



In Search of Eldorado



Hello to Family & Friends

Happy Valentine's Day !!

I woke up this morning not having any idea what I was going to do today. Pretty much like most mornings back home. But I ended up doing quite a bit. First stop was another National Monument. As I drove up the access road I saw a sign that said 'Fee Required'. Sure, I thought, it must be a pretty boring job here, sitting in a kiosk and collecting money from a couple visitors each day. Just another lesson in judging a book by its cover. I hit the parking lot and found about 20 cars already there, a good sized visitor's center, large picnic area and extensive grounds. Will I ever learn?

I used my America's Beautiful Pass so as of right now the score is Mark - 3, shutdown - 1. After watching a 20 minute video, I felt as though I didn't need a 45 minute guided tour and opted for the

self-guided tour. I also wanted to stand in the rain as little as possible.



Day 41
Thursday

February 14th

Maricopa
To
Phoenix

Weather
50's and Rainy

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!'

A model of the Monument. It was impossible to get a photo without the light reflection.



Casa Grande Ruins

The plaque below does say "like the ruins you see before you". I could not tell any ruins from the regular ground. Hmmm..wonder if the tour guide could have pointed those out.

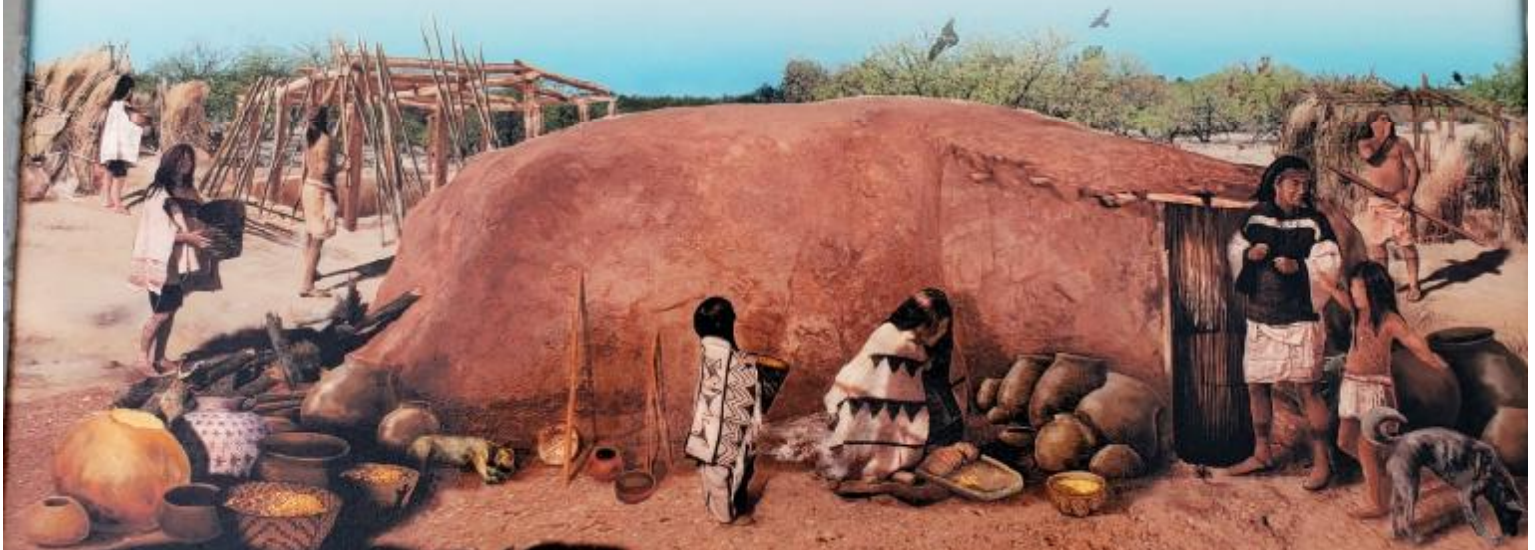
Before Walled Compounds

About 4,100 years ago, people in southern Arizona began to grow corn. Over time more and more crops were introduced by trade. People became more settled and lived in the same place for longer periods of time.

They built earthen homes called *pithouses* and began to dig canals to water their fields. Some 1,500 years ago, larger villages began to appear in southern Arizona. Around 800 years ago people here began to build not only pithouses, but above-ground buildings and walled compounds like the ruins you see before you today.

Ancient Grains, Ancient Technologies

The corn you see here closely resembles ancient maize grown in the Southwest 1,500 years ago. Baskets made harvesting crops easier. People used stone tools to grind grain. Pottery helped store and protect food and seeds from pests.

