

from the dust and sand that blinded him, Perkins stumbled into a rock ledge that provided him with some shelter from the howling wind.

As he sat facing the ledge, the miner broke off a few rocks and examined them. Realizing that he sat next to a quartz ledge streaked with gold, Perkins stuffed the nuggets into his pocket and scrawled some notes. Unable to discern his exact location, he unbuckled his six-shooters and laid them in the sand to mark the spot.

After the storm passed, Perkins, weak and disoriented, held onto his horse's tail as it staggered back toward the mine. But within a few hours, Perkins was dead, half-buried in the desert dunes, probably not far from the rich ledge of ore. Several days later, when Perkins' horse showed up without its rider, a search party of Planet miners set out to find their boss. They found his body, his pockets filled with the gold ore and notes describing his find. By all accounts, he had become lost and died from dehydration and exposure.

According to legend, countless prospectors have circled the area looking for Perkins' gold quartz ledge, but have yet to find it. Known as the Lost Six-Shooter Mine, perhaps it remains buried, along with Perkins' guns, until another storm uncovers it.

Many lost Arizona mines still lure treasure hunters, who, like prospectors of the past, believe their searching will pay off. Some spend their entire lives looking for legendary gold mines.

Arizona lays claim to the world's most famous lost gold mine, the Lost Dutchman Mine. Named in July 2000 by *U.S. News and World Report* as one of the world's greatest mysteries, the Lost Dutchman remains the most sought-after gold mine of all time. Since 1891, the legend has lured thousands of people to Arizona's Superstition Mountains to search for prospector Jacob Waltz's fabled mine.

If anyone knows the extent to which Arizona's lost gold mines entice would-be

miners, it's Nyal Niemuth and Diane Bain of the Arizona Department of Mines & Mineral Resources. Niemuth, an agency mining engineer, and Bain, its public information officer, have seen their share of treasure hunters over the past 20 years.

Regarding the Lost Dutchman, Niemuth said, "I get a phone call every week from someone who tells me they've found it."

He refers callers to the Forest Service, which has jurisdiction over any treasure trove found in the Superstition Wilderness. As far as finding the legendary gold mine, Niemuth explained that no one can stake a mining claim within federal wilderness

A stranger staggers into town, his pockets filled with gold, telling tales of quartz ledges laden with rich gold veins or golden nuggets lying on the ground — there for the taking.

areas, so the agency doesn't encourage Dutchman hunters.

"Even if someone did find Waltz's mine in the Superstitions, they can't even get to the first step in filing a claim," Niemuth said.

Although the agency develops Arizona's mineral resources by providing field investigations, technical research and information, it also stores files of research materials on lost mines, which it makes available to the public.

"We can't spend a lot of time with maps and files on lost gold mines, but we don't mind if people come in to do that. In fact, we should probably be their first resource," said Neimuth.

Bain said people come in carrying old mining claims or stock certificates, found among a deceased relative's belongings, hoping that the papers are worth something. In most cases, the claim has such elusive boundaries that it's impossible to pinpoint an exact location. An agency file labeled "Belmont Veteran Mine" contained

a 1940 description of the property, which listed its location as "15 miles southwest of Salome in a rolling to hilly country. Reached by a good desert road."

Bain, who's written an agency publication titled *Gold Panning in Arizona*, said some mines have been lost simply due to the vastness of Arizona's outback and the secretiveness of old-time prospectors.

Bain explained that although a mine may carry an intriguing name like the Lost Dutchman, it isn't necessarily "lost."

"Today we may know some of those old lost gold mines by a different name," she explained.

Indeed, a 1992 *Arizona Highways* story by Rick Heffernon speculated that the Lost Six-Shooter Mine might be the modern-day Copperstone Mine, one of Arizona's top-producing mines until the gold market bottomed out in the 1990s.

Lost Dutchman aside, many modern prospectors believe the truth about Arizona's lost gold mines has been buried in years of folklore, fables and fabrications. Dusty library books and cryptically drawn treasure maps tempt gold hunters with

romantic tales as rich as the shiny stuff itself.

Ironically, the land that produced and houses Arizona's gold also conceals it. Desert sandstorms, searing heat and water-parched terrain have played key roles in Arizona gold legends. Add in avenging Indian war parties, sketchy directions and mislabeled maps, and you begin to understand why Arizona has its share of lost gold mine stories.

Most lost-gold accounts share a familiar theme: A stranger staggers into town, his pockets filled with gold, telling tales of quartz ledges laden with rich gold veins or golden nuggets lying on the ground—there for the taking. Usually, the prospector spends the better part of the evening and his gold at the local saloon drinking whiskey, awakening the next morning with a hellacious hangover and permanent memory lapse. That is, if he makes it out of the desert alive in the first place.

Take ole Sam Whitley, for instance. In

1894, Whitley prospected gold in Mohave County, Arizona's third-most-productive county for gold. Prolific treasure hunter and author Thomas Penfield wrote in his book, *A Guide to Treasure in Arizona*, that while prospecting, Whitley came across a deposit of gold that was said to have assayed for \$35,000 a ton. Back in town, Whitley told two friends that the deposit was within 2 miles of Sitgreaves Pass in the Black Mountains, not far from Oatman.

A few days later, the prospector loaded up his supplies and set out toward his find. After traveling down the trail a way, Whitley realized two men were following him. He pulled out his gun and started shooting. With bullets flying in all directions, Whitley succeeded in killing the two would-be claim jumpers right then and there. Unfortunately, in the process he was fatally wounded and died soon after, taking the location of the gold to his grave.

Arizona boasts an abundance of unique mineral deposits from one end of the state to the other. For centuries, since the Spanish conquistadores searched the territory for the fabled Seven Cities of Cibola, legends of vast riches beneath Arizona soil have kept treasure hunters' dreams alive.

Mine names like Vulture, Gold Road, Eldorado, Congress, Crown King and Bonanza fill volumes with Arizona's gold-mining history. But other names, like Lost Black Maverick, Lost Apache, Lost Soapmaker and Lost Jack Rabbit spur interest in fabled Arizona mines. Even Geronimo may have used stories of a hidden gold mine in an attempt to trick American soldiers into bringing him back to Arizona after his capture. In his book, Penfield wrote about Geronimo's lost gold mine.

According to Penfield, while a prisoner at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, Geronimo begged to return to his homeland before he died. He tried to strike a deal with soldiers there that in return for his freedom, he would lead Army officers to his hidden gold mine, purportedly somewhere near Sycamore Canyon in Yavapai County. The officers opted not to give the cunning Apache a chance to escape, so Geronimo never again stepped foot in Arizona, and died near Fort Sill in 1909.

Fighting Indians sometimes led to gold discoveries. In the April 1983 issue of *Arizona Highways*, James Cook wrote about a well-authenticated legend concerning gold found in a spot called Squaw Hollow. In 1864, King Woolsey, a veteran Indian fighter, and Judge John T. Alsap, a respected Arizona pioneer, led an expedition in search



of Indian warriors near Bloody Basin.

After a few days, the group encountered a band of Apaches and a battle began. Outgunned, the Apaches retreated, and Woolsey's party set up camp at Squaw Hollow. Recognizing the area as a good spot for prospecting, some of the men fanned out to search for gold. According to Alsap, they returned with the richest ore he had ever seen. It had been taken from a ledge that the men said contained an abundance of gold. Before they could make their way back to their discovery, the Apaches came back with reinforcements outnumbering the white men. Woolsey's party hightailed it back to Phoenix, keeping the location of the ledge a secret. Alsap wasn't with the men who found the gold, so he wasn't sure of its whereabouts. Years later he searched for the ledge, but never found it.

If lost gold mines do exist in Arizona, Niemuth said, they're most likely located in western Arizona, an area known for gold deposits. A map hanging on the wall in

[PRECEDING PANEL, PAGES 12 AND 13] The wild and forbidding landscape of the Superstition Wilderness provides the setting for legends of Jacob Waltz's gold and the Lost Dutchman Mine. ROBERT McDONALD

[ABOVE] The lost gold of a murdered miner reportedly lies secreted within 2 miles of Sitgreaves Pass, shown here, in the rugged Black Mountains near Oatman. TERRENCE MOORE

Niemuth's office shows significant gold occurrences in La Paz, Mohave and Yuma counties, not too far from where Sam Whitley and the miner Perkins took their chances on finding gold and paid dearly.

