Seeds of Growth: 
Neighborhoods on the Salt River Floodplain
The City of Phoenix Aviation Department’s Community Noise Reduction Program (CNRP) funded this report. The CNRP was created by the Phoenix City Council in 2002, and offered services to eligible Phoenix and Tempe residents living in the neighborhoods most severely impacted by noise from aircraft using Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. Residential property owners wishing to receive assistance were eligible for Voluntary Acquisition and Relocation Services (VARS). The VARS boundaries, determined by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), were 7th Street to the west, 44th Street to the east, Washington Street to the north, and University Drive to the south. VARS was a voluntary buy-out program whereby eligible home- and landowners could sell their property to the City of Phoenix and relocate to a comparable dwelling of their choice in any community outside of the program area and outside other noise-impacted areas.

The CNRP-VARS project area included seven residential neighborhoods: Eastlake Park, North/32nd Street, Ann Ott, El Campito, Cuatro Milpas, Green Valley, and Rio Salado San Juan Bautista. From 2007 to 2013, a research team from Desert Archaeology, Inc. and Arizona Preservation Consultants studied prehistoric and historic archaeological resources affected by the project. This research, sponsored by the City of Phoenix, in cooperation with the FAA and the Arizona State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), was conducted in compliance with federal and state laws that protect our nation’s cultural resources, ensuring that the valuable scientific information contained in these resources would be carefully collected, analyzed, preserved, and reported. This report features notable community members associated with the VARS neighborhoods along with highlights from the research.
Introduction

The Salt River is a large and powerful river. While its size and power present major challenges even today, it is the ultimate source of much of the growth of Phoenix in both the city’s prehistoric incarnation and in its second form as the nation’s sixth largest metropolis.

The Salt River was tapped by an extensive set of hand-dug irrigation canals beginning in approximately the first century A.D. For the next 1,400 years, the agricultural productivity of these Hohokam fields supported remarkable craft production, wide-ranging trade networks, and several waves of cultural development and change. When population declined by the mid-1400s, a lack of adequate labor to maintain the agricultural infrastructure that harnessed the powerful river led the remaining residents to move out of the valley.

It was not until late in the 1800s that the potential to rebuild and reuse some of those ancient canals was realized, and soon thereafter, the waters of the Salt River were producing crops and attracting new settlers. The original Phoenix townsitae was half a square mile, set back from the river, but still within the floodplain. Population increased, and in the late 1920s another engine for growth was established on a second half section in the floodplain, Sky Harbor Airport.

The project that defined the focus of this report (see locational map, inside front cover) wraps around three sides of today’s much larger Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport. In some ways, the boundaries that frame this project are arbitrary, but the Salt River and its floodplain provide a unifying theme that is reflected in the stories of the people who worked in and lived on this floodplain. A remarkable variety of groups and individuals made this locality a unique corner of the world. It seemed appropriate that this report should tell the story of the area through the diverse people who shaped it, from prehistoric times to the present.

Some of the people featured in the following pages, for example the Hohokam, Jack Swilling, John Y. T. Smith, and Calvin Goode, may be known to many readers. Others, such as Ann Ott and J. Parker Van Zandt, are probably lesser known, yet they played key roles in the development of the area. A few, such as Concepción “Chona” Faz, are inadequately known, yet they left a significant mark on the landscape through the items they made and used. And still others, including Pete Bugarín, Sister Mary Luca Junk, and César Chávez, were suggested by members of the community in response to outreach efforts to identify people important to the history of the area.

This report is not a “Who’s Who” of all the important people who have lived or worked in this area. Instead, it is intended to whet the reader’s appetite. Each of the following stories has human interest but also touches on larger themes in local history: agriculture, commerce, transportation, neighborhood change, civil rights, heroism. The writers hope that these sketches will encourage readers to explore, on their own, the history and people of this special area. For those readers hoping to delve into family history, an introduction to the subject is provided on page 43. Finally, for those individuals seeking a deeper understanding of local prehistory and history, a Recommended Readings section is included at the end of this report (see page 44).
Hohokam Farmers of the Salt River Floodplain

Archaeologists use the term Hohokam to refer to the distinctive desert farmers who thrived for more than a millennium in what is now southern Arizona. Of central importance was an extensive system of irrigation canals and associated fields. Phoenix was the location of the largest prehistoric irrigation system currently known in the western hemisphere.

There are other distinctive aspects of the Hohokam lifeway, although these traits changed through time. For example, villages originally consisted of pithouses arranged in household clusters around a large open plaza at the center of the settlement. By A.D. 750–800, ballcourts—oval clearings with raised edges that served as focal points for ceremonies and games—were incorporated into the village layout, usually off to one edge of the central plaza. Probably the most recognizable material product of the Hohokam was the red-on-buff pottery made and traded widely. By A.D. 1075–1100, ballcourts seem to have dropped out of use. By the late A.D. 1200s, platform mounds and aboveground adobe architecture had largely replaced earlier ceremonial and residential architecture. For the Hohokam, it was the fields watered by the Salt River that ensured survival.

The story of the floodplain is a story of agriculture. The earliest records of the extensive canal system of the Phoenix Basin were created by individuals such as Omar Turney and Frank Midvale, who found time in the first decades of the twentieth century to make maps before the growth of agriculture and population. More recent archaeology has focused on the floodplain in and around Sky Harbor, the VARS area, and downtown around the original Phoenix townsite.

Beginning soon after A.D. 500, most of the canals that served the area tapped the Salt River just south of the very large village of Pueblo Grande, which today preserves and displays both a ballcourt and a platform mound.

Northwest of this area was the long-lived settlement of La Ciudad, with a ballcourt from its early era and a platform mound from later times. These places would probably have been the permanent homes of the farmers of the floodplain.

The floodplain was the prime tract of agricultural land. Regular flooding replenished the nutrients and cleansed the soil of salts built up by the application of saline irrigation water carried through canals from the Salt River. Use of the floodplain varied over time. While evidence of 4,000 years of maize farming is well documented along the smaller Santa Cruz River that runs through Tucson, we do not have evidence of use of the Salt River floodplain around modern Phoenix until the first century A.D. Indications are that these early farmers established seasonal residences along the upper margin of the Salt River floodplain. They most likely pursued both irrigation and floodwater farming.

Archaeological studies conducted in field areas away from villages documented some interesting patterns. First, pairs of pithouses—one large and one smaller and less formal—
Field ditches carry water from a distribution canal in this depiction of Hohokam irrigating and tending their fields. A field house stands in the background. Multiple crops were grown in each field plot, including maize, squash, beans, and cotton. Wild plants, such as mustard greens and cholla, were also encouraged to grow in and around these plots.
were repeatedly observed. Second, there were several cases where pithouse pairs were rebuilt in the same location as a previous pair. This was taken as evidence of continuity of use of the area by the members of a village-based household. In fact, despite the large scale of the Phoenix-area canal system, irrigation agriculture appears to have been organized at the household level. The repeated occupation of dwellings in a field area is viewed as evidence for household ownership of land and the transfer of those ownership rights across generations.

In the period between A.D. 1050 and 1300, there is a surprising lack of evidence for residential use of the floodplain. While some researchers have suggested that this reflects a lack of agricultural activity, it seems more likely that the organization of agricultural labor changed. The household laborers who formerly resided at field locations throughout much of the agricultural season may have, instead, banded together in larger groups and traveled between their village residences and the fields, leaving few material traces of their presence.

Apparently this new approach was short-lived, for in the A.D. 1300s, there was a renewed residential presence on the floodplain. The pattern primarily reflects the former household pattern. The biggest change in these later times is the presence of a significant residential settlement, Pueblo Salado, immediately north of the Salt River channel on a small, independent irrigation canal. This community represents an incursion into the territory of the larger, well-established settlements to the north, which had farmed this area for hundreds of years. While it was ideal farmland, the area of Pueblo Salado was also highly vulnerable to flooding.
Every place where archaeologists worked on this project had been a family home for many decades. Left: On a chilly winter day, this archaeology team is mapping the artifacts and features related to a Hohokam pithouse that dated to the interval A.D. 1100–1250. After prehistoric artifacts were observed in exploratory trenches, a little more than a foot of soil was stripped away from the back of this property. Note the brick circle where the archaeologist is standing. That marks the top of a cesspool, a fairly common feature in houses built prior to the 1950s. The layers of use and reuse of this floodplain area ultimately extended over almost 2,000 years.

