

The Verde Valley

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Authored by William L. Cowan

10 interesting insights into the work – The Verde Valley

1. This is the first book, since the 1954 release of Pioneer Stories of Arizona's Verde Valley that treats the entire Verde Valley as the single interconnected community of families that it once was.
2. This book is among the first which looks at the early history of Central Arizona, Fort Verde and the Rio Verde Reservation from an Indian perspective.
3. This book includes an interesting history of both the incorporated and unincorporated communities of the Verde and traces the settlement of the Verde as it progressed from the Lower Verde through Fort Verde and up the drainages of the Verde River as well as up Beaver Creek and Oak Creek.
4. This work includes many never before seen photos from family collections such as those from 90 plus year old Evelyn Wager, a four generation Arizona native. Her great-grandmother came to the vicinity of Cottonwood in 1875. Betty Dickinson Kent whose great-grandfather Samuel Dickinson came to Middle Verde in 1875. Jane Goddard whose great grandfather, Welcome Godard, arrived in Lower Verde in 1891. Shirley Sullivan who ran the V Bar V Ranch for many years and has shared photos of the early cowboy life and the Dude Ranch days. Glenda Farley whose family came in 1879 shared Willard family photos going back essentially to the abandonment of the Rio Verde Reservation. Many of the Munds and Benedict photos contributed by Frank Benedict have never been seen before. Finally the Sedona Heritage Museum photos belonging to Sherman Loy represent a family who came to Oak Creek in 1877 and also a family of noted photographers across 4 generations. Finally, this work includes a never published photo of Morris Andrew Ruffner who staked the first claim at what would become Jerome, along with a map showing the location of his homestead near Peck's lake.
5. This book allows the reader to understand the history of the Verde Valley in a clear, easy to understand chronological order through some of the best photographs of the period.
6. In this year of the Arizona Centennial, this book explains the history of the Verde within the context of The Homestead era, the development of Arizona Territory and the early years of statehood.
7. This work is approved by the Yavapai County Arizona Centennial Committee.
8. Book explores through photos the historical development from the horse and buggy through the development of electricity, the automobile, and the airplane.
9. The book includes many classic photos of cowboys and ranching in the American West.

10. The book is an appreciation of the families that made up the history, generation on generation through the historic development of the Verde Valley.

About the Author of - The Verde Valley

William L Cowan is a resident of Rimrock, Arizona, raised in a day when most of the roads were dirt and all Arizonans treated each other like they might be related. His interest in the history of Arizona stems from many nights around a campfire with a father who loved to hunt, fish and tell stories and a mother who loved to hunt arrowheads and figure out where the people who had lived here before, stayed in the course of their seasonal migrations. Born in Phoenix, the family spent summers at their Mormon Lake cabin. The annual travel in those days included a visit to many of the towns and locations featured in this book, at a time when they were still rural and small enough that everyone in the Verde, if they had been here long, knew virtually everybody else.

A 1970 graduate of the Northern Arizona School of Forestry, William became a student of historic photographs of rural Arizona as a way of documenting environmental change over time. As an employee of the US Forest Service he spent hours studying maps and geography from the fire tower at Mormon Lake Lookout and slowly recognized that the history of Northern Arizona was written in the place-names such as Munds Park, Willard Springs, Lee Butte or Newman Park – all places named for pioneers of the Verde Valley.

Cowan led Historic Treks for the Camp Verde Historical Society for 17 years and learned first hand the stories and legends of the Verde at the places where the history actually occurred and often with descendents of the participants, while serving as president of that institution three years and on the board 5 years.

Cowan currently serves on the Yavapai County Arizona Centennial Committee and has initiated the building of historic Legacy Monuments celebrating the history of Arizona throughout Yavapai County including Beaver Creek, Clarkdale, Clemenceau, Red Rock, Walker, Dewey, Prescott Valley and Ashfork. Cowan has participated in the Arizona Centennial Best Fest, is a member of the Arizona Historical Society and assists where possible in the preservation of Arizona historic sites, traditions and culture.

Bill hopes this book will foster an appreciation for the colorful history of the Verde Valley and a format for residents to consider the valley as their own single community, and encourage individuals and families to participate in the preservation of stories, photographs historic buildings and the history of those who passed this way before.

The lasting impact of the book – The Verde Valley

It is my sincere hope that in this year of celebrating the Arizona Centennial, that folks will love and appreciate the rich history of Arizona and particularly here in the Heart of Arizona, essentially the geographic center of the state. This work seeks to encourage residents and visitors to the Verde to think of the Valley as a single interconnected community with a very colorful shared history from Indians to cowboys, miners, ranchers and farmers. Beef consumed by miners in Jerome was raised in the Mogollon highlands by Beaver Creek, Oak Creek and Camp Verde cowboys and wine served in Clarkdale came from vineyards along Oak Creek. Families from Jerome and Clarkdale frequented businesses in Cottonwood, attended dances in Beaver Creek, Cornville and Camp Verde and camped and fished along Oak Creek.



Bill Cowan with grandchild Ashlyn Bailey Cooper, a 7th generation Arizonan we call “Smiley” at the Arizona Centennial Best Fest.