Yet as long as legends of Arizona's lost gold mines stay alive, those who are willing to risk desert storms, sweltering heat and treacherous terrain will keep searching. And, who knows? Maybe one day some lucky prospector might stumble across a pair of six-shooters half-buried in the sand—and uncover the key to untold riches. **AH**

Sally Benford enjoyed researching Arizona's lost gold mines, but plans to leave prospecting to the pros. She lives in Peoria.

Wild

ORCHIDS

Arizona has 26 species
of the world's largest flower family

Orchids seduce Ronald Coleman. He was smitten on the spot three decades ago.

"Wild orchids continue to fascinate me because of their beauty, rarity, the thrill of the hunt and the challenge of photographing them," says the author of *The Wild Orchids of Arizona and New Mexico*. The initial object of Coleman's passion: a 14-inch plant with a leafless stem sporting eight three-quarter-inch purplish-pink, brown and white flowers. Spotted in 1972 at Washington's Hoh Rainforest in Olympic National Park, the *Corallorhiza mertensiana* was as good as gold for Coleman.

"I had been growing commercially available orchids on my windowsill for about two years, so I knew about orchids and was even aware that some were native to the United States," says the Tucson resident. "But I hadn't contemplated ever finding any. Since I was already hooked on orchids and wildflowers, this was a match made in heaven. For the rest of that trip, and ever since, I've spent all my vacations and most weekends during the blooming season looking for orchids. Off-season, I spend time at the library researching orchids."

The largest family of flowering plants in the world, orchids are the second-largest commercial flower crop in the United States, behind only poinsettias. More than 25,000 kinds of wild orchids exist worldwide, with some 200 species native to the United States.

Remarkably durable, orchids have adapted to varied climates, from steamy jungles to arid deserts, and with the exception of Antarctica, orchids grow naturally on every continent. Arizona is home to 26 native orchids, found in 13 of the state's 15 counties. Sonoran Desert species growing close to cacti include the *Hexalectris warnockii*, *H. revoluta*, *H. spicata* and *Epipactis gigantea*.

Perhaps the heartiest Arizona wild orchid is the *Stenorrhynchos michuacanum*. Pale green, with dark-green stripes, the flowers possess a mild, musty fragrance that is noticeable at night, suggesting pollination by night-flying insects. "This orchid grows in the most difficult conditions, in alligator juniper forests at elevations of



TEXT BY CHERYL A. SWEET
PHOTOGRAPHS BY RONALD A. COLEMAN

[ABOVE] All of Arizona's 26 species of orchids are terrestrial (they grow from the ground), and about half of them grow in riparian and wetlands habitats. Shown here is the *Calypso bulbosa*.



[THIS PAGE] A) *Hexalectris spicata*, B) *Cypripedium parviflorum*, C) *Hexalectris revoluta*, D) *Stenorrhynchos michuacanum*, E) *Platanthera limosa*, F) *Calypso bulbosa*, G) *Hexalectris warnockii*, H) *Malaxis corymbosa*, I) *Corallorhiza maculata*, J) *Epipactis gigantea*, K) *Spiranthes delitescens*, L) *Corallorhiza striata*. [OPPOSITE PAGE] M) *Corallorhiza maculata*, N) *Malaxis corymbosa*.



about 5,000 feet in extreme southeastern Arizona, sometimes in direct sun,” notes Coleman. “The plants grow and bloom entirely within the summer monsoon season, which is the only time the conditions are gentle enough to support them.”

Coleman’s book, which took nine years to complete, is the latest scientific work on wild orchids in Arizona and New Mexico. Photographing all 26 species took considerable plant-detective work. “Part of my objective was to document the historic record, and make a case for the study and preservation of these enchanting flowers,” he says.

With wild-orchid hunting becoming an increasingly popular pastime, Coleman offers a few Arizona trekking tips: Search moist, forested areas above 7,000 feet during the April to October native-orchid blooming season. The White Mountains are the richest native-orchid region in the state, and the Santa Catalina Mountains north of Tucson harbor at least 10 wild orchid species. Keep in mind that sightings don’t necessarily spell the only success, he points out: “You’re out there hiking in beautiful country, so the search itself is rewarding.”

Wild orchids are often difficult for novices to detect. “The flower on some orchids is so small that you need a magnifying glass to really appreciate them,” says Coleman. “There can be 100 flowers on a stem that’s just 6 inches tall. That tells you how small the flowers are, and that’s what you have to be prepared for when you’re out looking. When I’m with friends who aren’t familiar with orchids and I point one out, they’re amazed it’s an orchid.”

Perseverance pays. At least it has for Coleman, who discovered a California orchid in the 1980s that was named after him. The *Piperia colemani* is a tiny green flower on a green stem found in the Sierra Nevadas in California.

The Arizona Department of Agriculture has

included all wild orchids in Arizona on the list of Highly Safeguarded Protected Native Plants, the highest level of protection under the law. “Most orchids live in association with a fungus, so they won’t survive transplanting because they’ll lose their association with the fungus,” Coleman notes. “The success rate in getting them transplanted back in the wild remains abysmally low.”

While Coleman’s research contributes to species survival, Aaron Hicks is immersed in another orchid-preservation project. The seven-year-old Orchid Seedbank Project preserves native orchids not only from Arizona, but also from every country in the world, through collection of seedpods.

According to the OSP Web site, Hicks, an Arizona State University plant transgeneticist, created the organization because “there was no central clearinghouse for conservationists, researchers and commercial and hobbyist growers” to get orchid seeds. Operating OSP from his home, Hicks works with horticulturists, chemists, biologists, biochemists and other scientists to improve longevity of orchid seeds in storage. Surveying his home overflowing with 90,000 common and rare orchids, Hicks dryly admits, “There has been some sprawl to the kitchen, but the lab itself is the garage.”

If you’re interested in hunting orchids in Arizona, the 120-member Orchid Society of Arizona is a good resource. The group holds informative meetings and other events, including educating students about orchids.

For more information, see its Web site at welcome.to/orchidsocietyaz. **AW**

Once blasé about orchids, Cheryl A. Sweet of Phoenix has developed a new appreciation of the flowering plants and is considering purchasing some for an in-home project.

Tucsonan Ronald A. Coleman has spent more than 30 years studying native orchids. He has written and photographed two books on the subject.

Sonoran Desert National Monument

ITS CAPTIVATING WILDERNESS EMBRACES MOMENTS IN HISTORY

TEXT BY BILL BROYLES PHOTOGRAPHS BY JACK DYKINGA





I'M GUILTY, BUT WE'VE ALL DONE IT: Ignore the kid next door who eventually becomes our best friend. Drive right past the better restaurant. Ask everyone to dance except the one we eventually choose to marry.

Of the 2 million people a year driving Interstate 8 past the Sonoran Desert National Monument in central Arizona, few know it's there, and fewer stop to enjoy it. I was one of them. Four million urbanites live within 60 miles, but few can tell you its name.

It may not even be on your map yet. Created in January 2001, it's Arizona's newest national monument.

Located southwest of Phoenix between Gila Bend and Casa Grande, the monument spans half a million acres of rugged mountains and rutted valleys. It's known for its bighorn sheep, spell-binding scenery and saguaro cacti forest. It has not one or two, but three wilderness areas. It's so good that many states would use it as a model for a license plate motto: "The Monument State."

To many of us who've lived in Arizona more than a couple of summers, the monument is both new and old. My first memory

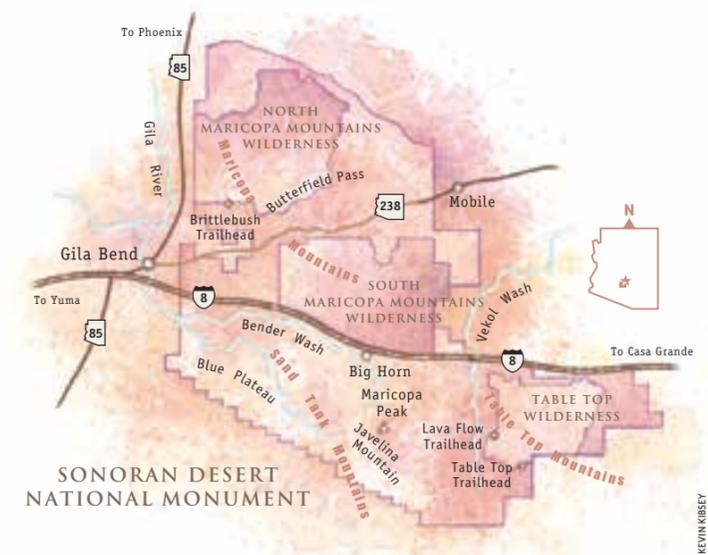
of it was as a child. Few cars had air conditioners. When we'd go from Tucson on old U.S. Route 80 (now I-8) to visit relatives in California or to go to the beach, my parents would buy a block of ice and set it in a cake pan on the transmission hump of the car. As it melted, we'd at least think we were cooler. We'd leave on Friday after work and school, and we'd travel by night to dodge the brunt of the sun.

