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Historical Tucson

William C. Barrow

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By William C. Barrow

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September 2014

These articles originally appeared in Tucson's *The Saguaro* and *The Desert Leaf* monthly newspapers and are here republished by the author.

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INTRODUCTION

In the 1980s, while I was a Realtor in Tucson, selling residential properties for Tucson Realty & Trust, I quickly became enamored of the charming Colonial Revival and Mission Revival architectural styles found in some historic neighborhoods. Wondering why that was, I began researching my favorite historic subdivision: Colonia Solana. I spent a long time on the project and at some point met the publisher of a foothills tabloid newspaper, *The Saguaro*, who asked if I could write something about that topic. It became a broadly-titled “Historical Tucson” article on Colonia Solana. Much to my surprise, he requested another article for the next issue! Having spent months on Colonia Solana research, I wasn’t sure I could work that fast, but fortunately I was by then familiar with all the resources available to me in Tucson and proceeded to turn out a series of short articles for *The Saguaro* and later its successor paper, *The Desert Leaf* (which I’m pleasantly surprised to discover is still publishing in 2014). Not wanting to see these articles gather dust forever, I am posting them here in the Cleveland State University “EngagedScholarship” institutional repository, for which opportunity I am thankful.

CONTENTS

“Historical Tucson”

Originally published in June of 1986, this was my first article for *The Saguaro*. It details the creation of Colonia Solana as a private enclave of magnificent homes on large lots, with winding streets and native vegetation. (*The Saguaro*, [1:6]. June, 1986. p12.)

“Rancho Santa Catalina”

This was the private home of a health seeker who came to Tucson to recuperate in the desert, as many did then, and built a private retreat across the street from today’s prestigious resort, the Arizona Inn. (*The Saguaro*, [1:7]. July, 1986. p4.)

“El Encanto Estates: an Enchanting Place to Get Lost”

North of Colonia Solana, another elite subdivision was created along more ostentatious lines. El Encanto owed some measure of its privacy to the formal layout of its streets. (*The Saguaro*, [1:8]. August, 1986. p6.)

“Homesteads & Early Subdivisions” (Sam Hughes neighborhood, part I)

Sam Hughes borders the University of Arizona in the mid-town area and is a favorite of university professors for its convenience, quality and high measure of charm. This article gives the background to Sam Hughes. (*The Saguaro*, [1:9]. September, 1986. p4.)

“The Significance of University Manor” (Sam Hughes neighborhood, part II)

This article continues the story of Sam Hughes, focusing on the atypical for Tucson (but very familiar to me in Cleveland Heights today) Tudor style house in the center of the neighborhood. (*The Saguaro*, [1:10]. October, 1986. p4.)

“Southern Arizona School for Boys”

Two teachers arrived in Tucson, envisioned a ranch school which would prepare boys for college while exposing them to vigorous outdoor activities, which led to their creating the Southern Arizona School for Boys near Sabino Canyon. (*The Saguaro*, [1:12]. December, 1986. p4.)

“San Clemente: A Story of Delayed Success”

The San Clemente neighborhood survived a premature allotting to become a Tucson treasure. (*The Saguaro*, [2:1]. January, 1987.) Original article not available.

“Fifty Years at Tohono Chul (‘Desert Corner)’”

A history of the John DuBois Wack house at Ina and Oracle Roads, now Tohono Chul Park. (*The Saguaro*, [2:2]. February, 1987. p4.)

“Desert Sanatorium of Southern Arizona”

The “Desert San” was created to serve the ever-growing crowd of “health-seekers” coming to Tucson to cure their tuberculosis in the elevated desert air. It evolved into the Tucson Medical Center hospital, the city’s largest employer. (*The Saguaro*, [2:3]. March, 1987. p4.)

“Mansions on the Mesa: The Magnificent Belin and Wright Homes on Wilmot.”

Charles A. Belin and Harold Bell Wright were both health seekers who settled out at the far end of Tucson on Wilmot Road and whose charming homes still exist. (*The Saguaro*, 2:4. April, 1987. p1.)

“Preserving the Old Pueblo”

Comments on the historic homes and neighborhoods of Tucson and their preservation. (*The Saguaro*, [2:6]. June, 1987. p6.)

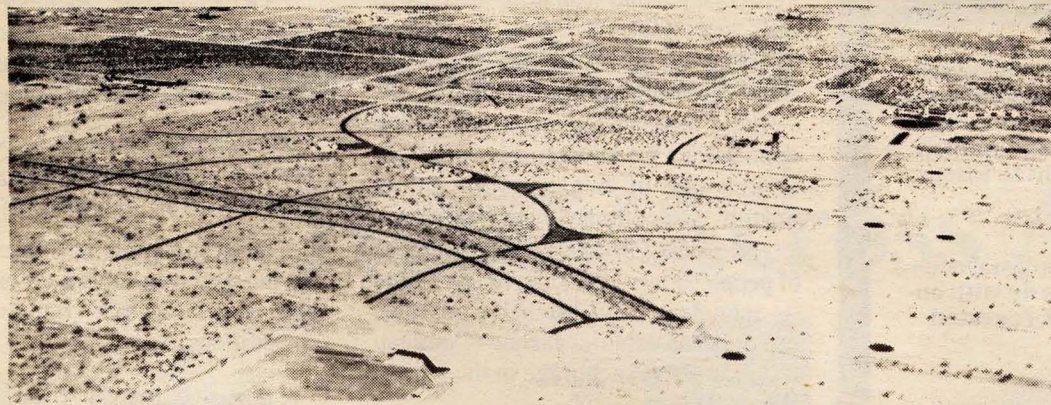
“Up from the Valley: the Settlement of the Foothills”

As the city expanded, the foothills of the Santa Catalina Mountains to the north came within the city’s orbit and were opened to the development of now-historic luxury subdivisions as the Catalina Foothills Estates. (*The Desert Leaf*, 1:1. October, 1987. p1.)

“The Author of Historical Tucson”

An autobiographical piece. (*The Saguaro*, [1:11]. November, 1986)

Historical Tucson



Aerial view of Colonia Solana in 1929 with the El Conquistador Tourist Hotel at upper right. El Deseo Real is the third from left and the Brown House is to the left of the water tower. (Photo: Arizona Historical Society)

William C. Barrow

In the middle of Colonia Solana stands a gracious two-story Spanish Colonial mansion that some neighbors still refer to as "The Diamond House." But when George B. Echols built it in 1928, he named it "El Deseo Real" (The Royal Desire) in keeping with the grandeur and luxury of its design.

However, while El Deseo Real may be the oldest home in Colonia Solana, it was not the first home built on the quarter-section of land lying south of Broadway and east of Country Club.

In 1907, an eastern newspaperman named Thomas Brown arrived in Tucson and placed his wife in a sanitarium that once stood on the present site of El Con Shopping Center. Because of the long buggy ride there from downtown Tucson, he leased 160 acres of desert across Broadway and built a small house where Prudential-Bache Securities' west parking lot is today.

After three years, Mrs. Brown's health improved to the point where they could leave Tucson. The lease on the 160 acres was taken over by Harry E. Heighton, a prominent Realtor in the 1920s, who moved into the Brown House with his daughter, Dorothy. She married Col. Ted Monro, co-authored with him the U of A fight song "All Hail, Arizona," and outliving both her father and husband

died in the house in 1965. The Brown House was razed for commercial development in the late 1960s.

In 1916, U of A Chemistry Professor Dr. Paul H.M. Brinton assumed the lease on everything except the Brown House and two surrounding acres and in 1918 purchased it outright for \$3 an acre! (Writing in 1929 the *Citizen* exclaimed that this same land was then worth several hundred thousand dollars an acre). Dr. Brinton later left Tucson, but held the land for a decade, eventually selling it to Harry F. Bryant, who, as Country Club Realty, subdivided and sold the lots in Colonia Solana, one of several developments growing up around the new El Conquistador Tourist Hotel.

Colonia Solana, "The Sunny Colony" or "The Suburb of the Sun," as Country Club Realty termed it, was laid out by San Francisco Landscape Architect Stephen Child with narrow streets winding through the scrub desert. Where the roads cross the Arroyo Chico, called "Arizona Dips" by Child, "There will therefore be no uncomfortable jounce, but rather the very agreeable sensation one has when riding the surf at Waikiki."

The homes in Colonia Solana were required by deed restrictions to cost at least \$10,000, which compared favorably with the \$8-\$12,000 minimum required in El Encanto to the north. Unlike the latter's extensive

William C. Barrow is a specialist in historic homes and neighborhoods with Tucson Realty and Trust.

grounds-keeping efforts, however, Colonia Solana left landscaping largely to the individual homeowners. Bob Quesnel remembers, as a boy, being paid a dollar a day to water the palm trees along Avenida de Palmas, and a 4/3/28 article in the *Star* indicated that Harry Bryant donated the trees to line Randolph Way provided that the city spend \$350 to dig the holes. These different approaches to landscaping were undoubtedly reflected in the preferences of these two subdivisions' early owners and is noticeable today in the sense of natural privacy in Colonia Solana and the feeling of formal display in El Encanto.

One of the first spec builders to buy lots in Colonia Solana was George Echols, who was then living in one of several homes he had built in the new Jefferson Park subdivision north of the U of A campus. By December of 1928, VanderVries Realty & Mortgage Co., exclusive agents for Colonia Solana, was advertising El Deseo Real, "A Residence Dedicated to All Things Fine..." Several months later they thanked the many people who had seen the home, but no new owners show up on the public records. Presumably the home was rented for many years, while Echols Building went on to construct a home purchased by wealthy U of A Graduate Thomas Griffin. (Mr. Griffin's daughter was married to Dominick Dunne, who has a book, *The Two Mrs. Grenvilles*, on the current bestseller list.)

