



Winter 2005

Volume 14 No. 1

SUN CITIES AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Historical Amnesia ???

During good times and bad, historical societies are havens for learning the lessons of the past; they provide a sense of time, place, and stability. Their main job is preserving and interpreting the past.

The growth of small historical societies in neighborhoods has been very evident in our area. The following communities have excellent societies which have developed over the past few years: Peoria, Glendale, Sunnyslope, Youngtown, Litchfield Park (just now organizing), and of course, our own society here in Sun City.

In 2005 we will be celebrating 15 years!

History has done well in Sun City, especially the first twenty-five years when many of the “pioneers” were still here.

Sun City and Sun City West differ from other neighborhoods in that we have no “roots” ... we have all come from somewhere else. We have yet to develop and recognize the need to preserve our Sun Cities’ heritage. Though our roots are elsewhere, how many of us have lived here longer than anywhere else?

We hope newcomers, also, will realize the importance of maintaining our local history.

We are still making history around the world with our active retirement lifestyle.

Let us not refuse to remember the past and the present because that points the way to the future. Let it not be said that Sun Citians suffer from “historical amnesia”!

Today is tomorrow’s history. We must collect and preserve it NOW. To do that, we need *your* support. Can we count on you?

Open House March 5th

It’s Open House time again. Yes, we plan this annual event to coincide with the Oakmont Recreation Fun Fair. One might say, “Two for the price of one,” as we are right next door to the recreation center.

We will be open from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Volunteers will be ready to give you a tour and answer questions, or you can go “on your own.”

We look forward to your visit.



10801 Oakmont Dr.—Sun City, AZ—85351

Open Hours—1:30 to 3:30 p.m. Tuesday—Wednesday—Thursday—Friday

Phone: 623/ 974-2568

Email: scahs@frys.com

Web site: www.scazhistory.org

The Sun Cities Area Historical Society is certified by the Arizona Historical Society

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Message from the President

Our “New Year” arrived under dark clouds of a devastating tsunami in South Asia, and an unusually wet period for the Sun Cities. The cold, rainy days reminded me of the Sun Cities’ encounter with the flood of 1980.

1979 had been a wetter-than-usual year. Heavy rains in the Bradshaw Mountains drained into Lake Pleasant and filled it to capacity. The rain continued into early 1980 and soon threatened Waddell Dam that held back the lake. As a result, the rate of discharge had to be increased. That water, combined with saturated soil, resulted in a flood sweeping down the Agua Fria River, pushing brush and debris ahead of it. The surging water tore at the footings of the Bell Road Bridge, and on February 22, 1980, the bridge gradually settled into the flood. As soon as the water subsided, Del Webb and county crews carved a bypass route of the river bed. It would be 18 long months before a new bridge was completed.

The water spread across a wide area, flooding the spring training park for the Milwaukee Brewers west of 111th and north of Grand Avenue. East of Sun City, many of the main east-west streets dipped down into the bed of the New River. Today’s bridges hadn’t been built on many of these cross streets. The floodwater coming down that river left boulders, rocks, and other debris on the roads, and they were closed until they could be cleared.

Unlike the South Asia tsunami, no lives were lost, and property damage was minimal. The main cost was a temporary inconvenience, and Sun Citians soon returned to their usual activities. No doubt, many of you who lived here then have your own stories about those pluvial days.

It’s the Historical Society’s role to see that events like these aren’t forgotten, for they helped shape our present. The flood resulted in a wider, taller dam at Lake Pleasant, and many new and better-constructed bridges. We needn’t worry about floods in the new year!

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the Sun Cities Area Historical Society. We hope to see you at our house on Oakmont, at the February 25 Membership Workshop, or at the April 6 general meeting at The Madison to meet Jack Swilling, founder of Phoenix. You’ll find more information on these and other events in this newsletter.

Here’s wishing you good health and great happiness in 2005!

Edson Allen
President, Board of Trustees

Membership Workshop - Friday, February 25

At its January meeting, the Board of Trustees set “increasing membership” as the primary goal for 2005. To make it worthwhile to belong to the Society, we need to offer potential members benefits and reasons to participate. We each have many choices on how we allocate our time, and the Society is in competition with the many activities available in our communities.

The Board agreed to set aside Friday morning, February 25, for a workshop devoted to exploring how we can make our Historical Society a “must-belong-to” organization. Previous Board members are invited, as well as those who volunteer in various capacities at the Society.