The prehistoric artifacts recovered from some of the properties were cleaned and studied to help reveal the story of the Hohokam use of the floodplain. Above: Pottery often indicates the past time period of use and the kinds of activities pursued (top left). Ceramic vessels were used for cooking, serving, and storage. Other artifacts observed range from spindle whorls for spinning yarn from cotton or agave fibers (lower left), a large basin metate from one of the oldest pithouses (circa A.D. 400–500) encountered on this project (top right), and a carved stone palette likely used in Hohokam ritual activities (lower right).
John Y. T. Smith (1831–1903)

Many aspects of the project area make it unique and significant. It has the distinction of including the first land settled by non-Indians in the entire Phoenix area. The very first of those settlers was John Smith, who led a remarkable life of adversity, adventure, and accomplishment.

A long chain of events brought John Smith from his native New York to the Arizona Territory. Orphaned at 10, Smith learned to provide for himself at a young age. While still in his teens, he worked as a cabin boy on river steamboats, as a laborer on farms, and as a survey crew member for a railroad.

His journey westward across the Mississippi began in 1853, when he helped drive a herd of cattle to California. There, “gold fever” struck the young man. He tried his luck at prospecting, but when that venture failed and the Civil War broke out, he enlisted as a private with the California Volunteers. His distinguished service at several posts in California and at Fort Yuma in Arizona earned him the rank of first lieutenant by the time he left active military service in 1865.

Following the war, the military focused on protecting western settlers. Fort McDowell on the Verde River was established for that purpose. The Army offered Smith a civilian job as master of transportation for the 14th Infantry Regiment. While accompanying troops from Fort Yuma to Fort McDowell, Smith noticed abundant native grass growing along the Salt River. He realized he could harvest that resource and sell the hay to the military.

In 1867, Smith set up camp near the eastern edges of what are now Sky Harbor Airport and the project area. He hired Mexican workers—who had come to the Phoenix area to make a living—to cut the hay, and he provided makeshift shelters for them along the river. He and his workers soon blazed a road to Fort McDowell and raised cattle. Smith prospered in the role of military contractor. His success enabled him to finance canal construction, start businesses, and engage in politics.

One profitable business for Smith was his flour mill. He established it in 1876, near Central Avenue and Jefferson Street but relocated the facility to 9th and Jackson streets around 1890. The mill gave local farmers a way to process grains into flour, thus stimulating the area’s first industry: agriculture.

Smith’s political aspirations led to a name change. In 1879, the Arizona Territorial Legislature approved a measure adding the initials “Y. T.” to his name. The action followed
Smith’s unsuccessful run for Congress, when a newspaper editor commented that he admired the courage of a man with an all-too-common name who dared to run for high office. When asked what the initials stood for, Smith is said to have answered “Yours Truly.”

John Y. T. Smith would hold many political offices. While serving as Speaker of the House in the Arizona Legislature, he was influential in moving the territorial capital to Phoenix. He died at the age of 71 in Los Angeles, where he had gone for medical treatment. In his lifetime, Smith saw his little hay camp grow to become the hub of Arizona.

The 1893 Sanborn Fire Insurance map was drawn three years after John Smith’s flour mill was built near 9th Street and East Jackson Street. The map contains a difficult-to-read legend, describing the specialized equipment used to separate and grind grains, as well as other features of the mill. The expanded caption reads:

Cap: 50 Bbls. [Barrels] per 12 Hrs.
5 Employees – No Watch
Men – Man sleeps near premises
Water from well filled into tank by F. P.
Fuel: Wood – Lights: Ker. [Kerosene]
Bas’t [Basement]: – Shafts – Barley & Feed Ruffer – 1 Gannon
1st Fl: 5 double Stands Rolls – 2 Flour Packers
1 Brand Packer – 1 Barley Roll – 1 Wheat Separator.
2nd Fl: 4 Scalpers – 2 Smith Purifiers – 1 Holt
Purifier – 2 Aspirators – 1 Brand Duster.
3rd Fl: 3 Scalpers – 3 Smith Centrif’s [Centrifugals] – 7 Wagner
Jack Swilling & Trinidad Escalante Swilling Shumaker (1830–1878 & 1845–1925)

There was no Phoenix 150 years ago. Instead, the Salt River ran through the remnants of Hohokam settlements. An enterprising pioneer realized the potential of the long-abandoned canals, and the end result is a community inhabited by millions of people.

John William “Jack” Swilling was born in 1830, at the Red House Plantation, Anderson County, South Carolina. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 1847, heading off to the Mexican-American War. He returned to Georgia, where he was married in 1852 to Mary Jane Gray, who died a few years later. Jack left for the West, arriving in Mesilla, New Mexico Territory, in 1857. Over the next 10 years, he worked as a prospector, a member of the Gila Rangers militia, a saloon owner, and a soldier in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. He was married in 1864 in Tucson to Trinidad Mejia Escalante.

Trinidad was born about 1845 in Hermosillo, Sonora, and she came to Arizona around 1857. After marrying Jack, she bore seven children. Several of the couple’s children died in infancy, which was typical for the time.

In 1867, the Swilling family lived in Wickenburg, and in November of that year, Jack started the Swilling Irrigating and Canal Company. He noticed prehistoric canals along the Salt River and took a group of men to clean them out, running water to fields where he grew hay, wheat, barley, and corn to help supply the soldiers at Fort McDowell. He homesteaded land south of what later became Van Buren Street in Phoenix. The Swilling family lived in a large house that had a pond for pet ducks, a fruit orchard, and a vineyard (see locational map, inside front cover, site #3).

Trinidad would later say that she was the first woman in Phoenix: “No woman was here before…me.” She remembered how the community was named: “They found the name in the dictionary, looked in the dictionary and found Phoenix.” A small settlement grew up around the Swillings’ house. But when the original Phoenix townsite was laid out to the west of their land, Jack became disgruntled and moved his family north to near Black Canyon City. In 1878, he became a suspect in a stagecoach robbery and was arrested and taken to the Yuma Territorial Prison, where he died on August 12, 1878. Jack’s use of a combination of alcohol and narcotics, taken to relieve pain caused by old injuries, ruined his health. After his death, it was determined that he was innocent of the stagecoach robbery charges.

Trinidad was re-married in 1887 in Phoenix to Henry Shumaker. The couple had three sons before Henry died in 1896. Afterward, Trinidad lived with her family on Apache Street (see locational map, inside front cover, site #14) in the 1910s. She died in 1925, and was buried in the St. Francis Cemetery. Mrs. Shumaker was often heard to say that her pioneer days in the Salt River Valley were her happiest.
Jack Swilling recognized that ditches running from the Salt River were ancient Hohokam canals (depicted by Omar Turney in the small inset map). He and his workers redug the old canals and watered agricultural fields, as shown on an 1870 General Land Office map. The Swilling family’s adobe house fell into ruins after they left Phoenix.
Charles H. Veil
(1842–1910)

The lively and humorous memoirs of Charles Henry Veil provide a portrait of early life in the study area. Veil witnessed and reported many changes to the area during his long residency there, from 1871 to 1891. Not surprisingly, the spirited Veil also played a role in some of them.

Originally from Pennsylvania, Veil served on the Union side during the Civil War, and continued in the military once the war ended. The Army assigned him to posts in the Arizona Territory—camps Crittenden, Tubac, Grant, Lowell, and McDowell—where he encountered a cosmopolitan mix of Mexicans, Indians, Chinese, and Anglos. Primitive conditions at the posts took a toll on the troops, and Veil spent much of his time pursuing deserters. However, he too proved less than a model soldier. On several occasions he faced inquiries and court-martials on charges ranging from consorting with loose women to misusing government funds. When an 1870 act directed the Army to reduce its force by discharging substandard officers, Major Veil was dismissed from service.

Seeking a new line of work, Veil began supplying grain to military posts. To expand the business, he became a partner in a flour mill. The Hellings-Veil Mill was located near what are now Van Buren and 30th streets (see locational map, inside front cover, site #1). The mill, one of the first in Arizona, quickly showed a profit. “We were then making money so fast,” Veil wrote, “that I supposed we would certainly be millionaires.”

Veil never became a millionaire, but he did gain considerable influence in “Mill City,” as the community around the mill was called. Veil purchased and moved into Jack Swilling’s former house (see locational map, inside front cover, site #3) and came to control much of the land west of the house. He encouraged the production of wheat by providing machinery to farmers willing to grow the crop. To oil the gears in this process, Veil and his partners opened a store that extended credit to farmers until their wheat crops were harvested. Wheat became the local currency.