El Deseo Real was no longer known by this name in 1938, when Mrs. Mildred Z. Loew purchased the home and hired architect Cecil Moore to make many additions and changes. Mrs. Loew, wife of MGM Vice-President Arthur Loew, brought a measure of Hollywood glamour to Tucson, and noted commercial photographer William Becker used the Loews' yard as a setting for his Sears & Roebuck catalog shots of Elaine Powers models.

Colonia Solana today retains all the charm and prestige that its early developers intended, and many other large stately homes now surround El Deseo Real. But the construction of this home was the watershed between land worth \$3 an acre and some 120 lots with homes currently selling for several hundred thousand dollars each. "El Deseo Real" come true.

by William C. Barrow
Realtor Associate
Tucson Realty & Trust Co.

Tucked away behind a dense screen of oleanders and well back across Elm Street from the Arizona Inn stands a magnificent estate house that once played an important role in Tucson's history. Unknown by most of today's city residents and overlooked by a 1960 article on the area's great mansions, it was designated in a 1925 *Citizen* article as "easily the largest and most pretentious of Tucson's private residences."

Known successively as the Wheeler Ranch, Rancho Santa Catalina, The Potter School and Casa Seton, this estate was the site of the first significant private swimming pool, the first meetings of the Tucson Rodeo, and was proposed to be Tucson's first tourist hotel. It was also the home field of the Arizona Polo Association, the site designated for the first municipal golf course, and was reputedly used by Isabelle Greenway as an airstrip.

The origins of Rancho Santa Catalina, as the property was known in its heyday, go back to the turn of the century when the young village of Tucson was rapidly growing northeast towards the new university. The village limits were Speedway Boulevard and North First Avenue, but developers were making substantial profits on land just outside of the village. The railroad was bringing in hundreds of people seeking relief from lung disease who settled on the cheaper land north of the university in wood and canvas shacks collectively called Tent City.

One such "lunger" was James W. Wheeler, a Seattle real estate developer

Rancho Santa Catalina



who came here to die but ended up living to be 100 years old. In 1906 he purchased 120 acres of desert land east of Tent City from Moses Drachman for \$3,000 after an inspection in Drachman's one-cylinder Reo automobile. Although the Wheelers would have the only inhabited parcel out to the mountains, the land was said to have a "great future."

There Wheeler and his wife, Alta, built a large tent house for themselves, two more for guests and one for their car. They dug an 83-foot well, erected two windmills, installed a 5000-gallon tank and constructed an 80-foot circular concrete pool for their extensive landscaping project. This pool was to become a favorite swimming place for Tucsonians and today looks like a huge, empty, concrete satellite dish.

Later they replaced the tent house with

a permanent home, but as his health had improved, they sold the property to Leighton Kramer in 1918 and returned to Seattle where Wheeler lived until 1974!

Kramer, a wealthy Philadelphia industrialist, was a frequent visitor until finally moving here in 1924, also for health reasons. However, Kramer was no Tent City dweller, for he immediately incorporated Wheeler's house into an 8,000 square foot, two-story mansion and renamed it Rancho Santa Catalina. An avid horseman and civic booster, he obtained some adjoining acreage and set about creating the polo association and the rodeo. He also offered some of this land to the city for a municipal golf course, which, although the offer was officially accepted, was never installed.

The grounds around his palatial home

were planted with a wide variety of trees and shrubs and were surrounded by an ornamental green wooden fence with the main gate where Olsen Avenue ends at Elm Street. To the left of the gateway stood the lodge-keeper's house, occupied by Ed Echols, who cared for the Kramer horses and later went on to become both the Pima County Sheriff and an early father of the modern rodeo. The stables faced the main gate, and a caretaker's house stood to the east along the drive leading towards the main house. There were also dog kennels in this area.

The main house was an impressive plaster-over-stone-and-brick affair with a green tile roof. Attached to this by a covered driveway was a wing containing the library (which doubled as a ballroom) and writing room. Beyond the house were the garage and servants' apartments and tennis court.

The house and library were a showcase to Kramer's tastes and the furnishings acquired in his travels. Rich Chinese rugs, Italian furniture, lamps and marble table-tops from Belgium, and massive bookcases containing deluxe-bound first editions were but a few indications that he enjoyed his wealth and success.

Even Kramer's failures can boast of eventual success. In 1925 the local civic leaders were eager to bring a first-rate tourist hotel to Tucson, and many offers of land were received for its site. Kramer offered Rancho Santa Catalina for \$200,000, arguing that its locations and improvements made any other candidate a financially foolish choice. His offer

(continued on page 6)

Rancho Santa Catalina

(continued from page 4)

was refused, and the El Conquistador Tourist Hotel went up on Broadway instead. Financially in trouble from its inception, the hotel struggled along for several decades before being destroyed to make way for the El Con Shopping Mall in 1968. Meanwhile, directly across Elm Street from Rancho Santa Catalina, Isabelle Greenway created the still-famous Arizona Inn Resort Hotel, doubly indicating Kramer's prediction.

Leighton Kramer died here in 1930. His property was purchased in 1940 by the Dickson Potters, who ran a girls' preparatory school there until selling it in 1953 to the Mother Elizabeth Seton branch of the Sisters of Charity Catholic Order. John S. Greenway of the Arizona Inn has owned this property since 1971.

By this time, however, most of the land had been split off to form the Catalina Vista subdivision. The Tucson Rodeo moved away when Kramer died and his stables were converted into a private residence in the 1940s. The main house, once slated to become condominiums, is now an outpost of the University's art program.

The opulent furnishings are gone from Kramer's magnificent library and the polished wood floors are grey and weathered now, but one cannot view Rancho Santa Catalina today without being inspired to imagine what it was like in its full glory.

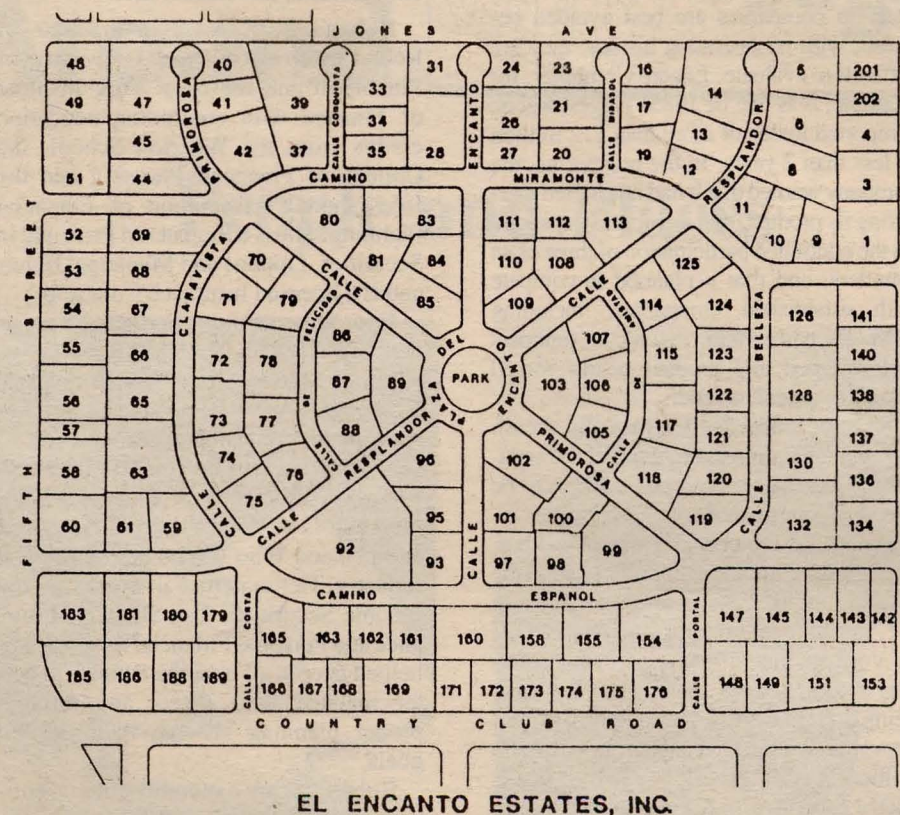
“EL ENCANTO: An Enchanting Place to Get Lost”

One reason for the enduring success of El Encanto Estates, “The Enchanted Estates,” is the high degree of privacy afforded its residents by the neighborhood’s complex street patterns. From a small central circle, one can take any of six routes to a larger outer ring and from there eleven other choices exist, six leading to arterial roads outside the subdivision (Broadway, Country Club, and East Fifth) and five dead-ending before the El Con Shopping Mall. For drivers accustomed to the monotonous regularity of Tucson’s north-south, east-west grid pattern of street, El Encanto’s layout almost demands to know whether one really belongs in the neighborhood at all.

This effect may be intentional, for when W.E. Guerin conceived this subdivision in the mid-1920s, he envisioned a place where “Great care was taken that the value of anyone’s investment in the property, should in every foreseeable way be protected, so that the residents of the property could live in a quiet and peaceful environment.”

Besides the self-contained street pattern, “Great care” measures included the then relatively new tool of restrictive covenants, dictating architectural styles, minimum house costs, and extensive landscaping services. That these measures proved effective can be seen from the prestige and uniformly high resale value El Encanto homes command today, nearly 60 years later.

However, 78 years ago this land was acquired *free* from the federal government by homesteader Henry Bloise. It was pro-



bably he who built the three-room cottage at Broadway and Country Club that became the residence of Leroy C. “Jessie” James in 1921. This James was not the famous outlaw, but rather a prominent Tucson car dealer, civic booster, and founder of the Sunshine Climate Club, an organization which extolled the benefits of Tucson to easterners. He paid \$3,700 for the house and surrounding 10 acres and was teased

by his golfing buddies for buying worthless desert land so far from town. This kidding stopped when James started refusing offers of ten times this amount a few years later.