In Casa Grande, we'd buy another block of ice, and a third in Gila Bend. I managed to stay awake only that far, but I remember

(Text continued on page 27)

[PRECEDING PANEL, PAGES 20 AND 21] Otherworldly monsoon light charges the atmosphere, creating hard-to-believe color contrasts in the Sonoran Desert National Monument. Moisture-laden air, heavy with turbulent potential, combines in a swirling alchemy of wind-borne dust and the day's last light to produce two different scenes of rare and powerful beauty.

[ABOVE] Saguaro cacti stand against a horizon dominated by the setting sun and the Sand Tank Mountains in this view from the western slope of the Table Top Mountains.







(Continued from page 23)

the road between those blocks of ice. It was two lanes back then, and wound through tall saguaros and strange trees. Invariably we'd see a fox or coyote cross ahead of us. Once we saw a deer. The countryside was magical, one without towns or many cars.

On another trip, we drove that stretch during a lunar eclipse and stopped by the roadside to take in the full sweep of the event. There was absolute silence—and no lights, no noise, no breeze, only black space from horizon to horizon, from us to the moon. On later trips, when driving to California on my own, I saw the golden moon rise and the full moon glare off granite cliffs as the radio blared rock 'n' roll from a high-watt station in Oklahoma or a disc jockey named Wolfman Jack from a transmitter in Mexico. If you had the Wolfman on, you could drive all night.

One of my University of Arizona English teachers was Byrd Granger, who's known for writing a second edition of Will Barnes' *Arizona Place Names*. I knew her as the no-nonsense instructor who cared about words and people. During World War II, she served in the Women Airforce Service Pilots and ferried planes for the military. In the classroom, she talked about ballet and art, aircraft engines and folklore, and in one unguarded moment mentioned that she still wrote letters to her deceased husband. Her glare could strip wall paint. Her praise could raise the sun.

Her poetry class was one of the two best college classes I ever took—and I took some dandies. An Emergency Medical Technician class taught me to check breath and blood, heart and bone; Doc Granger taught me to triage every word, healthy or sick, of the body we call language. One day she came to class almost giddy and announced, "I finished my manuscript at 4 this morning." She walked the talk, just as she expected us to do.

Dr. Granger, as we underclassmen called her, loved our word heritage, particularly the names of places. She loved derivations and geography, saying that names told little histories of the countryside and biographies of people who had mattered. Marana, a growing town in southern Arizona, may have been her favorite, since she mentioned it several times. The name sounds euphonious, but in Spanish it means "an impassible tangle of briars and brambles," because the original town sprang up in a mesquite thicket along the Santa Cruz River. She admired that. It also has impish connotations of a puzzle or a mess.

Although I still feel 16, my age is closer to the reverse of those digits. And somewhere in between those numbers, I found myself compiling place names not yet in Dr. Granger's book. And somewhere I grew interested in exploring that country between Casa Grande and Gila Bend, so I've been to many of those places named on the map and have met not only the butte, arroyo or well, but sometimes also the people behind the name.

One of the prettiest arroyos within the new monument you'll ever see is named Bender Wash, broad and sandy, lined with mesquites and desert willows. I met two of the Bender family, Letty Hofstra and Anita McGee. Their family moved to Arizona in 1913 to escape Oklahoma's panhandle. One thing and another, they ended up along the lonesome dirt road that eventually became U.S. Route 80.

There were no neighbors. Their dad started a gas station at a spot on the highway they called the Big Horn. Mom sold sandwiches

[PRECEDING PANEL, PAGES 24 AND 25] A sharp angle of sunlight fires the spines of a dense stand of saguaro cacti in Bender Wash.

[LEFT] A frost-damaged saguaro displays a stately resignation in the face of desert climate extremes.



and collected money for the gas. The girls started school and grew up in that country. Their father built and named places now in the monument, like Hog Tank, Big Horn and Jake's Tank. Though they left the ranch in 1952, the Bender sisters still return every winter to pick up litter along the I-8 near the Big Horn.

At the northern end of the monument, Margie Baker Woods has a cove, a trail and a peak named in her honor. She and her husband ran the Cosmo, a bygone restaurant and nightclub between Gila Bend and Buckeye.

Some of the monument names are descriptive. In springtime, the Brittlebush Trail passes hillsides splashed with yellow brittlebush flowers. The Lava Trail, as you'd expect, winds for 7 miles through the lava flows on the west flank of Table Top Mountain. The waterholes at Sand Tanks have sandy bottoms, and at twilight the Blue Plateau looks blue. Wildlife is represented by Antelope Peak, Big Horn and Javelina Mountain.

The monument names are unexpectedly tame. There's no Poison Well, Deadman Gap or Rattlesnake Hill. And, there are too few names from the Pima, Maricopa or Tohono O'odham languages. Vekol, a Pima word for grandmother, has been applied to Vekol Valley and to a silver mine south of the monument.

Place names can be lofty goals. The Table Top Mountains, in the monument's southeastern corner, have a summit trail beginning at a campground on the edge of the Table Top Wilderness area. The lower stretches provide easy walking, but it becomes rocky and loose on the upper slopes. The elevation gain is 2,000 feet over the 4.5-mile rise. Quail call from the hillside; a roadrunner crosses ahead of us, chasing a lizard. A mile later, two mule deer stare at us from behind a paloverde tree.

During springtime, yellow bladderpod and brittlebushes, orange poppies and pink owl clover may cover the slopes. Along the trail, mallows, chicory and phacelia lend spots of color against the dark rock. Later in the year, the cacti will bloom, with magenta hedgehog, yellow barrel, orange cholla and white saguaro blossoms

[ABOVE] The ruins of the old Big Horn service station slip into decay near the entrance to the Sonoran Desert National Monument.
[RIGHT] Monsoon clouds build over Table Top and a stand of mature saguaro cacti.





These are leftovers — relics — of previous cooler, wetter times, stranded after the last ice age. They manage to hang on here by rooting in shady canyons, on north-facing slopes and on the shadow side of boulders.

attracting insects, birds and bats, as well as photographers.

When the trail nearly crests, we're confronted with a mysterious wall of stacked stone blocks. Lore differs on who built it and why. Did Indians build it as a fortified wall to guard against their enemies? Did someone pen domestic sheep on the summit? Could the Civilian Conservation Corps have built the trail and wall to pave the way for airline beacons that guided planes from one airport to the next? Perhaps cowboys built the wall to keep cattle from straying across the summit from one valley to the next. Take your pick. Whatever the purpose, someone moved tons of rock.

The top of the mountain is not quite as flat as we'd expect from its name or distant profile. It appears more like an open book being read by someone sitting to the northwest, the two flat pages tilted into a gutter that drains the infrequent rains. The Table Top Mountains were known as Flat Top prior to 1941, but the Pimas called it Mo'obad for "mountain with its head cut off." Doc Granger would say Mo'obad is much more poetic than either Table or Flat Top.

Some of the names throw us off the scent. Maricopa Peak forms the summit of Javelina Mountain. The 3,183-foot summit of the sprawling Maricopa Mountains is unnamed. Go figure.

Maricopa Peak, like Table Top, has another twist. They both are in a monument dedicated to the Sonoran Desert, and their slopes are covered with magnificent saguaros, paloverde trees, cholla and ocotillo. But near their summits we begin to notice plants that are not in our desert flower books: Arizona scrub oak, roseberry juniper, Arizona rosewood, banana yucca and canotia, as well as ferns and grasses such as curly mesquite and little barley.

These are leftovers — relics — of previous cooler, wetter times,

stranded after the last ice age. They manage to hang on here by rooting in shady canyons, on north-facing slopes and on the shadow side of boulders to save them from the summer sun's full fury.

In the monument can be found at least 450 of the Sonoran Desert's 2,500 or so plant species, as well as many of the typical animals.

Page upon page of history have plunged through the monument, but few structures have stuck. A few ranch houses and barns, rail sidings, a gas station, some roads and mine tunnels, and water tanks and wells were built over the centuries, but no towns. Better land, with water or gold, beckoned farther down the trail. In 1699 Father Eusebio Francisco Kino and his entourage became the first Europeans to visit the monument. They "discovered" many small Indian villages along the Santa Cruz and Gila rivers and mapped them, writing trail directions for future travelers.