Other forms of agriculture also took root in the area: cattle, sheep, and poultry raising, as well as dairy, vegetable, and fruit farming. An experiment of unforeseen consequences occurred in the 1880s, when Veil’s home became the epicenter of “Major Veil’s Hog Farm.” Veil’s initial stock of 27 pigs multiplied wantonly and uncontrollably. After stripping...
the Veil ranch of all grains, vegetables, fruit, and even baby chicks, the hungry hogs struck out for neighboring fields. The pigs defied attempts to relocate or kill them, opting instead for a feral lifestyle. They became so wild that they would hide during the day and emerge at night to browse the landscape.

As Veil’s hogs lived large on the land, an interesting turn of events gave the major a lucrative exit strategy. Developers approached Veil about selling land along the projected path of a streetcar line. Veil agreed to the sale, receiving more than 20 times what he had paid. After liquidating other local assets, Veil retired to his home state of Pennsylvania, where he died in 1910.

Charles Veil with a group of Arizona pioneers in the early twentieth century; Veil is seen in the back row, center (courtesy History and Archives Division, Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records).
Moses Sherman (1853–1932)

The life of Moses Hazeltine Sherman reads like a rags-to-riches story. It began in the Northeast, where his childhood was spent on the family’s small farm. Sometimes forced to interrupt his schooling to earn money, young Moses eventually completed a college degree to become a teacher. Ill health is thought to have brought him to Prescott at the age of 20. He thrived in the new environment, quickly rising from teacher, to principal, to territorial superintendent of public instruction. In 1883, the governor appointed him Adjutant General of Arizona. When Sherman helped organize Arizona’s militia, people started calling him “General,” a title he liked and retained through life.

General Sherman’s greatest talents, however, lay in finance and real estate. He developed a knack for organizing businesses. Relocating to Phoenix around 1884, he became a prime participant in the Valley Bank and various land deals. His marriage to the daughter of a Southern Pacific Railroad executive helped him achieve his dreams. By 1890, he was the largest taxpayer in Phoenix. Moses Sherman brought public transportation to the Phoenix area by leading the syndicate that developed the streetcar system. The first streetcars, in 1887, were horse-drawn vehicles, but in 1893, Sherman began using electric trolleys. In the days before the automobile, the streetcar network made it possible for people to work in one location but live in another. The system turned Phoenicians into commuters and nurtured suburban sprawl along its routes. One line of the trolley ran east along Washington Street, prompting real estate prices there to soar (see related story about Charles Veil).

For many years, the Washington Street line extended only as far east as 16th Street. Sherman created a park there...
so that trolley users would have a pleasant place to spend time as they awaited their ride. The facility was initially called Phoenix Park, but in 1902 it was renamed East Lake in reference to its location near what was then the eastern edge of the city (see locational map, inside front cover, site #7).

The water-based park became a destination in its own right. Popular amusements included boating on the artificial lake and swimming in the indoor pool. The park provided a venue for cultural events as well as athletic activities. Booker T. Washington spoke there in 1911 at the Great Emancipation Jubilee. A decade later, the park became the venue for the annual Juneteenth celebration. The multiethnic neighborhood surrounding the park became known as Eastlake.

Although Sherman owned the park until 1914 and the streetcar system until 1925, his focus meanwhile shifted to southern California, where he developed the Los Angeles district called Sherman Oaks. Through hard work, ingenuity, and determination, Sherman showed how a man of humble beginnings could rise to a life of wealth and comfort.
If a single word could describe José M. Iberri, it would be “enterprising.” Farming, ranching, retailing, mining: Iberri did it all. His quest for a better life brought him from his native Mexico to Phoenix, where he resided, worked the land, and started businesses. The hard-working Iberri exemplified the many Mexicans who helped build a sense of community in the early days of Phoenix. By the turn of the twentieth century, his Hispanic countrymen constituted more than one-third of the local population.

José Monteverde Iberri was born in Guaymas, in the state of Sonora. In 1887, he immigrated to Arizona, and in 1894, he married Juana (Juanita) Dominguez Baine, a Yuma woman of Hispanic-Irish heritage. The newlyweds chose Phoenix as the place to start and raise their family. Eighteen children were born to the couple, 13 of whom survived to adulthood. The family resided in and around the project area, moving from house to house as their numbers grew. One such home was located at 802 East Madison Street.

The Iberris were as industrious as they were prolific. Around the time that José became a naturalized U.S. citizen (near the turn of the twentieth century), he opened a retail business near 6th and Jackson streets. It was called La Competencia (see locational map, inside front cover, site #8). The name had a sly double meaning, referring to the competence of its owner, as well as to the competition it brought to rival merchants. The store specialized in selling dry goods, groceries, tinware, hay, and grain. In addition to the store, José owned and operated a soda bottling works.

Despite the demands of his businesses, José found time to contribute to the cultural life of his adopted city by serving as an officer of La Junta Patriotica, an organization for Hispanic Arizonans living in the Phoenix area. Activities of the group included celebrations of the annual fiestas patrias, such as Diez y Seis de Septiembre.

José Iberri cultivated land that later became part of the Ann Ott Neighborhood. He was one of many farmers who used water from the Dutch Ditch, a nineteenth-century Salt River canal, to irrigate acreage east of 7th Street and south of the railroad tracks. The Dutch Ditch often tested the patience of its users. It washed out several times during floods, requiring reconstructions and reroutings. At other times, poor drainage in the ditch created unsanitary water that posed health hazards. By patiently working his land with Dutch Ditch water, Iberri succeeded in growing hay, grain, and other commodities to sell in his Phoenix store.

Opportunities afforded by the copper bonanza at the Magma Mine eventually lured the Iberri family to move on. They relocated to Superior, where José founded a lime production plant.
The retail scene in Phoenix in the early 1900s included establishments such as José Iberri’s store near 6th and Jackson streets. Iberri came to Phoenix in the late 1800s from Mexico (courtesy the Iberri family and Frank M. Barrios).

His kilns produced 40-50 tons of lime every 10 days and employed about a dozen workers. The lime was used to construct the Magma smelter, completed in 1924. He also established a general store in Superior and took out mining claims in the surrounding countryside. José Iberri remained an active and enterprising resident of Superior until his death there at the age of 76.
Concepción “Chona” Faz (1857–1938)

The objects, features, landscapes, and structures that people create and use often reveal facets of life that aren’t found in written records. A good example is the property formerly at 1329 East Madison Street (see locational map, inside front cover, site #6). Archaeological excavations there unearthed surprising details that written sources failed to note.

The historic occupants of 1329 East Madison were members of the Faz family. Historical documents tell us little about them. The family matriarch, Concepción “Chona” Faz, was born in 1857 in Mexico, perhaps in Altar, in the state of Sonora. Chona first entered Arizona in 1865, and in 1872, married a man from Yuma. By 1900, she was a widow, living in Florence, Arizona, and working as a day laborer to support her three children, Casimero, Clotilda, and Francisca. She soon moved the family to Tempe, and then to West Buchanan Street in Phoenix. In 1912, she bought a small house at 1329 East Madison, paying off its $200 mortgage in just four years. That home would remain in the Faz family for more than three decades (1912–1944).

After two of her children grew up and left home, Chona continued to live at 1329 East Madison with her daughter Clotilda and Clotilda’s children. Census records and city directories listed no occupations for either Chona or Clotilda Faz while they lived at that location. They appear to have supported themselves, in part, by renting small houses that they added to the property. At various times, their renters included blacksmiths, laborers, and an office secretary.

A backyard garden contributed to the family’s subsistence. Botanical remains from archaeological excavations revealed that the Faz family developed a little oasis that would be the envy of many a gardener. They maintained a rich diversity of plants in a lush backyard corral, a Spanish term for a horticultural plot composed of vegetable gardens, fruit trees, and inedible but showy plants intended to provide shade and attract birds. Peaches, plums, and olives were among the foods likely cultivated by the family. The Faz family also ran a backyard cottage industry at 1329 East Madison Street (see page 17).

