The Mohave Epic
footprints in time

WE INVITE YOU TO FOLLOW OUR FOOTPRINTS THROUGH THE CYCLE OF HISTORY
This booklet has been reprinted as Roy Purcell wrote it in the late 1960’s. The decades since that time have seen rapid growth and many changes in Mohave County.

That growth is reflected in the changes and additions to the Mohave Museum of History & Arts. The building has been enlarged, a research library and artifacts storage facility had been added, and new exhibits have been added.

This booklet could have been updated to reflect these changes, but Mr. Purcell has such a unique style of writing, it was determined that it should stand as written.

It is to be hoped these pages will help the visitor to better understand the changes that have been wrought in this northwestern Arizona county, which is in essence, a microcosm of the changes that have occurred around the world.

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AS A FUNCTION OF THE MOHAVE COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, this museum is dedicated to the purpose of preserving and presenting the story of Mohave County. It is not a totally unique story, for all histories follow similar patterns of growth and change. It is by understanding the basic structure of this growth that we become cognizant of ourselves in an historic sense and begin to see the direction in which we move.

We invite you to follow our footprints through the cycle of history as Mohave County, a child, emerges from the dawn of its own consciousness and gropes its painful way through infancy and adolescence and blossoms into the flower of youthful maturity, only to wither toward old age and the day that death comes to herald the birth of a new cycle under the burning sun.

Our earliest known residents are nomadic people following the footprints of sloth and mammoth from the North as the last ice age recedes. As early as 9000 B.C. these groups wander as families over much of the Southwest in seasonal migrations leaving records in the form of stone implements, sleeping circles and well-defined trails.

From 5000 B.C. until the beginning of the Christian era, other groups, adapting slowly to a drying climate, follow similar trails and establish trade routes between the coast and pueblo cultures to the east, exchanging shells and feathers for turquoise. Some groups settle along the Colorado, exchanging a nomadic life of hunting and gathering for a more sedentary one of raising crops of corn, wheat and melons to supplement their diet of fish.
By 700 A.D. the Pueblo culture begins moving into the high plateau country along the southern borders of the Colorado, only to leave mysteriously by 1100. Within a short time the Cerbat people, probable progenitors of the Walapai and Supai, begin moving into Mohave County from the South to establish a simple, but stable economy of hunting and gathering, in a land rich with grass and shrubs, antelope, deer and mountain sheep.

As the Walapai are moving quietly around their familiar mountains and valleys following a well established way of life, much is going on far to the south as the Spanish greed pushes conquest North from Mexico into the vast southwest seeking ever greater fortunes in the mythical cities of Cibola. By the beginning of the 17th century, exploration has moved as far North as the Pueblos of New Mexico and Arizona and in 1604 Juan de Onate moves into Mohave County, making contact with the Mojave on the Colorado. Not until the following century does another Caucasian make contact with our early residents. As the Declaration of Independence is being signed a Franciscan Father named Garces, walks from the Coast to the Colorado and on across the County thru the present site of Kingman, carrying a banded image of the Virgin and the Crucified Christ and teaching as he goes.

The first half of the 1800's sees a new breed enter the area as an Eastern demand for furs pushes intrepid trappers into the Colorado basin in search of Beaver. Men such as Kit Carson, James Ohio Pattie and Jedediah Smith leave their names to an era that opens the west and introduces the seeds of death to a culture that has lived here for 700 years.

By 1848, the United States has acquired the greater Southwest from Mexico in the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo and immediately begins the exciting work of exploring and mapping the country to discover feasible routes of migration for westward expansion. Gold discovered in the golden state of California draws thousands of immigrants west, most of which travel to the south of us or over the Rockies of Utah. The Barrier of the Colorado and its canyons creates a formidable obstacle for travel across the Mojave and Walapai country. But the most direct route is along the 35th parallel and the decade of the fifties sees such men as Sitgreaves, Whipple, Beale and Ives surveying for railroad routes, building wagon roads, and checking the Colorado River for feasible navigation. In the most unique and colorful chapter of this exploration, Lt. Edward Beale transports camels from the orient and uses them to establish a Wagon road from Fort Defiance, New Mexico to the Colorado River west of Kingman.
About the same time, Lt. Joseph C. Ives heads a steamboat, the EXPLORER, up the Colorado to the mouth of Black Canyon before heading East across the county toward the Hopi mesas.

The year following the camel experiment sees the wagon roads first use by whites. John Udell, headed for California with the Rose party, is met at the Colorado River by a band of marauding Indians and turned back. They succeed in crossing the river the following year but the previous encounter precipitates the establishment of Fort Mojave on the Colorado to keep the Mojave and Walapai Indians in check and make the road safe for immigrants.

The North and South are divided in civil war but to the soldiers at Fort Mojave there is no North or South only the fighting of the Walapai wars in a campaign of extermination - difficulties incurred by the wanton shooting of one of their principal chiefs by a party of whites. A camp is established at Beale Springs near present Kingman and as the Indians are subdued, they are herded into a temporary reservation nearby before marching to a permanent site along the Colorado. They do not fare well under the changed conditions and after many in the low hot river bottoms, the rest run the reservation to return to their old haunts - only to find them occupied by settlers and miners. The soldiers have found gold and the news triggers an influx of prospectors who have found only disillusionment in California.

