THE STORY OF EARLY ARIZONA

by

Sharlot M. Hall

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There are a few states, like Massachusetts with her Puritan pilgrims, and Virginia with her cavaliers, and California with her romance of gold and conquest, and Texas who brought to our flag a star that she had won bravely and worn with honor as an independent state, that have a history which sets them apart from all others; but for the most part the history of one state is so inwoven with that of its neighbors that taken alone it is a thing of shreds and patches.

This is particularly true of us here in Arizona; our story is made up of the crumbs that fall from richer tables. We have never had anything just for ourselves. Nobody discovered us because he was looking for us; nobody cared whether we were ever discovered or not, and our beginning in history was punctuated with flowing Castillian oaths because we presented more miles of blistering desert than golden cities of the Bull.

In the early day we had but one eulogist, good Padre de Niza, the first white comer to our borders; and his glowing reports so glowed in and out of season that only for his priestly frock he would have been branded of all men as a liar. And not a few of the unlucky ones whom he beguiled into following him northward to his new found paradise said so despite the frock—and laid their despairing bones face down in the sand, while their souls went on to a braver quest than Cibola.

But it is something to know that our discoverer praised us, even though intemperately; for we were destined to be the battle ground of missionaries and politicians and treasure seekers who came and saw and were not infrequently conquered; and went on to mingle the bitterness of defeat with unvaried tales of heat and sand and drouth and desolation.

To go back still farther it is said that even the Creator did not refer to Arizona when he saw his work and proclaimed it good. Tradition asserts that being particularly hurried the last evening he cleaned up the work-shop and dumped all the rubbish and left-overs and misfits in the universe down here without one smoothing touch.

Early poets have sung that Lucifer himself was god-father at our christening, and that being permitted to add whatever he deemed lacking to climate and scenery he ever after forsook his own kingdom and took up his permanent abode in Arizona.

In truth Nature seems to have worked here in her uncertain moods, to have tried her prentice hand on peak and plain, and to have left it at last a sort of experiment station, full of things she never cared to repeat elsewhere. Geologically Arizona is one of the most wonderful spots on earth, with a history laid bare in her rocky pages that reaches from the first gray shoulder of stone that swallowed up above the universal sea to parching deserts rimmed with shell-strewn beaches that might have been wet yesterday.

But to return to Father de Niza—the good old man was not looking for us

that April day in 1539 when after sending his negro servant ahead to clear out possible difficulties he crossed our southern border. His eyes were bent northward to the fabled golden cities which rumor said lay beyond the desert. The same lure of heathen souls to be saved and heathen gold to be won that had led him through Peru with Pizzaro now fired his enthusiasm for another quest fated to end in something less than Incas and ingots.

But the padre was a dreamer; however often he was disappointed, the waiting heathen gold and perishing heathen souls always lay just over the next hill, and though his followers refused to go farther at last and compelled him to return to Mexico footsore and empty handed his enthusiasm still served to fire the ardor of a dozen explorers. Coronado and Alarcon, Espejo and others, always seeking gold and wonders, and, as tradition grew in that ready soil, a great inland sea to the north, crossed and recrossed Arizona: cursing the land under their feet and looking for riches and pleasure beyond.

Quite the most wonderful thing of all is how thoroughly those first Spaniards penetrated the secrets of the grim land in which they wandered without map or guide. The Colorado river with its marvelous canyon, the great triple peaks of San Francisco, the deserts, the few fertile valleys, were all known and then forgotten, as the dream of a new Peru faded and grew dim.

It was a quest of *souls* pure and simple that made our history for the next century. We were a lost and forgotten land except as some zealous padre more daring than his fellows crossed to the Moqui villages in the north, or eastward to Zuni and the scattered pueblos along the Rio Grande. They found the Indians of the great river valley, which in 1630 first appeared under its present name of Gila, the same friendly, peaceful, agricultural people we know them today. A mission to the Papagos was the first attempt at settlement in Arizona; and without the aid of this tribe and the Pimas and Maricopas there would never have been that brief, romantic, always precarious era of Spanish colonization along the southern border.

