

## Statehood Day 1912

BY MARSHALL TRIMBLE, OFFICIAL ARIZONA STATE HISTORIAN

IF ONE WANTED to get a modern-day perspective on the euphoria Arizonans felt on February 14, 1912, imagine what it would be like if the Phoenix Suns won the NBA Championships, the Diamondbacks won the World Series, and the Cardinals won the Super Bowl all in the same year. Statehood meant an end to second-class citizenship by the long-suffering Arizonans. It meant an end to federal neglect, sky-high freight rates, a voice to vote in the U.S. Congress, and the right to elect their own governor.

The territory had lusted for statehood much as a teenager waits anxiously for his or her first driver's license. Arizona's bane was Indiana Senator Alfred J. Beveridge, the Republican chairman of the Senate Committee on Territories. He thought Arizona was a desert wasteland. He'd taken a three-day fact-finding trip and concluded Arizona was a "mining camp." He gerrymandered in such a way by Democrats that if Republicans were to carry the state by 10,000 votes, it would still send three Democrats to Washington. Beveridge and his political cronies

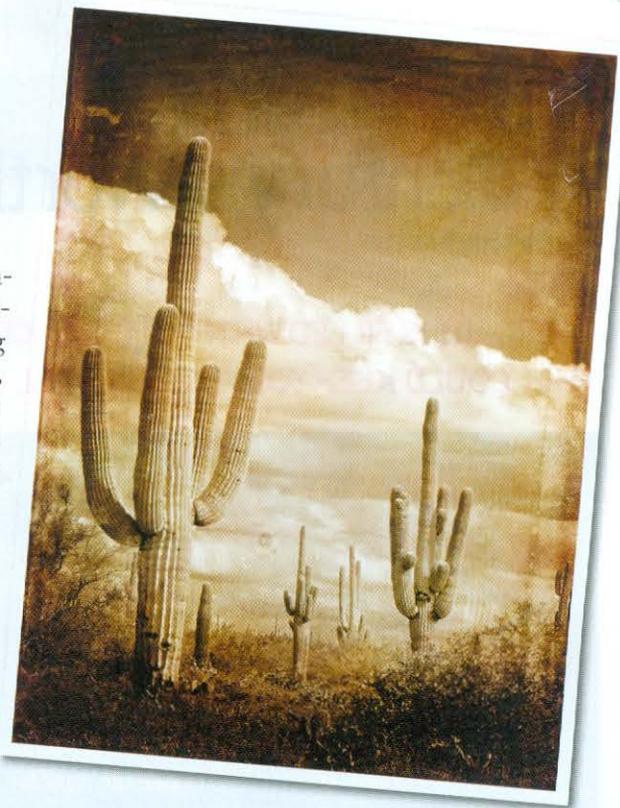


declared the territory a land inhabited by "rattlesnakes, scorpions, Gila monsters, murdering Indians, illiterate Mexicans, stagecoach robbers, polygamist Mormons, cattle rustlers, and Democrats." Arizona just didn't fit their notion of a proper state.

A Beveridge ally, Sen. Kunte Nelson, Minn., addressed this un-American area by saying, "Ay tank dose fellairs en Arizona not beene goot enofe Americaines. To bay goot seetyzain, a fellair moost bay Americaine."

Yeah, right!

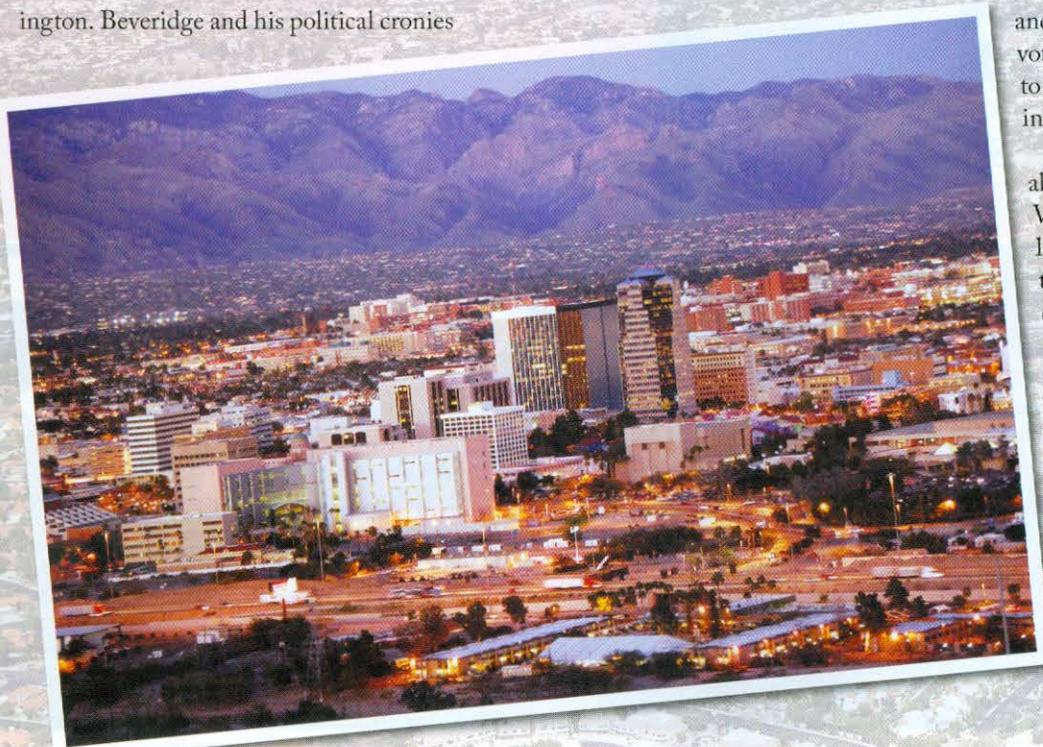
In 1902, Beveridge and his friends tried to combine Arizona and New Mexico into one state called Montezuma. In a feeble attempt to placate the outraged Arizonans, it was changed to Arizona, but the capital would still be in Santa Fe. The Joint Statehood bill passed the House in 1904. Even



their old friend from Rough Rider days, President Teddy Roosevelt, favored it. This caused irate Phoenixians to threaten to change Roosevelt Street to Cleveland.