One offer he didn’t refuse was from Guerin, who was acquiring the western 120 acres of Bloise’s original quarter-section (the eastern 40 acres was going into the grounds of the new El Conquistador

Tourist Hotel) for El Encanto. The high mesa land around the new hotel was experiencing much interest from developers, who were creating Colonia Solana, El Montevideo, and San Clemente subdivisions, in a real estate boom that touted the amenities of suburban living far from the city. James’ land was made a part of El Encanto, and he kept the house and several surrounding lots, selling them to their current owner in 1933. This house, greatly changed, still exists, and the surrounding lots are still vacant.

The rest of El Encanto did not remain vacant. Well-to-do newcomers and prominent Tucsonians soon started erecting costly homes in the required Moroccan, Spanish, Italian, Mexican, Indian, or Early California architectural styles. One thousand trees were planted along the gravel streets, and the homeowners’ association started providing garbage collection, a night watchman, daily mail delivery, gardening services, and “soft, pure Rincon water” from the subdivision’s own well. This was suburban/country living at its finest.

Today, it is city living at its finest. The original palm trees now sway high overhead, the gravel roads are paved, and the charming historic homes have been joined by equally beautiful modern mansions. But all of this can only be enjoyed by sightseers who have plenty of time and an indifference to knowing exactly where they are at any given moment, for El Encanto is truly an enchanting place to get lost!

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The Sam Hughes Neighborhood, Part One

Homesteads and Early Subdivisions

The Sam Hughes neighborhood has for decades been one of Tucson's best-known and most desirable residential areas. Named for the popular Sam Hughes Elementary School—which, in turn, was named after a local pioneer merchant—the neighborhood contains some of the Old Pueblo's finest examples of charming Mission Revival and Spanish Colonial homes in a collection of subdivisions dating back to 1906.

Before the subdivisions, however, this square-mile section of land was home to several families who settled 40 to 160 acre tracts under the provisions of the federal Homestead Act of 1862.

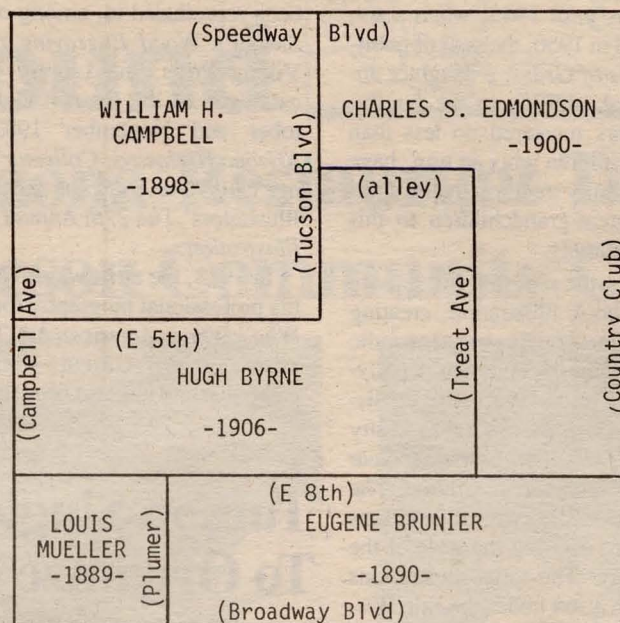
These early homesteaders probably arrived after 1880 when the Southern Pacific railroad started bringing thousands of Anglo Americans here in search of healthful climate, cheap land and the opportunities offered by the Western frontier. This rush of new residents changed Tucson from a relatively isolated Mexican village to a rapidly growing imitation of Eastern U.S. cities. Downtown the first electric company, sewer lines, water mains and street grading projects were launched through the efforts of the town's leading business and professional men.

Graceful brick and dimensioned lumber homes were being erected according to Anglo tastes to replace the flat, mud-roofed adobe buildings typical of the pre-railroad era. And the young University of Arizona was being constructed northeast of town, reached after 1898 by a mule-drawn street-car. Long before the area within the city limits (Speedway Boulevard and North First Avenue) was filled in, developers began subdividing the land around the University west of Campbell Avenue.

East of Campbell Avenue was still the hinterlands before the turn-of-the-century and five homesteads were in place between

Speedway and Broadway west of Country Club (see map). William H. Campbell, who received his federal land patent or title in 1889, occupied the northwest quarter, and a road to the Fort Lowell military reservation appears to have run diagonally across the parcel.

Hugh Byrne's homestead (1906 patent) wrapped around Campbell's land to the south and east, while the Charles S. Edmondson homestead (1900 patent) filled in the northeast quarter-section and some of the southeast, too. South of East Eighth Street Louis Mueller (1889 patent) had 40 acres west of Plumer Avenue and Eugene Brunier's 120 acres (1890 patent) lay directly east. (These streets existed only as survey lines before 1900, of course, and are mentioned here for purposes of visualization.)



Often than their names, little is known of these homesteaders. But the hardships of homesteading the Sonoran Desert in Territorial days were described by one of them, Mr. Alvina Himmel Edmondson, in 1942.

Mrs. Edmondson and her daughters lived in a small redwood house at 2625 East First Street surrounded by coyotes, rattlesnakes and wandering Indians. She kept a supply of coffee on hand to placate the Indians, but sometimes had to produce a revolver when they got too demanding. When she ran out of coffee, or anything else, she had to walk four miles roundtrip over the desert to town, pushing a carriage (for her babies), pulling a wagon (for her purchases) and carrying a stick (to chase off coyotes). She sold some land across East First Street from her house to the city

in later years for a park named after her parents, the Himmels.

In the first decade of the 1900s, the developers began turning their attention to the Sam Hughes homesteads. In 1906, Victor S. Griffith recorded his plat for the Speedway Heights Addition on the northern half of William Campbell's old parcel. A few years later Griffith moved there himself when his neighbors on University Boulevard took exception to his habit of taking his six *naked* kids for a cool twilight ride around the block after work. He moved his family into a reinforced-concrete house—"so the kids couldn't tear it down"—on the 2100 block of East Speedway, which road he then laid out and graded out to his house. This house later became part of the the Barfield Sanatorium and was eventually razed for the Sun Station Post Office construction.

Other developers were entering the area at the time and also converting homestead lands into future homesites. Judge Sawtelle's Arizona Improvement Company purchased the Byrne Homestead and turned it into the Fairmount subdivision in 1907. The Edmondson land became the Mundo Vista and Morningside Additions. Louis Mueller's homestead is now part of American Villa, and the Brunier parcel later became a number of subdivisions, including Terra DeConcini.

Vic Griffith had only purchased the northern half of Campbell's land, the southeasterly part became the Alta Vista addition. But it would be the southwest 40 acres that became significant in the history of Tucson's residential development when, in 1920, the University Manor subdivision was born.

(Next Month: UNIVERSITY MANOR)

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The Sam Hughes Neighborhood, Part Two

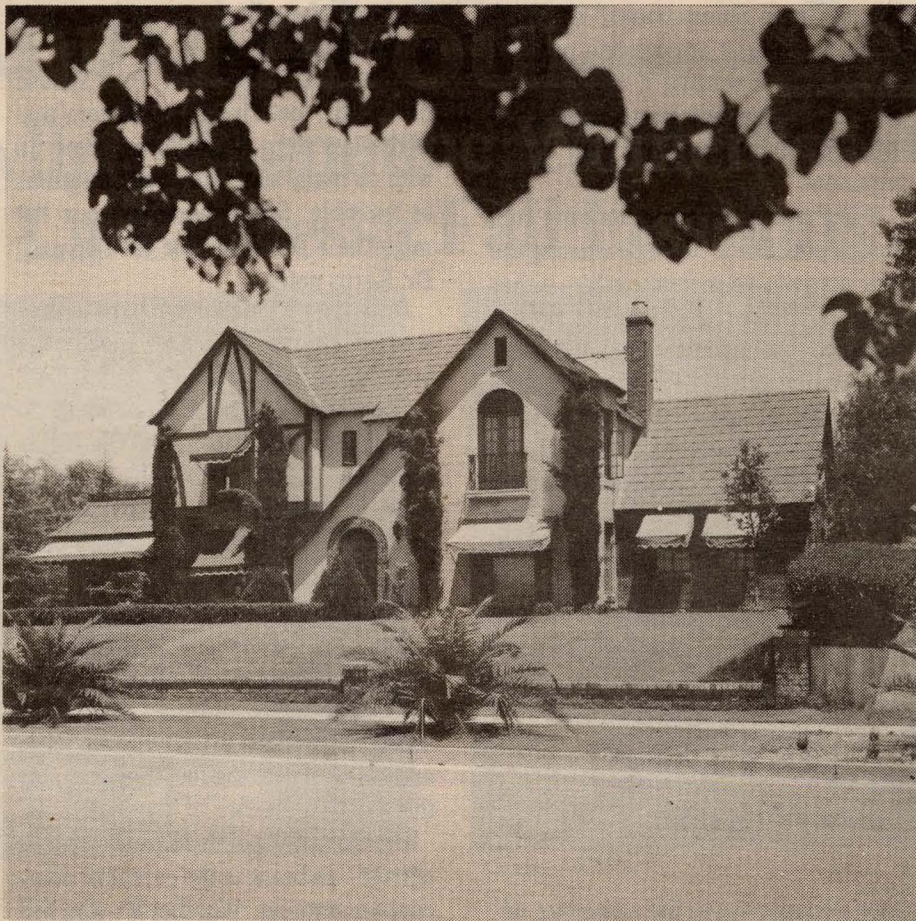
The Significance of University Manor

On July 1, 1920, the Tucson Mayor and Council approved the plat of the University Manor subdivision and annexed it into the city. Many other subdivisions had been approved in the four decades since Bruckner's Addition became the first one, but University Manor was something special.

For the first time in Tucson's residential development, a subdivision was planned in nearly present-day form. While retaining the usual north-south and east-west grid pattern of streets (departures from which would not occur until the creation of EL Encanto and Colonia Solana in 1928) it nevertheless did require paved streets, curbs, sidewalks and street lights as part of its developer's (Tucson Realty & Trust) initial plan.