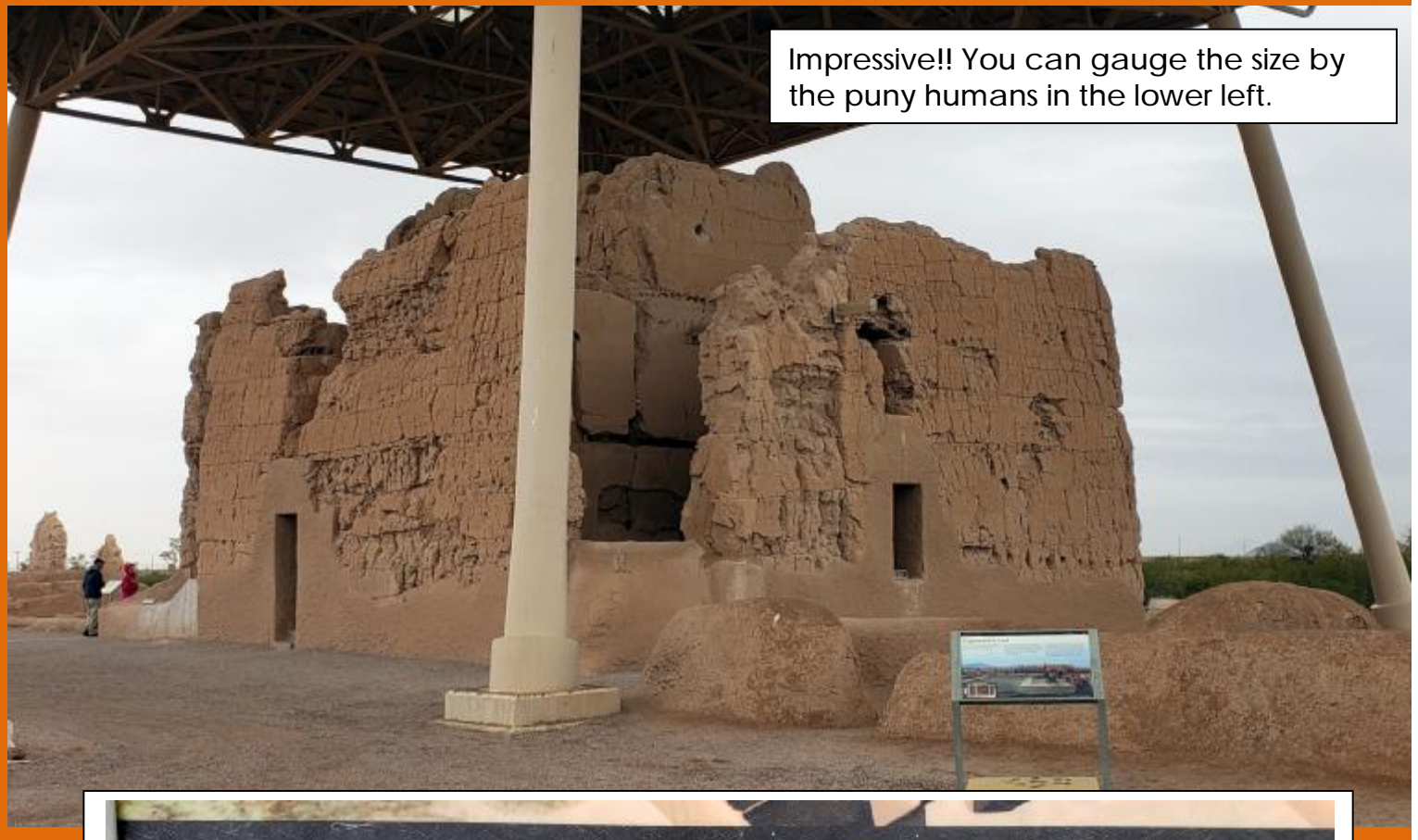




Were there others like this?

Other Great Houses were found along the Gila River and in the Phoenix Basin. Archeologists believe another structure like the Casa Grande existed at the site of Pueblo Grande, an archeological park in Phoenix.

Today, the Casa Grande remains the only example of a multi-story structure from the Hohokam culture.



Impressive!! You can gauge the size by the puny humans in the lower left.

Why Build the Casa Grande?

Archeologists don't know for sure. Its original purpose remains a puzzle. Here, there are still more questions than answers.

Was it an ancient astronomical observatory? Perhaps. Why do the walls line up north-south-east-west? Unknown. We can still observe the sun and moon line up with certain holes in the wall before you, year in and year out.

Were sacred ceremonies held here? Did a leader who oversaw the all-important irrigation canals work inside these rooms? Did an influential family or clan call the Casa Grande their home?

The answers remain unknown. The Casa Grande likely served many purposes, many functions.



Farming societies in many parts of the ancient world worked out ways to track the seasons. The Casa Grande also has features that can be used to accurately mark the time of year.

Built about 700 years ago

The ability of ancient cultures, Aztec, Mayan, American Indians, Stonehenge, Etc., being able to accurately map the movement of stars and planets is absolutely amazing.

Summer Solstice
Sunlight lines up through this small hole at sunset on the longest day of the year.

Spring and Fall Equinoxes
The rising sun lines up with twin openings in the top floor of the Casa Grande each March and September.

