



# In Search of Eldorado



Day 29  
Saturday  
February 2nd

Yuma, Arizona

Weather  
Great today. 70's and sunny

## Hello to Family & Friends

Much less sore today. Swelling is gone from my hand, I can walk pretty much normal, and except for the budding scabs, very little pain.

I covered a lot of territory today, 19.7 miles on the bike. First stop was the Colorado River State Historic park which is home of the Yuma Quartermaster Depot. A Quartermaster is the army officer responsible for providing quarters, rations, clothing and other supplies. (thanks Google dictionary) The photo above is the visitors center. Out west A.T. stands for Arizona Territory not Appalachian Trail.



## 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?'

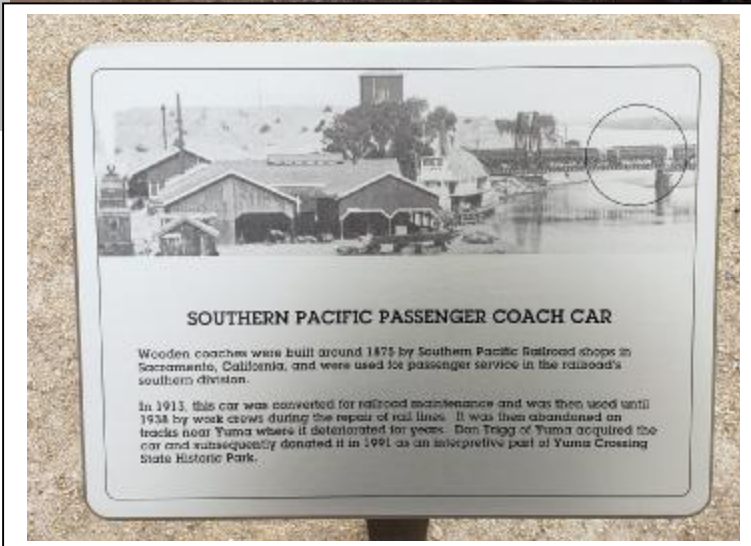
'Over the Mountains  
Of the Moon,  
Down the Valley of the Shadow,  
Ride, boldly ride,'  
The shade replied,—  
'If you seek for Eldorado!'



It seems to be a doggie day today. Then I noticed a bunch of stations set up around the park.



It just so happens that today is testing and certification for guide dogs for the blind. There were hundreds of them here. Good thing none of my girls were with me or we would never have seen anything else in the park. You would all be oohing and aahing and cooing over every dog here. JK. I only stopped to pet 2 or 3, or was 4 or 5.



Fort Yuma was established on March 17<sup>th</sup>, 1851 on the California side of the Colorado River. Since California could not settle the conflicts between the 49er's and the Quechan Indian Tribe over ferry rights, the U.S. Army had to step in.

Below is a photo of the Storehouse





Imagine yourself as a steamship captain. That wheel is 7' high.

### Mojave Steamboat Pilot House Wheel

This great wheel allowed the captain to steer the Mohave steamer along the Colorado River. The lower portion of the wheel dropped below the floor level of the pilot house to allow the captain easier handling of the large wheel.

Please Do Not Touch the Display

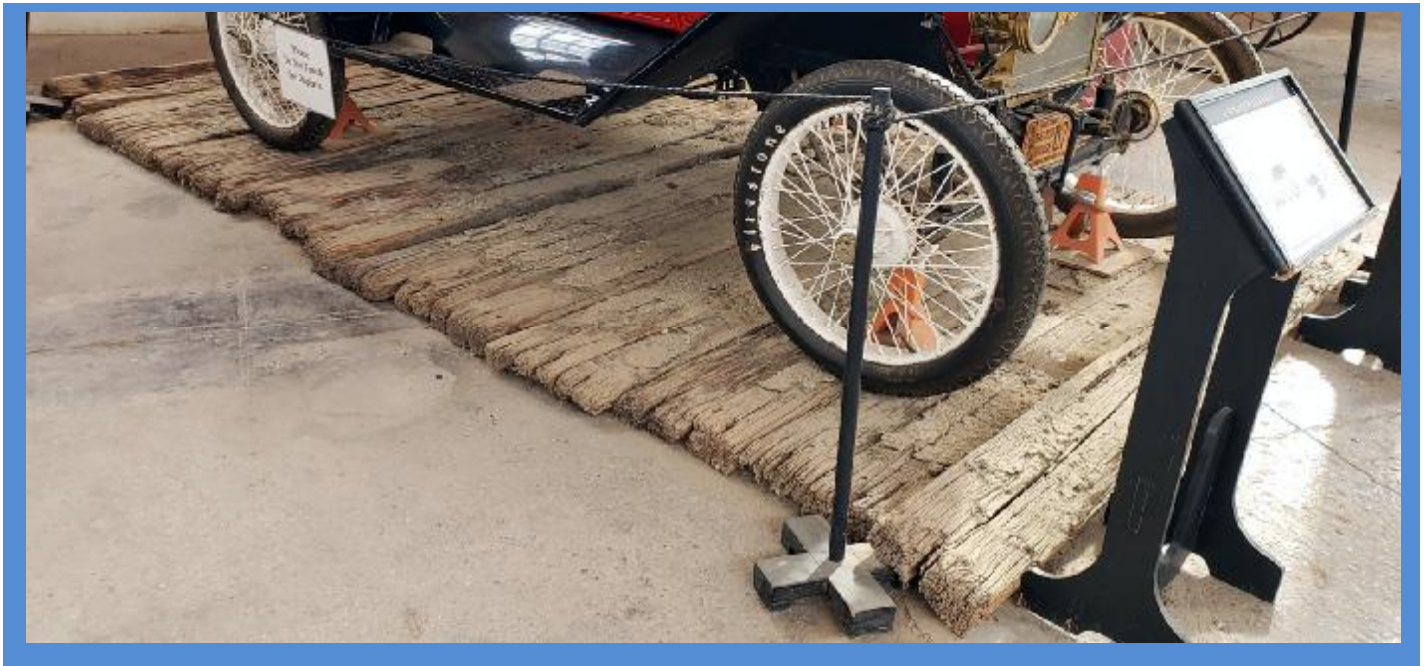


### 1931 Ford Model A Truck

Henry Ford introduced the new Model A truck in late 1927, just a couple of years before the beginning of the Great Depression. Sales soared during the prosperous late 1920s, but began to drop after the stock market crash in 1929.

During the early 1930s, drought in the Great Plains states compounded the economic hardships already being felt, and thousands of farm families decided to pack up their Model A and head west. Many of these families passed through the Yuma area as they journeyed to California in search of migrant farm work.





## A WOODEN PLANK ROAD

Just west of the Yuma Crossing in California lay the Algodones Dunes, a great sand tract stretching more than 40 miles. Throughout history, travel of any nature was severely inhibited by these great shifting sand dunes. With the building of the Ocean to Ocean highway and bridge through Yuma in 1915, a way had to be found for automobiles to cross the dunes. That way was the wooden plank road.

*The dunes were probably produced by wind, which*

### 10 mph Speed Limit

"Announcement has been made that traffic control system will be installed beginning Sunday (March 14, 1926) on the plank road over the Imperial County sand hills, whereby the traffic will move in one direction for a length of time and then will be stopped for that direction while the flow travels in the other direction."

*Yuma Morning Sun  
March 13, 1926*

“When we reached Holtville, California, the asphalt highway we traveled ended. Looming ahead were the sand dunes called the “American Sahara.” Snaking across the sand was a portable plank road, which was constructed of one-car-width sections. There were turnouts every half mile for oncoming cars. The wooden road had been completed in 1916. It was built so the sections could be uncoupled, pulled by a team of mules to another location, realigned and then be ready again for traffic. In those days car springs weren’t designed to cope with washboard conditions, and the up-and-down motion of the vehicle would accelerate as it traveled. It was necessary to stop occasionally to quiet the violent bouncing, and anyone foolish enough to travel faster than ten miles an hour bounced off the road into the sand.



And here I am complaining about the graded dirt and gravel roads in Arizona.

The Quartermaster Depot was established by the Army in 1864 to distribute supplies to forts and posts throughout the Southwest. The supplies were shipped by schooner from San Francisco around Baja California and almost to the mouth of the Colorado River at Port Isabel, Sonora. The supplies were transferred to steamships and ended up here in Yuma. The Quartermaster Office is pictured below.



#### Office of the Quartermaster (1872)

The quartermaster served as the officer in charge of the Yuma Depot. The quartermaster's office originally occupied a corner room of the busy, noisy Storehouse.

