

# ORO VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Newsletter of the Oro Valley Historical Society

Nov/Dec 2008

Web: [www.ovhistory.org](http://www.ovhistory.org)

## **General Meeting - Open to ALL Thursday - Nov. 13, 2008 at 6:30pm**

### **“Tucson Presidio, Spanish Soldier’s Life”**

Presented by: Rick Collins

#### **Life and War on the Edge!**

Who were the settlers Spanish Colonial Tucson?

What did they eat?

What did they wear?

How did they survive?

Were they hanging on in the face of Apache resistance or creating a successful civilization?

An examination of life on the northern frontier of old Tucson.

The presentation will be entertaining as well as factual. The presenter will be dressed in period clothing and share some interesting history with us. Older children may find this presentation interesting as well. See page 5 for a great photo.

## **Upcoming OVHS Events**

General Meeting - Nov. 13, 2008, 6:30 PM  
See Above Details

General Meeting - March 20, 2009, 6:30 PM  
“Narrow Gauge Rail to Oro Valley”  
by Gene Caywood

### **Heritage Month Presentations:**

March 19, 2009  
Hohokam Lifeways near the Canada del Oro

April 9, 2009  
Ranching Legacy

May 14, 2009  
Spanning the Generations

### **Rick Collins**

Rick has served as a National Park Ranger as well as a long-time volunteer at Saguaro National park. He has been involved in various parks as a living history interpreter for 37 years.



He currently serves as vice-president of the Tucson Presidio Trust and works as a volunteer in the Collection of the Arizona Historical Society, where he is re-cataloguing and inventorying the approximately 4,000 items related to Spanish Tucson. He serves as a consultant on Spanish Colonial clothing and equipment for the City of Tucson, City of Marana, the National Park Service Anza Trail, and various other organizations.

The General meeting location is at the Town of Oro Valley Library, their large Meeting room which is to your right, down the hallway as you enter the Library, 11,000 N. La Canada.

## **Oral History Training**

We have rescheduled our first Oral History training, “Interviewing Techniques”, for Wed., January 21, 2009 from 9 AM to noon. If you are interested in this training please send us an email or contact Pat Spoerl. Attendance will be limited.

## President's Message - Progress and Plans



Last weekend I went to an open house at the historic Empire Ranch north of Sonoita. The ranch is part of the Las Cienegas National Conservation Area managed by the BLM. The theme was "Cowboy Life on the Empire Ranch". Activities included demonstrations of horseshoeing, cattle branding, rawhide braiding, and cattle roping. There were

cowboy storytellers, local authors, and special tours of the buildings and Ranch Heritage Discovery Trail. Visitors of all ages enjoyed the western music, barbecue, and opportunity to experience a part of ranching life. The event included celebration of the 20 years the property has been in public ownership. The BLM and its partners, including the Empire Ranch Foundation, have accomplished much during that time.

I snapped pictures, mainly to illustrate ideas that could be applied here in Oro Valley at the historic Steam Pump Ranch. I wondered what Steam Pump Ranch will be like in 10 years and in 20 years. Preserving historic places and developing educational programs entails ongoing time, energy, and enthusiasm. There is little point in their preservation unless they can be used and enjoyed, and, become special places for shared learning. The Master Plan for the Ranch is complete; it's time to initiate and support the implementation phases of the upcoming years.

Some buildings at Empire Ranch are open for public visitation; others aren't. At each feature, however, is a sign with three key elements: a description; *Progress* made to date in its restoration and repair, and *Plans* for interpretation and use. This information very effectively conveys the importance of the feature, in the past and for the future.

Steam Pump Ranch can be a very special place for our community. It is unique in its commercial setting in contrast with the sprawling Empire Ranch, but both provide a common linkage to the ranching heritage that is very much a part of southern Arizona today. The Historical Society was formed with a purpose of assisting the Town in preserving places of historical importance. We will continue with the Historic Gardens proposal (Sept/Oct newsletter) at the Ranch that may be initiated in 2009. We will also develop a guided heritage tour for visitors.