Over the earliest pages of our history lie large the names of two priests, Padre de Niza, the dreamer, and Kino, the mission builder. Niza first made us known to the civilized world; Kino shot through the plain warp of our story with such golden threads of romance as shall never fade. He was a great traveler, from 1687 he spent twenty years going up and down over northern Sonora and that vague land of Pimeria Alta which was to be Arizona. Sometimes he traveled with a few Spanish soldiers for guard, but often alone with only an Indian guide. On one long journey he walked and led a mule laden with the altar service so that he might say mass in every Indian rancheria. He did no permanent building; the number of missions in Arizona has always been over estimated, because Kino and his followers had a way of giving every little Indian village a Spanish saint's name; but we have left as the outcome of his work the most beautiful relic of all that old religious fervor, San Xavier del Bac. Not one of the Pacific Coast missions is as rich in decoration or as gracefully beautiful in architecture; and not one of them was reared under conditions half so savage and dangerous.

With San Xavier, or indeed before her, were Tubac and Tumacacori; at first mere presidios, tiny adobe forts with a handful of soldiers and a huddle of Indian converts, and a visiting priest

who came and went from tribe to tribe. Then very slowly the fields were enlarged, a few Spanish settlers and traders came, a truce was made with the Apaches, as fierce then as now, and gradually a quaint little colony grew up in the desert half-a-year's journey from anywhere.

The broad valley of the Santa Clara was thick with cattle; there were haciendas not unlike old Mexico; and grain fields and vineyards; and many sheep for wool, and horses to ride. The records of San Xavier show that great herds of cattle were driven down to Sonoran ports and sold to pay for that rich cathedral in the desert. In the country surrounding Tucson are still to be seen the ruins of ranches of large size; some of them now miles distant from all living water. And there are in the old Mexican families most interesting stories preserved of the old days.

Once a year pack trains went out to Sonora, conveyed by the bravest men of the little colony and bearing hides, wool, rich ores, buckskins and such things to exchange for gay cloth, sugar, imported wines, jewels, and silver coin. Often the Apaches laying in wait swooped down on them on their return and reaped rich plunder.

It was the most picturesque era in our history; but it could not last; the colonists were always like mice in the clutch of a cat; and when internal wrangles compelled the recall of the troops to Mexico most of the settlers went along and the rest were killed by the Indians. The missions were abandoned; beautiful San Xavier stood silent and alone with barred doors and shut windows for many years. The Papagos still tilled bits of the old fields but they forgot the faith of the padres. Tubac was never reclaimed and is today a cluster of weather smoothed adobe mounds where the old buildings can scarcely be traced. And Tumacacori is a deserted ruin though still so beautiful that in any other land than ours it would be guarded as a treasured heritage.

After many years soldiers were again stationed at San Xavier and another settlement struggled for footing; but the first American travelers found little more than a mud fort and a few adobe huts.

These first American comers were trappers, traders, adventurers, and later soldiers and explorers; but though from them at last was to be born a new state it was still an accident; nobody cared the toss of a coin for the soil that is now Arizona. It became part of the United States because with the end of the Mexican war California and New Mexico were held spoils to the winner. And these Siamese twins of conquest were united by a strip of unknown desert and mountains that could not well be severed. It was the tail that went with the hide,—and as little valued. There had never been a Spanish settlement north of the Gila, the southern boundary of the new possession, and since Espejo no one had explored it, it was a land forgotten.

Though somewhat later she brought to the territory its first civilized inhabitants southern Arizona has no boast over the north. The Gadsden purchase meant a road cleared to the gold of the Pacific —and no more. It was tacked on to the big territory of New Mexico, which included all of Arizona previously acquired, as carelessly as a bow to a slipper. In spite of the promise of rich mines the people of the East and the authorities at Washington mouthed long at the price and called it boldly a waste of good money.

As in the days of Coronado the people

who crossed Arizona did so because they wanted to get somewhere else and she happened to be in the way. The war with Mexico made her a highway for troops marching to and from Sonora and California; and the way they opened was followed by government surveying parties and soon by a horde of gold seekers.