Early explorers and travelers going from the East to California used a trail through the Maricopa Mountains to shave 80 miles off their trip. The trail went directly west from what is now the community of Maricopa to Gila Bend, instead of following the Gila River and looping north through Phoenix. This stretch undoubtedly was traveled earlier by Pimas, Maricopas and Coccomaricopas, as well as their Hohokam and Patayan ancestors before them. They went on foot to hunt and to gather wild foods. A dozen or more Indian tribes fit the monument into their histories and religions.

Perhaps the most historic spot in the monument is Butterfield Pass, first called Puerto de los Coccomaricopas by Francisco Garces in 1775. He also named Sierra Maricopa, in honor of the tribe, although another member of the expedition, Pedro Font, called it Sierra de Comars. Garces and Font were part of an expedition led by Juan Bautista de Anza, a Spaniard, captain in the army and commander of the garrison at Tubac in what became southern Arizona. New Spain was growing as settlers and missionaries came. They needed a fast and safe route from mainland Mexico to California. Travel by sea was risky for both passengers and

[LEFT] Symbolic of the constant desert cycle of death and rejuvenation, Mexican goldpoppies peek out between the ribs of a fallen saguaro. [ABOVE RIGHT] A spiky symmetry marks the tough exterior of the saguaro. The ribs encased beneath the spines and the cactus' leathery hide expand and contract with seasonal rainfall.

[RIGHT] Aglow with the lowering rays of late-afternoon sunshine, teddy bear cholla and saguaro cacti stretch to the base of the Sand Tank Mountains.

cargo, so Anza set out to establish a commercial route along the trails mapped by Kino 75 years before.

The safest way was along the riverbanks of the Santa Cruz and then the Gila to the Colorado. Anza started from the presidio of Tubac, south of modern Tucson, with 240 people, 165 pack mules, 340 saddle animals and 302 head of beef. During the journey, they lost cattle, mules and horses, but they gained a few souls when wives traveling with their husbands gave birth along the trail. They would seed the settlement of San Francisco when they arrived March 27, 1776, five months after they began.

The route was also used by many of the forty-niners on their way to the goldfields of California and by the Mormon Battalion during the Mexican War. You'll find segments of it called the Juan Bautista de Anza National Historic Trail, Gila Trail, Mormon Trail, Leach's Wagon Road, Butterfield and Southern Overland Trail. Someone sitting on a rock overlooking Butterfield Pass could have cheered the long parade of Arizona's history.

The road was so hot and dry that it became known as the Forty Mile Desert, and travelers raced across as if holding their breaths. John Russell Bartlett, who crossed it in June 1852, reported "as there was no water the whole distance, the journey must be made in one march without stopping. . . ." His pack train went at night and traversed the 45 miles in 13 hours. Near exhaustion, they reached the banks of the Gila River where they found water and pasture for the mules, and the men, "creeping under some mesquite bushes soon fell asleep, rest being more desirable than food."

Stagecoaches and regular freight-wagon service began in 1857. The most famous of several stage lines was the Butterfield Overland Mail. Travelers with durable bottoms could ride from St. Louis to San Francisco in 25 days. Butterfield service ended in 1861, but the pass was well traveled until 1878, a year after the railroad came to Arizona. The railroad line, still used, runs through the monument a bit south of the dusty stage road.

There's something nostalgic as well as humbling about sitting near the tracks and watching freight or passenger trains rumble by. The ground shakes, and we're grateful that pioneers built rail routes to serve the growing nation. The railroad itself brought names to the monument. Ocapos siding was coined from the reversed first two letters of Southern Pacific Company.

Byrd Granger would have loved adding this new monument to her place name book. ■■

Bill Broyles of Tucson was one of many public citizens who worked for creation of Sonoran Desert National Monument. His book Our Sonoran Desert was published last summer by Rio Nuevo Publishers in Tucson.

This was Jack Dykinga's second time exploring the monument. The solitude and dense population of saguaro cacti keep him returning—even in 119-degree heat.



LOCATION: Approximately 60 miles south of Phoenix.

GETTING THERE: From Phoenix, drive south on Interstate 10 and turn onto Maricopa Road at Exit 164. At the town of Maricopa, turn right onto State Route 238 and continue to the monument area.

TRAVEL ADVISORY: If you plan to visit the monument, carry plenty of water and check your route with the Bureau of Land Management, as travel on some of the dirt roads requires high-clearance vehicles. Spring and fall are the most comfortable seasons. Spring flowers may bloom in the desert from late January through June.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Bureau of Land Management, Phoenix Field Office, (623) 580-5500 or their Web site, azwww.az.blm.gov/sonoran/sondes_main.htm.





GETTY IMAGES

On the Trail of the White Ghost of Kendrick Peak

A Legendary Tale for Fools, or the Nemesis of Dreaming Hunters?

TEXT BY LEO W. BANKS PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT G. McDONALD

The morning sun hangs like a beacon over the winter ground as I exit State Route 64, south of the Grand Canyon, in search of a legendary animal. I don't expect to find it, at least in daylight, and certainly not with snow lying in puzzle pieces over the mountains ahead of me.

No, if I have any chance at all of setting eyes on this fantastic creature, a snow-white deer, perhaps an albino, first seen by hunters more than 80 years ago, it will come at night, when its striking coat shows up through the forest darkness.

As I drive east along Forest Service Road 141 through the Kaibab National Forest, I wonder how this landscape of golden brown hills sloping gently back to majestic pine

mountains produces so many odd tales.

The deer called the White Ghost inhabits one of many tales still told around this part of the state, known to some as the Land Where the Lion Screams.

The name doesn't show up on any map, and I can't claim credit for coining the colorful phrase. It appeared as a headline in *Scenic Southwest* magazine in a January 1952 article about this portion of northern Arizona, so partial to strange occurrences.

Flagstaff marks the area's border on the east, and on the west stands the small railroad town of Williams, with Kendrick Peak and Beale and Sitgreaves mountains in between. Below Interstate 40, the area includes Garland Prairie and the rugged

canyons south of Bill Williams Mountain.

The vast majority of this territory lies within the Kaibab forest, but a portion of it ranges south into the upper reaches of Prescott National Forest.

I talked to a number of locals, men and women with deep roots in the area, but no one could satisfactorily explain why these forests, lakes and mountain trails produce so many tales. The best theory begins with history.

In the latter months of 1853 and into 1854, Lt. Amiel Weeks Whipple led an expedition across this same countryside, hoping to advise the U.S. Congress on the best railroad route to the Pacific.

Among several Whipple diarists, New



Hampshire-born John Pitts Sherburne ranks as my favorite. I like him because he dropped out of West Point—he tanked in chemistry—and gained his place in the expedition only by being Whipple's brother-in-law.

I also like him because he wrote well. His account tells of several instances of wolves howling around the men's tents at night, frightening everyone, and in one case carrying off sheep.

About 23 miles west of Leroux Spring, almost due north of Bill Williams Mountain, Whipple's party was startled to see an Indian peering into camp. "Tho' on foot,"

Sherburne wrote, "he ran with such rapidity as to render pursuit on mules out of the question."

Another encounter with Indians occurred southwest of Ash Fork, between the Juniper and Santa Maria mountains. This place lies beyond the region of investigation, but it plays into my theory nonetheless.

Whipple's men captured two Indians believed to be Tonto Apaches. H. Balduin Mollhausen, a Prussian artist accompanying the expedition, described them as "powerfully made, with large heads, projecting cheekbones and foreheads, very thick noses, swelled lips, and little slits of eyes with which

[ABOVE] JD Dam Lake has been the scene for some of the region's eerie stories.

[RIGHT] Just south of Williams, the Santa Fe Dam plays a part in local legends of separation and tragedy.

they looked about as fierce and cunning as wolves."

Sherburne said that after being led into camp, one of the captives escaped, after which the second Indian was chained and padlocked. Before long, he began making animal-like calls.

"At short intervals he shouted something for the other," wrote Sherburne, "but no answer except for the distant howling of a

wolf, which was thought to proceed from some of his comrades. This was kept up during the evening & is still heard in the distance."

The prevalence of wolves in this part of Arizona, and the apparent habit of Indians to mimic their cries, seems significant. I believe the land has a memory, and over time its sounds and sights attach like a computer chip to the brains of the humans who live on it.

Stories emanate from these sights and sounds, and they're handed down. Even when the source of them—in this case, wolves—has vanished, people still hear them, or some reasonable substitute, because time and forest memory make it so.