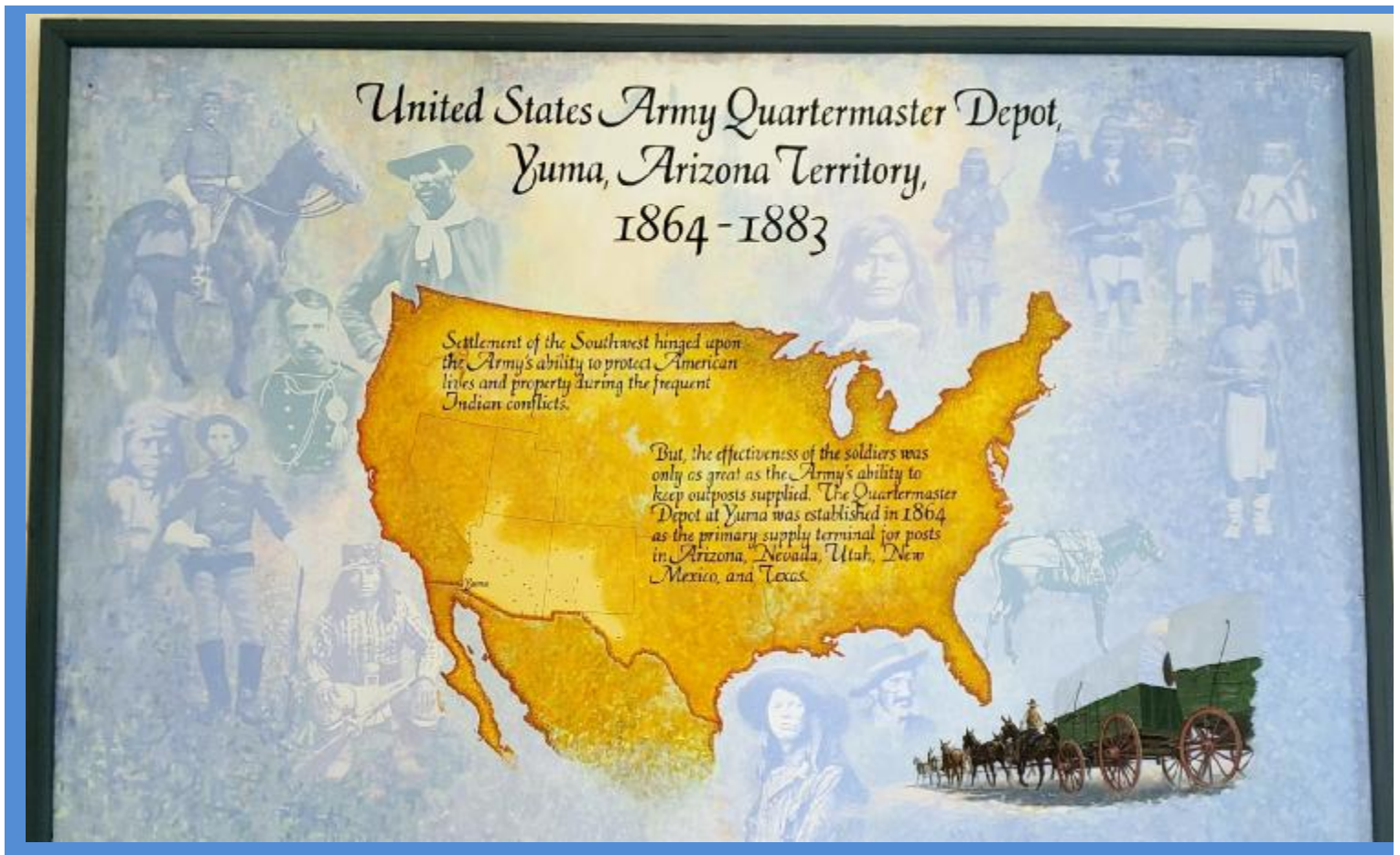
In 1872, the quartermaster received permission to build a new office. The commissary of subsistence officer occupied the east room, while the quartermaster occupied the center and west rooms.

In 1873, the U.S. Army Signal Corps operated Arizona's first, non-private telegraph line from this office. The telegraph stretched from San Diego, through Yuma, and on to Prescott and Tucson.



Storehouse Cistern Office Living Quarters Kitchen Corral

A model of the Quatermaster Depot prior to 1880

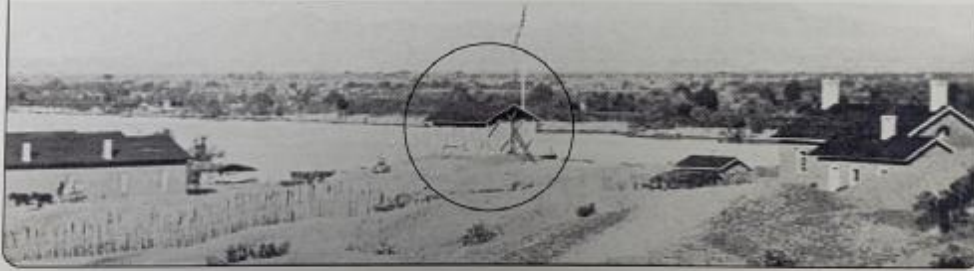


## QUARTERMASTER DEPOT WATER RESERVOIR

A steam pump located at the edge of the river propelled muddy Colorado River water through pipes to an elevated holding tank constructed of local rock and mortar with a wood shingle roof to decrease evaporation. Sediment fell to the bottom of the tank, then gravity flow forced the cleared water through pipes to Quartermaster buildings and other houses in the area. Periodically, a soldier was sent into the tank to clean out the accumulated silt, hoisting it up and out in buckets.

The reservoir provided a number of services: household water for people, water for the large number of horses and mules used for freighting supplies throughout Arizona Territory, and water for irrigating the extensive vegetable gardens that graced the grounds around the Commanding Officer's Quarters.

The Arizona State Parks Board acquired the water reservoir in 1981 from the Bureau of Reclamation. Full restoration was completed in 1987.





## COMMANDING OFFICER'S QUARTERS & KITCHEN

In 1859, steamboat entrepreneur George Alonzo Johnson built a riverside home for his bride, Estefana Alvarado. Now known as the Commanding Officer's Quarters, the home is believed to be Arizona's oldest Anglo-built adobe building. In the devastating Colorado River flood of 1862, this building and the nearby Hooper residence, now the detached kitchen, were unharmed because they were built on high ground. Quartermaster personnel used the buildings from the mid-1860s until the military abandoned Fort Yuma in 1883.

In 1902, President Theodore Roosevelt designated the Commanding Officer's Quarters as a customs reserve and the U. S. Customs Service remained in the building until 1955. In 1956, the City of Yuma purchased the Commanding Officer's Quarters and Kitchen from the federal government. Ownership was transferred to Arizona State Parks Board in 1986 and rehabilitation was completed in 1991.



The Colorado River, as it flows through Yuma today, is just a shadow of the mighty Colorado River of the 1800's, before it was tamed by seven dams, each manipulating the turbulent waters for their specific uses; electricity; recreation, flood control; wildlife habitats; and irrigation. I was surprised to find that 90% of America's leafy greens are supplied by the Yuma Valley.