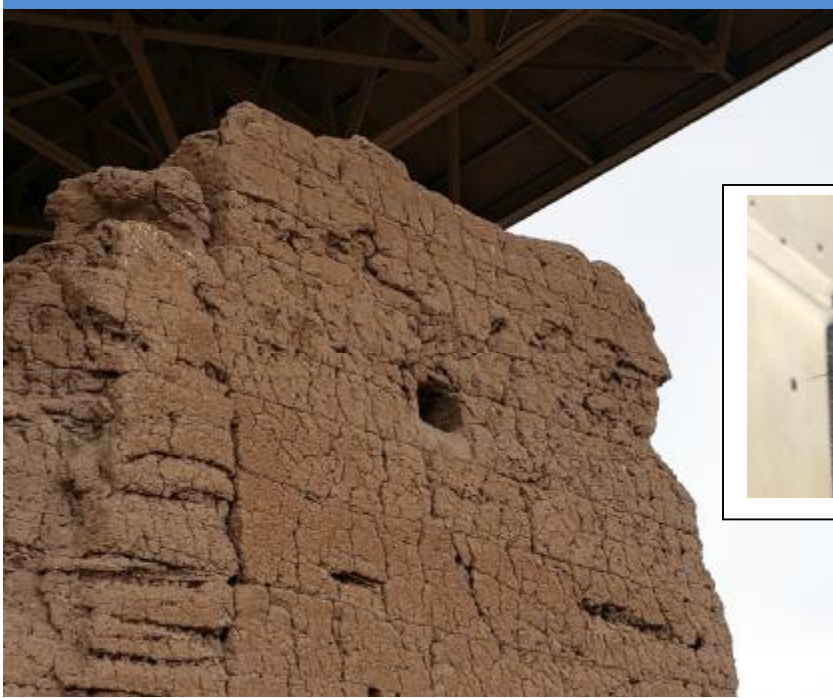
A Very Rare Lunar Event
The sun 'stands still' in the sky twice every year—at 'solstices.' The moon 'stands still' in the sky only once every 18.6 years. This hole marks that lunar event.

You Are Here

Summer Solstice
Sunlight lines up through this small hole at sunset on the longest day of the year.



A Very Rare Lunar Event
The sun 'stands still' in the sky twice every year—at 'solstices.' The moon 'stands still' in the sky only once every 18.6 years. This hole marks that lunar event.





That's the tour I would have been on

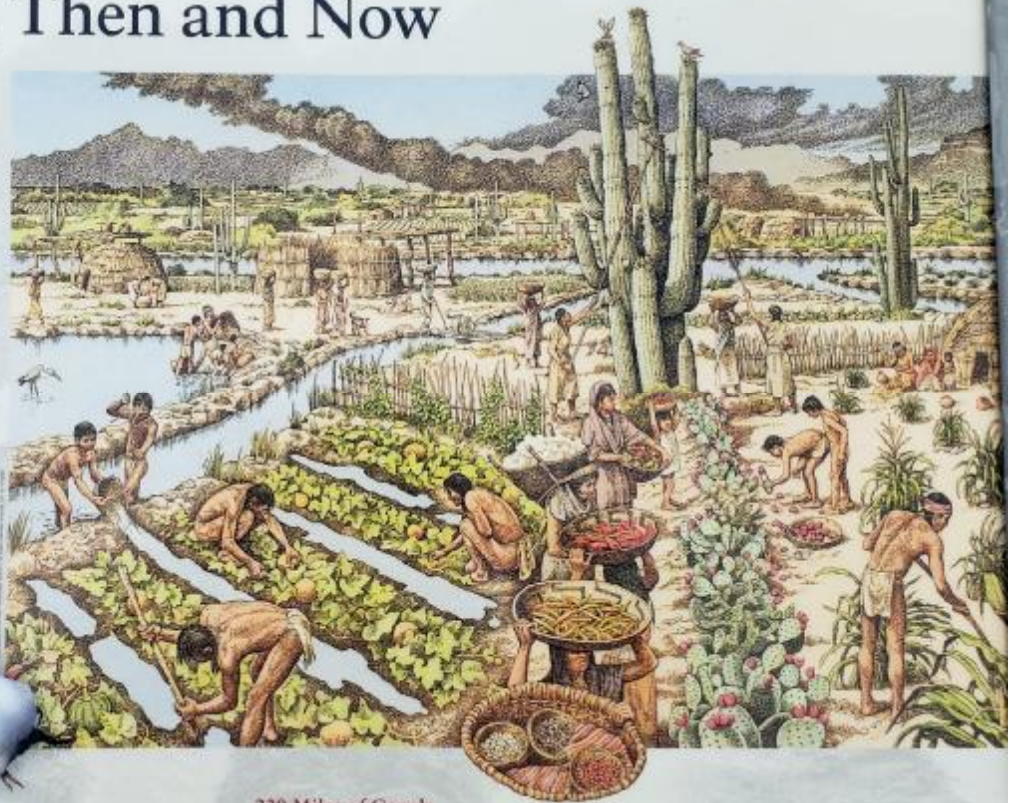


Desert Farming, Then and Now

Farming in this part of Arizona started 4,100 years ago with corn. Little by little, over the centuries, travelers brought in beans, squash, gourds, pumpkins, tobacco, and cotton. People here gradually dug a vast network of canals to take water from the rivers into their fields. Communities living along the miles of ditches worked together to maintain their irrigation system.

The first Spaniards who visited the Casa Grande in the late 1600s noticed that people here grew cotton. Cotton thrives in hot climates, but it is a very, very thirsty crop. Without irrigation, cotton won't grow in a desert.

