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Historic Happenings

www.cgvhs.org

Volume XXXI, Issue III

December 2011

When Opportunity Knocks, Open the Door: A Special Exhibit at the Museum

Events that come to us as serendipitous usually cause us to stop and rethink our priorities. So it is with the Father Kino exhibit that opens December 10th in Heritage Hall. It was Board member Jim Sommers' enthusiasm for this project that started the ball rolling. What we discovered, as we looked further, is that this is likely to be the most popular traveling exhibit ever displayed in Casa Grande.

Everyone who lives in Arizona or New Mexico thinks they know who Eusebio Francisco Kino was and what he accomplished during his ministry to the native peoples of the Southwest. The surprise is that we don't. We see only the tip of the iceberg, so to speak.

The tone for this powerful exhibit, created by the Kino Heritage Society, is set by a 7' cross adorned with abalone shells. We understand the symbolism of the cross, but why abalone shells? The answer is that Kino, who was a blue-eyed Italian, came to the New World as the royal cosmographer for the California Expedition in 1682. While in Baja California (which was thought to be an island), he noticed that the abalone was present in the gulf coast but not present in the Pacific side. Surely, he thought, if this were an island, the mollusk would live on both sides. Years later, his supposition was validated.

The Kino story is history at its best. Each of the seven panels in the exhibit describes a different aspect of Kino's life. A 30-minute video enhances the story told on these panels. In addition, religious vestments, a display case



holding artifacts, and a replica of the statue "Kino on Horseback" provide rich context.

This exhibit comes to the Museum courtesy of the Catholic Diocese of Tucson and the Kino Heritage Society. Our museum staff has added a center with objects related to the Kino story that children may touch. A series of contemporary prints by Ted De Grazia are on display.

The exhibit opens in Casa Grande on Saturday, December 10, 2011. Admission to the exhibit is by ticket--\$10 for adults and \$5 for children. A purchased ticket gives the visitor access to our museum as well as this special exhibit. Hours are the same as the museums. The exhibit is closed Christmas and New Year's weekends. Its final day is Sunday, January 29, 2012.

We hope that you will bring your special guests to see this exhibit and our museum during the holiday season ahead!



President's Message

Greetings from your Museum!

I hope that all of you have had the opportunity to come by and see the activities that are happening this Museum season. The action has not stopped since our doors opened on September 15th. Please share with your family, friends and neighbors the wonderful events and happenings that have already taken place and will be happening next year. A Museum membership would make a great gift to someone for Christmas. It truly is a gift that would keep on giving throughout the year. Memberships start as low as \$25.00!

Have you seen our new train exhibit? Have you spent time at our Family Fun Sundays? Did you enjoy an afternoon at our "Hot Wings for History" cook off? Have you heard about our yard sale coming up in December? Please see your newsletter for the dates, times and places of these special events. We just had two of our historic Fire Engines in the Veteran's Day Parade and we are decorating our 1929 Fire Engine for the Electric Light Parade on December 3rd. Hope to see you there!

We have a very special exhibit coming to our newly remodeled Heritage Hall on December 10th. The Father Kino exhibit will be on loan to the Museum through January 27, 2012. This display features the story and artifacts of Father Kino and some of the works of Ted DeGrazia. You can be involved with helping to show our community this amazing exhibit. We need volunteers to host the exhibit; no experience is necessary! Please call the office to volunteer your time and celebrate the story of Father Kino and his contributions to the Southwest with our visitors. Contact Ashley or Dee at the office (520) 836-2223 and pledge an afternoon to "walk through history" in the time of Father Kino.

The Museum Season is well on its way into the Centennial celebration of Arizona's statehood. On January 22nd we have the Annual Meeting of the CG Valley Historical Society. Our special Centennial Celebration is scheduled for February 11th, the Old Timers' Picnic will be on March 11th, and our special "A Night at the Museum" will be on April 14th.

Your Museum staff and volunteers are working hard to help us all enjoy and benefit from the wonders of history and to make sure the present is preserved for future generations. Come by and say hello to the staff and volunteer to be part of making our Museum a showplace for the community and its history.