Forest Road 141 rolls toward Sitgreaves, Beale and Kendrick mountains, the supposed home of the White Ghost and the

perfect place to test my theory. It's a fair distance from the hubbub of civilization, so I'm safe for now from the men in white coats. History has steeped this route.

In two places, the road intersects the Beale Wagon Road, sections of which remain visible after more than 140 years. Edward F. Beale built it between 1857 and 1860, and travelers used it extensively as a wagon path to California until 1883.

By midafternoon, I'm on foot, making my way up a hillside trail on Sitgreaves, said to be the location of a number of rock forts built by late 19th-century outlaws for protection against pursuing lawmen. My steps land softly on the thick pine needles. The deep quiet exists just as it did the night before at Santa Fe Dam, below Williams.

One of Williams' persistent legends, dating to the early 1900s, plays out there. As

the story goes, a woman who lost track of her children went searching for them at the dam, and in her excitement lost her footing and drowned.

On stormy nights, residents today say they can hear her calling for them. Or do they hear the outlaw wolf?

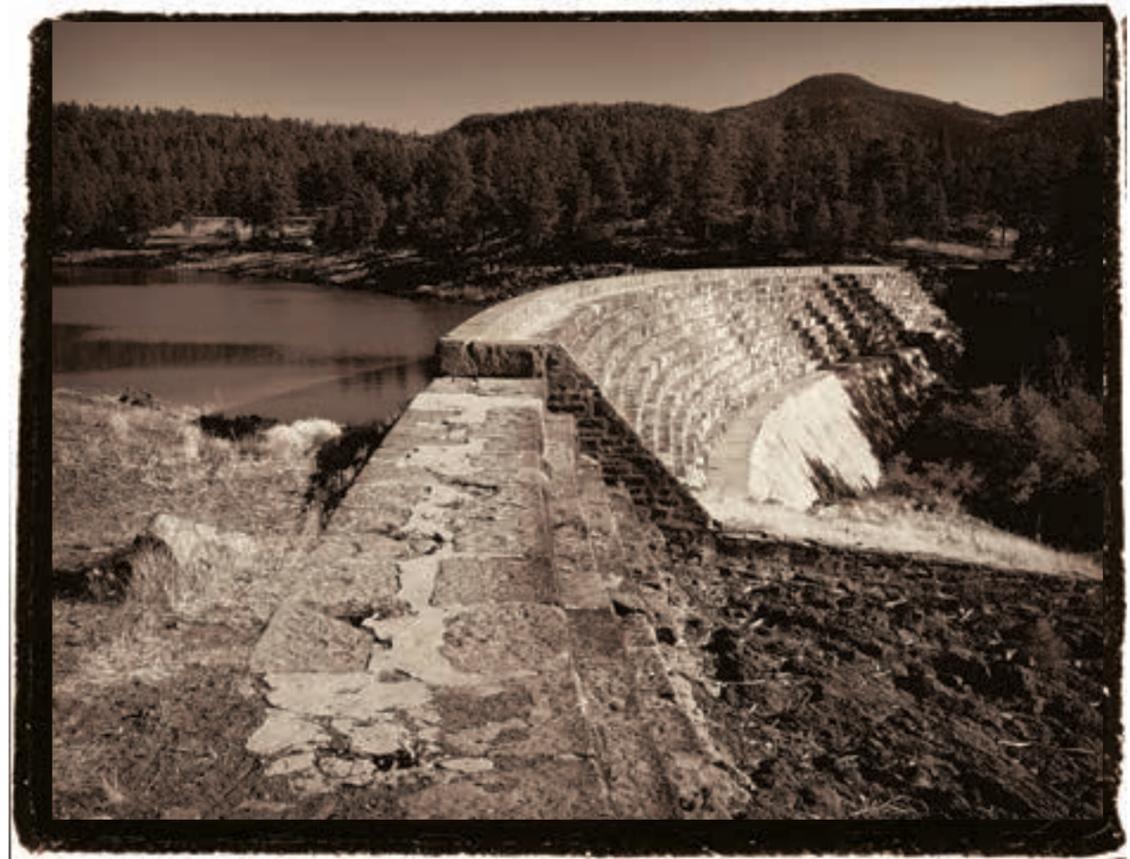
Around the same time, the stock corrals and pastures were besieged by a voracious white wolf. The beast did its work on both sides of the Perkinsville Road, south of Williams—until Cap Merrill, a trapper who was every bit as cunning as his prey, left his cabin on the rim of Sycamore Canyon and started after the predator, whose howling was known to all.

In prose purple enough to suit a legend, reporter George Brigham Young wrote in *Scenic Southwest*: "His great jowls dripping the blood of his kill, the outlaw would stand on the jutting pinnacle of a rearing crag and utter his unearthly, vicious call."

Merrill and his dogs cornered and destroyed the outlaw in MC Canyon, in the Prescott National Forest east of Drake. But some folks believe the vengeful

A weeping woman? A bellowing wolf?

Both sound like nothing more than stories told around a campfire. But some Williams old-timers insist the incident at Santa Fe Dam is based on fact.



We wondered at that stillness,
and then it came —
the most unearthly noise
I ever heard.

animal's voice still haunts the land.

A weeping woman? A bellowing wolf? Both sound like nothing more than stories told around a campfire. But some Williams old-timers insist the incident at Santa Fe Dam is based on fact. As for the wolf, Merrill took its striking white pelt to the Grand Canyon, and according to a *Scenic Southwest* report in November 1954, sold it for \$1,000 to George Horace Lorimer, editor of the *Saturday Evening Post*.

Later, even with the wolves gone from the area, the shrieking continued. By the early 1950s, writers attempting to explain the sounds turned to the mountain lion.

In testimony taken by *The Williams News*, Mrs. Al Legath told of the time she and a companion were at JD Dam, 16 miles southeast of town, when the peace was broken:

"There wasn't an animal in sight, not even a cow, nor a bird. Not even a bird song. We wondered at that stillness, and then it came — the most unearthly noise I ever heard. I wouldn't say it was like a woman's scream, for it was more bloodcurdling than that. A cold hand began at the base of my spine and ran all the way up to the back of my head.

"When I could get my voice, I quavered, 'What — what's that?'

"'I-I don't know,' was my friend's reply. 'Let's get out of here.'

"And we got."

Late in the afternoon, I reach Spring Valley in the Kaibab forest northeast of Williams, a place of grand open meadows and classic old barns made of wood slats that rattle in the breeze. I see horses in pastures behind split-rail fences. The shadows of big pine trees fall across the dirt road.

After several days spent tracking these stories, these odd combinations of myth and fact, I've learned one thing better than any other: A legend needs the proper climate to thrive. Under afternoon's brightest light, beautiful, peaceful Spring Valley hardly seems the place.

But put away the sun for a moment and blacken the sky. Hang a bent finger of moon in its midsection and turn up the wind just enough to transmit every minute sound, every odd rustle. Then drop the temperature to where the blood flow slows to a trickle,

and this peaceful forest becomes something else.

I continue driving on FR 141, and as the shadows of night begin to fall I pick up Forest Service Road 194. It intersects 141 just past Sitgreaves Mountain, then crosses Beale and rolls east toward Kendrick Peak. In these very draws, canyons and pastures, the story of the White Ghost got its start.

The logical mind can only scoff at the tale, and I understand that. But before you scoff, listen to Charlie Christiansen, a 59-year-old road grader operator, describe what he saw 30 years ago in the forest north of Spring Valley:

"There were two of them, and they were running through the cedars. I'd say they went 200 yards before they got out of sight. I've spent my whole life in these hills, and believe me, I got a long enough look to know what they were."

Two snow-white deer. Others report seeing a lone deer, a huge white buck with flowing whiskers and a remarkable ability to bound silently away from hunters.

The animal of legend was first seen in 1924, and by the end of the decade a local taxidermist, captivated by the stories hunters told, offered \$500 for the carcass. The reward attracted professional hunters, but the clever deer eluded them, too.

It could bound from one side of a defile to the other, fully astonishing the pros. Few mountain goats could descend a wall of stone, or drop off the rim of a canyon into the brush below. But this deer could.

One writer, noting its many feats of escape, described the White Ghost of Kendrick Peak as the most written-about deer in the West, a now-you-see-him, now-you-don't king of the wild.

"Let me tell you about the time I spent two weeks chasing that buck," one hunter said. "And when I walked off the mountain he almost ran over me. And I'll swear he was laughing as he went by."