Today the farm fields near Casa Grande Ruins are still one of the largest cotton-producing areas in the United States. Irrigation still makes desert farming possible.



220 Miles of Canals

Long-Range Trade and Travel

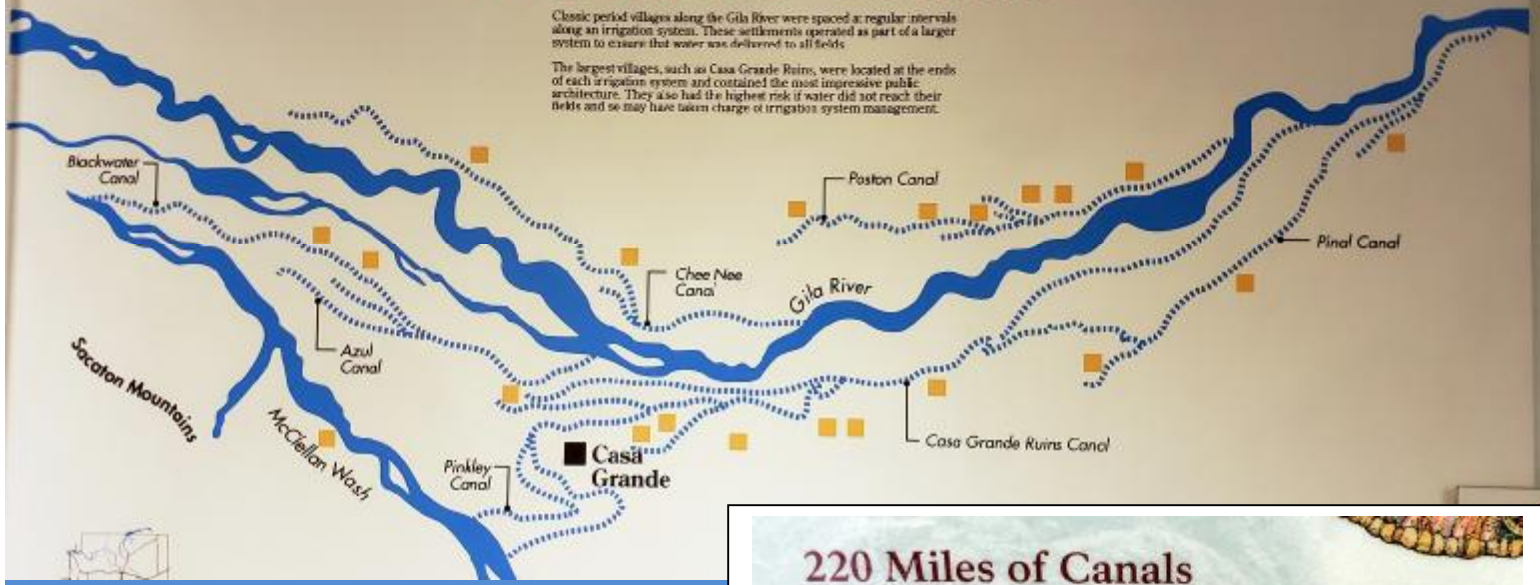
Farmers living near the Casa Grande traded cotton and surplus crops for raw materials and other goods. Copper bells and scarlet macaws came up from the south. Turquoise and obsidian came here from the south and east. People in southern Arizona journeyed to the Sea of Cortez and to the Pacific, returning with sea shells. They fashioned their shells into beautiful bracelets, rings, and pendants.



Gila River Canals

Classic period villages along the Gila River were spaced at regular intervals along an irrigation system. These settlements operated as part of a larger system to ensure that water was delivered to all fields.

The largest villages, such as Casa Grande Ruins, were located at the ends of each irrigation system and contained the most impressive public architecture. They also had the highest risk if water did not reach their fields and so may have been in charge of irrigation system management.



220 Miles of Canals

Near Casa Grande Ruins, the Ancestral Sonoran Desert People irrigated as many as 19,000 acres of crops.