The road from Santa Fe to Tucson was made by Lieut. Col. Cooke and his famous Mormon batallion in 1846 and over it passed argonauts and 49ers by thousands—cursing the land as they crossed it and leaving a trail of bones to mark their way. In 1851 the government got up curiosity enough to send Lieut. Sitgreaves across from Zuni to the Little Colorado, and by way of the Big Colorado down to Yuma. Whipple and Ives and similar expeditions came from time to time after him; and soon the gold of California drew westward such an army as was never seen before or since. Mexican pack trains and American caravans poured out along the trail from Santa Fe to Tucson and from Tucson to Yuma, re-enforced by an exodus of Mexicans from Sonora by way of Altar. It has been guessed, though probably with too generous an estimate, that by the end of 1851 60,000 people had crossed the Colorado river at Yuma, and for years thereafter the travel continued.

A little homely romance is connected with this period—for some of these travelers were old pioneers of the East and tried to escape the worst piece of desert by floating on flat boats down the Gila to Yuma. In November, 1849, such a boat came down bearing a Mr. Howard and his party, among which was his wife and little new born son, named Gila, from the river on which he first saw light. He was the first American child born in Arizona.

All the while this stream of adventurers fought and wrangled and starved their way across her southern verge Arizona was just a huge, desert-scarred nowhere, tacked on to Dona Ana county, New Mexico. What goverment it got came at long range from Santa Fe and mostly miscarried on the journey. There was in fact nothing to govern except Tucson and a few Indian rancherias near. The whole northern part was still practically unknown and in the hands of the Apaches. Only one American—old Pauline Weaver, the trapper, had penetrated the mountain plateau Black Range and destined within the coming twenty years to yield gold enough to pay almost twice over the purchase price of the settled lands below the Gila.

Yet it was a silver knight who was to wake the sleeping state, hedged as securely behind her legions of cactus as the fabled princess of old with her briar rose. As the mining fever grew the old tales of La Planchas de Plata, the great placer where nuggets of pure silver were found scattered in the sand; and the silver mines of fabulous richness known to the padres and lost through half a century of Apache warfare, begun to stir again.

Two men, Lieutenant Sylvester Mowry and Charles D. Poston, probably did more at this period to pave the way for the new state than all the others within her borders. They had followed the old tales to earth and found ore and even indications of earlier prospecting. Both were men of some influence and neither scrupled to use it. Mowry's mine, the Patagonia, fairly lifted the hitherto neglected land into general notice and his books, lectures, and persistent lobbying gained the ear of the government for larger measures.

These early mining interests were

largely in the Santa Rita mountains not far from Tubac and south of Tucson. The first government military post in the territory, a little adobe barracks named Ft. Buchanan, was located with a view to protecting the miners and for several years activity centered at Tubac and Tucson renewed something of her old importance. In 1856 the motley population of the section gathered at Tucson and held a convention which resolved to send a memorial to congress urging the establishment of a new territory of Arizona. There were 260 names on the petition but the five thousand inhabitants claimed to be painfully waiting a fuller government were more than four-fifths Indians and Mexicans and the report at Washington was unfavorable. Other similar bills were presented with systematic persistency from year to year and as regularly ignored or defeated.

It is amusing in connection with these and not particularly soothing to our vanity to know what unwillingness and even anxiety our foster mother New Mexico showed to be rid of us. Nor did she purpose sending us out empty handed into the world to seek our fortune like a dowerless daughter. She very generously proposed to give us all the Indians within her border; insisting in fact that we should take them as a parting gift. They were to be moved into northern Arizona to fill up our unmapped spaces and set a good example to immigration.

In 1860 a convention met at Tucson to frame a provisional constitution, and organize a territory, subject to the later action of the general government. It was done in fact, with a governor and all officers (Dr. L. S. Owings governor); a code of laws was framed and the governor's address printed at Tucson in pamphlet is the first book published in the territory.