1920 census lists Concepción “Chona” Faz living with her daughter Clotilda and grandchildren Alberto and Miguel at 1329 East Madison Street.
The Faz Family Pottery Kiln

Archaeologists working in the backyard of 1329 East Madison Street found a belowground kiln composed of two large pits connected by a short underground tunnel. One pit was a heavily burned, beehive-shaped chamber, which would have held the pottery being fired; the neighboring vertical-walled pit would have been used by the potter to monitor the firing and probably add fuel as needed. The short connecting tunnel allowed access between the two pits and also served as a vent to allow the fire in the kiln chamber to draft properly. Both pits were between 5 and 6 feet across and about 2½ feet deep; the firing chamber was round, but the neighboring access pit was rectangular. Both pits had layers of ash and charcoal at their bases, although a mix of broken pottery and ash in the pit next to the firing chamber suggests this material was raked out of the firing chamber through the tunnel and piled to one side in the adjacent pit. To our knowledge, this is the only kiln of this type ever encountered at a historic-era excavation site in Arizona.

The kiln was used by members of the Faz family to fire several varieties of handmade earthenware flowerpots. One looked like the small, plain terra cotta pots that can be bought at any modern garden center; others had thick walls and a grayish-white glaze on the exterior. One pot found during excavations was quite elaborate; it was large, 9 inches tall and originally about 10 inches in diameter, and it had a footed base and decorative fingerprint indentations around the rim. Unfortunately for the potter who made it, the vessel began to melt and deform in the heat of the kiln, making it unsellable. The broken vessel was abandoned in the kiln pit when it too was abandoned.

No documents describe the use of the kiln, and it is not known how long the Faz family made pots. The clay walls of the kiln chamber had been turned bright red through exposure to intense heat, suggesting the kiln had been used repeatedly. In a time when employment opportunities for women were limited, the money earned from selling flowerpots probably provided extra income for the Faz family.
Phoenix in the first half of the twentieth century was marked by rampant discrimination. Minorities were segregated from Anglos in housing, restaurants, theaters, hospitals, schools, hotels, swimming pools, and clubs. Hispanic-Americans were among the victims of such exclusionary practices.

John Woods Lewis was one individual who worked to reverse that trend. Lewis was the primary promotor of the Lewis Park and Lewis Park Annex subdivisions in what became the Cuatro Milpas Barrio, a Mexican-American neighborhood.

Lewis developed an inclusive view of society through a childhood enriched by Hispanic people, culture, and language. He was born in Albuquerque to an Anglo father and a Latina mother. His bilingual family background fostered language skills that served him well through life. As a young man, he worked as an interpreter for the government. Later, in Phoenix, he opened the Eagle Employment Agency, a company that specialized in helping field workers find jobs on Salt River Valley farms.

John’s main occupation, however, was in real estate. He realized that many subdivisions in Phoenix barred Hispanics (among other minorities) from owning or even renting houses. Sensing a need to help a growing segment of the population achieve home ownership, he urged his extended family to create a special subdivision on land between 13th Street, 14th Street, Buckeye Road, and Pima Street (see locational map, inside front cover, site #12). Named Lewis Park, the 1926 subdivision was created exclusively for Hispanic people. Its plat stated, “the ownership and tenancy of said Lewis Park shall be restricted to persons of Spanish-American descent.”

Lewis Park found a receptive clientele and enjoyed brisk sales. It became the core of a larger neighborhood called Las Cuatro Milpas (“the four cornfields”) by Hispanic-Americans who settled there. Two stories recall how the barrio got its name. The more accepted view is that the term referred to four fields that had once been farmed by Mexican families.

An alternative view is that Las Cuatro Milpas was named after a popular 1937 Spanish-language movie that celebrated rural Mexican
life and folkways. In either case, Cuatro Milpas Barrio grew in modern times to encompass a neighborhood from 7th to 14th streets, and from Buckeye Road to Mohave Street.

Lewis Park was designed with an actual park near its center. The park acquired special cultural significance to the Hispanic community when it became the scene of annual \textit{fiestas patrias} and other celebrations. Community members called the park “La Plataforma.”

In 1943, John Lewis went on to create and market another subdivision. Situated immediately west of Lewis Park, the new subdivision was called Lewis Park Annex. Its plat, deeds, and covenants carried no racial or cultural restrictions. Although open to all, the subdivision became particularly popular among Hispanic-Americans.

A tragedy marred the final months of Lewis’s life. On April 8, 1960, the car he drove was struck by a train at the intersection of 91st Avenue and the Southern Pacific tracks. The accident took three lives. Lewis survived, but died four months later at his Phoenix home.
Racism was a dominant force in Phoenix through the first half of the twentieth century. No group felt the sting of discrimination more sharply than African-Americans. Despite a segregated society, the African-American middle class of Phoenix produced leaders who succeeded in their professions and who worked to improve conditions for others. Among those leaders was Marshall Shelton, an African-American realtor who helped minorities purchase homes in Phoenix.

The African-American population of Phoenix numbered about 350 when Shelton arrived in 1911. His move to Arizona had taken a roundabout route. Born and raised in Missouri, he had worked for more than a decade as a porter in Kansas City. Just after the turn of the twentieth century, he moved to Seattle, where he honed marketing skills as a book solicitor, an old-fashioned term for a door-to-door salesman, or street vendor. In 1911, he moved briefly to Los Angeles before settling permanently in Phoenix.

The Phoenix that Shelton encountered presented many obstacles and few opportunities. The schools had recently become segregated, adding to a long list of laws and customs that separated whites from minorities in virtually all aspects of life. Nevertheless, many African-Americans sought homes of their own and had the means to purchase them. Sensing a niche, Shelton entered the field of real estate.

He began by astutely “flipping” parcels in the downtown area. He also became involved in residential developments. His first, in 1914, was Acre City, located at Washington and 32nd streets. That was followed in 1915, by Shelton’s Addition, north of Acre City (see locational map, inside front cover, site #2). The crowning achievement of his career, however, was the Portland Tract (see locational map, inside front cover, site #4).

An ad for the Portland Tract, a residential subdivision developed by Marshall Shelton. The tract was described as “the first restricted residential district for colored people ever offered for sale in America” (from the Arizona Republican, June 23, 1923).

Shelton developed the Portland Tract in 1923 on an oddly shaped piece of land east of what is now 40th Street. He aggressively
marketed the tract to members of the African-American middle class. It was reported that the development was “the first restricted residential district for colored people ever offered for sale in America.” Miss Hallie Q. Brown, president of the National Association of Colored Women’s Clubs, was rumored to be among the first buyers. Shelton’s newspaper ads predicted that purchasers would double their money by investing there.

Although some predictions for the Portland Tract proved to be too optimistic, Shelton succeeded in selling many lots there. Soon, however, the Great Depression took a toll on his business. His company, the Phoenix and Los Angeles Investment Association, managed to survive. It added an important new service by arranging mortgages in redlined neighborhoods. Redlining was known as such because conventional lenders would draw a red line around an area on a map, usually delineating a locality with a high concentration of minorities, and then refuse to make loans there because they considered the risk too high. Marshall Shelton helped to counter that practice, and he remained active in the Phoenix real estate scene until his death at the age of 82.
Ann Elizabeth Ott knew she wasn’t in Kansas anymore when she reported for work at the Robert Louis Stevenson Elementary School. The schoolmarm from the Sunflower State had to weave her way through cotton plants to find the one-room building hidden in their midst. She was to be the teacher and principal at the new schoolhouse, built in a farming community at 12th and Apache streets (see locational map, inside front cover, site #14) on the outskirts of Phoenix.

In her first year at Stevenson (1928–1929), Miss Ott had 86 students, ranging in age from 6 to 16. Their parents worked in agricultural fields surrounding the school. Poverty and disease plagued the families. Children would arrive at class barefooted and afflicted with impetigo, a highly contagious skin infection. One of Miss Ott’s first goals was to get shoes for the students to curb the spread of the disease. With the district superintendent’s blessing, she took the children to a Phoenix store and fitted them all with good footwear.

Miss Ott would spend 32 years ensuring that the many underprivileged children in her care were properly taught, fed, and clothed. Her services extended well beyond the classroom. Requests for her help in naming newborns, blessing marriages, settling quarrels, giving haircuts, and so forth, were all promptly answered. She became guardian, protector, and supporter of the community she served. Her varied duties did not prevent her from continuing her own education: in 1938, she graduated from Arizona State Teachers College, now Arizona State University.