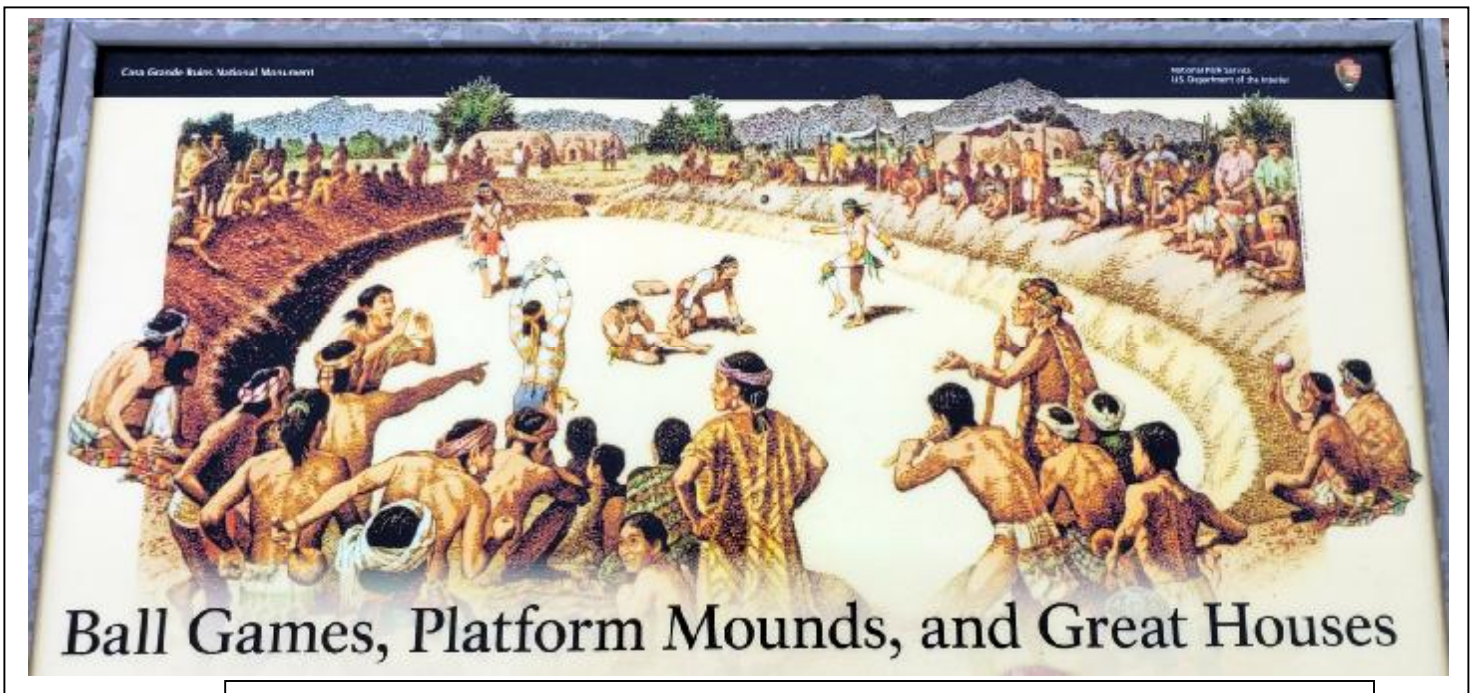
This is another fact of these people that I find absolutely mind-boggling. Using no tools except sticks and stones to dig canals up to fifteen feet deep and 20 feet wide, they dug 220 miles of canals to divert water to their fields. Talk about a community working together to achieve a goal. Wow !!

Irrigation Communities

The walled compound where you are standing was just one community of a network of communities that were built along canal systems. An eagle flying high over this Gila River Valley 1,000 years ago would have seen dozens of villages with wide, irrigated fields.

Extended families usually shared rooms and open areas within a compound like the one you are in now. Several compounds grouped together made up a village. Villages along a network of canals worked together to keep the irrigation water flowing into the fields.

The largest villages were often found at the beginning or end of canals. At these sites you will find ball courts, and platform mounds and sometimes structures like the Casa Grande. Large sites like Casa Grande Ruins were gathering places where people celebrated ceremonies and harvests.



The more things change, the more they stay the same. Even a thousand years ago the lady in the center with her hands on her hips, looks plenty PO'ed that the men are playing games instead of working.



One of two ballcourts in the complex

Ballcourts

The Casa Grande Ruins' ballcourt, a large, oval-shaped earthen depression, was first identified in 1846. The appearance of ballcourts coincided with the population growth during the Colonial period. The regular spacing of ballcourts throughout Hohokam territory facilitated the exchange of goods between many new settlements.

Ballcourts were the principal form of Pre-Classic period public architecture – accessible to entire communities. The Hohokam played a game similar

to those documented in central Mexico, but adapted to local conditions. Between 300 and 600 spectators could have gathered on the banks of the Casa Grande Ruins' ballcourt. Others could have viewed the matches from the platform mounds in Compound B. The consistency in the form and shape of ballcourts throughout the Hohokam region indicates a shared concept of how to build them and of the proper form and meaning of the activities conducted inside.



The Old Ball Game

Players used stone balls larger than today's professional baseballs. Archeologists have identified about 200 ball courts like this in Arizona. A fine caliche plaster made the central playing fields hard and smooth.

Ball Games, Platform Mounds, a

Does the hollow, oval mound you see before you remind you of a sports stadium? Just like today's arenas, this ball court was a place where crowds of people regularly gathered more than 1,000 years ago.

Every society needs public places to get together. Here the ball court, platform mounds, and the Casa Grande all served as community centers for the Ancestral Sonoran

Desert People—but at different times. Archeologists see clues that once the platform mounds to your right were built, people suddenly abandoned this ball court.

Then when the Casa Grande was built, around 100–150 years after the platform mounds, it became the center of the community.

By the 1400's Hohokum culture had pretty much died out, or more accurately, moved away. The exact cause of the decline of this culture, in this area, is not known, but it can be surmised that changes to the rivers, either flooding or drought or both, drove the ancient people back to a more individual ranching/farming life and away from villages and compounds. Ancestors of these people still exist in the Tohono O'odham, Hopi and Zuni people of Arizona.