The animal's second peculiar feature, its long whiskers, attracted the notice of non-hunters, and in the 1940s, summer tourists began showing up in the area to get a look at him. But by then, whenever hunters spotted the great deer, they lowered their rifles, because no one wished to earn the



[ABOVE] An abandoned barn rests in quiet disrepair along Forest Service Road 141 in Kaibab National Forest. Sitgreaves Mountain hugs the horizon in the distance.

false honor of bringing down the legend of the forest.

I stop and find a trail on the western slope of Kendrick Peak. I have nothing in mind but to listen and breathe the air and exercise my tight muscles. When I return, I sit on the hood of my car in the gloom just after dusk.

Absolutely silly, I tell myself. A tale for

fools. But after an hour of pondering, with the forest murmuring its terrible ode under a gunpowder sky, doubts emerge. And they grow as the moments tick off.

Don't get me wrong. I didn't see the White Ghost, and I didn't hear the pounding of his hooves. But I didn't have to. The forest remembers. ■■

Leo W. Banks also wrote about the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show in this issue.

Flagstaff-based Robert G. McDonald hoped to catch a glimpse of the White Ghost deer while exploring the Kendrick Peak area.



23 miles northeast of Williams.

GETTING THERE: From Flagstaff, travel 30 miles west on Interstate 40 to Williams. Exit I-40 just before Williams and take State Route 64 north toward the Grand Canyon. Forest Road 141 links to State 64 about 5 miles north of Williams.

LOCATION: Kendrick Peak, which straddles the Kaibab and Coconino national forests, is about 17 miles northwest of Flagstaff and

TRAVEL ADVISORY: The forest roads are easily passable, except after a hard rain. For more information, check with the Kaibab National Forest in Williams, Williams Ranger District, (928) 635-8200. **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:** Williams-Grand Canyon Chamber of Commerce, (928) 635-1418; Flagstaff Chamber of Commerce, (928) 774-4505; Coconino National Forest, Peaks Ranger District, Flagstaff, (928) 527-3600.

{early day arizona}

He and his best girl strolled into the fancy French restaurant. He tried to put on his I-do-this-every-evening look.

WAITER: "Will Monsieur have a la carte or table d'hote?"

YOUNG MAN: "Both. And put plenty of gravy on them."

*The Weekly Tribune (Tucson),
APRIL 24, 1909*

RODEO JOKES

We asked readers for rodeo jokes. Here are some responses:

It's no wonder so many young people want to join the rodeo. What other profession averages more than 100 bucks an hour?

JOSEPH M. JONES, Ash Fork

When the champion rodeo bronco rider was asked why he wore only one spur, he replied, "I've noticed that if you can get one side of a horse to move, the other side will always go along."

PHYLLIS BEVING, Everly, IA

One bronco was so ferocious a contestant actually refused to get on it, a technique called "passing the buck."

JOHN KRIWIEL, Oak Lawn, IL

Two small boys belonging to rodeo families were playing behind the bucking chutes at the local rodeo when the strains of

"The Star-Spangled Banner" could be heard signaling the start of the show.

One little fellow asked his friend, "What's that song they always play?"

The other one answered, "I think it's called 'Bronc Riders Get Ready.'"

MARY EINSEL, Wickenburg

Our rodeo horse was half horse, half hyena. He'd throw the rider, then laugh.

One rodeo rider was thrown so often he earned frequent-flier miles.

BOTH BY TOM PADOVANO
Jackson Heights, NY

With dreams of rodeo glory dancing in his head, a tenderfoot decided to hone his horsemanship. He mounted the horse, and it sprang into motion. It galloped along at a steady and rhythmic pace, but the tenderfoot began to slip from the saddle.

Terrified, he grabbed for the horse's mane, but couldn't seem to get a firm grip. He tried to throw his arms around the horse's neck and almost lost his balance. The horse galloped along, seemingly impervious to its slipping rider.

Finally, the tenderfoot tried to throw himself to safety by leaping from the horse. Unfortunately, his foot became entangled in the

PERSPECTIVE
UNUSUAL

Maricopa County, where Phoenix is located, has 168 golf courses, more than any other county in the country. Its motto is "Fore!" — Linda Perret

stirrup, putting him at the mercy of the pounding hooves. His head battered repeatedly against the ground, and he was moments away from unconsciousness when, to his great fortune, the Wal-Mart manager ran out and unplugged the horse.

ROGER NAYLOR, Cottonwood

On their first visit to the West, the city slicker and his wife decided to attend a rodeo. After watching rider after rider get thrown in the bull-riding event, the tourist turned to his wife and said, "Gosh Betsy, those bulls sure are mean. How do they ever get close enough to milk them?"

BOB McDONNELL, Valatie, NY

I tended bar in a tavern across the street from Tucson's rodeo grounds. My husband came to pick me up and sat at the bar while he waited for my shift to end. He noticed four tough bull riders laughing and loudly bragging about their day's adventures.

He wandered over to them and calmly said, "Ya' know, I could have been a bull rider if it wasn't for my stomach trouble."

They snickered and asked, "What kind of stomach trouble do you have?"

He looked them straight in the eye and said, "No guts."

LAWANDA BROTHERS
Tucson

Running late for his next performance, a rodeo clown was pulled over while speeding from Tucson to Phoenix.

Suspicious of the costume, the officer demanded to inspect the

contents of the trunk. To his amazement, it was filled with razor-sharp stainless steel Bowie knives. Asking why so many lethal weapons were concealed in the trunk, the officer was unimpressed with the explanation that the clown's specialty was daredevil juggling. "These Bowie knives are simply the tools of my trade," he said. "Now, can I just have my ticket and be on my way?"

"Not until you prove your story," quipped the cop. "I want to see you juggle a dozen of these knives at the same time, right now." Conceding with a sigh, the clown soon had a dozen blades flashing in the sun as they sailed in precision above his head.

Just about that time, on the other side of the road, heading in the opposite direction, Clem and Slim were returning from Phoenix to Tucson. Noticing the strange spectacle of a trooper and cruiser accompanied by a clown juggling a dozen Bowie knives, Clem turned to Slim and asked, "Did you see what I just saw?"

"Yeah," drawled Slim, "that DUI test is gettin' tougher and tougher all the time!"

ROGER RABALAIS, Charleston, WV

{reader's corner}

I put hot sauce on everything. I'm the only person I know whose cereal goes "snap, crackle and holy moly." Send us your hot sauce jokes and we'll pay you \$50 for each one we use.

TO SUBMIT HUMOR: Send your jokes and humorous Arizona anecdotes to Humor, *Arizona Highways*, 2039 W. Lewis Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85009 or e-mail us at editor@arizonahighways.com. Please include your name, address and telephone number with each submission.

WILSONGARY'S WEST

by JIM WILLOUGHBY



"I'd say we should go THAT way."

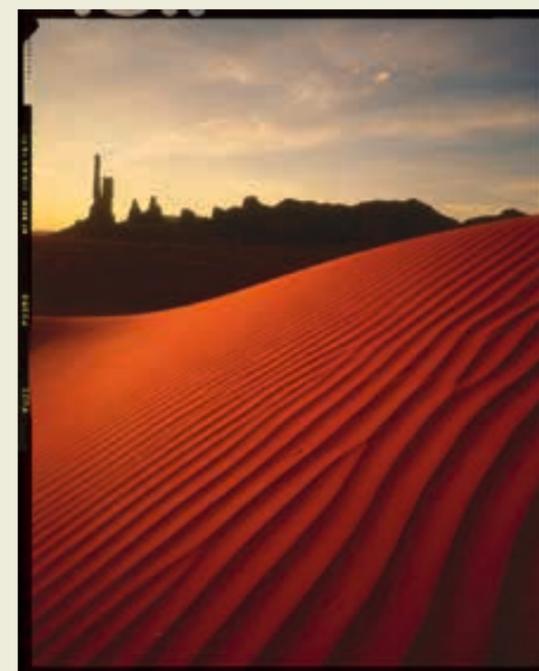


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Havasu Falls, Kerrick James; Portrait, Shawna Scherbarth; Deer Creek Falls, David Muench; Monument Valley dunes at sunrise, LeRoy DeLoie

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Bald Eagles Find a Cozy, Secluded Home at Far-flung Alamo Lake

HAVE ASPIRED TO VISIT the Alamo Lake area for many years. Mostly, the great eagle rescue story lured me, but I was also pulled by my unreasonable affection for the sharp and spiny land of loose lava that lies between the end of the pavement and the shores of this out-of-joint desert lake.

Alamo Dam created the lake in 1968 at the junction of the Big Sandy and Santa Maria

Route 93, between mile markers 177 and 178.