In 1922 the project was transferred to Southwest Improvement Company which added the most important innovation: subdivision-wide deed restrictions. In those days before zoning laws, deed restrictions were the only land-use regulation capable of directing development and protecting value. The success of this innovation can be seen today in both the high quality of University Manor and in the fact that no prudent home buyer would now purchase property in an expensive new subdivision that lacked the protection of adequate deed restrictions.

University Manor's restrictions were filed by Southwest Improvement's President, Monte Mansfeld (a prominent local Ford dealer), and Secretary, Arthur Hazel-tine (an officer of Tucson Realty). They prohibited the construction of any business, apartment house, hotel, bar, or oil rig in the subdivision and required that only



"first class private residence" costing at least \$5,000 be erected. Certain minimum set-backs were required and garages could not be built before the homes, presumably to prevent them being used as residences during house construction. There was also the then-common prohibition against "African or Asian" residents, which provisions

were struck down nationally in the 1950s by the U.S. Supreme Court. Most of University Manor's restrictions were to lapse in 1970.

The first homes in the subdivision, according to city directories, were Monte Mansfeld's, at 1944 East Third Street, and

William T. Pierce's, at 1923 East Fourth Street, both built around 1922. The next year saw homes built by Ed Bertram (1935 E. 4th), Frank H. Packard (1941 E. 4th) and Eugene Meyer (1939 E. 3rd).

A big reason for University Manor's success was also the personal promotional efforts of Monte Mansfeld. When local physician Samuel Townsend was considering moving from his West University area home, he investigated Colonia Solana and El Encanto, but settled on University Manor thanks to Mansfeld's salesmanship. Here Dr. Townsend built the distinctive Tudor-style home at 2101 East Third Street around 1932, which was designed by the Foster & Foster architectural firm. Mrs. Townsend spent much time seeking out a particular type of marble for the fireplace and having the family coat-of-arms worked into it.

The Townsends moved back to West University and sold the home in 1938 to the Hamilton Shavers of New Jersey, who loved the house so much that they ended up purchasing almost every piece of furniture as well. The current owner bought the house in 1945 and says that it has been such a wonderful family house that she canceled her original plans to move after just a few years.

This is a typical story for University Manor. Thanks to the innovative planning of its original developers it has aged gracefully into one of Tucson's premier historic neighborhoods.

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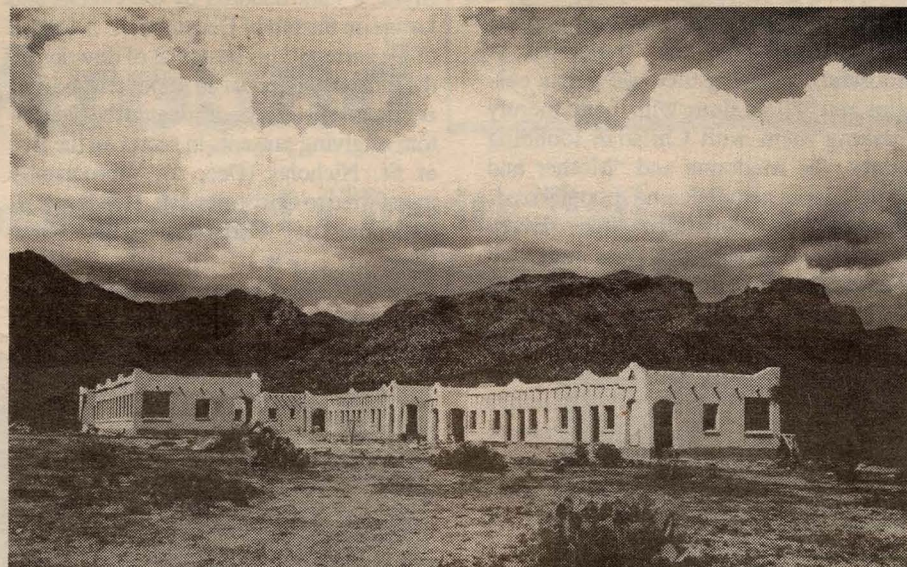
The Southern Arizona School for Boys

By William C. Barrow

There is something special about the relationship between the Southern Arizona School for Boys, now the Fenster School, and the Sabino Canyon. For 56 years three generations of local and out-of-town youth have hiked, climbed and horseback ridden all through the canyon and the surrounding lower reaches of the Santa Catalina Mountains. In the words of Mr. Don Everitt, a former teacher there for 30 years, "the canyon is the school's playground."

The canyon, and the school's property immediately to the south, have been more than just a playground, however. Scattered all throughout the area are archaeological sites where the students are uncovering a heritage of human occupation going back 8,000 years, when the first "Archaic" Indians arrived in the Tucson valley. Near this rare archaeological site are five Hohokam sites dating back to the time of Christ, covering successive phases of Hohokam culture.

The earliest *historic* use of the school's site was for ranching. While there are unconfirmed reports that the area was once part of a large Spanish land grant, it is clear that a Thomas Gonzales owned a ranch there in the first years of this century. In 1916 this property was purchased by pioneer rancher Charles De Baud who worked it through the 1920s. When he, in turn, sold it, it was split up and part became the Southern Arizona School. (Another portion became the famous Double U Guest Ranch where the movies "Arizona" and "Billy the Kid" were filmed. The Double U Ranch buildings



The newly-completed Southern Arizona School campus in August, 1930.

were incorporated into Mel Zuckerman's Canyon Ranch Spa in 1979.)

The Southern Arizona School for Boys was the creation of Captain Russell B. Fairgrieve and George A. Harper, two midwestern teachers who each arrived in Tucson around 1926. Here Capt. Fairgrieve was Director of Religious Education at the Trinity Presbyterian Church, while Mr. Harper taught mathematics at Tucson High School. Combining talents they soon began plans for a ranch school that would prepare boys for college while exposing them to vigorous outdoor sports like horseback riding, polo, rodeo, tennis, baseball, volleyball and mountain climbing. Capt. Fairgrieve would serve

as the school's business manager and Mr. Harper as Headmaster.

They opened a temporary office at 1110 North Fremont Avenue in town, organized a board of directors, raised \$100,000 for first-year expenses, and began promotional efforts to attract students. Architect F.W. Sharman was hired to draft the plans for the campus and Vander Vries Realty & Mortgage Company was selected to oversee the actual construction.

In the spring of 1930 ground was broken on their 80 acre site north of Ocotillo Drive. Adobe bricks were made from materials found on-site, "except for the straw", and used to erect a series of Hopi-

style buildings with 16" walls. The campus was ready for its first 30 students by the fall term.

For over 40 years the Southern Arizona School educated the minds, nourished the spirits and strengthened the bodies of hundreds of boys. Upon graduation each Senior traditionally designed his own brand and burned the design into the ceiling beams of the school's main building. An inverted forest of these personal branding irons still hang from the ceiling there, including two gold-plated ones which had belonged to a pair of graduates who were killed in World War II.

Capt. Fairgrieve died on Christmas Day in 1972 and the SASB property was acquired by the Fenster School two years later. The Fenster School was founded in 1944 by Mr. and Mrs. George Fenster as the first coeducational boarding school in southern Arizona and it continues many of the programs and traditions of its predecessor to this day.

The future, however, is uncertain. The Pima County Regional Transportation Plan envisions a four-lane extension of Sunrise Drive running right past the school's front door. Bisecting the campus and erecting important archaeological sites, this parkway will forever alter the historic relationship between the school and the Sabino Canyon.

Bill Barrow is a Realtor-Associate with Tucson Realty & Trust Co. specializing in historic homes and neighborhoods. He can be reached at 325-3448 and welcomes questions and suggestions.

SAN CLEMENTE: A STORY OF DELAYED SUCCESS

William C. Barrow

Like the California city for which it was named, Tucson's San Clemente neighborhood contains many lovely historic homes in the popular Spanish Colonial style. It also contains one of our city's most unusual street plans due to an accident of history that illustrates the story of local subdivisions in the 1920's.

All through the early decades of this century, Tucson's eastward growth was fueled by the demand for cheap land. Homesteaders and speculators acquired federal land farther and farther east and were followed by developers who created residential subdivisions in "the desert lands." Optimism over the future of Tucson's growth tended to create an oversupply of subdivided homesites and, in the competitive market that resulted, a developer had to come up with innovations to be successful.

Two important innovations that appeared locally in the 1920's were deed restrictions and street layouts that departed from the traditional north-south and east-west grid pattern. Subdivision-wide deed restrictions were first used here in 1920 when Tucson Realty and Trust created the University Manor subdivision on Campbell Avenue in what is now the Sam Hughes neighborhood. Deed restriction were used in the days before zoning laws came into being and proved so successful that they are still a widely used subdivision tool.

In 1928 development activity moved east of Sam Hughes to center around the new El conquistador Tourist Hotel (now site of the El Con Mall). That year saw the creation of the El Encanto and Colonia Solana subdivisions, which featured street layouts that departed from the grid pattern in order to insure privacy, property value and neighborhood identity (see [Saguaro](#) articles of June and August, 1986).

Not all subdivisions of the 1920s proved so successful or innovative. John M. Roberts had purchased two quarter-sections of land from the federal government by 1913 and in 1923 offered them

to the public as the Country Club Heights subdivisions. Running one-half mile north and south of Broadway between Alvernon and Columbus (then called Thoreau Avenue), these subdivisions were two miles east of where the public was buying homesites and was laid out in the familiar grid pattern without protective deed restrictions. Clearly Country Club Heights was the wrong product in the wrong place for 1923.

By the late 1920's, however, the market had moved closer to the Roberts' property and Tucson Realty and Trust was ready to repeat its success at University Manor here. Under its new President, Stanley Williamson, it purchased Country Club Heights South-Side and began creating San Clement.

Forced to use the large blocks that Roberts had platted, Williamson superimposed a winding pattern of new streets which effectively camouflaged the earlier, underlying grid pattern. With the addition of deed restrictions, including a \$6,000 minimum house cost requirement, San Clemente was offered to the public in 1930.