Guess who came along, rediscovered the buildings here, and gave them the Spanish name of Casa Grande or Great House? That's right, Ricardo Montalban, oops I mean Father Kino.



Who named the Casa Grande?

A Jesuit missionary, explorer, and mapmaker, **Eusebio Francisco Kino** (1645–1711), was the first European to see and document these ruins—in 1694. Father Kino called the building 'Casa Grande,' Spanish for 'great house.'

In 1889 Congress voted to protect Casa Grande Ruins from further vandalism and looting. They voted to pay for clearing away debris and repairing the eroded foundations. The wooden beams and metal rods you see today were installed in 1891 to brace up some of the walls. Three years later, the federal government made Casa Grande the nation's first archeological preserve.

The braces you can see today are the same ones installed in 1891. The current roof structure was installed in 1931 by, you guessed it, the CCC.

My expectations were far outstripped by this Casa Grande National Monument, and I was pleasantly surprised and happy that they were. Well worth a visit if you're ever in the area.

What to do next. Check the map, nothing pops out at me. Check the internet and Roadside America mentions a museum in Florence, just a few miles away. Since this is the general direction I am heading anyways, why not give it a shot.



The Spaniards came through this area in the 1690's. The Apache saw them playing cards and adopted the idea. These cards are made of deerskin and were collected by William Clarke, an engineer at the Silver King Mine in the 1870's, who had an interest in Native American artifacts.



Charles D. Poston

Father of Arizona

More about this guy later



Charles D. Poston

Furniture made from cacti was one of the items mentioned in Roadside America. The immediate picture that comes to mind is something that might be a little painful to sit down in. I never pictured anything like what you see below.





M. M. Havins Collection

This is a grouping of saguaro cactus furniture, Indian baskets, and rugs donated to the museum by Maude Havins. R. O. Perry designed and constructed the furniture out of saguaro cactus at his workshop in Phoenix, Arizona, during the late 1930s and early 1940s. He cared more about his craftsmanship than commercial success. However, it was reported that examples of his work could be found in a Manhattan apartment, the Bahamas, and at the Biltmore Hotel in Phoenix. This furniture was used to furnish the Havins's new river rock home at the intersection of Highway 287 and Eleven Mile Corner Road. The baskets were collected from the Tohono O'odam Indians who worked in the cotton fields near the Havins Home.





This stuff is incredible. The intricate carving, the symmetry of design. It must have taken a lot of time hunting the desert for the right pieces to be used.

A red velvet dentist's chair and foot powered drill; a portable X-ray machine; wheelchair; all these items were donated by long time residents of Florence who actually worked at these professions in the community.





Tom Mix was a big Western movie star from 1909 until the 30's when his star began to become dim. His daughter had married a man from Florence and Mix often visited her there. On one such occasion, in 1940, as he was driving away from the ranch in his 1937 Cord 812 Phaeton, he had to stop very suddenly, maybe a cow in the road? Who knows? But he was hit in the head by a metal suitcase that flew forward from the backseat and died instantly with a broken neck.



Remember the Yuma Territorial Prison tour? I remember seeing Pearl's name among the inmates there.

It also turns out that when Yuma prison closed in 1908, Florence is where all of the inmates were sent. Today, it is still the site of the state prison.



Pearl Hart

Flamboyant Lady Bandit

Robbed the Kelvin Stage with accomplice Joe Boot.

Tried and sentenced to 5 years at Yuma prison. Boot got 30 years.

Boot escaped. Pearl was eventually released.

Some believe she married a local rancher and lived out her life northeast of Florence.



To the left are the actual ropes used for hanging the inmates pictured above each one. Just a little gruesome, don't you think?

Arizona State Prison

trap door



The actual trap door of the gallows where men, and one woman, were hung by the neck until dead.