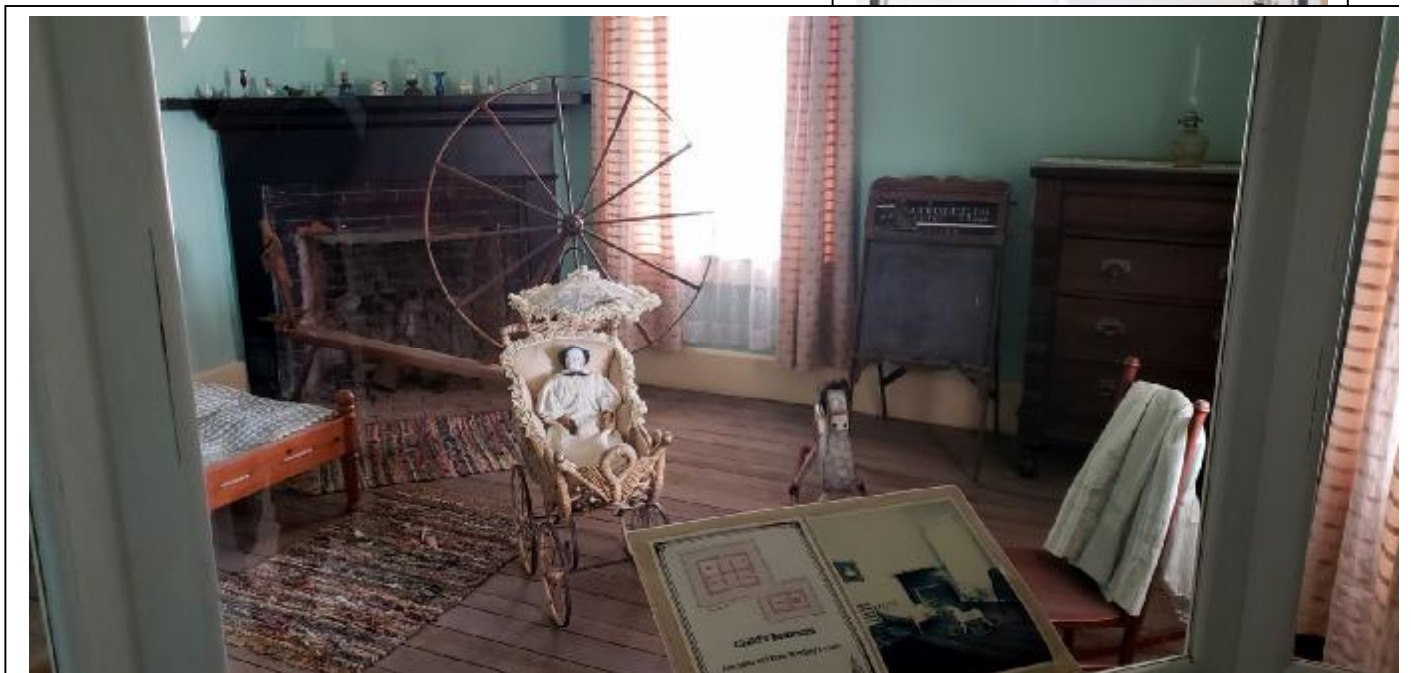
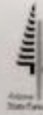


### Parlor Room

Here the Bradley family entertained friends and officers from Fort Yuma or had a quiet evening reading and discussing current events in the lives of military personnel.

*"Whenever the riverboat came up, we were sure to have guests, for many officers went into the Territory via Ehrenberg. [and Ft. Yuma]"*

Martha Summerhayes  
Ehrenberg, Arizona Territory,  
1875



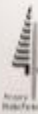


### Master Bedroom

The bedroom was a sanctuary for the military husband and wife.

*"Much sleep was not to be thought of; the sultry heat by the river bank, and the pungent smell of the arrow-weed which lined the shores thickly, contributed more to stimulate than to soothe the weary nerves. But the glare of the sun was gone, and after awhile a stillness settled down upon this company of Uncle Sam's servants and their followers."*

Martha Summerhayes  
Colorado River,  
Arizona Territory, 1874



### Dining Room

*"I can never forget the taste of oatmeal with fresh milk, the eggs and butter, and delicious tomatoes, which were served to us in his latticed dining room."*

Martha Summerhayes  
Ft. Yuma, August, 1874

*"We had a merry supper: cold ham, chicken, and fresh biscuit, a plenty of good Cocomonga wine, sweet milk, which to be sure turned to curds as it stood on the table, some sort of preserves from a tin, and good coffee."*

Martha Summerhayes  
Ehrenberg, Arizona Territory,  
1875





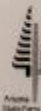
### Commanding Officer's Kitchen

*"The Quartermaster Department furnished everything in the line of kitchen utensils; I went over to the quartermaster store-house to select the needed articles."*

*"After what I had been told, I was surprised to find nothing smaller than two gallon kettles, meat forks a yard long, and mess kits deep enough to cook rations for fifty men!"*

*"I thought that we should never be able to manage with such kitchen utensils as were furnished by the Q.M.D."*

Martha Summerhayes  
Wyoming Territory, 1874

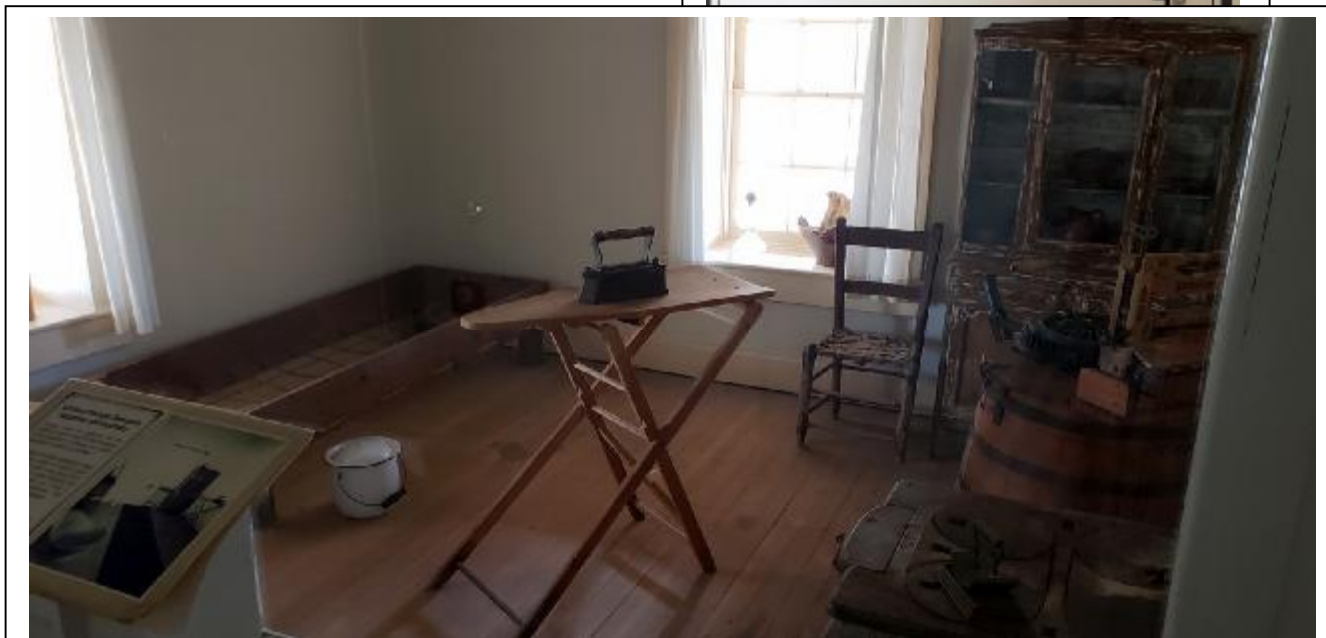


### Kitchen Storage, Servant's Quarters, and Laundry

"There were no persons to be obtained who could do the cooking in the families of officers, so it was customary to employ a soldier."

"They liked the little addition to their pay, if they were of frugal mind; they had also their own quiet room to sleep in, and I often thought the family life, offering as it did a contrast to the bareness and desolation of the noisy barracks....."

Martha Summerhayes  
Camp Apache,  
Arizona Territory, 1874





### **A Lucky Encounter**

The story of the Yuma East Wetlands restoration is not complete without recognizing the many individuals involved in making the project possible. One such individual was a gentleman named Lucky—and these are his meager belongings.

The restoration crew first encountered Lucky as they conducted their initial field survey of the area that would become the wetlands. Lucky was living in the area as a hobo but welcomed the transformation of his “home” from a dumping ground full of invasive species to the beautiful wetlands it is today. He became an enthusiastic supporter of the project, joined the work crew, and befriended all involved. Although Lucky has since passed away, his spirit lives on in the place he called home.





I was completely unaware of this project. Even after reading it a couple times I am still not sure exactly why they had to go under the river. It is not explained very well. But I was amazed at what they were able to do back in 1912

**Diving 200 miles from the**

While sinking each of the two vertical shafts of the Colorado River Siphon, groundwater seepage into the work area became a major problem. Initially, pumps removed the water, but later the shafts were allowed to partially flood and clamshell scoops removed both water and excavated material. When crews struck bedrock, the heavy concrete shafts would sink no farther. Two divers, Al Christie and Louis Hammel, were then hired to place dynamite into the submerged bedrock, fracturing the hard rock and allowing the vertical shafts to continue sinking into the ground.

**DEEP SEA DIVING IN THE YUMA DESERT**

*Placing 400 lbs. under the water*

*If at first you don't succeed...*

*Total weight of the equipment on diver = 285 lbs.*

**If at first you don't succeed...**

"Over on the California side of the river today the divers went down in the siphon shaft in 90 feet of water and placed their charges of dynamite, but as happened once or twice before, the pressure of water is so great that the dynamite merely burned up without exploding. Tomorrow, however, more nitro-glycerine will be mixed with the dynamite..."