I hope you enjoy our Newsletter and its format; we are making *progress* in distributing information to members. This issue includes a special article about the heliograph network in southern Arizona. We *plan* to have a feature article in each of our newsletters. If you'd like to contribute one please contact us. Pat Spoerl

## Oro Valley Historical Society

### Officers:

President: Pat Spoerl (2011)  
520 297-7347  
Vice President: Joe Frannea (2009)  
Secretary: Roxy Johnson (2009)  
Treasurer: Lyra Done (2009)

### Directors:

Georgia Hollinger (2009)  
Twink Monrad (2011)  
Fred Roof (2010)  
Joyce Rychener (2010)

Note: Officers are selected by Directors each year from the elected Directors. The numbers in parenthesis are the year the Directors term expires in March.

### Committees:

Membership: Twink Monrad  
Fund Raising: Georgia Hollinger  
Archival: Joe Frannea  
Speakers: Roxy Johnson  
Education: Tom Moser,  
Joyce Rychener  
Oral Histories: need help...  
Historic Gardens: Joyce Rychener  
Editor: Joe Frannea  
joe @ ovhistory.org

### Donations:

Donations are always welcomed, much appreciated and needed. We are a 501(c)3 Non-Profit Corporation with donations being tax deductible to the extent of the law.

### Memberships:

Family: \$25  
Individual: \$15  
Student: \$5  
Corporate/Institution: \$75  
Life-Family: \$200  
Life-Corp./Institution: \$400

**Web:** [www.ovhistory.org](http://www.ovhistory.org)  
**Email:** [info at ovhistory.org](mailto:info@ovhistory.org)

## Oro Valley Heritage Month

### Mark your calendar now...

The Historical Society has received \$5,000 from the Town of Oro Valley Community Funding Program to help fund an Oro Valley Heritage Month during the birthday celebration next April (the Town's 35<sup>th</sup> birthday).



The OVHS Board planning session led by Pat in late September outlined several events to celebrate Heritage month. We will focus on three time periods prior to the forming of the Town of Oro Valley.

The three time periods will be (dates are tentative):

#### \* **March 19<sup>th</sup> - Hohokam Lifeways near the Canada del Oro**

This will focus on Native Americans starting about 1200 AD. We will explore the ruins discovered in the greater Oro Valley area and other significant events.

#### \* **April 9<sup>th</sup> - Ranching Legacy**

Ranching from the early 1800's through the 1900's will be discussed, focusing on both the ranches in the greater Oro Valley area and ranching lifestyles. The Steam Pump Ranch will be one of the main topics.

#### \* **May 14<sup>th</sup> - Spanning the Generations**

We will discuss the period of time from about 1700 thru the early 1800's.



We will not cover town history from the time of incorporation (1974) to present since the town's birthday celebration is April 16<sup>th</sup> and they will be covering some of this history and events.

If you have ideas, possible display items, information about these periods or want to become involved please contact one of our Board members or send an email to: info at ovhistory dot org.

## Speakers Bureau

The Historical Society has initiated a Speakers Bureau that will provide information and updates about Steam Pump Ranch (the "historic heart" of Oro Valley) to area civic organizations and businesses. Its purpose is threefold: to increase understanding of the important role that Steam Pump Ranch and its owners played in shaping life along Oracle Road; outline the planned scope of work to restore the Ranch's historic buildings and setting; and identify the financial costs and responsibilities to better consider ways we can all work together for future use of the Ranch.



OVHS Secretary Roxy Johnson has given several presentations to groups such as Rotary Clubs. If you would like to help make presentations or have an organization interested in learning more about Steam Pump Ranch

or the Oro Valley Historical Society, please contact Roxy at 797-9597 or Email: TucsonRoxy at aol dot com. Please allow several weeks of advance notice if interested.

