



In Search of Eldorado



Day 25
Tuesday
January 29th
Lake Havasu City
to
Parker

Weather
Great today. 70's and sunny

Hello to Family & Friends



Not too far down the road was Lake Havasu City, home of the London Bridge.

The photo above is part of an English themed village that houses the visitor's center. The buildings sit on 1 acre of land which Robert McCulloch gave to England as a thank you for the gift of the columns pictured to the left. The columns were sent by the Queen as gifts for preserving the London Bridge.

Similar columns and statues guard the entrances to the City of London, England. The shield represents St George, and the dragon that he slayed.

Since a foreign Government cannot own property in the USA, a corp was formed and that is how England again owned a little part of the USA.

Further research found that this entire area, sold and resold, fell into disrepair and was foreclosed on by a realty co. But a push was made to revitalize the English village and today the shops are fully leased, the walk has been repaved and everything looks fresh and clean.

Eldorado

By Edgar Allen Poe

Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old—
This knight so bold—
And o'er his heart a shadow—
Fell as he found
No spot of ground
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength
Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim shadow—
'Shadow,' said he,
'Where can it be—
This land of Eldorado?'

'Over the Mountains
Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,'
The shade replied,—
'If you seek for Eldorado!'



I arrived at the visitor center about 10:30 and found out there was a guided tour of the bridge that runs on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays at 11:00. I realized this at 10:48 and signed up.

Tour guide George was knowledgeable, but it seemed like he was often running a script through his head and trying to remember what was next. He also had some really, and I mean REALLY, corny jokes about the bridge.

The photo above is the London Bridge from near the English village. A low level shot.



The Entrance Gate to the English Village was part of the entry gate of Witley Court in Worcester, England. When the Earl of Dudley lost his shirt, the house was sold in the 1920's. In 1937 a fire gutted the house and successive owners took a little bit here and a little bit there until a salvage dealer bought the entire place and sold off what was left. Robert McCulloch found the gate in a salvage yard and had it shipped over.



Robert P. McCulloch and C.V. Wood, Jr. C.V. also designed Disneyland.

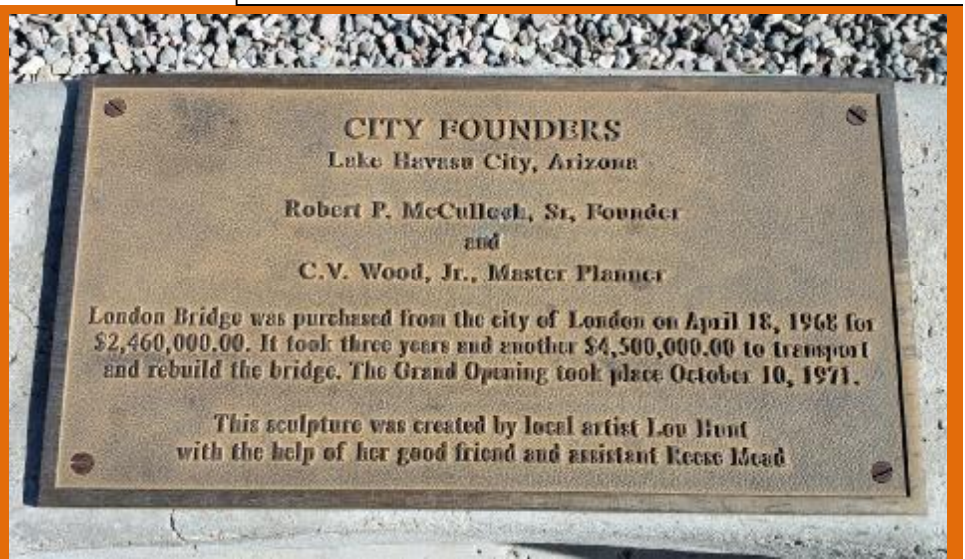
By now you're probably wondering who this Robert McCulloch fella is I keep talking about. Robert McCulloch is one of those men who had more money than they know what to do with. McCulloch inherited his paternal grandfather's fortune gained from implementing Thomas Edison's electric power plants in cities around the world and who founded Milwaukee's public utility system. That's right, a home town boy. Supposedly there was quite a bit of money from his mother's side also. Shortly after graduating from college he married Barbra Briggs. Hmm... sound familiar? She was the daughter of Stephen Briggs of Briggs & Stratton, You may also have heard of McCulloch chain saws? Yep, same guy. McCulloch Aviation, McCulloch Oil and several others.

It was the small engine market that found him in the desert looking for a test site for his outboard engines. In 1968 he purchased Pittsburg Point, which is now called the Island District, along with another 3500 acres from the State of Arizona for less than \$75 an acre.

To draw people to the desert he needed a gimmick. It just so happened that the London Bridge, designed and built (completed) in 1831 was sinking into the Thames and London felt it was more cost effective to sell it than to repair it.