We want you, too, if you have ideas on what we might do to persuade more people to join. If you’d like to attend, please call the office, 974-2568, and give us your name. We need to know how many will attend so we have enough name tags and refreshments on hand. We plan to start promptly at 9 a.m., and will conclude by 11:30.

What would you do if you were in charge of membership and wanted to attract more members? That’s the key question we will be seeking to answer. Once we have all of the ideas on the table, we’ll categorize them into the ones that can be accomplished easily and quickly, and the ones that will require more thought and planning.

It promises to be an interesting workshop. All members, and all ideas are welcome!

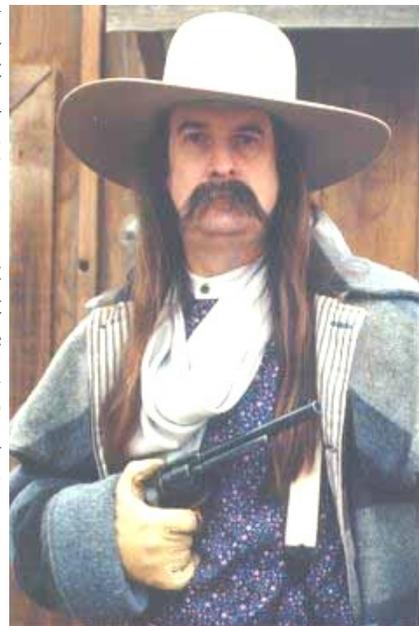
Meet Jack Swilling - Wednesday, April 6 at The Madison

Join us on April 6 and step back in time to 1867 to meet Jack Swilling, founder of Phoenix. Hear how he came to this area after participating in the Civil War, how he cleared canals left by the ancient Hohokam to turn the desert into a flourishing agricultural area, and why he is credited with naming the city that eventually emerged.

Jack Swilling will be portrayed by Sam Ferguson II, an actor/teacher/historian. He comes to us via the Arizona Historical Society’s “Amazing Arizonans” program that showcases various individuals from the state’s past. Sam has portrayed numerous historical figures for the past 32 years, and Swilling, one of his favorites, for the past 17 years. Sam not only dresses the part, but will bring artifacts from the late 1800s.

Our spring meeting will be hosted by The Madison at 18626 Spanish Garden Drive in Sun City West. Light refreshments will be provided at 12:30 p.m., and the program will begin at 1:00 p.m. If you are coming from Sun City, take Bell Road to R.H. Johnson Blvd. Follow it to the fourth stoplight, which is Camino del Sol. Turn left and go to the first stop sign. Turn left again, and The Madison is one block on your right.

Plan to attend this entertaining and informative event!



Beginning in January, members are given a 10% discount on any purchase made at the Society. Although we don't have a gift shop per se, we do offer the following items:

Books

\$10.00	<u>Del Webb: A Man, A Company</u>
\$12.00	<u>Along the Old Vulture Road</u>
\$10.00	<u>Jubilee</u> (not always available — ask your hostess)
\$12.00	<u>Sun City West: Silver Celebration</u>
	<u>Churches of Sun City</u> (complementary, with a donation)

Pamphlets

\$2.50	A series of 26 vignettes of local history
\$0.10	Individual copy of vignette
	(These may be purchased as a set, or individually)

Coins

\$1.00	Commemorative Coin of Sun City's 25th Anniversary
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Meet Our New Volunteers

Belva McIntosh

Belva moved to Sun City in September 1972 from her home in Utah. Before coming to Sun City, she worked as a secretary at an Army Hospital for 20 years. Shortly after her arrival in Arizona, she continued her secretarial duties at Luke Air Force Base. As to her volunteering, Belva said, "Sun City has an interesting history, and it will be fun helping people discover it." Belva also volunteers with Meals on Wheels every Sunday.

Dorothy Slough

Dorothy is a one-year resident, having come from Minnesota where she was with the Human Services Department of the local utility company for 35 years. Her interest in history attracted her to the Society, and she enjoys meeting the visitors, and at the same time continues to learn more about our history.

Speaking Out!

"What Was Here Before the Sun Cities?" . . . "A Unique Place in the World: Sun City" . . . "From Lizard Acres to Lush Oasis: Sun City West" . . . "Del Webb: A Visionary and an Interesting Character" . . . and "The Story of the Sun Cities" are just a few titles for special programs that are available for presentation to your group.