The Stevenson School grew under Miss Ott’s capable leadership. Around 1930, another cottage and two teachers were added. Shortly after that, another grade, cottage, and teacher were introduced. By 1940, the facility included eight classrooms and a principal’s office, and provided instruction through the sixth grade. Expansion continued, and by 1947 there were eight more classrooms and a program of instruction through the eighth grade. A cafeteria, library, workshop, music/art rooms, and a home economics department were added in the 1950s. Enrollment by 1959 reached 1,000, making Stevenson the largest elementary school in the district.

Through her long career, Ann Ott remained vigilant in protecting the well-being of her students. When the state and the city began planning the Phoenix Expressway (now part of Interstate 17), she heard that it would impact part of the playground. She was able to get the right-of-way moved south so that it would not cut into the school grounds.

Miss Ott retired in 1960, as the first and only principal of the Stevenson School. The school was renamed in her honor later that year. The Ann Ott School (see locational map, inside front cover, site #15) remained an important part of the Phoenix Elementary School District until the school’s closure in 2005. Her legacy continues today. The community she served, bounded by 7th, Mohave, and 14th streets and Hilton Avenue, is called the Ann Ott Neighborhood. And her former campus now houses the Rio Salado College Ann Ott Adult Learning Center, a facility providing community members with opportunities to earn GED diplomas and to improve their English skills.
Ann Ott School (now the Rio Salado College Ann Ott Adult Learning Center) at 1801 South 12th Street. Ann Ott, first and only principal of Stevenson School, points out to Mrs. Thelma Driscoll, kindergarten teacher, the area in which cotton stood when she started at Stevenson in 1929.
The Archaeology of Entertainment

Long before the Internet and television were invented, what did residents of Phoenix do in their spare time? People worked longer hours, sometimes 50 or 60 hours a week. This was the time period of the Great Depression and World War II, and money was often tight, so inexpensive forms of entertainment were important. A look through issues of the Arizona Republic, census records, catalogs, and archaeological finds from the 1930s and 1940s provides clues to what people did for fun.

The 1930 census included a column noting whether households had a radio. Between 30 and 40 percent of the families living in the neighborhoods studied had radios in 1930, with Mexican-American families less likely to own one. The 1930 Sears, Roebuck & Company catalog sold radios ranging from $42 to $124, with a low down payment and easy monthly payment plans. By 1935, two Phoenix stations played local and national broadcasts. Listeners could tune into shows covering news, religion, music, comedies, dramas, and soap operas. Several shows featured people reading and describing comic strips.

Listeners could also enjoy music on record players purchased from local stores or from the Sears catalog. Many people learned how to play musical instruments, or they sang at home or at school. Concerts and bands were popular. Neighborhood residents may have gone to the Riverside Ballroom, “home of the name bands,” at 1175 South Central Avenue, to listen to Pete Bugarín and the Aztecas, with Mary Lou Soto the featured singer in the mid-1950s. Bugarín’s orchestra was popular from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s. In the 1950s, Luis Estrada was a popular “Spanish radio personality” in Phoenix, who also led an orchestra.

By the 1930s, most residents were literate. Local newspapers were published in English and Spanish, and they carried news, community events, serialized stories, comics, and plenty of advertisements. National newspapers, magazines, and books could also be read or borrowed from the Phoenix Public Library.

Other at-home entertainment enjoyed by residents included board games and jigsaw puzzles,

A radio program listing from the Arizona Republic, April 7, 1935.
card games (bridge was very popular), back-lot ball games, and parties. People with spare money could spend it at boxing matches and other sporting events, at pool halls, and bingo games, as well as at carnivals and fairs.

Local movie theaters, such as the Studio, the Strand, the State, and the Orpheum, played movies filmed in Hollywood, while Spanish-speaking residents might have watched movies produced in Mexico. Movie stars endorsed products in newspapers and magazines, and children clamored for toys featuring Orphan Annie, Mickey Mouse, Shirley Temple, and Flash Gordon.

Many of these forms of entertainment leave no physical traces. Mementos often involved perishable materials that do not survive being buried in the ground; newspapers, movie and sports tickets, and playing cards are rarely preserved. Other items, such as radios, phonographs, and sports equipment, were long-lasting and valuable, and were rarely discarded.

Sometimes, items can suggest some of the recreational activities enjoyed by people living in the VARS neighborhoods. Archaeologists found many children’s toys. These included dishes from tea sets, dolls, a jack, marbles, two airplanes, a whistle, a glass coin bank, a small dump truck, an arm from a toy soldier or policeman, and a toy ceramic bathtub and iron from a dollhouse. Most of these items could be purchased in local stores or from mail-order catalogs.

Fewer adult recreational items were found; these included two pool balls, a poker chip, and a domino. Adults were also consuming alcoholic beverages, with beer, wine, whiskey, and liquor bottles found on many lots. Many people enjoyed tobacco products, including leaf tobacco and snuff. Children and adults drank carbonated sodas, and archaeologists found many of these bottles in backyard pits, including Big Boy, Clicquot Club, Delaware Punch, Dr. Pepper, Royal Crown, Barq’s Root Beer, and Coca-Cola.

It is possible to get a sense of what people did in their spare time by examining the surviving artifacts and contemporary newspapers. These sources suggest that Phoenicians in the mid-twentieth century had many different recreational opportunities.
J. Parker Van Zandt (1894–1990)

The idea for Sky Harbor Airport began to form over the Grand Canyon. In 1927, a pilot flew westward over the canyon while delivering a plane for the Ford Motor Company. The view so impressed him that he decided to quit his job and start an airline to take tourists to the scenic wonders of the West.

The pilot’s name was John Parker Van Zandt. He had begun flying as an officer with the Signal Corps in World War I. He remained a military pilot until 1926, and obtained the seventeenth pilot’s license ever issued by our government. When he convinced some fellow Midwesterners to invest in his tourism venture, Scenic Airways took flight, establishing an airfield at the Grand Canyon and service from that location.

The business did so well so quickly that it was soon time to expand. In the fall of 1928, Van Zandt wrote to an associate: “We have just bought an airport in Phoenix of 278 acres, adjoining the Southern Pacific tracks, and plan to develop a vigorous program using this new airport as our base.”

What Van Zandt actually bought was farmland, not an airport. However, within weeks of the purchase, he and his crew cleared the land of cotton, removed the tallest trees, filled in some irrigation canals, and built a crude runway. The first plane, a Ford Tri-Motor, landed and departed from the facility on November 18, 1928.

Although named Phoenix Sky Harbor, aviators referred to the facility as “The Farm,” because of its rural character. Prior to landing, they would buzz the airstrip to chase away cows and alert Phoenix’s lone taxi to the arrival of fares. At landing and takeoff, aircraft on the unpaved runway shot clouds of dust in every direction.

Despite its rather primitive appearance, Sky Harbor soon buzzed with activity. From the Phoenix base, Scenic Airways offered charter flights, aircraft sales and servicing, regularly scheduled passenger flights, a ground school, and flight instruction. The airfield participated in opening ceremonies for the Arizona Biltmore, and served as a stop along the first Women’s Air Derby. Scenic Airways installed lighting equipment and laid plans to improve Sky Harbor.

The stock market crash in October of 1929 brought an end to those dreams. Scenic Airways
had failed to return a profit, and its investors liquidated all assets. The airport was sold first to an investment company. Then in 1935, the City of Phoenix purchased Sky Harbor, assuring its future improvement and growth.

J. Parker Van Zandt went on to live a long and productive life in the field of aviation. His writings on the art and science of flight were well regarded. He became a consultant for the Civil Aeronautics Board, Director of Aviation Research at the Brookings Institution, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Air Force. Among his greatest achievements stands the founding of Sky Harbor, an essential element in the development of Phoenix as a modern American metropolis.

Aerial view of Sky Harbor Airport, around 1946, looking south. Note the broad channel of the Salt River just south of Sky Harbor. The mountain range in the mid-ground is South Mountain, which was established as a natural preserve in 1924 (courtesy H. & D. McLaughlin, M. L. McLaughlin Photographs, Arizona State University Libraries).
Silvestre S. Herrera
(1917–2007)

A tradition of military service runs deep in the neighborhoods of the Salt River floodplain. Among the many local men and women who have served their country is Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Silvestre Santana Herrera. The Silvestre S. Herrera School (see locational map, inside front cover, site #11) today celebrates his extraordinary heroism.