## Holiday Gift Idea

Need ideas for a Holiday gift, or want to learn more about Oro Valley's history?

Don't forget about the book "Images of America, Oro Valley" by Barbara Marriott and the Oro Valley Historical Society. It's available locally at the Western National Parks Association bookstore on Rancho Vistoso Drive and at area bookstores. Author Barbara Marriott is donating a portion of proceeds from book sales to the Society.

## Our Web Site - Publications

Our web site has historical information, membership forms, flyers, society information, financial statements, calendars, brochures, DVD stories, newspaper clippings, photos and other information that can be viewed or printed. We are always looking for more contributions pertaining to the greater Oro Valley area.

## Classic Car Show

The OVHS participated in the First Oro Valley Classic Car show at the Steam Pump Village in September by having a booth with photos of historic cars in the Oro Valley area. Thanks to all those who helped and stopped by.



Joyce Rychener talks with a visitor about the Oro Valley Historical Society



Twink Monrad checking out some of the classic cars at the show.

## OVHS Board Meetings

Board meetings are generally held once a month and vary as to date and time. They are open to the public and are usually held at the Oro Valley Library. They normally last about one and a half hours. If interested in attending one of our Board meetings, please call Pat Spoerl, 297-7347 for date/time and location.

## A Special Person Visits the Steam Pump Ranch

What does University of Arizona football have to do with Steam Pump Ranch? Plenty if you're a USC fan in town for the big game on October 25<sup>th</sup>. One of those fans was Walter Pusch III, great grandson of George and Matilda Pusch who came with family and friends for the game and a chance to visit Steam Pump Ranch as part of his family heritage.



Walter's family moved to California from Tucson when he was very young and he had visited the nearby Rooney Ranch when he was about 10 years old.

He vaguely remembers seeing the Pumphouse building and he does have a P-Z brand (Pusch Zellweger) that he is donating to the Historical Society.



Pat Spoerl, Walter Pusch III, Roxy Johnson

It was fun to give a site tour to a member of the George Pusch family and share some of the family history related to the Ranch. (It's just too bad that USC won the football game!). Thanks to the Town of Oro Valley for providing special access to the Ranch.

# Life and War on the Edge!



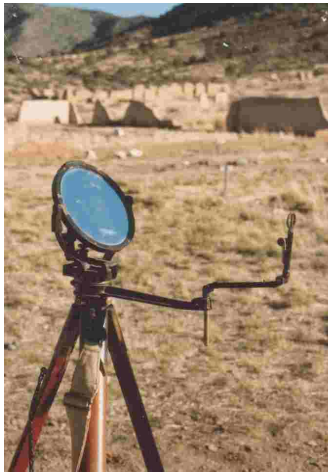
## Last stand

A Spanish Tucson re-enactment

photo courtesy of Rick Collins

## Did Geronimo fear the Heliograph?

Ever heard of a Heliograph? Well, I hadn't until a few months ago when Jim Kriegh's brother, David, donated his three display boards showing several heliograph stations and a map of Southern Arizona where heliograph stations were located. The Oro Valley Historical Society is very grateful for his generous donation. The heliograph name is derived from the Greek helios meaning "sun" and graphein meaning "write". This is essentially a wireless solar communication system.



The heliograph is a mirror based communication system that was used by the Army in the Arizona Territory in the 1870s through the 1890s. Morse code, a series of short and long flashes (dots and dashes), was used to send letters and numbers that constituted a message. The system was used to communicate between two line of sight points for up to fifty plus miles

depending on the size of the mirror and on weather conditions. Army camps and mountain peaks were often used as the two points of communication. The receiver of a message would often relay it on to the next heliograph station.

The heliograph consisted of a tripod for mounting the mirror(s) that provided stability to maintain accurate alignment. There are several different versions and they were improved as the use continued.