Our Society has qualified people ready to speak to service clubs, business groups, churches, small gatherings, or large events anywhere in the West Valley. We adapt the presentation to fit the time you specify. It can be "formal," or "interactive" with visual artifacts.

Please do call us or pass this newsletter on to a program coordinator. We look forward to sharing the history and myths of the Sun Cities with each of you. Call the Society, 974-2568, or the Speakers Bureau Chairperson, Connie McMillin, at 977-5894.

Water for Sun City

By Eugene T. Jensen

Snowbirds from the Midwest were not the first to appreciate the climate of the area drained by the New and Agua Fria Rivers! Thousands of years ago, the land now occupied by the Sun Cities was home to many Indian communities. (The Agua Fria National Monument, our neighbor a few miles to the north, was established in recognition of the many Indian ruins on Black Mesa and Perry Mesa.) Their presence confirms the past availability of a reliable water supply. The people have vanished, but their structures remain! Was water the reason?

The land remained essentially barren of people until the mineral riches of the mountains were discovered at about the time of the Civil War. The prospectors were followed by farmers, some who saw the irrigation potential of the Valley. Thus, in 1880, the Agua Fria Land and Water Company was formed to develop 35,000 acres of farm lands north and west of what is now Sun City. Their dream did not become a reality until 1928, when the dam forming Lake Pleasant was completed. They soon learned that the flows of the Agua Fria were inadequate, and they turned to the newly-developed pumps to tap the great water reservoir which underlies most of the Phoenix Metropolitan area. Boswell Ranches were among the largest of these irrigated farms!

When Del Webb, the builder, and Jim Boswell, the rancher, combined their resources to build Sun City, they turned to a network of irrigation wells to provide the water supply for both the golf courses and the residential community. As required by state law, they obtained a professional opinion from a qualified geologist that the area could be assured of a 100-year supply of water, provided there were no further increases in demand, and that recharge was not interrupted. With this assurance, ownership of the wells and water distribution system was passed to a private water supply company. Ownership of wells which provided water for the golf courses was eventually transferred to the Recreation Center organization.

Concurrently, the Phoenix Metropolitan Area was expanding rapidly, and there was concern that the groundwater supply would be exhausted. The state sought assistance from the federal government for a "Construction Project" to bring water from the Colorado River into Central Arizona. To obtain this assistance, the State promised the federal government that they would adopt state laws which would require the amount of groundwater to be pumped not to exceed recharge; *safe yield* in the parlance of the water engineers. (Just like a checkbook, withdrawals must not exceed deposits!) The new law passed in 1980 provided that "safe yield" would be attained in a series of ten-year steps ending in 2025. It is implicit in the law that the primary water supply will come from renewable sources (rainfall and river flows), and groundwater will be used as a reserve.

The Central Arizona Project, described above, was funded by the federal government, but with the provision that much of its cost would be repaid by those who contracted to make use of the water. The cost of water from CAP was much higher than water from wells, and there was reluctance on the part of farmers and private water companies to enter into long-term binding contracts. Nevertheless, the local water supplier, then Citizens Utilities, did contract for supplies on behalf of its three service areas, Sun City, Sun City West, and Agua Fria Division, serving a then-undeveloped area east of the White Tank Mountains. As yet there is no agreement as to how this water can be best put to use in Sun City or Sun City West.

In our next newsletter: *Impact of the Groundwater Act, and the hazard of subsidence*

Thanks for Renewing

THANK YOU! ... to all you wonderful members who have renewed your membership in the Society for 2005. We appreciate your prompt renewal.

As you know, the Sun Cities Area Historical Society depends on membership fees to further the solemn duty of preserving histories -- of Del Webb, Sun City, Sun City West, the former city of Marinette, plus historic events in many surrounding areas.

To those of you who have inadvertently delayed sending in your membership renewal, now is the time to do so. The membership period runs from January through December (calendar year), so you will get "more bang for your buck" by renewing early in the year.

Please help us in our efforts to preserve the ongoing history of our great area by mailing your renewal membership TODAY. You'll be happy you did!

*Get a Friend Involved
Be a Volunteer*

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIPS

SHIRLEY JASLOW
BELVA MCINTOSH
MARSHA MCINTOSH
DOROTHY RUCKER
ROSE SIEGMUND
DOROTHY SLOUGH
MARY LOU WARD



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