Herrera was 27, married, and the father of three when a military draft letter arrived at his Phoenix home one day in 1944. With a fourth child on the way and Silvestre likely to be out of the country during the birth, he felt the need to let family members know what was happening. A conversation with his father elicited two shocking revelations: Silvestre was not a United States citizen, and the man he had always regarded as his father was actually his uncle. Silvestre learned, for the first time, that he had been born in Camargo, Chihuahua, Mexico. After his parents died of influenza in 1917, 18-month-old Silvestre was brought to El Paso by his uncle, who wanted to give the child a better life in the United States.

As a Mexican national, Silvestre did not owe military service to the United States. But as he later explained in an interview: “I thought, I’m going anyway. I didn’t want anyone to die in my place…I felt that I had my adopted country that had been so nice to me. I thought, I have an American wife and the kids and one on the way.” He joined the Texas National Guard, 36th Infantry Division, to train for combat in Europe. His unit became one of the first deployed to Europe from the U.S.

On March 15, 1945, Private First Class (PFC) Herrera’s platoon came under machine gun fire near Mertzwiller, France. As the rest of the unit took cover, Herrera made a one-man frontal assault on a strongpoint and captured eight enemy soldiers. When his platoon resumed its advance and was subjected to fire from a second strongpoint beyond a mine field, PFC Herrera again moved forward, disregarding the danger posed by the mines, to attack the position. He stepped on a mine, severing both feet. Despite his injuries, he pinned down the enemy with accurate rifle fire while a squad flanked and captured the enemy gunner.
On August 23, 1945, Silvestre Herrera crossed the White House lawn in his wheelchair to accept the Congressional Medal of Honor from President Harry S. Truman. A year later, Herrera was awarded Mexico’s highest honor for valor, the Premier Mérito Militar. He is the only person to earn both medals. Silvestre was discharged in 1946 with the rank of sergeant and full U.S. citizenship.

After the war, he worked as an artisan in leather and silver. Equally proud of his Mexican heritage and adopted country, he spoke passionately at schools and service clubs about the privileges of United States citizenship. A true Arizona legend, Silvestre Herrera died peacefully in his sleep at the age of 84.
Lincoln J. Ragsdale & Eleanor D. Ragsdale

Lincoln Johnson Ragsdale earned his pilot’s wings with the Tuskegee Airmen, the first squadron of African-Americans trained by the United States military for aerial combat, during World War II. When he arrived at Luke Air Force Base in the mid-1940s, becoming one of the first African-American pilots involved in the base’s integration, he was surprised to find that racism was as pervasive in Arizona as it was in his home state of Oklahoma. Following the war and a return to civilian life, he settled in Phoenix, where he and his brother started the Ragsdale Mortuary (later called the Universal Memorial Center). In 1949, Lincoln married Eleanor Dickey, a Pennsylvania-born and educated teacher at the Phoenix Dunbar Elementary School. The kindred spirits became an effective team in working to strike down segregation in their community and state.

One of their first experiences in civil rights activism involved Lincoln’s military and mortuary background. In 1952, the body of PFC Thomas Reed, an African-American soldier killed in the Korean War, arrived at the Ragsdale Mortuary at 1100 East Jefferson Street. Reed’s family wanted to have him buried at the military veterans’ plot at Greenwood Memorial Park, but the plot admitted only whites. The Ragsdales worked with the Greater Phoenix Council for Civic Unity to publicize the controversy locally and nationally. After a 3-month standoff, park officials relented and agreed to integrate the cemetery. Greenwood Memorial was the first of several facilities the Ragsdales would help to desegregate.

As they worked and started a family, the Ragsdales found time to continue their educations. Lincoln graduated from Arizona State Teachers College (now Arizona State University), while Eleanor obtained realty and insurance licenses. The couple cofounded the Ragsdale Realty and Insurance Agency and other businesses catering primarily to African-Americans.

Eleanor’s real estate expertise led to the Ragsdales’ role in integrating Phoenix neighborhoods. The couple had dreamed of moving from their 1508 East Jefferson Street duplex to a more affluent neighborhood. In
1952, Eleanor found the ideal home. However, it was located near the Encanto Neighborhood, an area that excluded minorities. The Ragsdales found a way to circumvent the system. They had a white friend purchase the home and transfer title to them while the transaction was still in escrow. Through this maneuver, the Ragsdales became the first to cross the color barrier, the infamous redline (Van Buren Street) that had prevented African-Americans from settling in the white neighborhoods of north Phoenix. The Ragsdales provided a model that other African-Americans often followed when moving to all-white areas.

The Ragsdale family experienced harassment in the new home but continued the struggle for equality. They provided leadership for the movement that culminated in the 1953 desegregation of Phoenix’s public schools. In 1964, Lincoln successfully lobbied the Phoenix City Council for passage of a public accommodations law similar to the federal Civil Rights Act. Eleanor meanwhile promoted educational opportunities for minorities. She solicited funds for job-training workshops, and worked with Arizona State University administrators to establish financial aid for African-American and Mexican-American students. In fighting racism through “creative confrontation,” as they called it, the Ragsdales helped Phoenix become a more equitable community than they had found it.
Noah G. Billings
(1917–2012)

Young Noah Billings’s future did not look promising. He dropped out of school at an early age to help support his family, never attended high school, and had no formal training in commerce. Who could predict that he would one day found the iconic valley business Food City?

Noah G. Billings was born in Oklahoma. He was the fourth of seven children in a farming family that struggled to make ends meet. Amid the agricultural turmoil of the times, Noah’s family moved to Phoenix when he was 8, settling first at 2037 East Jefferson Street, and later at 1418 East Apache Street (see locational map, inside front cover, site #14).

From the age of 9, Noah worked at any odd job he could find or create. He raised rabbits for market, sold soda to warehouse workers, delivered milk door-to-door, and sold produce from a truck. Earning a reputation as a diligent and honest soul, Noah was offered the job of butcher at George Kirk’s market when he was just 16. He accepted, stayed on, and took over the business when the owner became ill, around 1940.

Noah and his wife, Marie, renamed the market Food City. They lived at the back of the building at 16th and Mohave streets (see locational map, inside front cover, site #16) while they got the business off the ground. Times were difficult: the couple had no money, and banks were unwilling to make loans to businesses south of the railroad tracks. When World War II broke out, Noah worked in an aircraft factory until he could return to his store full-time.

Despite its name, Food City originally functioned more like a general store than a grocery. It sold everything from clothing to kerosene. About 60 percent of its early clientele was Anglo. After the war, the clientele became increasingly Hispanic, as the surrounding neighborhoods grew. Billings embraced the change by adapting his store to meet the needs of new customers. He added a tortilleria, Mexican-style baked goods, and an array of products appealing to Latino cooks.

Such innovations earned customer loyalty. By 1948, it was time to expand. Billings razed the old store and built a new one, at 1112 South 16th Street (see locational map, inside front cover, site #13). Expansions gradually increased the size of the store to 42,000 square feet. The store would eventually employ nearly 200 people.

Food City emphasized personal service. Billings added a cafeteria, a bank, and an ethnic foods section long before they were common. He even dedicated space in the store for English as a Second Language classes and free legal clinics to assist immigrants. Billings was apprehensive when a Smitty’s Super Valu opened less than a mile away and when the West Approach Land Acquisition program displaced some 6,000 local residents. Food City survived these challenges, because its loyal customers were willing to drive farther for the store’s goods and services.

In 1994, Billings sold his business to Bashas’. Bashas’ opened Food City stores at more than 50 locations. Billings retired, but kept a finger on the pulse of the industry he loved. Even in retirement, his wife noted, he continued to do all their grocery shopping.
Noah Billings (seen in lower left and upper right) founded Food City, now a chain owned by Bashas’. The original store (to left) was at 1648 South 16th Street. The later store (to right) was at 1112 South 16th Street. The markets were particularly popular with Hispanic residents of Phoenix, and Billings responded by adding tortillerias and Mexican food products.
Copper Plates from the Copper State

Archaeologists excavated several pits at 1317 East Durango Street in the Ann Ott Neighborhood. Among the finds were two Arizona license plates that appear to have been discarded by the James Watkins family, who once owned the property. One, from 1932, was marked “5YS3,” and the other, from 1933, was marked “3LB4.” What can these plates tell us?

Copper Plates

Arizona required automobile license plates in 1914, two years after statehood. License plates were necessary to register automobiles, providing a source of income to build and maintain roads, and they could be used to identify automobile owners. For three years, between 1932 and 1934, Arizona produced license plates made from copper. This was the period of the Great Depression, and as copper demand and prices declined, Arizona’s large copper mines in Bisbee, Globe, Jerome, and Morenci were threatened with closure.