For most heliographs, the mirror was aligned by sighting through a hole in the center of the mirror with the tip of a sighting rod to hit the desired target. Sometimes a second mirror was needed to reflect the sun into the primary mirror, it was attached to the sighting rod. Then a keying mechanism was needed to slightly tilt the mirror to be able to create the dots and dashes. A shutter system could also be used to interrupt the sun light.



A skilled signal operator was needed to operate the heliograph. Most stations was comprised of about eight men. Operators, couriers to bring or take the

information to desired locations, and guards were needed. The stations were not useful at night so the men could retreat from peaks to warmer locations to get a good meal and restful sleep. Others had to remain on mountain tops enduring minimal subsistence. Using field glasses the observers could see movement at about 25 miles. With rainy weather, communications were often out for days.

In 1877 General Myer, a U.S. Army Chief Signal Officer, became interested in the British Army engineered heliograph. He sent several instruments to Western posts to evaluate their effectiveness.

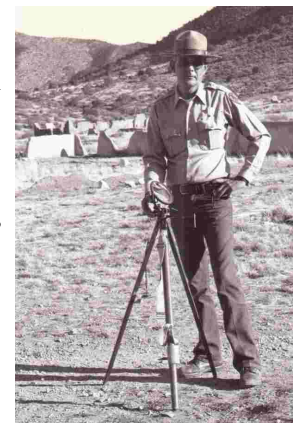


**Brigadier General Miles**

In 1886 Brigadier General Nelson A. Miles took command at Fort Bowie in Arizona Territory with orders to capture Geronimo and his renegade warriors for the final time. Nelson immediately implemented a large network of heliographs with Fort Huachuca

being the main operations center.

The heliographs started flashing early in the morning as soon as the sun was up and continued for most of the day. Weather conditions were often the first messages to be sent as well as supplies needed, any illnesses, settler movements and other logistics. Any detected movement of Apache warriors was quickly sent and troops could be dispatched accordingly.



Messages could be sent and replies received over the 400 mile wide area in about four hours traversing the Army's most comprehensive and extensive zig zag heliograph installation. This was much more efficient than using signal flags and increased the speed and extended communication distances greatly.

In 1890 the Department of Arizona conducted a communications demonstration using fifty-one heliograph stations to show they could function efficiently.



Shutter to use with heliograph~1890

This shutter signaling device was an improvement to avoid having to tilt the mirror back and forth to send the short and long flashes for the Morse Code dots and dashes. The Navy often uses this device on their ships.



Brigadier General Miles stated in his journals that his heliograph system was extremely effective and kept Apache warriors on the run as they could see mirrors sending a barrage of signals from many of the Army posts, hills and mountain tops.