Holes are being hacked into the earth on every hill as prospectors search to discover the veins to turn their tides. Towns begin to spring up with saloons, shops and stores to stem our needs - Cerbat, Mineral Park, White Hills, Stockton, - as the focus of growth moves from the river to the hills. The displaced Walapai, seeking something to sustain his needs, begins to find employment in the mines and on growing ranches, as the herds in the valleys and the miners in the hills make it impossible for him to maintain himself in the old manner. Our diseases and our wine add to the sickness of their loss, and their spirit, like their numbers, drops.

Meanwhile the Great Steel Monster moves West as rails make their way into and across the County during the early eighties, bringing an influx of more people, business, and excitement. Kingman, established in 1882 as a railroad town by locating engineer, Lewis Kingman, begins to take on importance as a
shipping center, eventually stealing the county seat and the newspaper from Mineral Park. The emphasis has shifted from the river to the hills and is now moving into the valley as transportation lifts its powerful head.

The mining boom continues and the county prospers as new interests are developed on the markets. The small cattle herds are growing in major proportions. With this emerging wealth and the growth of such permanent communities as Kingman, a new culture takes shape as the family and domestic activity become an important aspect of daily life. It is no longer just a man's world. The hard realities of steel and leather are softened by the gentle touch of lace and perfume as wealth creates leisure and the opportunity to develop a social aspect to the county's personality.

Social organizations are formed and cultural pursuits take on new importance. Schools and education assume a new role and the first attempt to acculturate the Walapai is made as Miss Calfee, hired by the Massachusetts Indian Agency, organizes an Indian Day School at Truxton Canyon near Hackberry. One Indian is hired to run the children down every morning and bring them to school. Meanwhile, the Mojave children are being taken from their homes and regimented into the white culture at the new school formed at Fort Mojave, vacant since the soldiers are no longer needed. Beadwork and pottery are sold by the Mojave at the train depot in Needles and the Walapai are selling baskets for twenty-five cents.

One by one the old pre-contact leaders of the Walapai and Mojave die - the bridge to the past is broken and the emphasis on wealth and riches continues to mount. New finds in the Black Mountains increase excitement and investment as fortunes come and go. Oatman and Goldroad flower overnight along with a host of smaller towns and mining camps. While a thousand shiny tin shacks dot the hills and ten thousand faces crowd the streets...
of Oatman, extravagant homes and a new and luxurious style of living appears.

But the curtain falls as the darkness of World War I dampens soaring spirits.

Even this, however, cannot long slow the excitement, and the war to end all wars, ends in exultation as the men return home with new vision and a broadened horizon. The mining industry reaches a peak and the county virtually breathes with expansion. Wagon wheels give way to rubber and horsepower is harnessed in steel as cars take over. The engines begin doing the work of men and the first plane arrives in Kingman guided by the hands of Charles Lindburg, as he establishes trade routes in the air from coast to coast. The growing cattle herds conquer the valleys and the miners conquer the hills and the only thing left to conquer is the mighty Colorado herself. As the twenties tick away, the preliminary surveys of the great stream are made and the strategy of the final conquest is mapped.

After five years of sweat following the growing vision the incredible concrete structure rises 700 feet above the base of Boulder Canyon and in

1935 President Franklin D. Roosevelt dedicates the dam as the greatest achievement accomplished by man since the raising of the pyramids in ancient Egypt. The Colorado is conquered - tamed and saddled!

The effort has carried the county through the years of depression and the afterglow lasts until the first shocking blows of World War II stagger the Nation. Rationing pinches the economy as the government turns its back on gold in search of metals for the war effort and the great mines of Mohave County shut down one by one. Gold Road, Cerbat, Stockton and Mineral Park become Ghost towns. Oatman dwindles almost to nothing and Chloride limps along as the population of Mohave County spirals downward. Only Kingman continues to grow as the Military moves an air base into the area and develops a gunnery training school for the war.

The Second World War is over and thousands of bombers limp home to a final graveyard at Kingman - a reminder of the price and penalties of war. For a decade the county is quiet, reflecting.

The last respects are paid and we turn once more to the future with new hopes. For many there is no energy for another run, but there is a new generation with a technology spawned by war, and more hydroelectric dams are placed along the already harnessed Colorado. Population doubles during the sixties and the pulse of a new economy throbs through the country. Large mining operations devour the little man and tear at the earth with a capacity beyond the scope of his imagi-
nation and the land is divided and subdivided to make way for the expanding population. Tourism and the new recreational facilities created by dams and man made lakes takes in the tired and homeless, fleeing from congested and withering centers along the coast. The new generation capitalizes on the growing leisure needs of the old as more and more free time demands more services and facilities for recreation. Business booms and excitement soars as the jingle of coins becomes the basis of our all consuming desires.

As the seventies begin we sing our songs of growth and kiss the purse strings of our pulsing economy, welcoming industry and the influx of population with open arms and with it the seeds of our demise. We seek frantically for water, land and opportunities. Our problems are compounded as we face the ever-growing needs of assimilation, distribution and dissemination of the growing mountains of our wastes as our voracious appetites demand more and more of our technology and consume at an ever increasing rate, the diminishing resources of our natural heritage.

Our passions have swept us beyond the boundaries of our inheritance as we face the day of our impending decay as the seeds of life and death continue to expand in the pulsing cycle of our history.