Using copper for license plates helped keep many miners employed in the state and provided an unusual way to advertise the state’s copper resources.

Gary Fox is a collector and expert on Arizona plates (www.azplates.com). He reported both plates were issued to Maricopa County vehicles, because the plates for the county started with the numbers 1 through 7 in those years. In 1932, only 79,835 passenger cars were registered in the state, with 33,497 from Maricopa County (roughly one car for every five people). The following year, 74,729 vehicles were registered in Arizona, with 31,184 from Maricopa County. The decrease in vehicles is probably a result of the continuing Great Depression.

James Watkins Family

James Robert Watkins purchased the deed for the Durango Street property in 1933. He was born in 1881 in Arkansas and was married in 1906 to Clara Avants, a 19-year-old Arkansas native. The couple had a son and a daughter before moving to Phoenix around 1919. Watkins worked as a farmer in Laveen, where the couple had a second daughter. After moving to Durango Street, he became a watchman for the Maricopa County Highway Department, and later worked for the Allison Steel Company. The family moved away in 1946. James died in Phoenix in 1962, Clara in California in 1973.

The two license plates discarded by the Watkins family reveal that they owned an auto or truck, and several horse-related artifacts found on the Watkins lot suggest the family may have also owned a horse.
Father Albert Braun O.F.M. (1889–1983)

Few individuals had a greater impact on this area during the mid-twentieth century than Father Albert Braun. His role in the Sacred Heart Parish gave cohesion and strength to its largely Hispanic population.

In a career dedicated to assistance and activism, Father Albert fostered a sense of community among the people he served.

Father Albert was a decorated hero of two world wars and a seasoned missionary by the time he arrived in Phoenix. Born John William Braun, he received the name Albert upon entering the Franciscan Order. His first missionary assignment was among the Apache of Mescalero, New Mexico. In 1918, he volunteered as an Army Chaplain, seeing action in one of the bloodiest battles fought by American troops in World War I. During the battle of Saint-Mihiel (France), he advanced with the front line and was wounded, but continued ministering to the injured and dying until the long battle ended. After the war, he returned to Mescalero, where he built St. Joseph’s Church.

As a commissioned officer in the Army Reserves, he was called to active duty in 1940. He was serving in the Philippines during World War II when American forces withdrew in 1942. He spent the next 40 months at prisoner-of-war camps. Defying his Japanese captors, he secured food and medical supplies for fellow prisoners, tended to their spiritual needs, and saw that the remains of the dead were properly handled. His weight decreased from 195 to 115 pounds as he endured beatings, hunger, and disease.

In 1952, Catholic volunteers known as the Sacred Heart Workers recruited Father Albert to help Phoenix’s Golden Gate Barrio build a neighborhood church. Braun and his volunteer corps soon broke ground near the northeast corner of 16th Street and Buckeye Road; in 1956, the Sacred Heart Church was dedicated.
Now listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Sacred Heart Church stands as a tribute to Father Albert Braun and a symbol of the barrios he served. Even today (2013), Father Albert’s life and works are recognized and celebrated annually. The Braun-Sacred Heart Center coordinates a Mass once a year, at 12:00 noon on Christmas Day, inside the old Sacred Heart Church, to remember Father Albert. Many of the former Golden Gate Barrio residents return each year for the event. Inset photo: Father Braun in later years (courtesy Frank M. Barrios).
That achievement sparked similar efforts in nearby barrios. In 1954, Father Albert organized St. John the Baptist Church at 1826 East Magnolia Street. Members of the Cuatro Milpas Barrio built the St. Mary Magdalene Church at 1102 East Hilton Avenue. In 1956, the Santa Rita Chapel was completed in El Campito Barrio. The four churches came to compose the Sacred Heart Parish.

The parish churches became focal points for community development. They provided leadership in efforts to improve social services and infrastructure (sewers, street lights, water, and so forth). With church support, three major service agencies formed within Sacred Heart Parish: Chicanos Por La Causa, Valle del Sol, and the Barrio Youth Project. Father Albert retired in 1962, but his legacy of activism continued.

Homeowners in the Golden Gate Barrio were relocated in the 1970s as the West Approach Land Acquisition program made way for Sky Harbor Center. Many of these residents were moved to nearby neighborhoods. However, parishioners wanted to preserve the Sacred Heart Church, and ultimately, the City of Phoenix let the building remain.
Recent Neighborhood Notables
(in alphabetical order)

Carver Barnes (born 1929)

Many who grew up in these neighborhoods remember Carver Barnes as the social worker and recreation manager who made a difference in their lives. He was raised in Kalamazoo, Michigan, where he started his career. Around 1960, he moved to Phoenix and became director of Berney Park, in the former Golden Gate Barrio. The park was a bright light for children of all races and ethnicities. It not only gave at-risk children a place to play, but also got them involved in socially meaningful projects. Barnes’s success at Berney Park soon landed him the job of Program Director at the Wesley Community Center (1300 South 10th Street; see locational map, inside front cover, site #10), a community organization designed to provide services and activities for families and children. Carver Barnes worked with Phoenix Parks & Recreation and with the Theodore Roosevelt Council of the Boy Scouts of America. Throughout his career, he helped impoverished people discover their potential and talents and to build more successful lives.

Pedro “Pete” Bugarín (born 1917)

Pete Bugarín was a Renaissance man who wore many hats, as a musician, an educator, an accountant, and a restaurateur. Residents remember him most fondly as the orchestra leader whose bands enjoyed a 25-year run (starting in 1950) at the Riverside Ballroom (1175 South Central Avenue). Years before that and fresh out of high school, he pioneered Phoenix’s first Spanish-language radio program, La Hora Mexicana, which debuted on station KOY in 1935. Many musicians developed their talents while working with him. He helped launch the careers of Curtis Gray (musical arranger for Duke Ellington and Count Basie), Luis Estrada (singer, orchestra
leader, radio announcer), Chapito Chavarría (bassist and orchestra leader), Maria Luisa Soto (star of radio and television), Ricardo Rico (the “Mexican Frank Sinatra”), and Narciso Martinez (“King of the Polka”), among others. In 1970, Bugarín and his family opened La Piñata Restaurant, soon to be known as “the home of the chimichanga.” The recipient of a master’s degree in education from Arizona State University, Bugarín contributed his expertise to organizations such as the Arizona Association of Mexican-American Educators, Chicanos Por La Causa, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), and the Vesta Club.

César Chávez (born 1927)

César Chávez played a significant role in the modern history of the area. In 1972, the Arizona Legislature passed and Governor Jack Williams signed a bill severely limiting the power of farm workers to strike, organize, recruit union members, and conduct boycotts. United Farm Workers President Chávez protested the law and urged the recall of Governor Williams. When asked about the difficulty of unseating a popular governor, Chávez is said to have replied, “¡Sí se puede!” (“Yes, it can be done!”), and the rallying cry of the Chicano movement was born. To underscore the gravity of Arizona’s anti-labor law, Chávez undertook a fast at the Santa Rita Center (1017 East Hadley Street; see locational map, inside front cover, site #9) in the El Campito Barrio, home to many of the state’s farm workers. Chávez was hospitalized on the twenty-first day of the fast and ended it on the twenty-fourth, but not before the hunger strike drew widespread attention and support. Although efforts to recall the governor and challenge the law failed, the movement ultimately forged a diverse coalition of Arizonans and energized a new generation of political activists.

A 1972 Arizona law, restricting the rights of farm workers, led César Chávez to stage a protest at the Santa Rita Center. His 24-day-long fast drew international attention and led many others to become political activists.
Neighborhood Notables...

Adam Diaz (born 1909)

Adam Diaz was the first Hispanic elected to the Phoenix City Council. He ran in 1953 at the urging of Barry Goldwater and others from the Charter Government Committee who wanted the city government to be run more professionally and efficiently. Diaz held office (1954–1955) during a time when council members served at-large rather than as representatives of specific wards or districts; his presence on the city council gave Latinos in Phoenix a voice in local government. Although his tenure on the council was brief, his involvement with civic organizations was life-long.

Groups to which he volunteered time and talent included Phoenix Elementary School District #1, Chicanos Por La Causa (1112 East Buckeye Road), Friendly House, the Vesta Club, the Boy Scouts, the Arizona Medical School Study Commission, the Governor’s Conference on Youth, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, Maricopa County Community College, the Arizona Historical Society, and the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors. Known as a consensus builder, he mentored rising political figures such as Mary Rose Wilcox, Alfredo Gutierrez, and Michael Nowakowski. The Adam Diaz Senior Center (4115 West Thomas Road) today honors the memory of the man who improved others’ lives and helped reduce discrimination toward Hispanics.