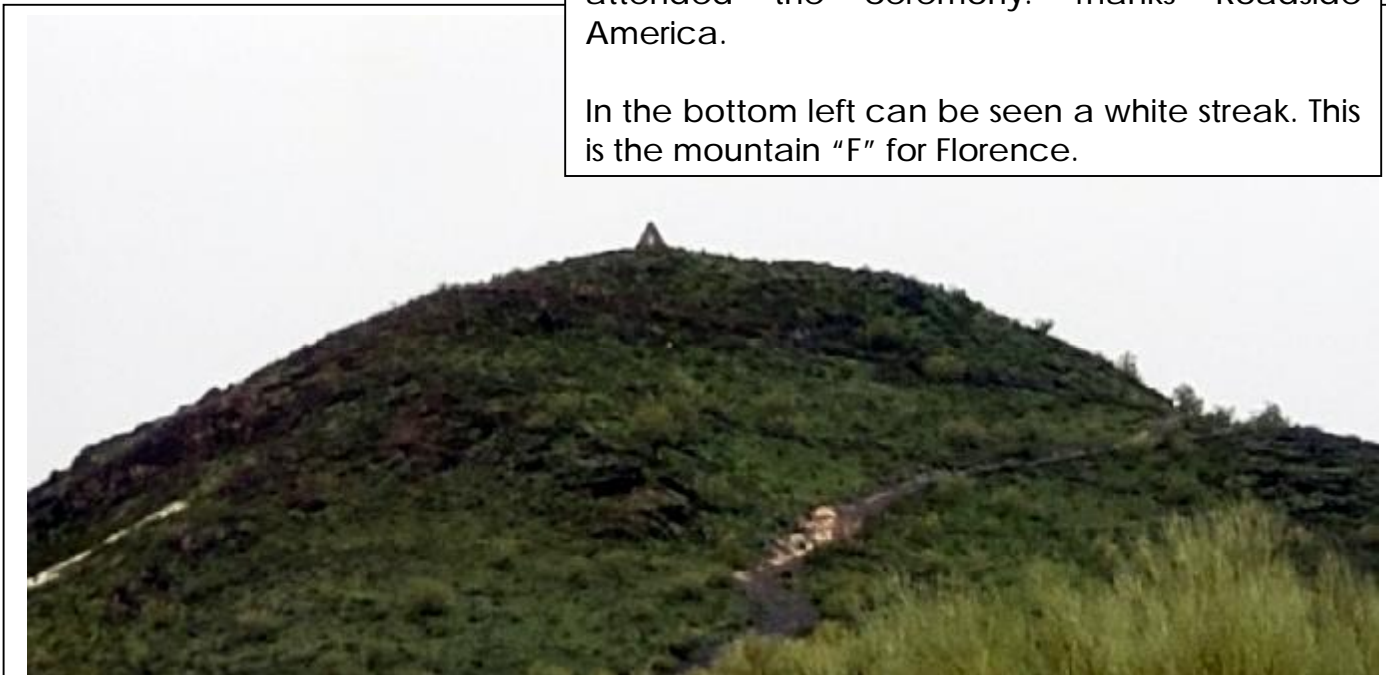


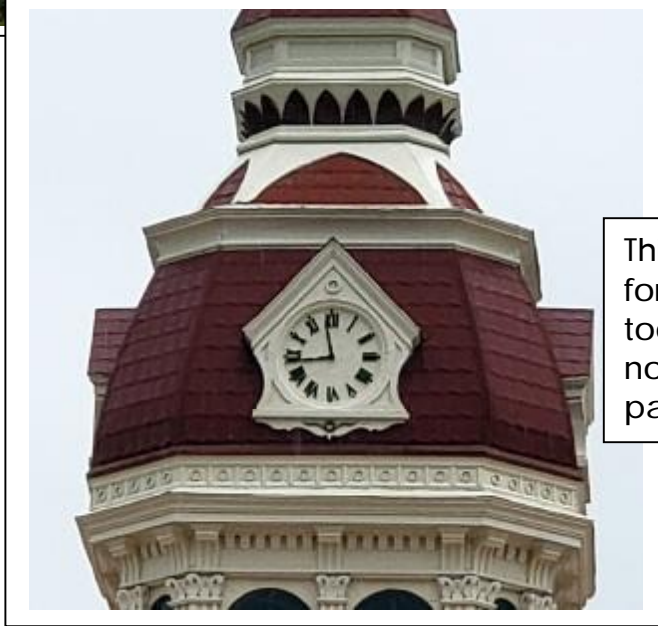
DOUBLE EXECUTION CHAIR USED IN GAS CHAMBER

THE FIRST EXECUTION BY LETHAL GAS WAS CARRIED OUT WHEN TWO BROTHERS WERE EXECUTED AT 5:00 A.M. ON July 6, 1934.

Earlier I told you to remember Charles Poston, below is the why. Charles Poston had intended to build a temple to the sun atop Poston Butte, but ran out of money. When he died in 1902 he was buried in a normal grave in Phoenix - but that didn't seem right to his friends. In 1925 they built a 14' tall pyramid on top of Poston Butte, dug up Poston, and reburied him in it facing the rising sun. A crowd of 1500, including the governor, attended the ceremony. Thanks Roadside America.

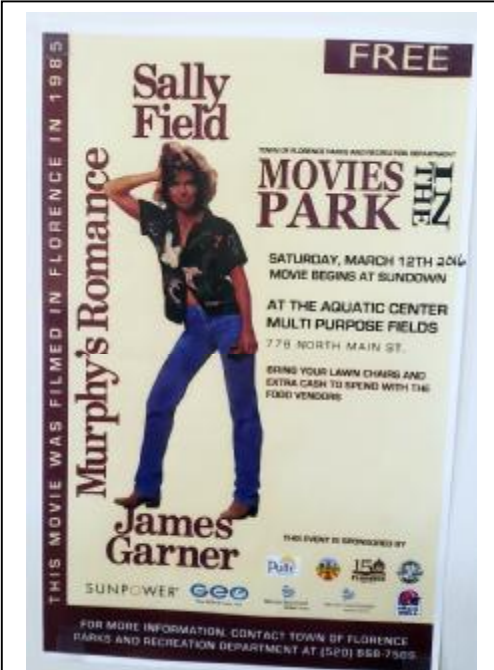
In the bottom left can be seen a white streak. This is the mountain "F" for Florence.





This building was originally the courthouse for Pinal County, but the project became too financially ambitious. So to save money, no clocks were put in the tower. It has four painted-on clock faces reading 11:44.