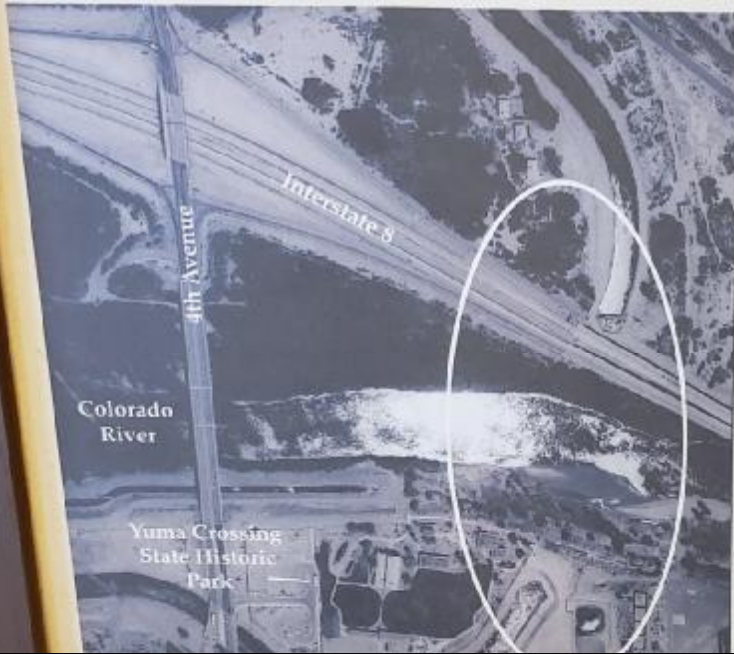
*Yuma Examiner, May 12, 1910*

*Total weight of the equipment on diver = 285 lbs.*

**If at first you don't succeed...**

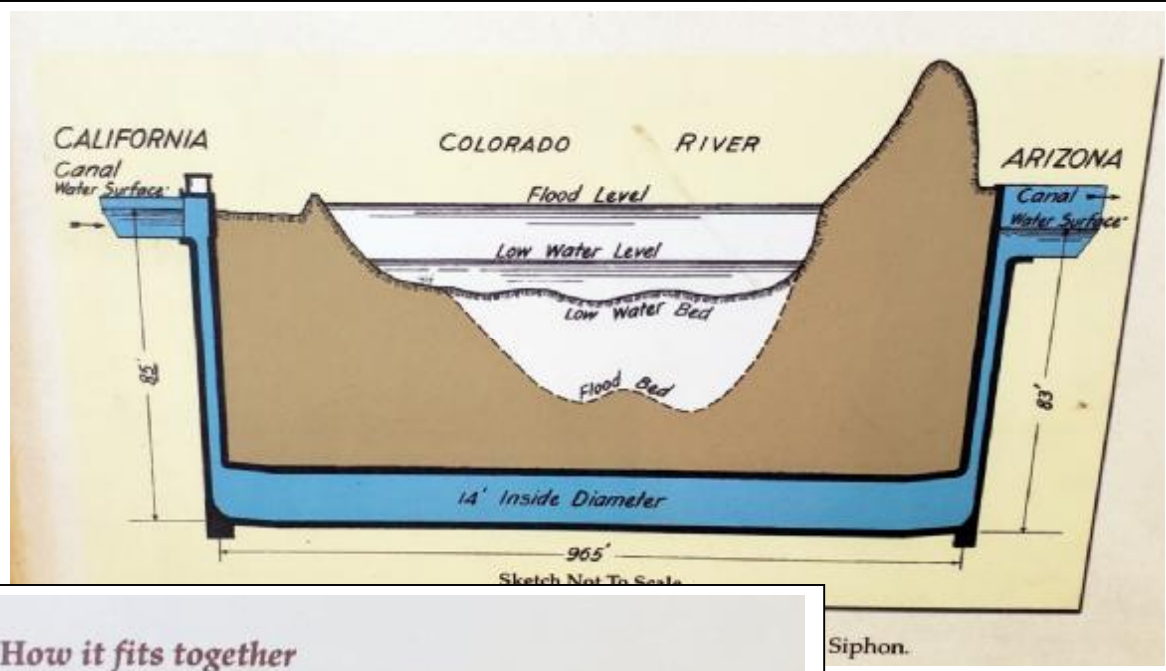
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*Yuma Examiner, May 12, 1910*



## Why the siphon was built

Due to the location of Laguna Dam on the Colorado River, a canal designed to serve the Yuma Valley would have to cross the Gila River if the canal began in Arizona, or cross the Colorado River if it began in California. An inverted siphon under the Gila River, and its associated canal, could be disrupted by river meandering during regular flooding. For this reason, the United States Bureau of Reclamation (BOR) opted to construct an inverted siphon under the Colorado River at Yuma where the river rarely meandered.



## How it fits together

The inverted Colorado River Siphon is a large, U-shaped tunnel formed by three concrete shafts: a vertical California shaft, a vertical Arizona shaft, and a horizontal shaft beneath the Colorado River that connects the two. Water from the Yuma Main Canal in California flows through the siphon by gravity and, after emerging in Arizona, continues along in the Yuma Main Canal. Soon thereafter, the Yuma Main Canal splits into the East and West Main Canals, both of which provide irrigation water to the Yuma Valley.

## The vertical shafts

Construction of the Colorado River Siphon began in December 1909 with the sinking of the vertical Arizona shaft. Each vertical shaft consisted of a series of concrete rings with a circular steel cutting edge attached to the bottom edge of the lowest ring. Until reaching more compact subsurface material, the concrete shafts sank largely by their own weight. As the shafts sank and workmen shoveled out the loose subsurface material, new sections of concrete were poured and fit into place, eventually forming the total height of the vertical shafts. Finally, concrete plugs placed at the end of each vertical shaft allowed tunneling for the horizontal shaft to begin.

### ***Keeping the water out during construction***

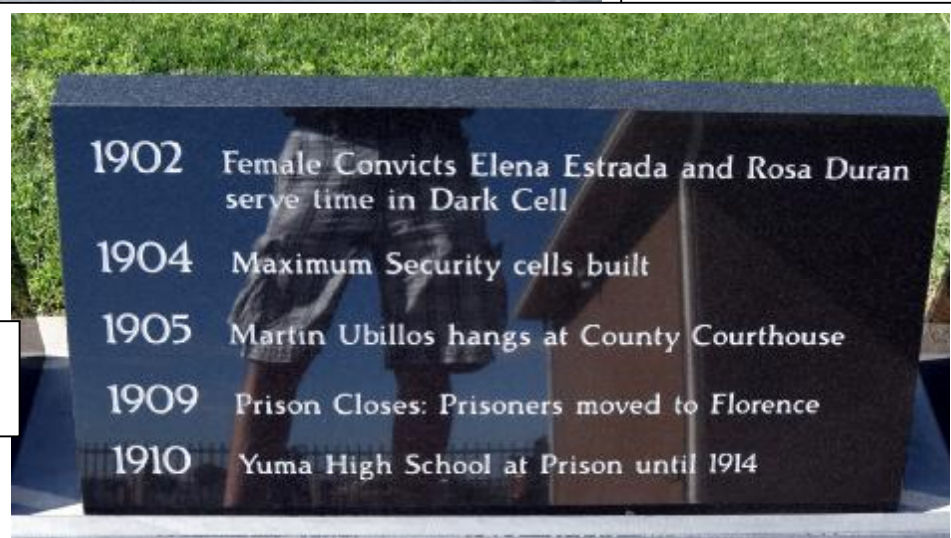
To keep water and sand from seeping into the excavation area while tunneling the horizontal shaft, the BOR decided to use compressed air machinery and workers. Compressed air workers, called "sandhogs," installed the machinery in the Arizona shaft and secured an air lock, within which they worked under air pressure high enough to keep out the sand and water. Sandhogs first excavated the upper half of the tunnel and poured concrete for the top arch. With the top portion completed, the same process was used to excavate and construct the bottom half of the tunnel. On June 8, 1912, work crews broke through the wall of the California vertical shaft, opening the siphon from California to Arizona.

## **YUMA TERRITORIAL PRISON**



## **STATE HISTORIC PARK**

ALL ABOARD!! Next train is the 3:10 to Yuma and the Yuma Territorial Prison. Think I might run into Russell Crowe? Or maybe Glenn Ford?