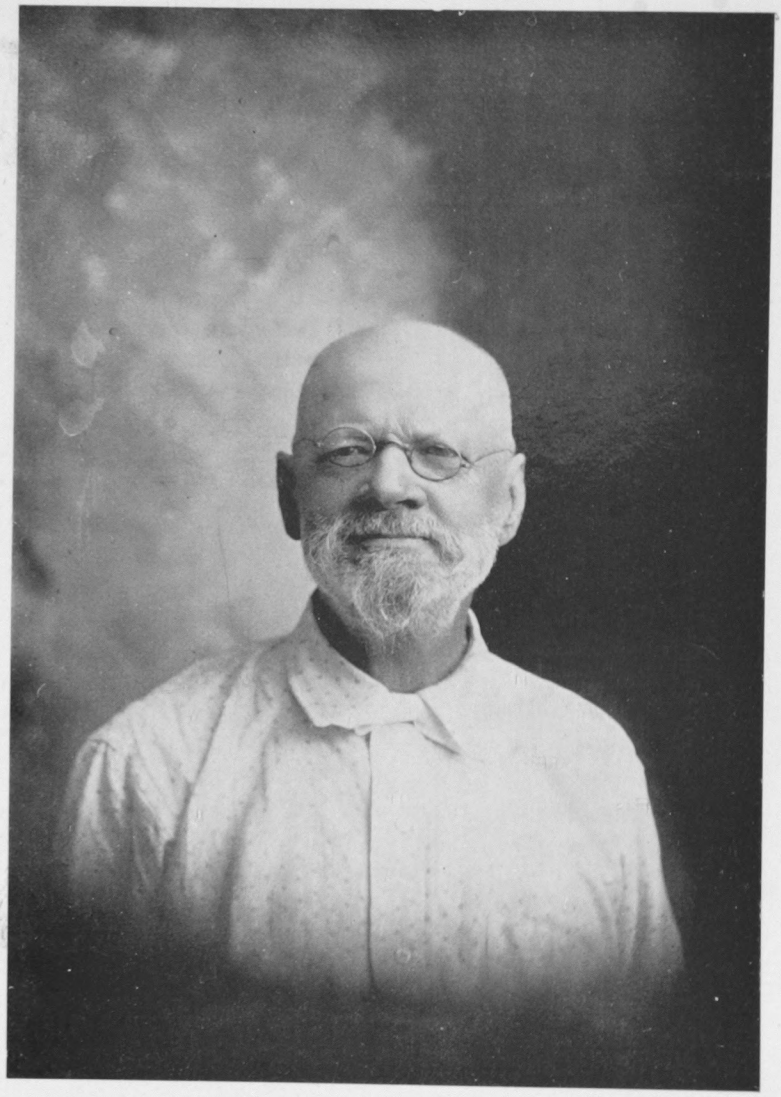
Sylvester Mowry had a map made of the proposed territory and it is one of the most interesting Arizona relics that I have ever seen. The northern boundary was far south of Prescott, not much above Wickenburg, and on the east the territory extended into the Staked Plains of Texas. It was divided by north and south lines into four huge counties, the most western being Castle Dome with the Colorado river between it and California. This county was named for Castle Dome mountain and silver mine; one of the very famous mines of the early days.

Castle Dome county was marked on the Mowry map as "unexplored" except a small corner around the mine and the vicinity of Ft. Yuma.

The next county was Ewell, named for General Ewell; the third, Mesilla, extended to the Rio Grande river, and the last, Dona Ana county, embraced the section between that river and the eastern half of the Staked Plain, taking in a good corner of western Texas.

There was a battle of names for the territory and Arizuma, Arizonia, Gadsonia, and Pimeria contended with Arizona. Personally, I wish the choice might have fallen upon Pimeria, with its rich human and historical associations: but Charles D. Poston decided for Arizona; taking the name from the Arisonac mountains near the great Planchas de Plate, it being considered suitable that the state which was to be built on silver should bear a name taken from the most wonderful silver region of the world.

And yet with her name settled and her boundaries a good deal less so the territory to be, had still three years to wait for her legal birth. There were complications



CHARLES D. POSTON

arising from the great civil strife then in progress which made it impolitic for a new member to enter the Union too precipitately. In 1862 a new bill completely rearranged the territorial boundaries, making them approximately the same as those of today, and in February, 1863, the enabling act was passed and a new star set in the western sky.