Merry Christmas to all and a
Blessed and Happy New Year . . .



MEMBERSHIPS September - November 2011

CORPORATE

Gold (\$250)

Al & Riley's Air Conditioning

Silver (\$100)

Grant D. Walton Orthodontics

INDIVIDUAL

Sustaining \$100+

Joe Auza
Steve & Kara Cooper
Richard Fleming
Tony Serrano

Family

Lois & Carol Grasty
Matthew Levario
Roger & Veda Mineer
Al & Rita Nader
Tatyana Persch
Larry Pfeiffer
David & Gloria Storie

Individual

Allen Co. Public
Library
Kempton Ashburn
Louis Hillman
Marian Hopes
Barbara Kunz
Brian Kramer
Dorothy Neitzer

Individual

John Nussbaumer
Carol Roth
Pamela Runner
Dale Smith
Eldon Smith
Gloria Smith
Ruth Walter
Shirley Weik

MEMORIALS September - November 2011

In Memory of:

Dr. Phil Blair
Nate Coxon
Chester Ethington
Mary Rugg
Rosemary Soltau
Will Soltau
Gladys Smith

Dennis Joaquin Kirkland

Donor:

Cooper & Rueter, LLC
Warren Goff
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Vivian Morrison
Calene Richard
Eldon Smith

Melvin & Pauline Anderson
Carla & Paul Cooper
Jim & Janet Henness
Joan Mason
Sheila McGinnis
Ken Skaggs



ARIZONA CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

Your Historical Society, along with other community groups throughout Casa Grande have planned a series of events to commemorate Arizona statehood. While the official

Centennial is February 14th, our celebration will take place on Saturday, February 11th, 2012.

The day will begin with the Casa Grande Plein Air Painting Event, sponsored by the City of Casa Grande Arts & Humanities Commission. Local artists will be working "en plein air," thereby capturing the ever-changing elements of their chosen venue.

Using various painting techniques, the artists will scatter themselves throughout the community to capture subjects and scenes that tell the story of our city. The artists will be working from 8 am to 3:30 pm, with a judging reception to follow in the evening. Please contact the City Clerk's office for more information on this event: 520.421.8600.

The festivities continue here at the Museum with History Alive! from 10 am - 2 pm. Volunteer Deb Miller has identified several people to portray key figures from Casa Grande's past. These characters will be strolling the Museum grounds, along with others providing demonstrations on bygone tasks such as flint-knapping and quilting.

Merrilyn Ridgeway has been working with the local quilting shops and together they will install a display of vintage quilts by local artists and antique ones from the Society's collection. This display will be housed in the newly renovated Heritage Hall, beginning on February 11th and continuing through the month of March.

Admission to both History Alive! and the quilt display are included with regular Museum admission: \$5 for adults, \$4 for seniors, free for children under 16 and Society members. The Museum will be open from 10 am - 4 pm that day. Stay tuned for more information on this exciting celebration of our heritage!



Exhibit Revisited

In September, 25 letters went to educators and former teachers in Casa Grande as part of the preparation for a new, more vibrant education exhibit in the Dallis Schoolhouse. Our strong collections of photos, artifacts, year-books, and documents tell the story of life in Casa Grande during its first 50 years. That is not, unfortunately, true of the most recent 50 years when change has been so dramatic.

Items that tell the story of education, agriculture, town life, prominent people and events in Casa Grande are being lost forever. As members know, the Society does not seek out and purchase artifacts. The collection in our care is the direct result of the thoughtfulness and generosity of local people--members like yourself.

Unless objects that today seem mundane are preserved there is little hope for the future for our museum. We are seeking to acquire items through a direct appeal to the membership and to others who have lived in Casa Grande since 1960 whose participation and membership we seek.

We collect local history. We share local history. We preserve local history. Your help is needed now so that your children, your grandchildren, and others who learn from the stories each of us have to tell. If you are not sure that the Society would appreciate an item or items, and you would like to speak with someone about a donation, please call the Society office at 520.836.2223.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR...