I always thought high school was like a prison



### Drinking Water Life in the Desert

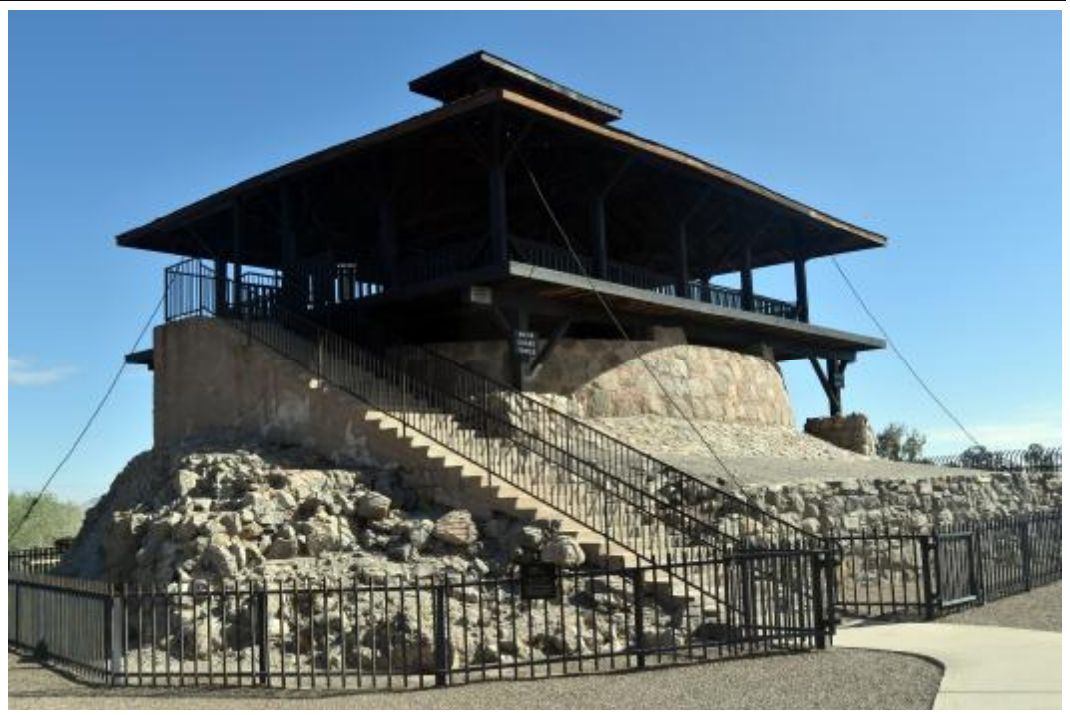
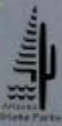
All water for the prison came from the river. Inmates dug a network of tunnels at the base of the hill which would fill with river water. From there water was pumped up into the 85,000 gallon granite-walled tank, also of inmate construction. In 1893, after continual pump breakdowns, prison officials and Yuma Water and Light came to an agreement: water was piped to the prison in exchange for electricity produced by the prison's electric dynamo.

### The Guard Tower

A platform was built on top of the water tank, to limit evaporation. A roof was added, and it became a guard tower. As smaller towers were added to the wall, this guard stand was glassed-in and heated to provide sleeping quarters for guards. A catwalk extended to the top of the wall.



After the prison closed, this tower served various functions, including a Civil Defense lookout during World War II.



The cistern



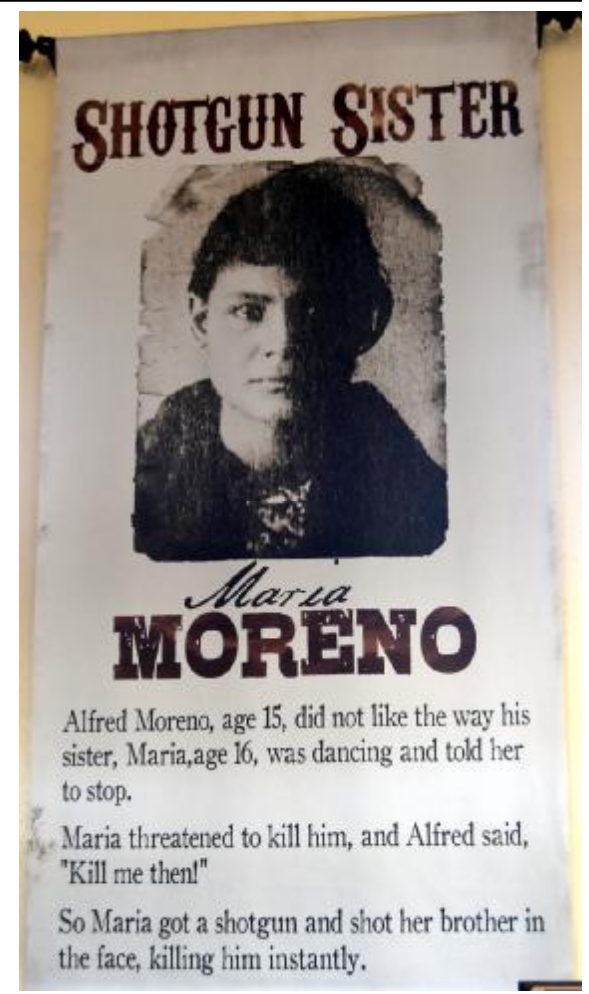
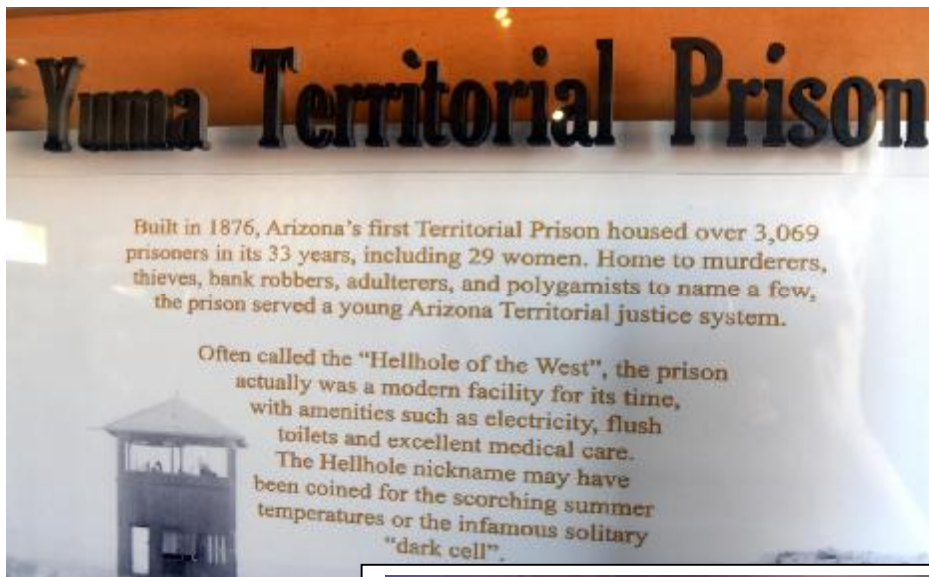
View from the guard tower of the Sallyport



This entrance through the wall is called the Sallyport, from the Spanish "*salir por la puerta*" meaning "to go out the door." At either end are two iron doors far enough apart to enclose a wagon, when both gates are closed. Notice the small doors constructed within each gate to restrict passage.

In October 1887, the most infamous escape attempt, the Gates Riot, took place at the Sallyport entrance. Seven prisoners attempted to escape, using Superintendent Gates as a hostage. Gates, not faltering, ordered the tower guard to shoot. When the dust cleared, four inmates were dead, another was wounded, and two were recaptured. The three survivors were sent to the dark cell. Gates sustained a knife wound to the neck. He later resigned due to constant pain from the injury.





Most of you know I participated in the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Great American Adventures Wyatt Earp Vendetta Ride last October, so this display has some significant meaning for me as well as some of my readers. You may recognize a name or two from my October Newsletters during the ride.



Tombstone was one of the last wide-open frontier boomtowns in the Old West. Fueled by nearly \$80 million in silver mining, the town grew from a population of 100 to 14,000 from 1877 to 1890. But it was a "powder keg" which drew Yankee capitalists and merchants from the north and ranchers and rustlers with Confederate sympathies. High on that list were "the Cowboys", a loosely organized band of outlaws led by the Clanton Gang who operated a booming market for stolen beef from Mexico, just 30 miles away.

It was only a matter of time before that powder keg would blow, as Wyatt Earp and his brothers, under a thin cover of the "law", clashed with and killed many of the Cowboys at the Gunfight at the OK Corral.

But what does this have to do with Yuma? As it turns out, an assortment of these outlaws (on both sides) ended up serving time at the Yuma Territorial Prison, which was the only prison fortified enough to keep them jailed. And even one of the wardens, John H. Behan, was a key figure in Tombstone gunfights.

Perhaps it was that only the Yuma Territorial Prison could bring peace to Tombstone.