This initial phase was the two blocks fronting on the south side of Broadway from Alvernon to Irving. A small sales booth was erected in a little park on the southeast corner of Broadway and Alvernon (see photo) and people began making the ten-minute drive out from town to view the new homesites. Early homeowners in San Clemente were Ben Solot, Samuel Seaney, Dr. S. C. Davis and Mr. Williamson himself.

San Clemente eventually grew to cover eight blocks and become one of Tucson's most charming neighborhoods. Today it's first two blocks are an area that should be officially recognized as a historic district. Fortunately the neighborhood was able to renew its deed restrictions a few years ago, a rare accomplishment, but some of the earliest homes are threatened by the Broadway Corridor Transportation Plan.

As published in *The Saguaro*, [2:1]. January, 1987. Original article not available.

Fifty Years at Tohono Chul ("Desert Corner")

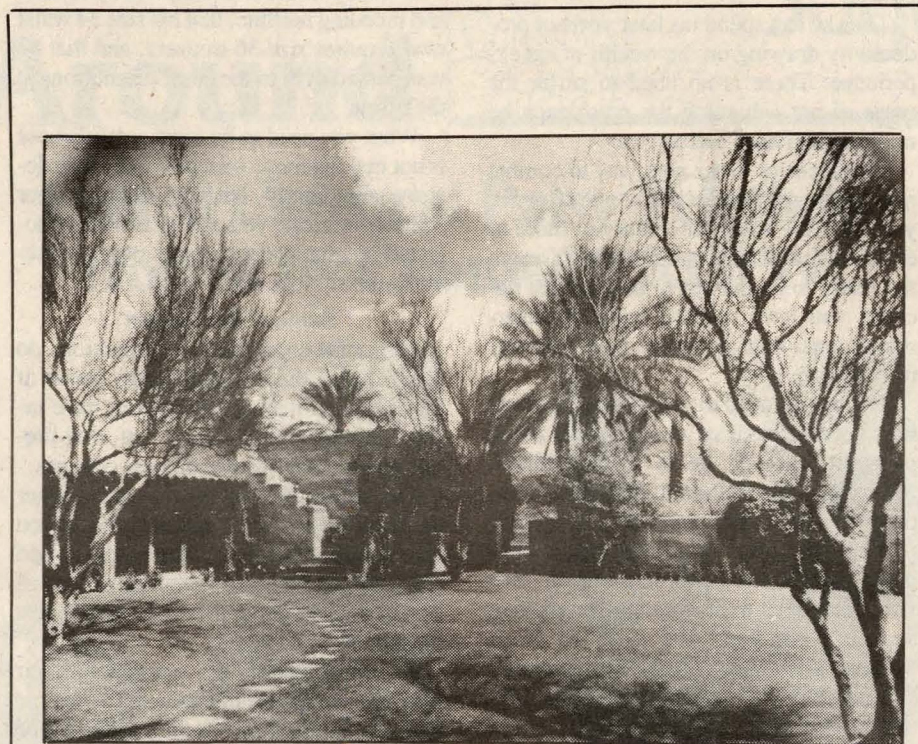
One fine spring afternoon in Tucson in 1937, the Reverend George Ferguson and his wife May were entertaining guests from Santa Barbara, California, Mr. and Mr. John DuBlois Wack. Mr. Wack, an avid polo player, and his wife, were staying at the Arizona Inn and visiting the Fergusons to see the new St. Phillips-In-The-Foothills church, where the Reverend Ferguson was Pastor.

Over lunch the Wacks mentioned their desire to acquire some nice desert land, perhaps with a knoll on which to build a residence for their visits to the Old Pueblo. The Fergusons said that they knew of just the place and took the Wacks to the north-west corner of Ina and Oracle Roads. Here lays the acreage that today is the beautiful Tohono Chul Park, just west of the Haunted Bookshop.

In those days this 40 acre tract, along with 600 acres to the north and west, was the Catalina Citrus Estates subdivision and owned by Samuel W. Seane. Mr. Seane, who is 94 years old now, had homesteaded this plot in 1930. His daughter, Mrs. Cornelia Lovitt, remembers those days as a young girl, living weekends in a cabin near Magee Road so that her parents could qualify for the homestead rights.

Mr. Seane fulfilled another homestead requirement when he drilled a well and installed pumping equipment on what is now the southwest corner of Magee and Northern. From this location, where the equipment still stands (although not for long, as the property is for sale), he supplied water to his neighbors, such as the Countess of Suffolk, and irrigated his own trees.

Another neighbor and homesteader in



Entrance to the original John DuBlois Wack home as it appeared in the early 1940s. It now houses Tohono Chul Park's administrative offices, gift shop and exhibition hall.

the area was Maurice Reid, whose land between Orange Grove and Ina Roads had become a major citrus orchard due to his discovery that this region was a frost-free "thermal belt." Mr. Reid was a Realtor as well and handled many of Mr. Seane's land sales. His son, Gene Reid (for whom our Reid Park and its zoo are named), re-

members meeting the Wacks that day and showing them around the property.

Mr. Wack, now 83 years old, fondly recalls that day also. "The Fergusons had given us a couple of mint juleps for lunch and then took us to see the property. We were probably still a little under the influence, but we immediately bought 80 acres

for \$16,000." That price still amazes and pleases him.

Contractor Paul Holton, who built many homes in the Sonoita area, built the Wacks a graceful Santa Fe style home on a rise on the property in 1937. The walls are 18" adobe brick and the ceiling beams were brought down from Mt. Lemmon. Power lines were erected along the unpaved Oracle Road, but the house relied upon french doors to catch the prevailing breezes for cooling. There was also one of Tucson's early private swimming pools installed east of the house.

As the Wacks only enjoyed this house on occasional weekends, his father, Henry Wellington Wack, and Gene Reid each served as "house-sitters". Mr. Reid says that it was a pretty nice job to have.

In 1943 the Wacks sold their property, and over the next two decades it changed hands several times until Richard and Jean Wilson acquired it in 1963. They re-assembled the original surrounding 40 acre plot and eventually created the Tohono Chul Park with the Wacks' house restored as the park's administrative offices, gift shop and exhibition hall. Gracious as ever, the house is ready for its next 50 years of history.

The Wack House can be seen daily from 9:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. at Tohono Chul Park. Enter the park off Paseo del Norte, north of Ina Road. The park is worth the visit!

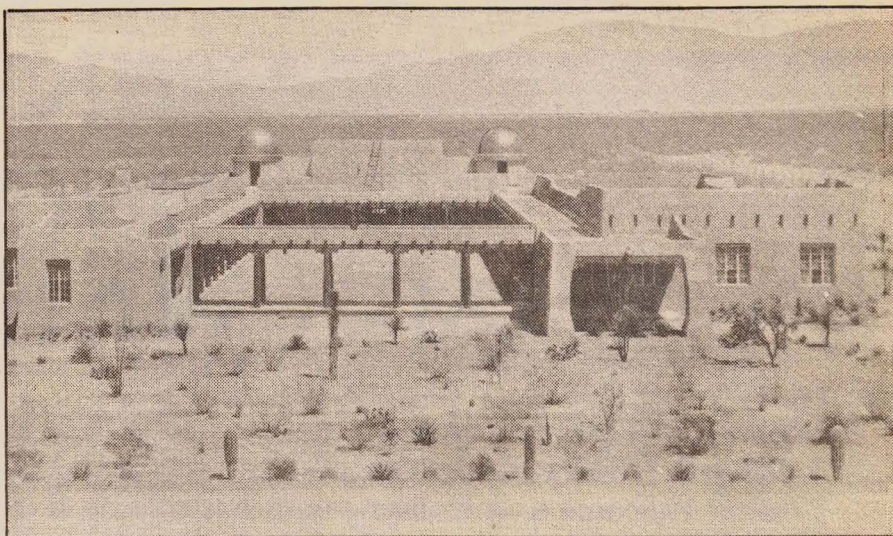
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The Desert Sanatorium of Southern Arizona

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The causes for Tucson's rapid growth during the six decades before World War II have been capsulized as "the 4 C's"—Cotton, Copper, Cattle and Climate. Of these, climate brought the bulk of the people here, established Tucson as a Mecca for those suffering from lung diseases and remains today as the only important growth factor of the original 4 C's.

Arizona Trust Company took Dr. Wyatt out to the end of Grant Road, at Swan. Setting his car's odometer on zero, Mr. Lovejoy drove due east for a half mile across the desert before stopping. As he figured it this was the southwest quarter of Section 35 and stretching a half mile north and east from this point (today the Grant Road median in front of the Park Tucson



The Institute of Research Building in 1929. Now the Farness Patio Building, it is just inside TMC's entrance at Beverly Avenue. (photo courtesy TMC archives)

If there is just one place that a visitor should go to best understand the city's history as a health center, that one place is the Tucson Medical Center. Turning north off East Grant Road at the Beverly Avenue light, one discovers the old Desert Sanatorium, forerunner to TMC and the oldest surviving collection of historic health industry structures still in use locally.

Before the "Desert San" was founded, Tucson was already well-established in its role as a healthful city and boasted of many sanatoriums, most of which are now gone. The Whitwell (Southern Methodist) Hospital still stands at Adams Street and North First Avenue, but was long ago converted into apartments. St. Luke's in the Desert is a geriatric home now and such private sanatoriums as the Comstock Mercy Mission and the Barfield Sanatorium no longer exist. Of today's major hospitals, St. Mary's the oldest, has lost all of its original buildings, while St. Joseph's and the Veteran's Hospitals were built after the Desert San.

The Desert Sanatorium of Southern Arizona was incorporated in November of 1925 as the result of Doctor Bernard L. Wyatt's efforts to establish a solar therapy hospital here. Using the model of work done in the Swiss Alps by Dr. Auguste Rollier, "high priest of the Modern Sun Worshippers", Dr. Wyatt developed a process of measuring the sun's strength by means of a radiometer and then prescribing exact doses of directed sunlight to each patient.