The Casa Grande Valley Historical Society Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 22, 2012

Sign-in: 11:30am

Meeting Begins: 12:30pm

**Featuring the Society's annual report,
and the election of new Board members**

Please bring a covered dish to share

A New Addition to Your Bookshelf...

Finally!! After more than a year in the composition and writing and several months in the finalizing, the Historical Society has received advance copies of the photographic history of Casa Grande. Kay Benedict and Dawn Snell selected the photographs, Marilyn Ridgeway provided the research, and Dawn wrote the text for what we hope will be a fun and educational experience for our readers. Arcadia Publishing Company, which has published more than 7,500 of these types of books, approached the Historical Society several years ago about doing a book; however, the timing was never quite right. A couple of years ago we decided that, with the Arizona Centennial coming in 2012, it was time to attack the subject.

Dawn will be signing copies of the book on December 4th during our monthly Family Fun Sunday from 1-3 pm. Be sure to stop by to purchase your copy and buy some as Christmas gifts for your family and friends.

Exhibit Update

If you haven't been by the Museum in a while, NOW is the time to plan your next visit!

Art Carlton's model railroad exhibit, titled "A Century Ago..." will be on display throughout the 2011-2012 season. Above is a photo of Art, in full railroad engineer attire, presenting his exhibit at the Grand Opening Event on October 2nd.

In the photo on the left you can see some of the exquisite details of this display. It features beautiful craftsmanship and is a wonderful history lesson on what the Casa Grande Valley was like at Statehood. Thanks again to Art and Helen for their dedication to this exhibit!



The Dallis Schoolhouse received a makeover this summer thanks largely to Marilyn Ridgeway's vision for what the space could become. In addition to African American history, the exhibit now tells the story of education in Casa Grande as well. Two large display cases have been added, which hold yearbooks, supplies, and other mementos through the years from our local schools. Our collection of antique desks has also been placed in the one-room schoolhouse to give it a more authentic classroom feeling. The barrier dividing the cloak room and teacher's desk from the rest of the space has been removed so that visitors can explore the area that is visually accurate to the original appearance of the schoolhouse.

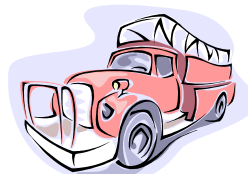


The **Centennial Speaker Series** at the **Dorothy Powell Senior Adult Center** is off and running. We are building upon last year's very successful local history programs, programs given by people who have lived in this community and have an interest in preserving the anecdotes and facts that are tomorrow's legends. Thanks to Nancy Hancock, who has tapped her friends, we heard Jim and Janet Hennessy's reminiscences in October and an insider's view of education in Casa Grande with Gene Moffett and Rita Nader in November.

Please join us at 10 a.m. on the second Monday morning of each winter month - October through May.

The program lasts an hour and is free.

Upcoming in December is "Hot Time in the Old Town Tonight" with Gene Lehman and Roger Mineer.



HERITAGE HALL UPDATE

The refurbishing of Heritage Hall is well underway and the transformation is outstanding. The hardwood floors have just been refinished and are now ready for the new exhibit. Gary Pranzo of Pranzo Carpentry has spent weeks bringing the original Douglas Fir back to its original beauty. Kelly Huston of Huston Custom Contracting is constructing two new window frames that will provide more natural light in the newly redone stage area. They are being built of Douglas Fir to preserve the historic integrity of the church.

Bill Bridwell and his crew from Golden Touch Developers have outdone themselves as they have implemented and expanded upon the ideas we presented to them. They have created a whole new look while enhancing the original intent of the interior of the building. The original altar has been uncovered beneath the old stage, and an original section of the gold-leaf accent on the church wall is now exposed. The Society owes them a huge debt of gratitude as they have donated all of their many hours and the material to accomplish this larger than expected undertaking. This project has taken many weeks longer than initially anticipated and Bill and his crew have been patient and dedicated through the entire process. We also owe a thank-you to Jay and Travis Hagstrom of Quest Electric for completing electrical work in Heritage Hall free of charge. Please let them all know how much their work is appreciated.