### Johnny Behan

Behan was the first sheriff of Tombstone. He would beat out Wyatt Earp to be elected Cochise County Sheriff in 1881. He and Earp would later compete again for the affection of Josephine Marcus. He sided with The Cowboys over the gunfight at the O.K. Corral. In 1888 he would become Superintendent of the Yuma Territorial Prison.

Ellsworth, is there something you haven't told us?



## Not so fast!

### David Ellsworth #2052

Ellsworth could not catch a break. He had previously attempted to escape 6 times from Walla Walla, Washington State Prison while serving time for murder.

He would later be convicted of counterfeiting and sentenced to 15 year at the Arizona Territorial Prison. Within two months of arrival he was thrown into solitary confinement for having files and screwdrivers in his cell.

Just two months after that he tried to scale the wall and escape but only landed himself in solitary for 31 days.



A real Gatlin Gun

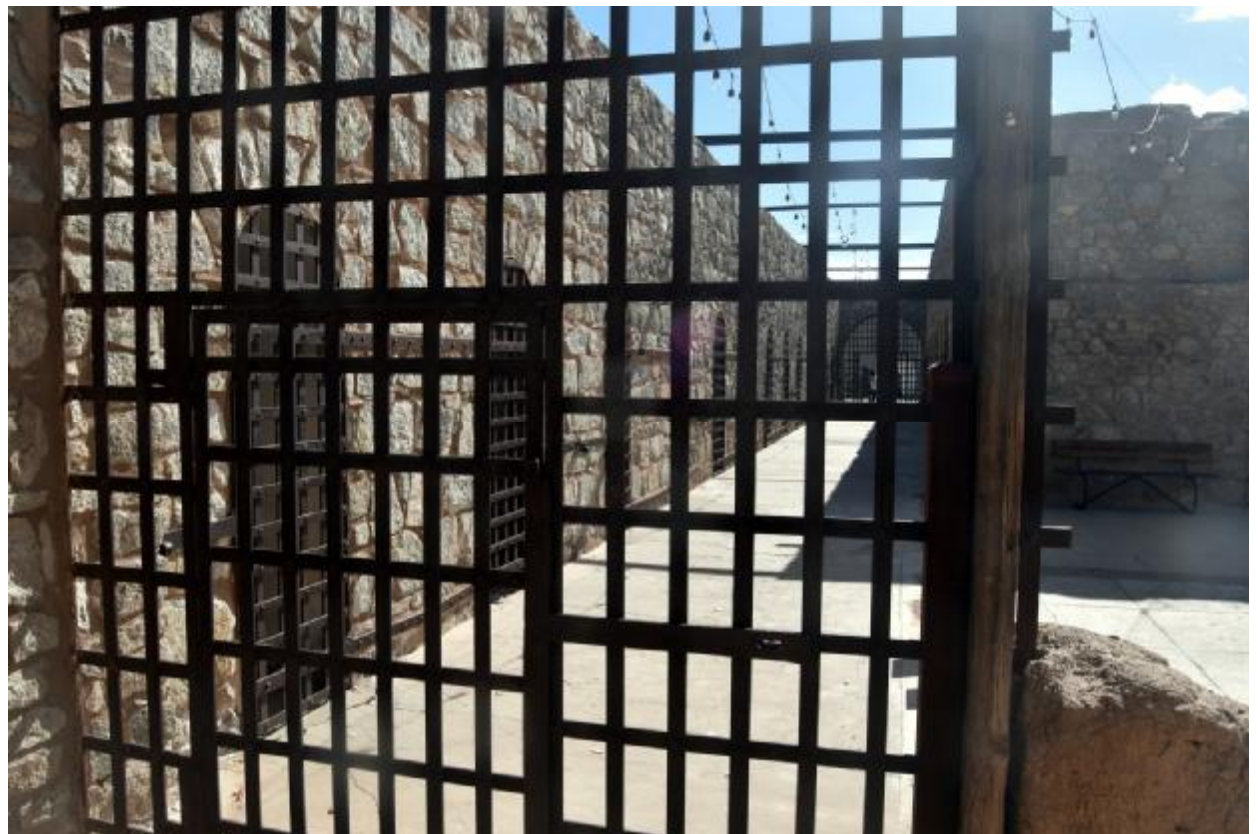
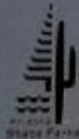
## MAIN CELLBLOCK

The main cellblock was built to house up to 204 prisoners, but at times the Superintendent's report stated that up to 240 prisoners were kept here. Each cell was approximately 9 foot X 12 foot and could hold six prisoners. When space became limited, the more trusted prisoners would sleep in the hallways. Cells were constructed of strap iron and granite rock, which was plastered and whitewashed. The iron was shipped in from California via steamboat, but the granite was quarried by prisoners on site. Originally, the cellblock was completely enclosed and not exposed to the elements as it appears today. One of the earliest electrical generating plants in the West furnished power for lights and a ventilation system in the cellblock.

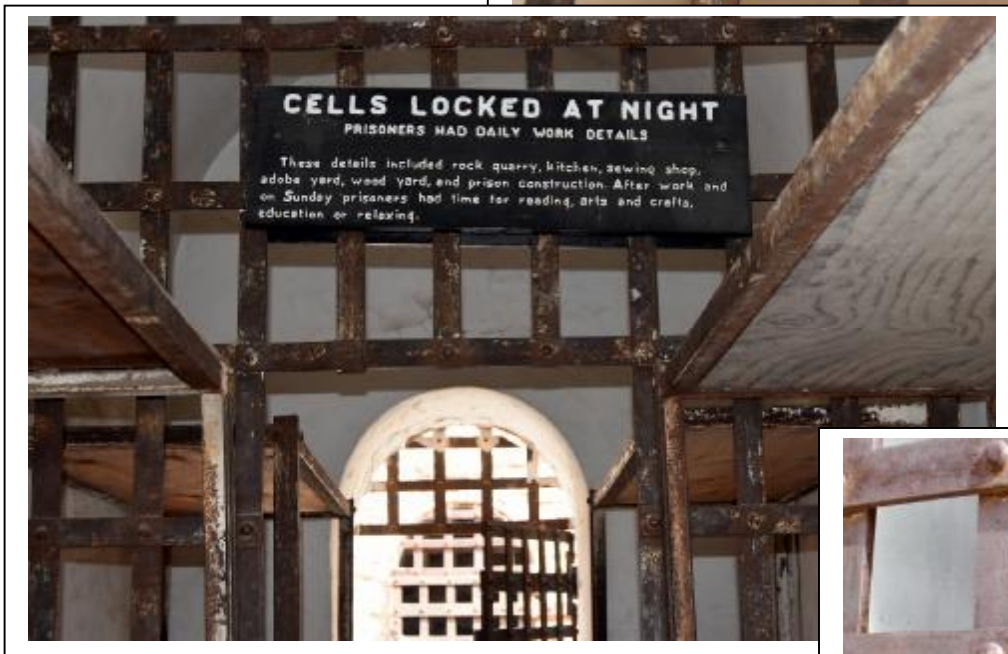
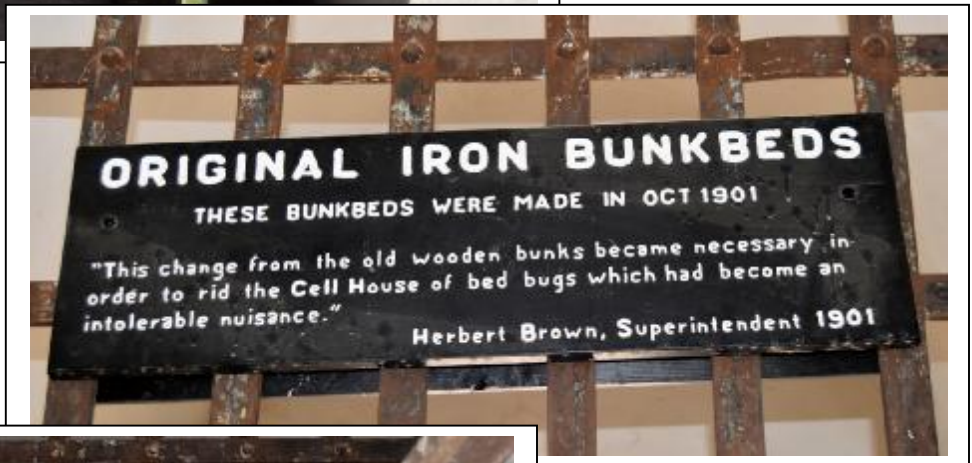
In 1902, a hospital was constructed on top of the main cellblock. This well supplied facility contained a dispensary, a doctor's office, operating room, attendant's room, bathroom with flushing toilets, and a consumptive ward. It wasn't uncommon for prisoners from other institutions to be sent to the Territorial Prison at Yuma to recuperate their health.