Having sold his ideas to Alfred W. Erickson, senior partner of the New York advertising firm of McCann-Erickson, and thereby obtained the start-up funding, Dr. Wyatt returned to Tucson to begin building the San. Here Walter Lovejoy of the

Hotel) lay 160 acres that Dr. Wyatt purchased for \$25 an acre as the site of his sanatorium.

Architect Henry O. Jaasted produced a set of plans and during 1926 the Desert Sanatorium came into being. The main building contained 20 patient rooms, four suites, all of the necessary medical facilities and a 3,500 square foot solarium, formed by glassing in the long veranda that ran along the building's eastern exposure. Also constructed that year were four small cottages, or courts, for wealthier patients, a water tower, and a residence for Dr. Wyatt.

The following year, 1927, the San tripled in size with the addition of nine more buildings and the purchase for \$150 an acre!) of 80 acres south of Grant Road. Constructed in the same Hopi Indian style of the previous year's buildings, these additions were: four more courts, a nurses' residence, staff quarters, a physio-therapy building, a medical building and a residence for the Ericksens.

With the addition, in December of 1929, of the Institute of Research Building, now the Farness Patio Building (see photo) the Desert Sanatorium was completed.

In 1943 the Desert San became the Tucson Medical Center and went on to become Tucson's largest hospital. Of the original 17 Desert San structures, an amazing ten are still in existence, thanks to Dr. Wyatt and Mr. Lovejoy's foresight in the original land purchase.

Thanks must also go to the TMC Board of Directors over the past decades who have preserved this important and charming part of Tucson's past. The story of the Desert Sanatorium, here only sketched, is extensively documented in the TMC archives and could become a major community asset if made an exhibit that was accessible to the city's general population.

The Magnificent Belin and Wright Homes on Wilmot

In the 1920s, Wilmot was a dirt road high in the desert mesa over four miles from the city limits and the new subdivisions of the day. Reached by Broadway and Speedway, also unpaved, Wilmot attracted a couple of wealthy health seekers into building gracious homes there which still exist today.

The first to build on Wilmot was nationally famous author Harold Bell Wright, whose name survives there in the Harold Bell Wright Estates subdivision. He was followed by the lesser-known Charles A. Belin.

The lineage of the Belins in America is long and intertwined with that of the renown DuPonts of Delaware. Augustus Belin was a French planter who fled Haiti in 1781 and worked for the DuPonts in Wilmington. His son, Henry, an ardent secessionist during the Civil War, was the DuPont company bookkeeper. Henry had a daughter, Mary, who married Lammot DuPont, and a son, Henry, Jr., whose daughter, Alice, eventually married Lammot and Mary's son Pierre Samuel DuPont, further cementing the DuPont-Belin relationship.

The DuPont fortune was based upon the company's early work in gunpowder, so it is only reasonable that Alice's brothers, Ferdinand Lammot and Charles Augustus Belin, drew upon family tradition when they helped found the Aetna Explosives Company. Aetna business took Charles Belin to Chile in 1906 where he contracted tuberculosis while buying nitrates. His health broke down following World War I and his



Harold Bell Wright's home, Catalina Mountain Range beyond.
(From the Stephenson Collection.)

doctors prescribed the curative effects of Tucson's climate.

Having the means to do things right, he dispatched a meteorologist and a geologist to Tucson with instructions to locate a suitable homesite, free of dust and other conditions that he must avoid. In March of 1926, he purchased eight acres fronting on Grant Road from Dr. Wyatt of the Desert Sanatorium (see last month's *Saguaro* article). Here, using local materials, he built a large Mediterranean-styled home that years later, while owned by the D'Autremonts, was designated one of Tucson's finest mansions. It was recently razed for the Park Tucson Hotel.

While living on Grant, Belin met and married Rosetta Carson Schwab, a widow with four children whose husband had been killed while flying the English Channel. Happy with his new family, Belin appears to have been less satisfied, however, with his new house. Perhaps the construction dust from the rapidly

expanding Desert Sanatorium next door aggravated his health, but by 1929 the Belins had built a second house out on Wilmot and had thereby become Harold Bell Wright's neighbors.

Wright had first come here in 1912 and lived on Speedway while writing *Their Yesterdays*. In 1915 he suffered a major relapse of his tuberculosis in an accident in California and returned to the St. Mary's Hospital sanatorium. Shortly thereafter he set up an outdoor camp in the area of the Flying V Ranch (north of today's Ventana Canyon Hotel) and spent several years there, soaking up the sun and writing. Then he moved his camp to Oracle and wrote *The Mine with the Iron Door* (1923).

Wright had also become a public-spirited citizen during these years, directing major benefit performances of his work on behalf of Tucson's associated charities and the Comstock Rescue Mission. He also helped to furnish the convent at St. Mary's, landscaped the Desert Sanatorium grounds, and, during the Depression, organized the Emergency Relief Committee to raise money for the needy.

His greatest to Tucson, however, was his 1924 article in the *American Magazine*, "Why I Did Not Die," which (continued on page 4)

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Mansions on the Mesa... (Continued from page 1)

recounted his battle with TB here and enormously boosted Tucson's national reputation as a health resort. The Sunshine Climate Club, formed in 1921 to promote Tucson's climate, saw to it that Wright's article stayed in the national consciousness even longer.

In 1920, Wright decided to give up camp life and began acquiring 160 acres on Wilmot Road for his dream home. The 320 acres running one-half mile east from Wilmot between the Broadway and Speedway alignments had been homesteaded by Alice and Lorenzo Harwell in 1915. Wright fell in love with the north half of this property where from a knoll he could see eleven mountain ranges and finally have a writing studio that combined the comforts of a real home with the inspirational amenities of country life.

Here the Tapp Planing Mill Company built a large but unpretentious cement-plastered hacienda in 1922. Facing north towards the Catalinas, and Wright's earlier camp, the home "resembled" rather than "imitated" an indian pueblo, and its patio displayed a unique rock pattern designed by Wright himself. His studio, which was off-limits to his family, was the room which received the most attention and contained a concrete vault for safekeeping manuscripts. Wright vowed to live out his life here.

The seclusion Wright sought was gradually destroyed by the very fact that this wealthy national celebrity had chosen to live so far east. Realtors of the day later agreed that his decision to build such a large home out on Wilmot created confidence for developers that Tucson's future lay east. And gradually other wealthy citizens joined him.

The first was Charles Belin (called "Squire Belin" by his friends). He acquired the southern half of the Harwell

homestead and another 40 acres to the east and built his second mansion. Lacking Wright's fame, Belin's construction didn't receive press coverage. However, because it is now the centerpiece for the Villa Campana Retirement Community, the Belin house can be more easily seen.

The house is built as three sides of a westward-opening square in a Spanish Colonial style. On the north side of the

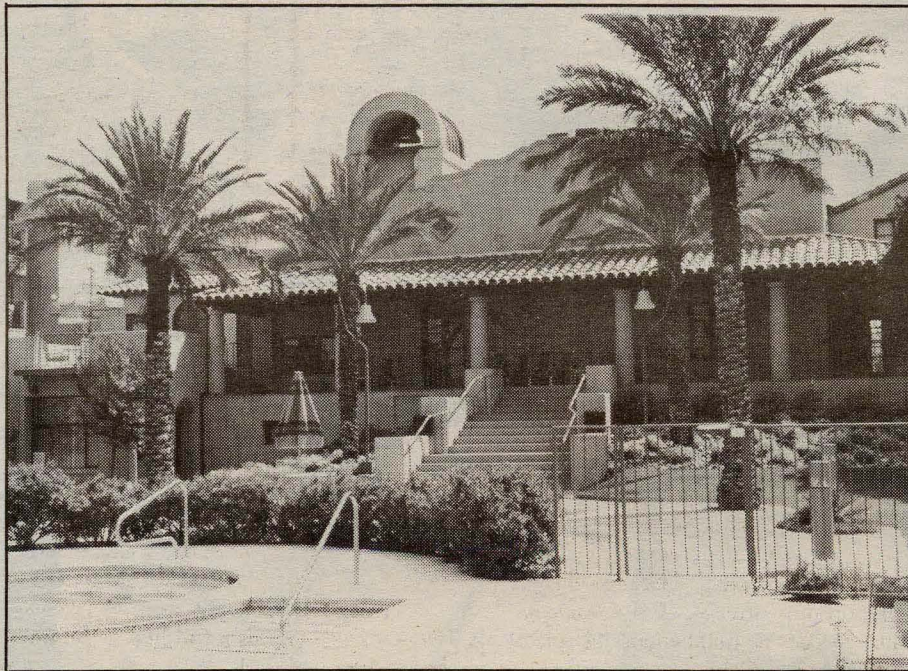
Rincon Mountains. Gracing the home is a lovely bell tower.

Belin was still plagued by dust, even out here on Wilmot, and in 1930 took up the issue with the Board of Supervisors. On January 3rd he wrote on behalf of himself and Wright offering to pay up to \$3,000 to oil treat their mile of Wilmot if the County would similarly oil Broadway and Speedway. The matter eventually went to the voters who

Belin sold the home to the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet. The girls' Academy had been housed down in Armory Park, but the move to Wilmot allowed the Academy to expand greatly and add several new buildings.

Another new neighbor moved onto the property north of Wright when Florence L. Pond built her mansion, Stone Ashley, in 1934. Now the home of Charles Restaurant, Stone Ashley was an imposing eastern-style building flanked by a row of cypress trees that grew to partially block Wright's beloved view.

Losing his unobstructed view was symbolic of the numerous problems Wright was experiencing. Fame brought curious people who would often march up to his house and peer through his windows while the family was eating dinner. Development was growing closer and traffic was increasing, bringing more noise and pollution. Finally in 1936 Wright gave up his intent to stay here forever and moved to California where he died in 1944. His home, still a private residence, is on the National Register of Historic Places. This stretch of Wilmot is now populated by restaurants, hospitals and high-rise office buildings, but if one knows where to look they will still find the Mansions on the Mesa as reminders of a lost lifestyle.