Labeled as Alamo Road on some maps, the unmarked road begins as a washboard dirt track until about mile 19, where it smooths out into a well-graded surface. It jaunts westward from the highway into the open desert, hemmed first by Joshua trees, then mesquites, paloverdes and ocotillos.

Slowing to a stop, I noticed at the top of one yellow-flowered paloverde a smallish, white-headed butterfly with a bright-orange abdomen and shimmering black wings spotted with white and iridescent blue—a misnamed great purple hairstreak butterfly.

He sat high on the blossoming tree, rubbing his hind legs on a projection of his rear wings—a “false head” designed to fool hungry birds into biting his other end instead of his head.

As I watched, another black butterfly fluttered past, provoking an immediate challenge. The resident male flung himself at the interloper, chased it around the tree, then straight up into the air for a hundred feet. Then they dove at the ground like a pair of rice-paper biplanes. At the last minute, they pulled up and one fluttered away. The victor swaggered back to his perch, having demonstrated the top-gun flying skills that convinced the intruder he would lose the race for any passing female.

Satisfied that butterflies are just as foolish as human beings, I climbed back into the car to continue my journey. About 6 miles from U.S. 93, I encountered the first Y intersection, which is unsigned, and stayed to the left. After another 23 miles, I came to a cluster of buildings and an intersection signed as the turnoff to Alamo Lake State Park. Wanting to see the north end of the lake first, I continued straight ahead.

Almost 3 miles later, I explored several of the bumpy, dusty side roads that lead a mile or two into primitive camping and hiking areas around the lake's north shore. During the recent drought conditions, this end of the lake has been mostly dry.

Alamo Lake remains an out-of-place gleam and glimmer in the desert. It captures the Big Sandy and Santa Maria rivers and merges them into the Bill Williams River flowing from the lake, which nourishes one of the state's best,

rivers to control violent floods that can raise the lake level by 11 feet in a single day. Before the lake's creation, the harsh, angular desert attracted prospectors, hermits and colorful characters. Since the lake arrived and the area came under the care of Alamo Lake State Park, it draws campers, wanderers and fishermen—not to mention nesting desert bald eagles. So I set out to savor the juxtaposition of lake, rivers and remote desert, way out past the pavement in the blush of spring—and maybe glimpse an eagle.

I launched westward onto Tres Alamos Road, a portal to the raw desert, which begins off U.S.



[ABOVE] Blossoming saguaro cacti display Arizona's state flower near Alamo Lake State Park southeast of Lake Havasu City in western Arizona.

[OPPOSITE PAGE] Mirrored in the still lake at dawn, an angler takes advantage of what the Arizona Game and Fish Department calls the “very best largemouth bass fishing in this area.”





[ABOVE] Teddy bear cholla spines look deceptively touchable in the last light of day near the Rawhide Mountains west of Alamo Lake.
[OPPOSITE PAGE] The combination of fish-stocked water and abundant nesting sites attracts bald eagles to the lake.

last stretches of cottonwood-willow habitat as it meanders some 33 miles down to the southern end of Lake Havasu on the Colorado River. Sweltering in the summer, the remote, shallow Alamo Lake has some of Arizona's best spring bass fishing, thanks to a fluctuating shoreline and heavy, seasonal inflows from a 6,500-square-mile watershed.

The springtime abundance of fish also attracts at least one pair of bald eagles that usually nest in the cottonwood snags at the lake's north end, feeding their voracious chicks on the lake's finny buffet. Bald eagles have made a dramatic recovery nationwide. In Arizona, which has nearly the entire population of desert nesting eagles, there were 45 nesting pairs in 2002. State nest watchers

protect the nesting eagles in areas where they might be disturbed by humans, like in the tangle of drowned trees at the lake's north end.

I'd wanted to visit Alamo ever since I'd heard about the time, nearly two decades ago, that nest watchers in a rowboat saved two eagle chicks from rising floodwaters about to sweep their nest from a cottonwood snag. The chicks were placed with another nesting pair of eagles and seemed to make the transition successfully.

So I spent time around the upper end of the lake, exploring the welter of dirt roads and keeping an eye on the sky. Alas, while I was momentarily fooled by a couple of circling turkey vultures, the eagles remained hidden.

I backtracked to Tres Alamos Road and

returned to the turnoff for the state park, where I turned right and drove to Alamo Dam Road, then turned right again. From the first turnoff, it's 6.5 miles to a ranger station and fee-collection point. A half-mile farther stands a small grocery store, near the boat launch and the lake's southern shoreline, suitable for wading, picnicking and birdwatching.

After nearly a full day of exploring side trails, having lunch while watching an itinerant flock of pelicans, and loitering here and there around the lake, I took the southerly route home down the paved Alamo Dam Road. The two-lane highway runs through farming country about 38 miles to U.S. Route 60 and the little town of Wenden, where I gassed up for a leisurely two-hour return to Phoenix. ■



WARNING: Back road travel can be hazardous if you are not prepared for the unexpected. Whether traveling in the desert or in the high country, be aware of weather and road conditions, and make sure you and your vehicle are in top shape. Carry plenty of water. Don't travel alone, and let someone at home know where you're going and when you plan to return. Odometer readings in the story may vary by vehicle.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Alamo Lake State Park, (928) 669-2088, www.pr.state.az.us/parkhtml/alamo.html.



Newly Opened Big Room at Kartchner Caverns Reveals 'Living' Wonders

THE EARTH BREATHES — its intake and exhalation measured in seasons. In the caverned heart of the Earth, people stand and stare, sensing the vitality of living stone.

Now visitors have a whole new set of wonders to marvel at when they visit Kartchner Caverns State Park, one of the world's 10 most colorful and varied limestone caverns, where air seeps into the cave half the year and breathes out the other half as changes in temperature and humidity alter the difference in air pressure between inside and outside.

After years of painstaking, over-budget, high-tech surgery to build a trail, install massive airlock doors and string delicate dim lights, the park opened the second half of the cavern—a fantasy "castle" decorated with rock

formations that appear to be of dripping stone.

The Big Room—400 feet long and 240 feet wide—dwarfs the portions of the cave that have been open to the public since 1999. Those sections have drawn an estimated 500,000 visitors, and they bring in roughly \$2 million a year, which supports Arizona State Parks. A 1,220-foot wheelchair-accessible trail winds carefully through the soaring spaces of the Big Room, past the lurid formations of the Strawberry Room and into the intimate, stunning Cul de Sac. The small group tours of the new cave sections should bring in another \$1 million per year—even though tours will halt all summer to avoid disturbing the colonies of nursing bats, which have migrated to this cave to raise their young for as long as 50,000 years.

Some of the cave's most bizarre and

impressive rock formations adorn the sections that opened to public tours in November, the most accessible of 2.4 miles of mapped passages that twist and turn to at least 200 feet beneath the surface. Scientists have found an intriguing scattering of fossils in the new section, including the century-old bones of a coyote lost in the midst of the Big Room. The body of an ancient bat has been fused with the floor, as were the bones of the 86,000-year-old (now extinct) giant ground sloth.

The wide variety of fragile formations, called speleothems, remain the cave's chief draw, both in the new Big Room section and in the previously opened Rotunda Room (230 feet by 120 feet) and the Throne Room (170 feet by 145 feet), where tours are limited to 500 visitors per day and the waiting list for phone-in reservations stretches for months—especially on weekends.

The formations, known as stalactites, soda straws, stalagmites, columns, semitransparent draperies of stone, parachutes, turnips, flowstones, popcorn, helecites, birdsnest quartz and boxwork, demonstrate the astonishing flexibility of stone. One 21-foot-2-inch-long soda straw made of dripped calcite rates as one of the longest such features in the world.

The neck-craning, breath-catching tour of the Big Room and the Strawberry Room spurs one long exclamation. Exquisitely thin stone hangs like curtains from the ceiling, as deftly positioned lights illuminate its undulating striations. Ceilings bristle with thickets of stalactites that taper downward to wire-thin points. Massive stalagmite spires of colorful rock rise from the floor, reaching toward the spikes hanging from the ceiling. The whole crescendo of calcite is so fused, melted, strange and colorful that even Disney would not dare such absurd overstatement.