John Diaz (born 1915)

John Diaz was an outstanding teacher who taught for more than 20 years in various Phoenix elementary schools. Six of those years were spent at the Silvestre S. Herrera Elementary School in the Cuatro Milpas Barrio. Diaz’s involvement in education did not stop at the classroom. He was a charter member of the Vesta Club, founded in 1954, which had the goal of enhancing the image of Spanish-speaking citizens. The club considered education to be the key to many of the problems faced by Mexican-Americans. Composed of professional and business leaders, the Vesta Club adopted the motto “Progress through education.” Its members, all college graduates, sponsored an extensive scholarship program. John Diaz also contributed his time and expertise to the City of Phoenix Human Relations Commission, the Jobs for Progress Board, the Governor’s Advisory Council on Aging, the League of Latin American Citizens, and various national and state education associations. His grandson, Dr. Gareth Zehrbach, now serves as Principal at the Herrera School (2013).
**Calvin Goode (born 1927)**

Calvin Goode has been called a “history maker,” a term that fits him perfectly. The accountant and long-time resident of the Eastlake Park Neighborhood served for 22 years (1972–1994) on the Phoenix City Council. He was the second African-American elected to that body and the longest-tenured councilman in Phoenix’s history. Representing District 8, he consistently supported programs to benefit minorities, young people, and seniors. He advocated affordable housing and worked to ensure that woman- and minority-owned businesses would receive a proportionate share of city contracts. He participated in the effort to get the city and state to observe Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

Community organizations have benefited from his decades of service. He was a founding member and president of the George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center, a vice president of the Booker T. Washington Child Development Center, and a vice president of the Eastlake Park Neighborhood Association. In 2004, Goode received the Hon Kachina Volunteer Award for his work in creating opportunities for others. Phoenix named its then city hall (251 West Washington Street) for him and inaugurated the annual Calvin C. Goode Lifetime Achievement Award program in his honor, which is presented at the Arizona Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration.

Phoenix City Councilman and Eastlake neighborhood resident Calvin Goode has a long legacy of service in the community. The City of Phoenix named the Municipal Building (formerly City Hall) at 251 West Washington Street, in his honor, and his place in the city’s history is commemorated on the Peace Marker in recently renovated Eastlake Park.
Neighborhood Notables...

**Pastor Marye A. Hutchings (born 1927)**

Marye A. Hutchings did not want to become a pastor. But when her husband, the Reverend Arthur Dave Hutchings, died in 1989, she felt a calling to lead his congregation at the Trinity Church of God in Christ. Located at 1702 East Jefferson Street, the church was (and still is) the place of worship for many African-Americans living in and around the area. Marye Hutchings not only rose to the challenge of becoming the church pastor, but also became a strong advocate for human rights and community development. She advised governors on social issues, counseled students to stay in school, and spoke on behalf of prisoners seeking parole. For her tireless efforts, the City of Phoenix named her a recipient of the 2009 Martin Luther King Stand Up for Justice Living the Dream award.

**Sister Mary Luca Junk (born 1905)**

Someone once commented that Sister Mary Luca Junk could “out-Teresa Mother Teresa.” She was a one-woman war on poverty, a go-to person for needy neighborhood residents. Working through social service agencies and her own network, Sister Mary Luca could supply anything, from refrigerators to mattresses to college scholarships. In 1965, at the age of 60, she was sent from the Midwest to Phoenix by her religious order, the Sisters of the Precious Blood. Her mother superior hoped that the transfer to a warm climate would help Sister Mary Luca’s arthritis and ease the path toward retirement. The Phoenix assignment was to teach fifth graders at the Sacred Heart School, 1625 East Tonto Street. “I began following the children home from school,” the nun told an interviewer, “and learned that they lived in crowded conditions without even the barest essentials of life.” When her retirement as a teacher came in 1968, she turned her full attention to helping such children and their families. Colleagues said she was able to finagle, beg, and borrow whatever was needed. In the gymnasium of the Immaculate Heart Church she stored her bounty, including donated bread, cheese, milk, fruit, blankets, clothing, and so forth. She personally distributed the items to those in need. Serving the poor until her death at 84, Sister Mary Luca was called “Mama Luca” and “God’s Lady in Phoenix” by the countless souls she served.
Interest in family history has recently increased with the popularity of genealogy television shows. Many people want to learn about their family’s past, but how do you do it?

Beginners should consider buying or borrowing a basic how-to genealogy guide, helpful for explaining the various sources of information you will use to work on your family tree. Start with records you have at home or that can be found with relatives, such as birth and marriage certificates, newspaper clippings, and photographs. Talk to your oldest relatives and learn what they know. Family group sheets and pedigree charts, available online or in genealogy guides, will help organize your data.

The Internet has many resources that can be accessed for free at home or at your local library. The State of Arizona has placed birth certificates (older than 75 years) and death certificates (older than 50 years) online at www.genealogy.az.gov. Arizona marriage records must be obtained from the Clerk of the Superior Court for Maricopa County. Many vital and census records are now available on the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) website www.familysearch.org, along with records from throughout the rest of the world. Google has also scanned millions of old books, including genealogies and local histories, and made them available on www.books.google.com. People are photographing tombstones and preparing memorials and posting these on www.findagrave.com.

Other websites charge to access their records, but can often be viewed for free at public libraries or LDS Family History centers, including the center in Mesa. The Phoenix Public Library has several useful websites:

www.ancestry.com has census records, military records, and immigration and border-crossing records; www.heritagequestonline.com also has census records, along with family and local history books, Revolutionary War records, and Freedman’s Bank Records, which provide valuable information for nineteenth-century African-Americans; and www.proquest.com has millions of obituaries from throughout the country.

Other websites specialize in digitizing old newspapers. The Chronicling America section of the Library of Congress website, www.chroniclingamerica.loc.gov has thousands of pages of Arizona newspapers. Subscription websites, such as www.newspaperarchive.com and www.genealogybank.com, are busy scanning millions of pages of newspaper articles from throughout the country, making them searchable by name and keywords.

Family trees can be found at many websites, including WorldConnect at wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com. However, there is a lot of inaccurate information posted, and any information found should be verified with original records.

As you grow more experienced, you will want to visit specialized libraries and archives. As an example, the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records in the capitol building has many collections specializing in Arizona history. A genealogy library is also present in the capitol. An overview of the collection and a link to an online catalog are available at www.lib.az.us/is/genealogy/collection.aspx. The Arizona Historical Society collects records from throughout the state and makes them available in their branch libraries. Other records can be found in the Special Collections at the three major state universities.

Family history research can be an exciting adventure as new relatives and their stories are found. It is also never-ending because each new mystery that is solved opens up further ones to explore.
Recommended Readings

Barrios, Frank M.

Bartlett, Michael H., Thomas M. Kolaz, and David A. Gregory

Bostwick, Todd W.

Dean, David R., and Jean A. Reynolds


Haury, Emil W.

Luckingham, Bradford


Murray, Vince, and Scott Solliday

Vega, Santos C.

A technical report describing recent archaeological work by Desert Archaeology in the VARS area is available through the City of Phoenix.

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Inside back cover: Aerial view of Sky Harbor Airport in its infancy, 1929, looking west. Note the airplanes and dirt landing strip in the foreground, as well as many farm fields that extend westward to near the limits of the original Phoenix townsite above the arc of train tracks near the top of the photograph (courtesy H. & D. McLaughlin, M. L. McLaughlin Photographs, Department of Archives and Manuscripts, University Libraries, Arizona State University, Tempe).
Top: Archaeologists monitored the demolition of houses acquired by the City of Phoenix under the VARS program in areas where archaeological resources might be present. Monitoring was the first step in identifying the need for more intensive archaeological investigations. Inset: Cesspools were common in Phoenix up until the 1950s in neighborhoods that were not connected to the city sewer system.

Left: Exploratory archaeological excavation, called Phase 1 data recovery, was used to search for buried historic and prehistoric remains. In this photograph, historic trash deposits are being outlined.

Above: More detailed excavation, called Phase 2 data recovery, was used to record the characteristics of archaeological features and recover associated artifacts. Here, archaeologists work to uncover and map a buried prehistoric house.