Charles D. Poston was particularly active in this last effort to secure legal recognition of the new section; when victory seemed near he sent to Arizona for four hundred ounces of virgin silver from his own mines and had it made into a magnificent ink stand for President Lincoln, intending that it should be used in signing the bill creating the territory. It was finished just too late for this purpose but it was accepted and is still preserved by Robert Lincoln as an object much prized by his great father. It was a massive piece, of simple yet most artistic and effective design. The ink well was hidden in the graceful dome of a capitol; the broad base represented the typical scenery of the desert, and at one end a crouching figure of Poston in frontier dress with a rifle across his knees kept guard, while at the other a beautiful Indian figure represented the friendly tribes. President Lincoln did not delay in filling the chief offices of the new territory. A governor and subordinate officers were appointed in March and in the latter part of July the entire party set out, conveyed by an escort of troops, to practically create the state, which they were to govern.

There was one change in the official list. John A. Gurley, the first governor died in July, and John N. Goodwin was appointed to fill his place.

In some ways the march of the gubernatorial party was a romantic and unusual progress; not often does a governor march to seek his capitol in an untracked wilderness; the site to be chosen at his own will. In no other territory of the United States has it happened so. But Tucson, the natural claimant of the honor, indeed the only town in the new domain; had leaned far southward in her sympathies and it was not certain, or rather it was only too certain, how she would welcome a government of the opposition. So she was left to dream in her enchanted valley, bewitched by old memories, and the official party made straight for the new found gold fields of the north, where in the midst of a primeval forest, on the site of old Indian encampments they set up a state house of rough hewn logs and named their capitol Prescott, in honor of the great historian then at the zenith of his fame. Richard McCormick, then secretary and afterwards governor, is said to be responsible for the name.

To go back just a little, one of the most picturesque incidents in Arizona history is the formal organization of her government as soon as the official party had crossed her borders. At Navajo Springs, in what is now Apache county, two days march from the eastern line of the territory the governor and his party halted, and on December 29th, the flag was raised and cheered, a prayer was said, and the oath of office taken. The governor read his proclamation by which the seat of government was located in the vicinity of Ft. Whipple, which post had been established about a month previously by Major Willis and his California colunteers.

If I were an artist I should like to paint that scene; the rugged hills dark with their ranks of cedars, the ground snow covered, the soldier escort, and the waiting officials; all eyes bent upon that rising flag as its bright folds shook out

and fluttered over a new commonwealth.

The Chino valley post was soon abandoned for the present site on Granite creek and the capital located as I have already stated. The doings and undoings of the early legislatures would be interesting reading, but I shall not speak of them; nor of the game of shuttlecock by which the capital was tossed back and forth between Tucson and Prescott, till it landed at last in the lap of a younger sister who has held it ever since. I have been a good deal interested in tracing the name of Phoenix; it was undoubtedly suggested by the rising of a modern city on the site of extensive pre-historic ruins, —like the fabled phoenix from his ashes. The name was chosen by Darrel Duppa, an Englishman of education and high family connection, who was the first settler in the vicinity of the present town.

One act of the first legislature was to adopt a territorial seal with the design of mountain peak, pines, and deer, now familiar to all; but it is rather curious that for twenty years this seal was discarded for another of unknown origin, which showed a miner with pick and shovel and sharp mountain peaks in the background—a design suggesting strikingly the pioneer baking powder label which some of us remember.

As on Mowry's old map the territory was at first divided into four huge counties, named this time from Indian tribes, Pima, Yuma, Mojave and Yavapai. Later Pah-Ute was set off from the northern end of Mojave and included all the corner of Arizona beyond the Colorado river, which afterward was attached to Nevada. When this was done Pah-Ute county was abandoned and the remnant restored to Mojave.