East side of Belin house overlooking the pool and Rincon Mountains.

building is the main entrance leading to a circular foyer wherein guests are warmed before a fireplace. South of the foyer is a large living room with a massive fireplace of its own. The living room leads west into the courtyard or east onto a covered veranda which, overlooking the pool and ornate pool house, once had a stunning view of the

approved a \$200,000 bond measure to oil 42 miles of county roads and construct seven bridges. The *Arizona Daily Star* announced the program on February 21, 1931, but it was too late for Belin who had died at his home two days before.

Wright's new neighbor became the St. Joseph's Academy when Rosetta

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HISTORICAL TUCSON

Preserving The Old Pueblo

By William C. Barrow

The recent demise of the Stray Cat and the five historic buildings unlovingly owned by the Marshall Foundation, all on East University Boulevard, underscores the fragility of our physical heritage and the weakness of our laws for preserving the Old Pueblo. It was just a couple of years ago that Tucson lost, needlessly as it turns out, the Avalon House on North Oracle Road, and many historic preservationists wonder what landmark will be next.

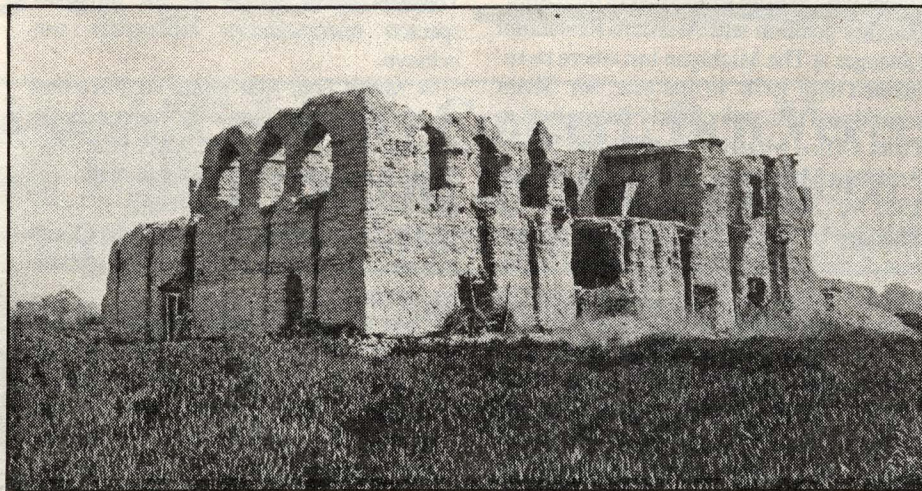
In 1962 offered up a list of historic buildings and sites in Tucson that badly needed protection. While I intend nothing so comprehensive as his list, nevertheless I am devoting this column to the subject of current historic preservation issues in the hopes that everyone will find something here to care about. Since Mr. Brandes' article the City and County have taken steps to extend a measure of protection to some of our oldest buildings, but we have all seen that much more protection will be necessary to insure that the "Old Pueblo" remains more than a public relations slogan.

Of the oldest portions of Tucson, the most immediate problem centers around the "Convento" site on Mission Road, near A Mountain. During the Spanish period of our local history the west bank of the Santa Cruz River was the heart of human settlements. Tucson derives its name from the dark rock of the adjoining hills and A Mountain, formerly called Sentinel Peak, was the lookout point for warning the village below of approaching Apaches. At the base of Sentinel Peak the early Spanish missionaries found extensive agricultural lands being worked by a large population of Papago and Pima Indians, and established an outpost of San Xavier del Bac here. Later, the military arm of the Spanish Empire established a presidio on the eastern bank to protect this important area.

Today there are no above-ground remains of the structures on either side of the Santa Cruz, but there are important archaeological sites on the west side that are severely threatened by both City plans to extend Mission Road through the site and by private plans to construct an outdoor concert arena in the old rock quarry next to Sentinel Peak. We can little afford to lose this, Tucson's birthplace.

The archaeological remains of the presidio on the eastern bank were largely removed in the construction of the governmental complexes downtown. But portions of the presidio's foundations still exist in places and the Downtown Development Corporation has recently acquired the site of one such portion, the fort's northeast corner. Here the DDC is talking about constructing a highrise office building that would have ground floor areas open for ongoing archaeological excavations and displays of the presidio foundation.

The biggest threat to downtown preser-



San Jose de Tucson as it appeared in 1891. Today it is in ruins, and its location marked only by mounds of adobe.

vation efforts is the Aviation Parkway. When it finally goes in it will remove a substantial piece of the warehouse district along Toole that dates back a hundred years to the coming of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Warehouses, it seems, have few champions.

The El Presidio Historic District would stand to lose a couple of houses to the parkway, too, but has recently benefitted from the restoration of the Owl's Club building. A gutted hulk for many years, the Owl's Club restoration has returned a valuable historic building to productive use and has garnered one of the craftsmen on the job a Governor's Award for Historic Preservation.

On the southern edge of the downtown two other bright notes appear. The creation of the Art District has led to the City's acquisition of the historic Temple of Music and Art in the Armory Park Historic District, and over in the Barrio Historio Historic District (south of the Community Center) a private party has purchased the crumbling Pascal Adobe complex for renovation into retail shops.

West of the U of A campus the news is mixed. On the bright side the Iron Horse Historic District was recently formed and both the Pie Allen and John Spring neighborhoods are at various stages of preparation for becoming districts themselves. On the downside was the senseless loss of the Stray Cat and Marshall buildings, none of which should have been allowed to happen. The City Council is currently considering measures to tighten up the demolition-by-neglect loopholes in our ordinances so as to discourage economic sabotage by owners of historic properties.

The University of Arizona, who in the past has wiped out more than its share of historic neighborhoods, recently took the praiseworthy step of putting its entire west-central campus on the National Register of Historic Places, complete with the historic landscaping. As the University and the

Railroad were two of the biggest contributors to Tucson's historic growth, the fact that at least one of these areas is so recognized is a significant gain.

Another major factor in our early growth were the thousands of people who came to the city in search of a healthful climate. While most of the early sanatoriums that served them are gone, St. Mary's in particular, a couple of significant complexes still exist. The Desert Sanatorium, forerunner to the Tucson Medical Center, is largely intact at the western end of the TMC complex and is receiving increasing recognition as an important historical resource. The other area is lesser known and lies west of Euclid Avenue along Adams Street. Here are both the old Whitwell Hospital (later Southern Methodist Hospital) and the original St. Luke's in the Desert sanatorium. Neither has received any notice at all of late, but should. Like the neighborhoods nearby (north of Speedway and west of Campbell) they are unappreciated and unprotected.

East of Campbell is a different story. The paperwork nominating the Arizona Inn to the National Register has been submitted and three significant neighborhoods to the south, Sam Hughes, El Encanto and Colonia Solana, are hard at work preparing their nominations. The biggest concern to everyone involved in these efforts is the future of Broadway Village Shopping Center at Country Club and Broadway. One of Tucson's most visible and beloved examples of "Old Pueblo" charm, the Village has only narrowly missed being demolished for the widening of Broadway. Given the reportedly unsympathetic attitude of its owner, the Murphy Trust, area residents are watching developments there quite closely. This complex was designed by Joesler, built by John and Helen Murphy and is thought to be Arizona's first shopping center.

Other older neighborhoods along Broadway, chiefly San Clemente and El Montevideo, have just started exploring their histories, but can be expected to be heard from in the near future as historic districts.

Moving further east to Wilmot Road, the Harold Bell Wright House has been entered onto the National Register in recent years. The other two major properties out that way, the Charles Belin House and the Florence Pond House are important in Tucson's prewar history, but have not received much notice.

Moving across the foothills, there are three major areas of historic importance. First is the former Southern Arizona School (now Fenster School) at Sabino Canyon. This has been written about in a previous *Saguaro* article, but remains affected by any County efforts to extend Sunrise Road across the canyon.

Another undesignated historic property is the Hacienda del Sol, which is at least enjoying splendid economic strength. At bottom that is the best kind of protection that a historic building can have.

The most significant historical area in the foothills, however, is the Catalina Foothills Estates and St. Phillips in the Foothills portion north of River Road. The significance of this area will be detailed in a future *Saguaro* article, but redeveloped pressures have already surfaced here in recent years. First was the threat to one of the buildings west of St. Phillips several years ago when the county decided to re-align the River Road and Campbell Avenue intersection. Prompt neighborhood action got the endangered building moved, at great cost, out of harm's way. Then there was the controversy surrounding St. Phillip's decision to expand the church, which went through eventually. Last year the three buildings across Campbell came back into the news when plans to develop the corner raised questions about saving Joesler's studio building on the intersection. That problem is currently awaiting final resolution. Meanwhile infill development is occurring along Campbell in the CFE neighborhood itself. This whole area badly needs historic designation and protection least its character is lost.

This is only a partial listing of significant areas of central Tucson that need to be preserved in order to insure that the community retains its original charm. Tucson is growing and needs redevelopment and infill to accommodate this growth, but not at the expense of our primary historic landmarks and districts that help create the identity we call "The Old Pueblo".

THE DESERT LEAF

A Monthly Foothills Tabloid

Volume 1, Number 1

October 1987

Up From The Valley:

The Settlement of the Foothills



St. Phillips in the Hills, 1938

By William C. Barrow

The modern era of Catalina foothills' history began on Tuesday, April 24, 1928, when young John W. Murphey bought thousands of acres in the foothills at an auction of federally-owned Public Lands. Deemed worthless property that old-timers in Tucson once would not have taken as a gift, Murphey in one case paid \$10,000 for a 640 acre section. Two years later he subdivided that section into Catalina Foothills Estates, the first of today's popular foothills neighborhoods.

