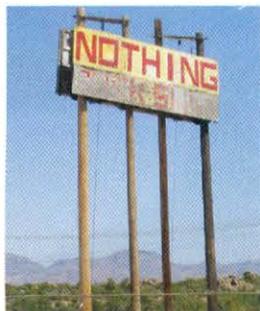


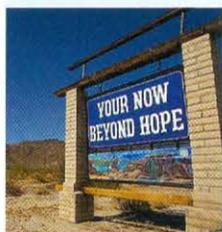
Arizona's Colorful Communities and Characters

BY MARSHALL TRIMBLE, OFFICIAL ARIZONA STATE HISTORIAN



ARIZONA HAS MORE than its share of colorful towns, places, and characters. Up near Wikie-up is a place called Nothing. It used to have a saloon called

the Ain't Much Bar, a population of four, a sign proclaiming the citizens had "Hope for Nothing, Faith in Nothing, Believed in Nothing, Worked at Nothing," and a town motto of "All for Nothing."



Speaking of hope, out in the deserts of western Arizona is a town named Hope, and there's a sign on the outskirts that says, "If you can read this sign, your [sic] now beyond Hope."

The citizens of another desert town grew tired of tourists asking why anybody would choose to live there, so they named the place "Why." Now you know Why!

South of Prescott is a place called "No Where." Biggest issue facing the inhabitants is whether to spell it *Nowhere* or *No Where*.

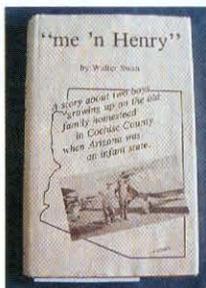
Back around 1900, the largest family living in Strawberry was named Peach.

The annual Corn Festival isn't held at Cornville but down the road a few miles at Camp Verde.

The other day as I was driving into Gila Bend, I saw an old billboard that said "Welcome to Gila Bend: Home of 1700 Friendly Folks and Five Old Crabs." I stopped off at the Space Age Restaurant and asked the waitress if any of the old crabs were still around. "We'll always have five



old crabs," she said, "because we elect five new ones every year." Turns out it's an honor, and she went on to say that a couple of years ago, a teenage girl was chosen as one of the old crabs.



Down in Bisbee, Walter Swan wrote a book titled *Me 'n Henry*, a story about him and his best friend growing up in the old mining town. He couldn't find a publisher, so he self-published. He

couldn't find a store to carry it, so he rented a building on Brewery Gulch and opened his own bookstore. He called it the One Book Bookstore and carried only his own book. Word got out, and people came from everywhere to purchase a copy of *Me 'n Henry*. I have one on my bookshelf. He would up selling thousands of copies. Now, that's what I call an entrepreneur!

When Hollywood decided to make a movie of the Broadway play *Oklahoma*, they couldn't find a location in the Sooner State that resembled Oklahoma in 1907. Someone suggested southern Arizona, so the cast and crew headed for Santa Cruz County. Oklahomans were outraged almost as much as Texans were when the John Wayne film *Red*



River was filmed in Cochise County a few years earlier. With *Red River*, there was a small problem: Most of the rivers in Texas have water in them, and Arizona's don't. The tiny San Pedro River had to be transformed into a big river so they could film a herd of cattle crossing. They solved the problem by damming up the river until enough water backed up to have a believable river crossing.

There was a small problem or two creating *Oklahoma* in Arizona, too. Corn wouldn't grow "high as an elephant's eye," so the University of Arizona's College of Agriculture developed some hybrid corn to fill the bill. Peach trees had to be imported from California, along with fake peaches made of wax. Scenes had to be shot early in the morning before the fruit melted on the trees.

Since the cast and crew were lodging in Nogales, the generous citizens of the border town agreed to let the state of Oklahoma annex their town until the filming was done. Thus, for a time, Nogales was officially in Oklahoma.

Located between the towns of Snowflake and Taylor is Bellybutton, Arizona. It's the home of the Naval Cattle Company. The late state senator Jake Flake explained to me that since the ranch was midway between the two towns, his dad dubbed it Bellybutton and proclaimed himself mayor.

Hard as we Arizonans try, though, we can't quite match Texas, which hosts the town of Buck Naked. Folks there posted a sign that reads "Next Time You Come through Buck Naked, Stop and Say Howdy." 



He has been called a cowboy singer, a humorist, and a storyteller, and he's Arizona's official state historian, but Marshall Trimble's most treasured title is teacher. He hopes people will realize the im-

portance and fun involved in Arizona history and culture. marshall@northvalleymagazine.com