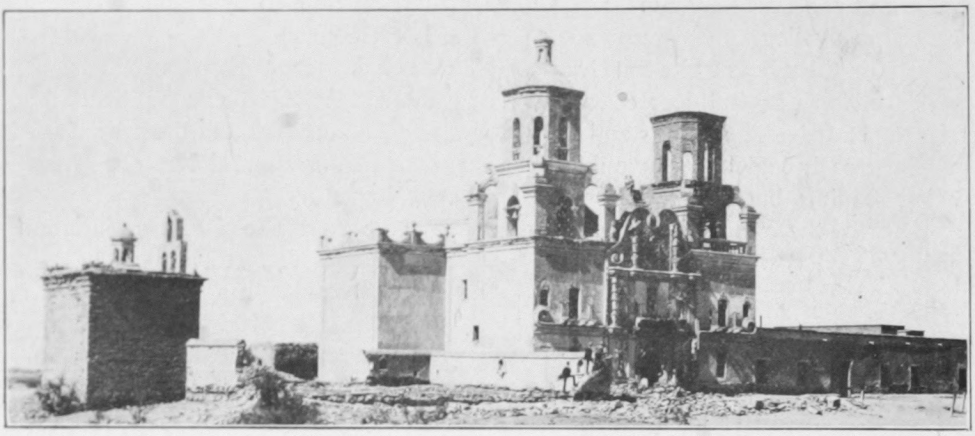
Later Maricopa, Pinal, Apache, Cochise, Graham, and Gila counties were formed from time to time and Coconino is the latest comer.

There has never been anything of large interest in Arizona's political history; her Indian wars and the varied development of her mineral resources have made up her story.

From the first she faced an Indian problem such as few states have had to meet, and though it was a matter in the hands of the national government every phase of it was reflected in the prosperity of the territory. The southern and southeastern counties were the greatest sufferers, and scarcely a mile of their soil but has been sometime stained with blood. Victorio and Geronimo, Chato and Cochise and Deltchay will live as long as our history;—but these Indian wars are for a larger canvass than mine today. The story of the early mines of Arizona is a romance, a fairy tale like the search of the Rhine gold. Every peak of the south is haunted with old stories of Jesuit mines worked by Indian converts for the enriching of the missions. There is scarcely one nail of truth on which to hang these fantastic garments of fancy; for the Jesuits worked no mines, and their Franciscan successors few, if any. But in the golden age of Spanish colonization the silver of the Santa Ritas and the wonderful La Planchas de Plata in the region now known as La Cananea drew thousands of brief adventurers who left little permanent mark.

There was never a Spanish gold fever in Arizona; the silver of Peru and Mexico had turned popular interest to that metal and its prominence in the ores of the southern border directed the course of mining to it alone.

I have spoken of how Mowry and Poston and other early prospectors were advocates of the white metal and



prophesied Arizona's future greatness on that basis.

The placer gold excitement begun along the Gila where a mushroom town of Arizona City sprung up while the California rush was at its height; and though the city soon shrunk to one house and the thousands who had winnowed the sands of the desert for gold dust passed on; new thousands gathered soon after along the Colorado river and made La Paz and Ehrenburg names of note in their day.

The discovery of placer gold drew a large floating population into northern Arizona, and the subsequent discoveries of rich quartz gave a stability to its later development. The placers counted millions of dollars in their harvest, and before they were fairly on the decline the silver era dawned. It was not as great as Nevada; but it lived long enough to make fortunes in a day and to tinge the politics of the whole territory long after the great mines were almost a tradition. For a quarter of a century the fame of Arizona rested on such names as Tombstone, Tip Top, Humbug, and the Peck. The Peck mine, the nearest of these to Prescott, produced in three years over one million two hundred thousand dollars, with ore that went as high as $17,000.00 a ton.

Peace and prosperity have no history, it is said; the steady development of Arizona for the past twenty years has left deeper impress on her hills and valleys than on the pages of her history. From a land whose two chief highways were once known as "The Trail of Death," and the "Day's Journey of the Dead Man," she has come to two great transcontinental railways and a connecting system spreading yearly and already outlined for extension that will reach the very deserts and mountain peaks.

Where once the peaceful indians of the Gila valley represented her agricultural population she has a net work of irrigated valleys that command national attention.

Her mines are known in all the markets of the world and her general development is a thing any state might be proud of. She has gone forward with a dignity and stability that promises much for the future she has had a romantic yesterday, her tomorrow will make true many of the golden dreams of her discoverors.