*Post abandonment photo.  
Main cellblock with hospital atop in background.*



There were several cells that still looked as they did when the prison was occupied. There were three cells that had motion activated recordings of an inmate telling his story.



I thought this would be a great selfie. Then while I was editing I realized the back door is open and another person can be seen. Oops.



The Dark Cell – Sounds like something out of Star Wars

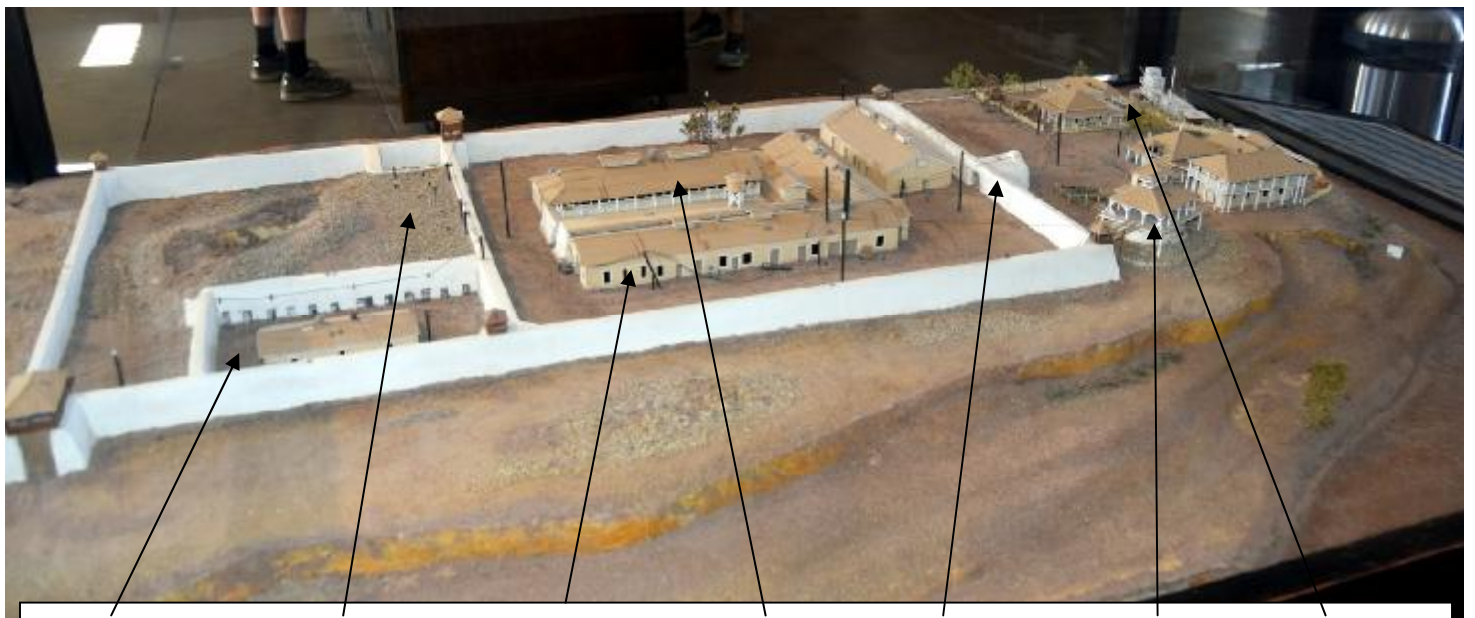
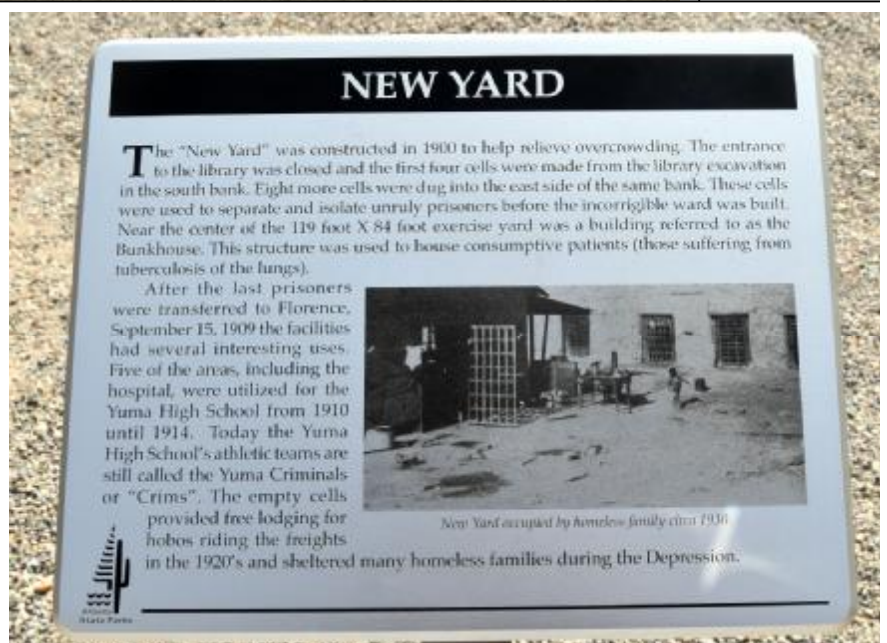
This is the scariest photo of the day. Is that a barber chair or a dentist chair?



Not so dark with the camera flash turned on



The women's cells were hewn right into the rock of the hill.



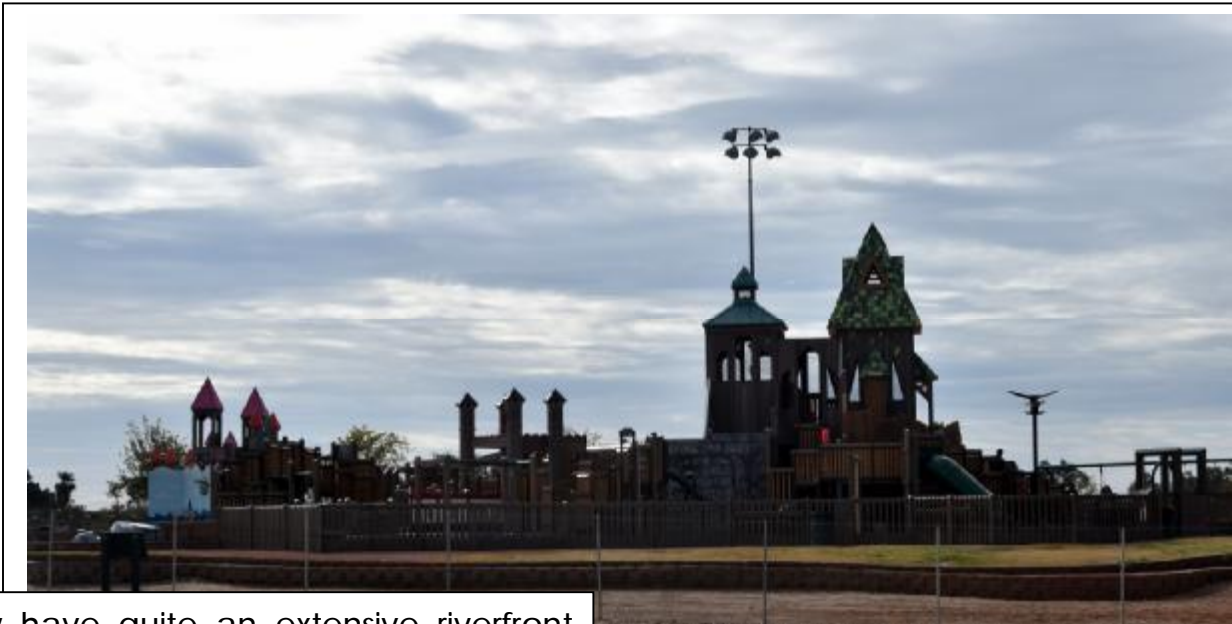
New Yard    Women's cells    Cell block    Hospital    Sallyport    Guard tower    Warden

A model of the prison as it was when occupied. The warden and that entire area, almost 1/3 of the prison, was demolished to build a train bridge





Back on my bike, I rode past Riverside Park, where they have a 1/8 scale railroad with 4000' of track, Similar to the train at the Milwaukee County Zoo. Naturally, they are only open on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Saturdays of the month.