Casa Grande Valley Historical Society Night at the Museum

Third Annual Gala Fundraiser

**Saturday, April 14, 2012
7pm - 10pm**

**110 W. Florence Blvd.
Casa Grande**

**Featuring a silent auction, prizes,
hors d'oeuvres, full bar & live music**

More details to follow!



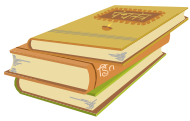
It's Great When a Plan Comes Together

KUDOS to Phyllis Crow whose dedication and perseverance have resulted in the entire textile and costume collection being assessed, described, and preserved for future generations.

In 2006, with support of a small grant from the Tucson Quilters Guild, the Society began what became a six year project. It was Phyllis who took on the management of this endeavor. We had hoped to recruit others to assist her, but it didn't happen that way. Phyllis was the person who removed and assessed the condition of each item, took a photo of it, wrote a detailed description for it, then returned it to storage in more suitable conditions. We're talking about approximately 400 items of outerwear (men's, women's and children's dresses, coats, uniforms, etc.), 400 pairs of shoes, and miscellaneous accessories like furs, purses, ladies undergarments, and 125 flat linens including table covers, bureau scarves, bedspreads, blankets, quilts, etc. Phyllis stayed the course, logging over 250 volunteer hours, and the result is that we have moved into the next phase of the textile project--entering the information into our database. Now that we know what we have, we can utilize the information to benefit the Society and scholars or researchers who are interested in textiles.

Lilly Tomlin is credited with saying: "I always wondered why somebody didn't do something about that. Then I realized I was somebody." We thank Phyllis for her hard work, and we admire her for seeing this project through to its final step.





From the Archives

By Kay Benedict, Archivist



Alice Sjoberg will be a familiar name to many in Casa Grande. Although Alice grew up and was educated in California, her parents and grandparents were Swedish immigrants to Minnesota in the 1880s. After coming to Casa Grande in 1949, Alice Sjoberg worked as a home economist, nutritionist, dietician, home demonstration agent, teacher, tour guide, and filled many other roles in her years of service in Casa Grande, till her death in 2011. Alice said she had probably made some 7,500 cups of coffee over one year while working as the Southwest Gas Company home economist. There's no telling how many get-acquainted trips for newcomers to Pinal County she organized and led. Nor how many children and adults she taught home economics to through the years.

A large group of Alice's papers were recently processed into the archives here at the historical society. Among them was a story written by her in 1975 entitled "Life Style Index—Three Generations." It was her description of her grandparent's life in Sweden, and then their life when they immigrated to Minnesota. These two lives were not too different, except that in America they would eventually own the land they were homesteading. What follows are some excerpts from Alice's account.

Life Style Index – Three Generations

By Alice Sjoberg
February 10, 1975

I don't know what kind of lights my grandparents used when they were still living in Sweden. I suppose all they had were homemade candles. Anyway it was up at dawn to work the land with oxen and hand tools and to bed with the birds so there wasn't much need for light in the house.

I've seen the kind of house they lived in. A whole row of such houses has been preserved as a historical area near where my grandparents lived. The houses were of mud-chinked logs. The roof was covered with sod which supported a healthy crop of grass. The better houses had separate sleeping living and cooking quarters.

These had a shallow fireplace used for both heat and cooking. Rougher quarters had just one room with a stone encircled hearth in the center of the room. There were forests nearby so there was plenty of wood for fuel. Travel for them was by foot. They probably never went further than to the church and the closest village.

Both grandparents learned to read and my grandfather learned to write in Sweden, but my grandmother was taught to write by her youngest son years later.

My mother was the oldest child. She was three years old when they decided to move to the "wonderful" land of America. There was absolutely no hope of ever bettering themselves as things were in Sweden in the 1880s. Some relatives had left for America earlier and were already settled in northern Minnesota (where else?). So they moved in with them until they got a sixteen foot square log cabin built for themselves—dirt floor, walls chinked with moss and a sod roof.

They really weren't much better off than they had been in Sweden with this one important exception: they would eventually own the land that they were homesteading. With hard work there was hope of bettering themselves.