Arizonans strongly opposed and campaigned against the proposal. At the Territorial Fair, 3,200 opposing signatures were gathered in a mere thirty minutes. A territorial delegate, Tombstone lawyer Mark Smith, saved the day by attaching an amendment to the bill requiring both Arizona and New Mexico to approve. When the vote came in, New Mexico favored it two to one, but the Arizonans overwhelmingly opposed it 16,265 to 3,141.

In 1910, Congress passed the Enabling Act, and on June 20, President William Howard Taft signed it, allowing for a Constitutional Convention. At the convention, Democrats controlled with forty-one delegates to the Republicans' eleven. The Democrats also had a majority of Progressive-Populist Liberals who were promoting such newfangled ideas as the women's vote, direct primaries, direct election of senators, and the initiative, referendum, and recall of judges. Not all the propositions made it. The most controversial were the three powers of initiative, referendum, and recall, and they all made it into the constitution.



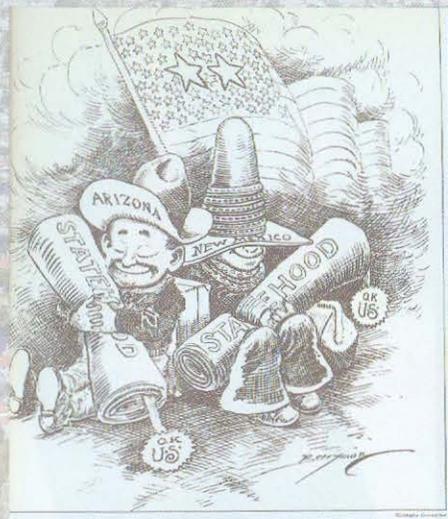
It was the latter power that rattled Taft's cage the most, and he promised that if they remained in the constitution, he would veto the joint resolution. The stubborn Arizonans refused, and Taft, a former judge, kept his promise.

It was back to the drawing board. Cooler heads advised the delegates to remove the recall and put it back in the state constitution after statehood was achieved. They did, and Taft signed. The following November, Arizonans got their revenge in the presidential election when Taft finished fourth in a field of four in the baby state.

Taft was planning to sign the proclamation on February 12, but he'd planned a trip to New York City and decided to postpone the signing for two days. His office offered another excuse, saying that since the twelfth was Lincoln's birthday and the following day was the unlucky thirteenth, the great event would occur on the fourteenth, Valentine's Day. Once again, the Arizonans had reason to be angry. They wanted the event to coincide with Lincoln's birthday, since Arizona became a territory during his presidency.

President Taft was supposed to sign the proclamation at 8 a.m., but there was another delay. Finally, at 10:02 a.m., he signed it with a golden pen in front of grinding movie cameras. It was the first time a motion picture camera recorded a president signing a bill. He then handed the pen to Territorial Delegate Ralph Cameron. The news reached Phoenix at 8:55 a.m. Whistles started blowing and pistols fired into the air as people took to the streets to celebrate.

A telegrapher rode over on a bicycle and



delivered the news to an anxiously waiting wedding party. Hazel Goldberg and Joe Melzer planned to be the first couple married in the new state and delayed the ceremony until word officially arrived. Standing nearby was the ring bearer, a fidgety 3-year-old named Barry Goldwater.

In Tucson, Arizona's largest city, a holiday was declared, and all 254 students at the University of Arizona were excused. At Bisbee, the new state's second-largest city, celebrants set off humorous-charge dynamite and nearly blew off the top of a mountain, while in Snowflake, the citizens placed a dynamite charge beneath an anvil and blew it high into the air.

The state's first governor was George Wily Paul Hunt, a portly man with a drooping walrus mustache and a large, bald head. Years before, he'd ridden penniless into Globe on a hurricane deck of a jackass and had risen, Horatio Alger-like, to the pinnacles of business and political success. A self-made man, he would be elected to seven terms as governor.

At 11:15 a.m., Hunt left the downtown Ford Hotel and took a 45-minute walk down

Washington Street to the capitol, stepping over irrigation ditches, dodging potholes, and trying not to step in horse manure. Hunt had invited the city's doctors to join him in the parade. Doctors Willard Smith, E. Payne Palmer, and George Goodrich—all very serious men—

decided to loosen up and marched in the parade, each with a bedpan under

his arm. Hunt wanted to set a good example of thrift but afterward thought better of it. From then on, he rode in a chauffeur-driven \$3,000 limousine that cost taxpayers \$300 a month to maintain.

Silver-tongued orator William Jennings Bryan made a two-hour, nonstop speech, using no microphone, to a crowd of 5,000. A

cannon was set up, intended to fire off 48 rounds, but they stopped after a few rounds when windows began to break in the capitol and horses started bucking off their riders.

At a downtown celebration, a band from the Indian School provided the music. Just before midnight, they played "Home Sweet Home," bringing to a close the greatest day in Arizona history.

Amazingly, in spite of all the celebrations, only a handful of people spent the night in jail. **NW**

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