As I was heading out of town I noticed a visitor's center and decided to stop. The VC is in the first Pinal County Courthouse and was built in 1878. Today it is the McFarland State Historic Park. Besides brochures, there is a gift shop and several original rooms laid out as a museum. Nothing really worth taking a photo of, well maybe. There was a photo of the other courthouse just as construction finished, and there was a cactus floor lamp by the same guy who did the furniture in the museum. I asked if there was anything to visit in Florence and was told, Casa Grande? - Did that. The Museum? - Did that. The Charles Poston Pyramid? - Did that. Hmmmm. Have you been to the hardware store? Everyone who comes to Florence goes to the hardware store because it carries a lot more than just hardware. (remember that hardware store and food store in Ajo?) Alright, off to the hardware store. You will be amazed.



Gotta get the movie angle in. MURPHY'S ROMANCE was filmed here in Florence.



Authentic 1900's Jail Door

History of Florence, AZ

Arizona became a territory under the signature of Abraham Lincoln in 1863.

Florence boomed in the 1870's as wagonloads of ore from the Silver King Mine passed through town.

Florence became the county seat of the newly created Pinal County in 1875 and a new brick courthouse and jail was built (now McFarland State park).

As the Coolidge dam was completed in 1930, farming became a major industry with the access to irrigation. Ranching and feed lots gave birth to vibrant rodeo culture.

Thanks to the Florence Chamber of Commerce



You have to read this one, it's hilarious

The Sheriff's Pink Shorts

Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio was having trouble with inmates stealing pairs of regular white boxer shorts from the county jails - it was affecting operating expenses. It was costing the county about \$40,000 a year to keep jail prisoners in clean, comfortable shorts.

In an effort to reduce theft, he devised a clever plan to dye all inmates' shorts pink. Then, as the inmates are discharged from jail or goes out on work furlough leave, they are searched for any pink boxer shorts. Since the boxer shorts are easy to identify, theft has dropped drastically, thereby reducing taxpayer cost for replenishing inmates' shorts.

This program was so effective that Sheriff Arpaio was getting requests from other inmates asking for a souvenir pair of shorts for friends and neighbors. With this in mind, the Sheriff wondered if there was a market for these pink shorts. He had 3000 pairs especially made with the Maricopa County Sheriff's badge embossed on them along with his signature.

These shorts are all brand new, and are the same make and style furnished to inmates at the county jails. Because of the unique color, these shorts have become a real fashion statement. The initial 3000 shorts sold out in a day and a half, so an additional 25,000 were ordered and were sold in Phoenix area malls.

All profits from sale of these shorts go to the Sheriff's Posse Foundation. One of the purposes of the Posse Foundation is to help defray the Posse's cost associated with Valley Mall Patrols. The Mall Patrols, which are operated by all volunteer Posse members, help reduce crime significantly during the holiday season. Because of the Posse presence at each Mall, YOU the Christmas shopper have a greater sense of security, and this service is provided at no cost to the tax-paying public. So the pink shorts serve a dual purpose: they are a definite fashion statement, and they help pay expenses involved in protection the public from vicious attacks from the criminal element at our area malls and shopping centers.

Arpaio allowed the world's first ever female chain gang. For this gang, it's a privilege to work outside prison yards, sweeping streets and cleaning graffiti. The Sheriff has also comprised the cheapest inmate meals in the country, costing under 20¢ per meal per inmate. And in 1993, the Sheriff started the nation's largest Tent City for convicted inmates.

Arpaio currently has the nation's largest Volunteer Posse with over 3200 members.





On the left - A Fireman coming down the pole. The doors above look great right? They are the employee entry to the back room. In the corners above this area were two displays that looked like scenes from Old Milwaukee. There was an 1870 High-Wheeler bike, with the 5' wheel in front and the 1' wheel in back. Then there was the guy below, he started his spiel every 30 seconds and the hands, head and feet moved also. It was a really cool hardware store, and I'm glad the VC lady suggested it, and I'm also glad I listened to her



You just never know what the day will hold once you hop out of bed. A National Monument, a couple museums, a hardware store, a couple courthouses and a pyramid. None of which I had even thought about yesterday. Isn't life great?

I made my way to the south side of Phoenix and visited a library. I will get to why in a moment.

Then I made my way to another casino for the night. This one actually has designated parking lanes for semis and RVs, just like a truck stop, and it's packed. I plan to shortly take a walk into the casino for an ice cream.

I'm not sure if there will be a newsletter tomorrow. For one thing it's a housekeeping day, clean the floor, do the laundry, make phone calls, dump the RV. But then for the evening I get to use one of my Christmas presents. Kali, Claire and Erin chipped in to get me a ticket to the Bob Seeger concert here in Phoenix at the Talking Stick Resort. I think the Phoenix Suns play there. I had to visit the library to print my ticket.

The concert starts at 8 p.m. and I have to find parking for the beast somewhere. It just struck me, Uber. It will be my first time if I use it. Wow, an Uber virgin. So if I have time to visit some sights after the housekeeping is done and before I have to leave for the concert, I might squeeze one in, but then again, maybe not. Only time will tell.

Looking forward to the concert.

Until next time.....