They still used wood for fuel and eventually bought an oil lamp. The homemade chest with the hand wrought hinges and hasp that they brought from Sweden served as dining table until a proper table could be built. (I still have the chest, now lined with cedar and storing quilts.) Farming was done with oxen. Clothing was knotted from the wool from their own sheep. They raised all of their own food or bartered for what they needed in the nearest town. Mother remembered the one treat they all got at Christmas: an orange.

As they prospered, more farm implements were bought. A larger house and barn built. The timers and boards came from their own farm. Just why they sold out and moved first to Oregon and finally to California I don't know.

I was born in Portland but soon after that my parents moved to Los Angeles. My father finished all of the schooling offered in Minnesota at

that time—fifth grade. My mother made it through the third grade. But they had learned to read, write and figure.

Father was a part time preacher and a full time lumberman. In 1925 he decided to get into real estate but 1929 stopped that. He never worked at a job after that. There were four of us in the family. It took \$15.00 per month for all expenses for the household which came out of savings. When he died in 1945 there was still some \$900 found hidden in chicken feed sacks in the basement.

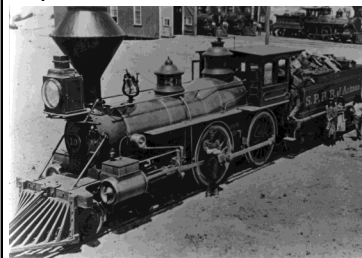
We never owned a car but we of course had electricity, natural gas, and city water. There was a gas range (no pilot lights), water heater (non-automatic, used only on Saturday nights, and an electric iron. In the early 1940s mother got an electric sewing machine, washer, and refrigerator. We had chicks and a goat. Other food father walked to the Grand Central Market in downtown LA to buy and then took the street car home. We also ate whole kernel wheat from the feed store as our breakfast cereal.

As for me, I have just about all I could possibly want, certainly more than I really need in the way of equipment and “stuff”.



2012 Historical Society Calendar

The Society will once again be selling a calendar for the coming year to keep our members posted on upcoming events. This year's theme is railroading in the Casa Grande Valley in honor of the Arizona Centennial and the Model Railroad exhibit created by Art Carlton & Helen Smith. Art has been assisting the staff with writing the captions for the calendar. So, you'll be able to have



a railroad history lesson with each calendar purchase! The 2012 calendar is \$15 and will be available soon in the Museum shop.

SAVE THE DATE!

The Historical Society will once again be hosting the 66th Annual Old Timers' Picnic

Sunday, March 11, 2012

Sign-in: 11:30am

Pot-luck Lunch: 12:30pm

“Old Timers” doesn't mean you have to be old, only that you've lived here for a long time. If you've been a Casa Grande resident for 25 years or more, please plan to attend!



A New Speaker Series is coming to your Museum!

This evening program is meant to compliment the morning speaker series the

Society hosts at the

Dorothy Powell Senior Adult Center.

This year's series will run for four months, January - April 2012, and will be held in Heritage Hall. Our first topic is Father Kino.

Seating will be limited. The cost is \$10 and includes admission to the Museum and light refreshments.

Specific dates and times to follow soon!
Contact Ashley in the office for more details!

Keep in Touch...

Because of these tough economic times your museum is seeking ways to reduce expenses. One way is to provide our membership with an electronic copy of our newsletter. If you wish to receive a hard copy of the newsletter you can continue to do so; however, we would like to encourage you to provide an email address so we can reduce our printing and mailing costs. Please send your request to info@cgvhs.org along with your membership name and a current e-mail address.





CASA GRANDE
VALLEY HISTORICAL
SOCIETY & MUSEUM

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Casa Grande, AZ 85122

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**Need to do some Christmas shopping?
Look no further than the Museum Shop!**



Check out our wide selection of sweets from Cactus Candy Co. including candies, jellies, & syrups. We also stock a variety of Arizona Cowboy salsas. All of these goodies feature the delicious flavors of the Southwest!

Our pictorial history of Casa Grande is available now for \$21.99. These make wonderful gifts for family & friends!