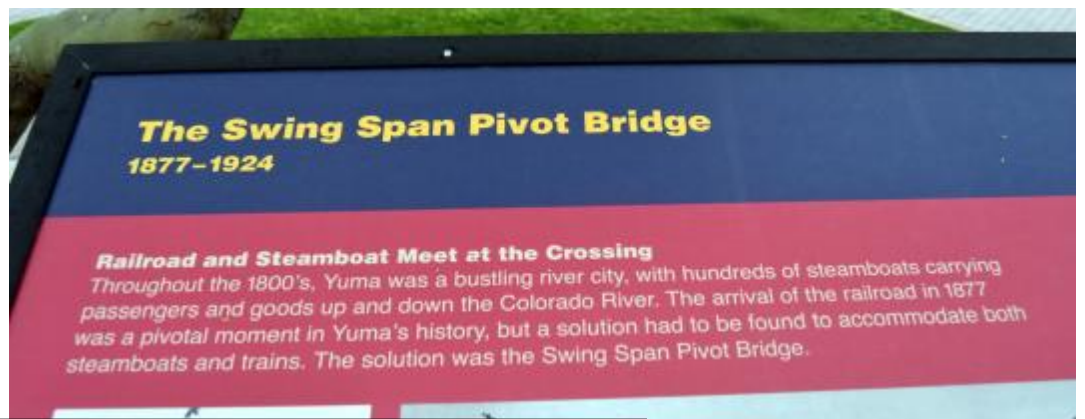


They have quite an extensive riverfront park system here. Six different parks connected by walkways and bike paths, pavilions, beach, the train. I parked at the Quartermaster Depot and biked to the prison, Riverside Park, West Wetlands where the kids were playing on the castle pictured above. They also have bike paths along many of the canals, so I took one south to find this guy....Do you remember these oddities from my Route 66 trip? They were called muffer men because they appeared out front of muffer shops, but some were spacemen, or holding a hotdog, or a lumberjack? Well, this one is a sheriff. He keeps the peace at the Westward Village RV Park.





My last stop for the day



### **A Legacy of the Past**

While much of the history of this original railroad bridge has been lost to the ravages of time, the concrete column upon which the 1895 swing span bridge sat is featured in this plaza. The new downtown riverfront development is called "Pivot Point" in honor of the rich history that took place on this site.

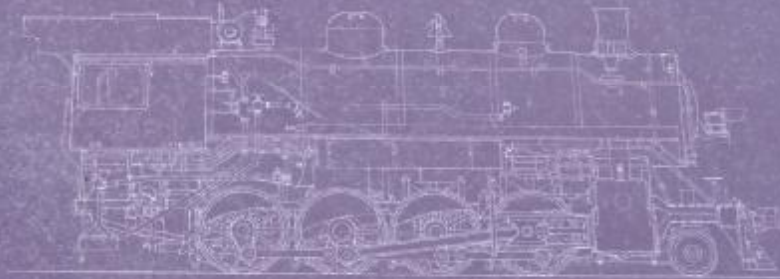
## Southern Pacific Engine No. 2521

1907-1957



**Southern Pacific No. 2521 was built by the Baldwin Locomotive Works in Schenectady, New York, and delivered to the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1907.**

In its lifetime, this historic engine logged an estimated 2.5 million miles hauling passengers and freight through the Southern United States. S.P. No. 2521 saw service as a main-line hauler in the Yuma area for more than forty years before steam technology was replaced by the modern diesel engine. The Southern Pacific Railroad donated the locomotive that you see to the City of Yuma in April 1957.



*The S.P. No. 2521 is 79 feet long and weighs more than 194 tons, (388,000 lbs.) and could haul 35 loaded box cars at up to 40 miles per hour.*



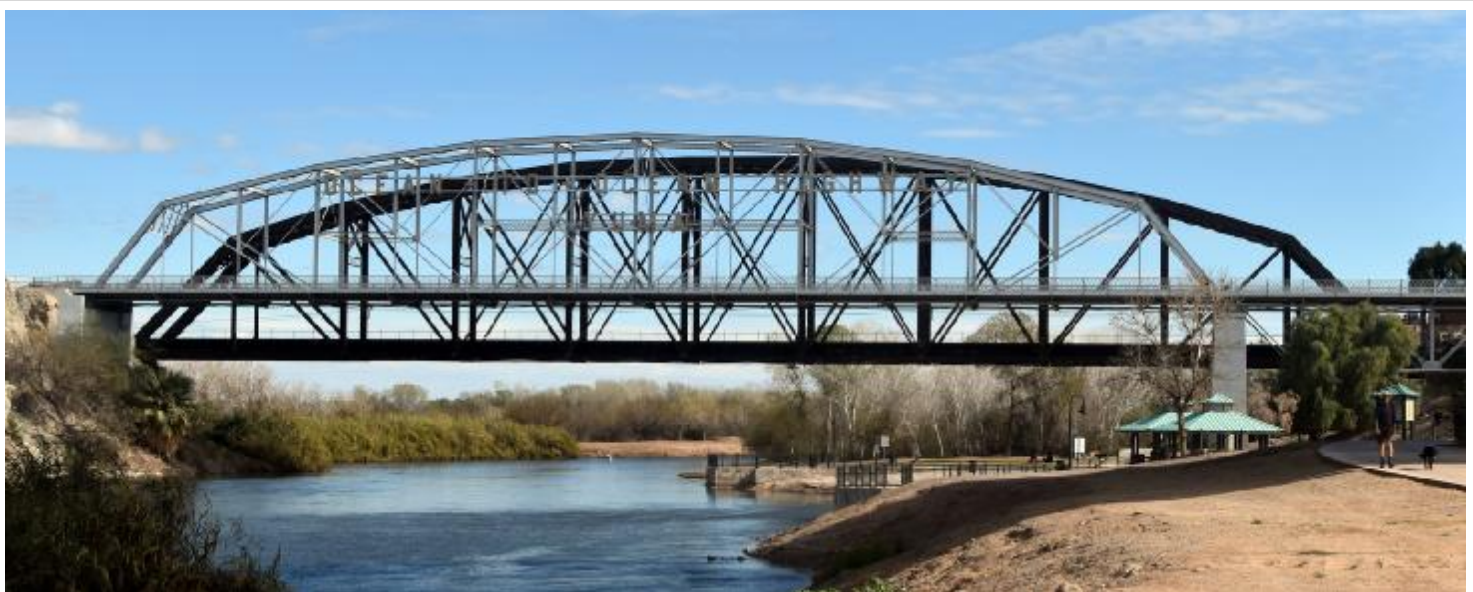
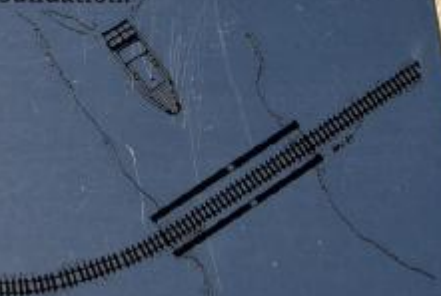
Inside the cab. This is interesting because the engine in Kingman was pretty much stripped of all the stuff you can see here. Well, I could see it through the grate, you can't really see much.



The gray bridge, finished in 1915, is the "Ocean to Ocean" Highway Bridge. This was the final link in a highway stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast. Its presence meant travellers no longer had to wait for the ferry to cross the Colorado River.



The first railroad bridge crossing the Colorado River was a low pivot bridge built in the floodplain below prison hill. It would swing open for passage of steamboats, and served the railroad until 1923, when the black railroad bridge was built. Approximately one third of the prison was demolished to make way for the present bridge and its foundation.



I know what you're thinking....way too many plaques, right? Just remember, you get to see the ones that I thought are interesting. I read ALL of them. And believe me, there were a lot of them.

But other than that, I hope you can actually read what is on the plaques. I am never sure if I make them large enough to be read, and I don't want to make them so large they take up a whole page.

But it was a good day; Just shy of 20 miles on the bike with no pain what-so-ever in my thigh. I only fell once. Ha ha. I did sort of trip, but it was because I was trying to put my right foot on the ground and found out my shoelace was tangled around the pedal. The bike kind of went  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way down. Nothing hit the ground fortunately and I was virtually at a standstill anyways.

With the wind no longer at my back, 20 MPH from the southwest tonight, I decided to spend another night in Yuma. A different gas station this time. Beforehand I decided to treat myself to a sit down dinner. Penny's Diner. I would not recommend a repeat performance. My chopped steak was small and overdone; the waitress forgot about my shake until half way through my meal so I told her a glass of milk instead; and I did not get my bill until I left my seat and went to the cash register. The rolls were good though.

Should have stayed home and made some New England Clam Chowder as I intended earlier in the day.

Tomorrow the wind will be at my back as I head east to Gila Bend. I will leave the Mighty Colorado, of which I have been near for the past 26 days, behind me and head to the real desert.

Until the next time.....