So for \$2.46 million McCulloch bought the bridge and moved it to the desert.

When first constructed there was no water under the bridge. A channel was dug and some of the Colorado River water was diverted under London Bridge which formed the Island District mentioned above.





Each stone was labeled with its unique location, disassembled shipped through the Panama Canal to California, loaded on semi's and trucked to the desert over primitive roads where they were painstakingly reassembled as seen below.



Numbers can still be seen on some of the stones, and there is a lot less water here than there is in the Thames.



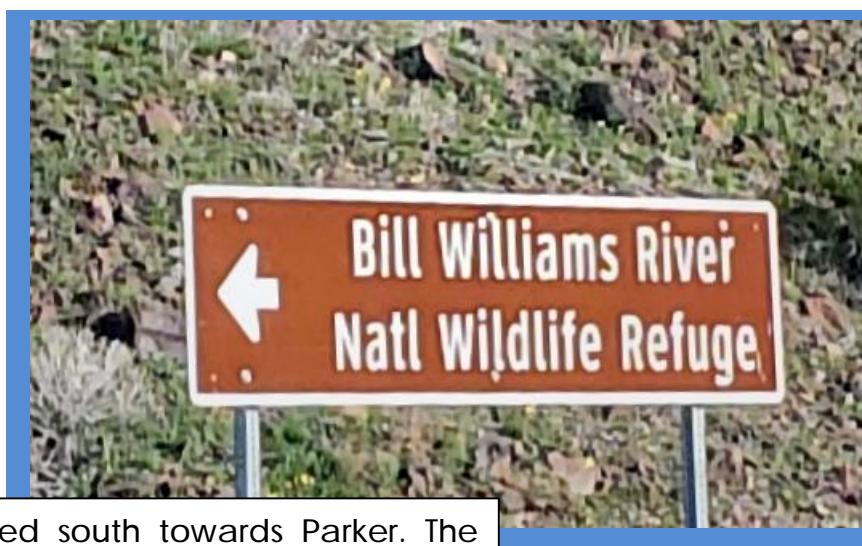
I will pass on some interesting facts. The lamp posts are original. They were forged from the melted down cannons of Napoleon's defeated army; there are over 10,000 stones that were moved; on a much earlier London Bridge, and they date to logs across the River Thames over 1000 years ago, London Bridge was pulled down by an invading Danish army. Thus the nursery rhyme "London Bridge is Falling Down"; The version built between 1176 and 1209 lasted over 600 years. This is the one I pictured before I arrived here with all sorts of buildings on the bridge. In order to help offset the building costs, the King leased parts of the bridge for housing and shops. One building was over 7 stories tall. Since that London Bridge was only 26' wide with buildings on both sides, the actual traffic lane was narrow and often clogged with carts, animals and humans. To keep the peace, the King ordered that all traffic must keep to the left. This was to keep the right hand/arm free to draw a sword because any threat would come from the right. Thus today, English traffic keeps to the left. Napoleon, not liking the English and defying them at every turn, told his French citizens to keep to the right.



About to cross the bridge on my bike. I put on 9.5 miles today.



The photo above is the bike path that circles the island. It was a little disappointing. There are 20-30 miniature lighthouse replicas around the island that help guide boat traffic. I was hoping to get up close and personal with a photo and description of each one (would you guys have be bored with that!), but the path never neared the shore. I was also surprised to see that about 80% of this island is still undeveloped. I expected shops, boutiques, eateries, all sorts of commercial traffic. Picture Door County. But no, just a boring bike path.



Back on the road again and headed south towards Parker. The Parker dam is closed to anything larger than a pickup and my bike battery is out of juice. I went right past the Central Arizona Aqueduct, but the speed limit was 55 and there was a line of traffic behind me so I was not even looking for signs. It was a scenic drive though. The pictures below are from the Wildlife Refuge from left to right. You can see some overlap.



I enjoyed Lake Havasu City, I just wish there was more to see. I am disappointed in one thing down here, a camping site. I have not paid for a night of camping yet on this trip, but I would like one night with an electric hookup so I can recharge all the batteries I have on board. Two campgrounds I stopped at were full. One of them was offering dry camping (boondocking) for \$18/night. Huh? When I can boondock a couple miles down the road for free? U-turn. Another one I called said I would not find any sites down here at this time of year. Wow. How about in another 10 years when the retired population doubles? Need a business to invest in? It is also the pricing. A cheap campground with hookups down here is \$30/night. All I need is 5 or 6 hours of electricity and I will be good to go. The solar is not quite keeping up with all of the electronics. And the bike gets me about 30-40 miles before needing a 4-5 hour jolt.

Oh well, it is what it is. I guess I have no choice but to stay off the grid.

I should end up in Quartzite tomorrow. This should be interesting. They have a two month long rock and gem swap meet every January and February. It is known as the RV boondocking capital of the world. The population of 3000 will swell to 1 million during this period.

You all know how I love crowds.

Until next time.....