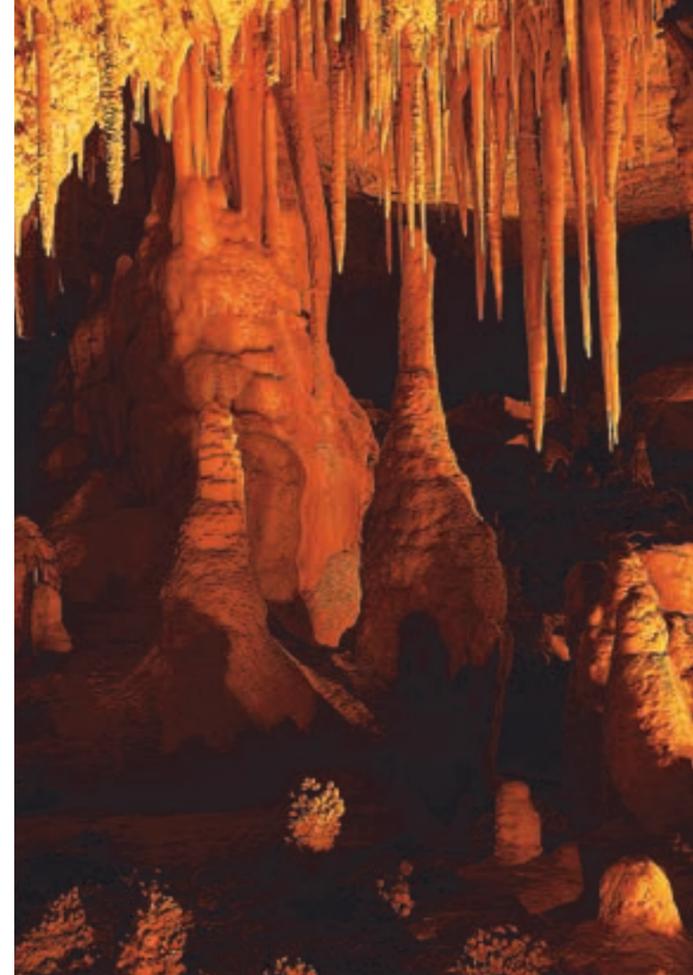
The extravagantly decorated cave offers a vivid lesson in geology and geochemistry. The

cave runs along a splintering of faults in beds of 320-million-year-old escabrosa limestone, composed of the compressed skeletons of ancient sea creatures. Buried and fused, the limestone layers were pressed again toward the surface between 15 and 5 million years ago.

Groundwater seeping through the fault zones created Kartchner and other limestone caves scattered throughout southeast Arizona. After creating the cavern, water formed stalactites and stalagmites drip by drip. Release of carbon dioxide from the mineral-rich water dripping into the cave prompted the minerals to crystallize. This created the formations that have grown like living things throughout the caves in the past 200,000 years. The rate of growth peaked perhaps 70,000 years ago and dwindled to an excruciating drip when the end of the Ice Age, 10,000 years ago, dried out the Southwest.

However, Kartchner remains a "living cave," building its formations at a rate almost imperceptible in a single, pitifully brief human lifetime. The bats come each season, the mites dig blindly in the guano, the bones of giants lie frozen into the floor and the Earth takes a six-month breath—lost in deep dreams. All the while, the curious humans go down into the cave to stand and stare and wonder in the heart of the Earth—among the tumescent tissues of calcite and crystal. ■

[BELOW] Filled with awe-inspiring formations, the aptly named Big Room is longer at its apex than a football field, and the ceiling at its highest point is taller than a four-story building.



[LEFT] Only recently opened to the public, the Big Room, the Strawberry Room and the Cul-de-Sac dramatically expand the Kartchner Caverns experience. [ABOVE] A "living cave," Kartchner Caverns grows and evolves as deposits from gently seeping groundwater add to its varied formations. ARIZONA STATE PARKS

when you go LOCATION: Approximately 50 miles southeast of Tucson. GETTING THERE: Follow Interstate 10 to the Sierra Vista and Fort Huachuca Exit 302, just west of Benson. Turn south onto State Route 90 and drive about 9 miles to the park. HOURS: Open daily, 7:30 A.M. to 6 P.M., except Christmas Day. FEES: Two tours are now offered. The Big Room tour is \$22.95, 14 and older; \$12.95 for children 7-13. Children under 7 are not permitted on Big Room tours. The Big Room will be open for tours October 15 through April 15. The Rotunda/Throne Room tour is \$18.95 for adults, \$9.95 for children 7-13, and there is no charge for children under 7. For visitors without a tour reservation, a park entrance fee of \$5 per carload of four people is charged for picnicking or hiking in the park. TRAVEL ADVISORY: Reservations are often filled months in advance, but a limited number of walk-up tickets are available each day when the park opens. Cavern tour trails are wheelchair-accessible, but strollers for children are prohibited. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Kartchner Caverns State Park, (520) 586-4100; for reservations (520) 586-CAVE, www.pr.state.az.us/parkhtml/kartchner.html.

Wilson Canyon Offers a Short Trek in a Fragrant Forest Near Sedona



[ABOVE] Seen from Wilson Canyon just north of Sedona, Giants Thumb on Mitten Ridge glows warmly against the white cliffs of Munds Mountain.

[OPPOSITE PAGE] Snowmelt creates a seasonal stream that cascades over stone steps below Midgley Bridge before feeding into Oak Creek.



LOCATION: About 25 miles south of Flagstaff or 2 miles north of Sedona.

GETTING THERE: From Flagstaff, travel south on State Route 89A. From Sedona, travel north on 89A, and cross Midgley Bridge, the silver structure spanning Wilson Canyon; then turn left into the parking area. Walk to the picnic shelters and begin the hike at the Wilson Canyon #49 sign.

TRAVEL ADVISORY: Parking at trailheads or pullouts within Red Rock Country in the Coconino National Forest requires a Red Rock Pass. Passes may be purchased at Gateway Visitor Centers when entering Sedona, at automated stations at several trailheads, from local tourist stores or on the Internet.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Coconino National Forest, Red Rock Ranger District (928) 282-4119; www.redrockcountry.com.

CALLING HIKERS TOWARD RED-ROCK spires and variegated cliffs, Wilson Canyon Trail meanders around fragrant Arizona cypress trees. The graceful trees add a sparkling scent of mint to this easy 1.5-mile trail. The trailhead, only about 2 miles from Sedona, lies in Oak Creek Canyon.

A favorite time to hike Wilson Canyon is late winter. When high-elevation snows melt, the cold, clear water musically trickles down the canyon. Terraced waterfalls in the intimate sylvan world seem to appear around every bend.

The trail parallels the canyon, crossing the unnamed stream several times. Piñon pine trees, one-seed junipers, hollyleaf buckthorns, yuccas and sugar sumacs grace the way. The walking proves easy, allowing plenty of opportunities to view the rock formations that shelter the tree-lined bowl.

Lava-capped Wilson Mountain towers to the north. At 7,122 feet, it ranks as the highest point in all of Red Rock Country. To the west rise Shiprock and Wilson Notch, formations carved from the pale Coconino sandstone. Below stand several spires in the red-orange Schnebly Hill formation.

In this setting, it seems the only real danger might be feeling overwhelmed by the majestic geology. But on a day in June 1885,

bear hunter Richard Wilson made a fateful decision that cost him his life and put his name on the canyon.

The Arkansas native, who lived in Oak Creek Canyon, was walking with his dog toward town. A friend, away in Prescott, had Wilson's large-caliber bear-hunting rifle to be repaired. Wilson was scheduled to check on the man's family at their log cabin on the northern outskirts of town. There was no bridge crossing the gap of Wilson Canyon. Instead, the route detoured into the forested side canyon where travelers could cross.

Suddenly, a huge grizzly bear charged. Wilson fired at it with the small-caliber rifle he was carrying. The bear—only wounded—turned and ran away. Its blood and tracks led into the woods. The tough old hunter couldn't resist. He followed.

Nine days later, two horsemen found Wilson's body, his faithful dog waiting nearby. Wilson had been mauled. Half of his face was missing. Teeth marks cut deep into his boot heel. The men speculated that his last desperate act must have been climbing a nearby tree, its branch twisted and broken.

Modern-day hikers need not fear confronting a grizzly bear in Wilson Canyon—they no longer exist in the Arizona wild. Hikers might instead see the tracks of deer, javelinas or coyotes, and hear the echoing calls of ravens and scrub jays.

Beyond 1.5 miles, the trail fades into the streambed. Turn around anywhere that feels satisfying. Perhaps, before heading back, take a moment to pause. Breathe in the primal energy of this sylvan canyon world, and save the memory for later. **AH**

Before you go on this hike, visit our Web site at arizonahighways.com for other things to do and places to see in the area.



KEVIN KIBBEY