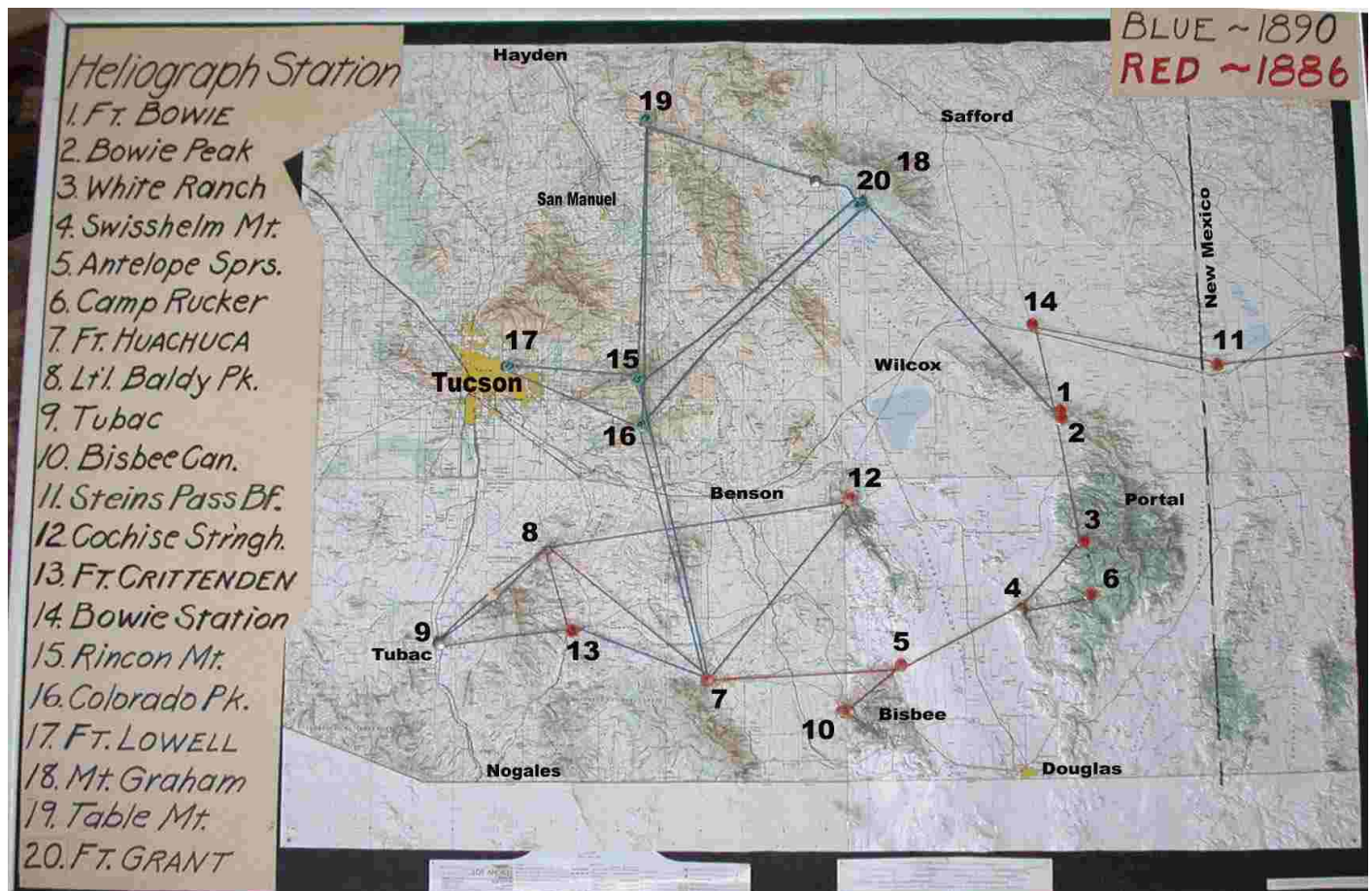


There are some controversial opinions as to the role of the heliograph in the final surrender of Geronimo in September, 1886.

You can read lots more with many interesting details. See our web site ([www.ovhistory.org](http://www.ovhistory.org)) for a 25 page Huachuca Seminar story "General Miles' Mirrors The Heliograph in the Geronimo Campaign of 1886" by Bruno J. Rolak.

You can also go to [www.Wikipedia.com](http://www.Wikipedia.com) and search for "Heliograph" for a more complete description and history of heliographs.

Joe Frannea



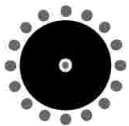


The Season's Greetings card sent to Mrs. H. W. Zipf from her friend Ella M. in Illinois. The postmark on the stamp is Dec 18, 7 PM 1906 ILL. and postmarked again on the back side when received in Tucson, ARIZ, Dec 21, 8 30 AM 1906. Three day mail service probably by train and only 1 cent postage.



Notice how simple the address was. The postmaster probably knew all prominent families in town. Tucson population was about 8,000.

Please Note: Some of our photos do not reproduce well in black and white in our printed newsletter. If possible, please enjoy the color version on our web site. If you have an email address and are receiving a printed copy, please send us you email address to help us save money by not having to print and mail copies.  
Thank You...



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HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

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