Historians debate whether individuals make history or whether historical trends and events elevate well-placed individuals to prominence. Whatever the case, Murphey had assembled the means to create a great subdivision just at the time that the local real estate market was ready.

It is difficult to find much information on what was happening in the central foothills before Murphey arrived on the scene. So difficult in fact that it's tempting to conclude that with the exception of cattle grazing, nothing much was happening at all.

Around the periphery, however, there is evidence of human habitation going back 8,000 years with the arrival of "Archaic" Indians in the Sabino Canyon area. These semi-nomadic tribes of hunter-gatherers were attracted to the natural springs and creeks. Hohokam settlements flourished along the Sabino and Rillito Creeks for over a thousand years after the time of Christ. An agrarian people, the Hohokam were proficient at diverting water from rivers to irrigate crops on the adjacent floodplains. Their successors, the Pimas and Papagos, were still employing these techniques when Father Kino came into the valley around 1700.

Kino found a large population of Indians farming the west bank of the Santa Cruz between his site for the Mission San Xavier del Bac and the mouth of the Canyon del Oro wash 12 miles to the north. Unlike the Hohokam, these later tribes do not seem to have farmed the Rillito or its tributaries, probably due to the threat from Apaches up in the mountains.

It wasn't until after Southern Arizona became part of the United States in 1854 that people began living along the Rillito. The *Arizona Miner* of September 10, 1867, reported that Granville Oury, Dr. Francis Goodwin, and Peter Brady had ranches on the Rillito. About this time the Carrillo family started the Cebadilla Ranch out along the Tanque Verde Wash.

Growth on the north and east side of town was encouraged by the military's decision in 1872 to relocate to the Camp Lowell Reservation at the junction of the Tanque Verde and Pantano washes. Here they created a major settlement, pumping drinking water with windmills from hand-dug wells and hauling river water for every other purpose.

Other ranches sprang up along the Rillito and Sabino Creeks after 1880, notably Mariano Samaniego's, whose cattle reportedly ranged all the way down to University Farms, over ten miles away. An 1890 *Arizona Daily Star* article pointed out that "the big stretch of country lying between Fort Lowell and the university is covered with the finest kind of grass, but there are few cattle there to fatten on it."

Up in the Sabino Canyon area, around the turn of the century, Thomas Gonzales and Juanita Martin Moore had ranches that would later become the site of well-known dude ranches and a private boys' school. The canyon was such a fine source of water that for decades many attempts were made to establish dams there to supply Tucson.

Farms also grew up along the Rillito and used diverted water to irrigate their fields. John Davidson incorporated the Santa Catalina Ditch and Irrigating Company in 1886 to build a canal. He planned to bury an infiltration chamber eleven feet below the surface to feed water into a canal running west along the south side of the Rillito. Around where Dodge Avenue is now, the canal would pass under the riverbed to irrigate fields on the north bank. A flood in 1887 washed out this scheme.

But Davidson's farm, and that of Charles Bayless, were still around in 1900 when Nephi Bingham and his family arrived from Casa Grande to form a Mormon community known as Binghampton. Some bungalow homes and silos between Country Club and Craycroft, the chapel east of Dodge, and the old pioneers' cemetery off Alvernon north of River Road still remain of this community.

The story of the southern and eastern borders of the central foothills before 1928 then is one of dependence upon surface water, augmented by a few windmill wells, to supply farms, ranches, and Camp Lowell with food.

The foothills' western boundary is Oracle Road and the land flanking it. Oracle Road was the principal route to the mining and ranching communities of Pinal County.

Oracle Road also was the trail for bringing cattle into Tucson. George Pusch, owner of a large ranch in the San Pedro Valley, established the Steam Pump Ranch in 1874, just south of the Canyon del Oro crossing, as a watering stop for cattle drives. The steam-driven pump was an important technological step over windmills, and, using mesquite wood for fuel, it could pump 3 gallons a minute. Today, the ruins of the pumphouse still stand, on the west side of Oracle Road, and constitute northwest Tucson's most significant historic site.

By 1920 the automobile had become the dominant mode of travel in Tucson, and Arizona was reported to be ninth nationally in per capita car ownership. So many people were escaping the valley's heat to the high country north of the Catalinas that a Control Road was opened to Mount Lemmon from Oracle. A control road is a one-way road—traffic moved up at certain hours, and down at other times, on a fixed schedule.

(Continued on Page 3)

October 1987

THE
DESERT LEAF

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Settlement Of The Foothills

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Previously, the only other way up to Mount Lemmon was via a mule train that made the trip up from Sabino Canyon between 1913 and 1918.

The well-known Flying V Ranch made its contribution to local history during the winter of 1915-16 when it allowed nationally famous author Harold Bell Wright to set up camp there. Wright had contracted tuberculosis in California and wanted to spend all his time outdoors attempting a cure. It worked, and Wright wrote a nationally circulated article, "Why I Did Not Die," about the benefits of Tucson's climate.

During the 1920s, the Sunshine Climate Club promoted Tucson's beneficial climate heavily back east and reprinted Wright's article often. People had been coming to Tucson for their health for 50 years, but in the 20s the town added dude ranches and private schools catering to the health seekers. The Flying V became a guest ranch

John Murphey,
circa 1920.



in 1927, and the neighboring Gonzales-DeBaud Ranch was split into the Double U Guest Ranch (location for the movies "Arizona" and "Billy the Kid") and a private boys' school, the Southern Arizona School (now Fenster School).

When John Murphey came to the foothills in 1928, he noted the market for health-related schools and built the Hacienda del Sol girls' school the next year. In 1941, the emphasis switched when it became a guest ranch and later the movie set for "Duel in the Sun." Murphey also watched the evolution of exclusive subdivisions in the valley and set about creating one in the foothills.

The City of Tucson townsite was the first subdivision, in 1877. Laid out in a square-block gridiron pattern, its north-south avenues were numbered west from North First Avenue. This unconventional system was defended on the grounds that the City had all the buildable land it would ever need, and nobody would ever want to live east of North First anyway.

But they did. When the Southern Pacific arrived in 1880, it began transporting large numbers of health seekers and people wanting to cash in on the opportunities of the frontier. Before the City's two square mile site was filled, subdivisions began springing up around the new university to the east. Their numbers grew quickly, and all employed the familiar gridiron pattern that was cheap to use. By 1920, there were so many subdivisions that competition forced some innovative marketing ideas.

First of these ideas was the use of deed restrictions in which minimum home values were set, uniform setbacks mandated, commercial uses outlawed, and ownership restricted to white people. The University Manor subdivision (in what is now the Sam Hughes neighborhood) was the first to use restrictions to insure property values and thereby attract buyers. Deed restrictions soon became an essential part of subdivision planning.

Another planning innovation was added in 1928 when El Encanto and Colonia Solana were created next to the El Conquistador Tourist Hotel on Broadway. They continued the practice of using deed restrictions, adding controls on architectural styles and landscaping. More importantly, these subdivisions departed from the gridiron structure, instead dividing variably shaped blocks into building lots of up to an acre in size. The idea was to further protect home values by creating a sense of identity, privacy, and security in the neighborhoods, thereby attracting the wealthier

end of the real estate market. This concept was also successful.

Murphey, the son of Tucson real estate developer Walter E. Murphey, had spent his life watching the city grow. Upon graduating from the University of Arizona in 1920, he spurned a Rhodes scholarship and instead began his own career as a developer. His first important step came that year when he acquired his life-long personal and business partner by marrying Helen Geyer. In 1926 he hired Swiss-born architect, Josias T. Joesler. Joesler had studied in Spain, Morocco and Mexico developing skills and styles that perfectly captured the warm climate and Hispanic flavor that became so popular in Tucson. The addition of Leo Keith as business manager in 1927 completed Murphey's team.

Having extensively rehearsed his team on individual homes in the valley and an entire small subdivision on Campbell Avenue (Old World Addition), Murphey moved up to the foothills with Hacienda del Sol. He was then ready to make local real estate history.

Catalina Foothills Estates has been called "the El Encanto of the foothills," and that was the very least that Murphey tried to accomplish. He saw that non-gridiron street patterns and large homesites were perfectly suited for rolling foothills terrain and that the goals of privacy and exclusiveness would fit well with the foothills' exclusive new guest ranches and private schools. Wealthy people were already willing to live as far east as Wilmot Road, where Harold Bell Wright built his dream house in 1922, and Murphey saw that the foothills offered the best aspects of what Wright had found first at the Flying V and later on Wilmot.

At one square mile, Catalina Foothills Estates was the largest restricted subdivision ever attempted in Tucson—over twice the combined size of El Encanto and Colonia Solana. The average lot size was in excess of four acres, and each owner had a mini-hacienda connected to River Road by winding dead-end lanes.

The Depression and World War II caused a slowdown in residential construction, but after the war Tucson rebounded rapidly. Catalina Foothills Estates No. 2 was subdivided in 1947, and other phases soon followed. Luxury homes are today being built in Catalina Foothills Estates No. 10.

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Naturally there were people in Tucson who were sure that nobody would live so far away from town. Murphey's beautiful church, St. Phillips in the Foothills (1936), was nicknamed "St. Phillips in the Weeds" by some. But experience demonstrated that Tucsonans would commute great distances to live in well-planned, low-density developments. Other developers, like John Bender, followed Murphey's lead, and the foothills quickly lived up to his vision as the community's premier residential area.

Joesler died in 1956, and John Murphey followed in 1977. The Old World Addition was demolished, caught between University Medical Center's growth and improvements to Campbell Avenue. Other fruits of their collaboration, like the Broadway Village Shopping Center (1940) and the original Catalina Foothills Estates' sales office at River and Campbell, are periodically threatened by redevelopment pressures.

Such pressures are slowly eroding the low-density residential character of the entire foothills area, as commercial centers, apartment complexes, and new parkways come into being. The historic crown jewels of the Murphey team should be preserved if Tucson is to remember what gracious 1930s living was like and how much of that was due to the vision of John W. Murphey.

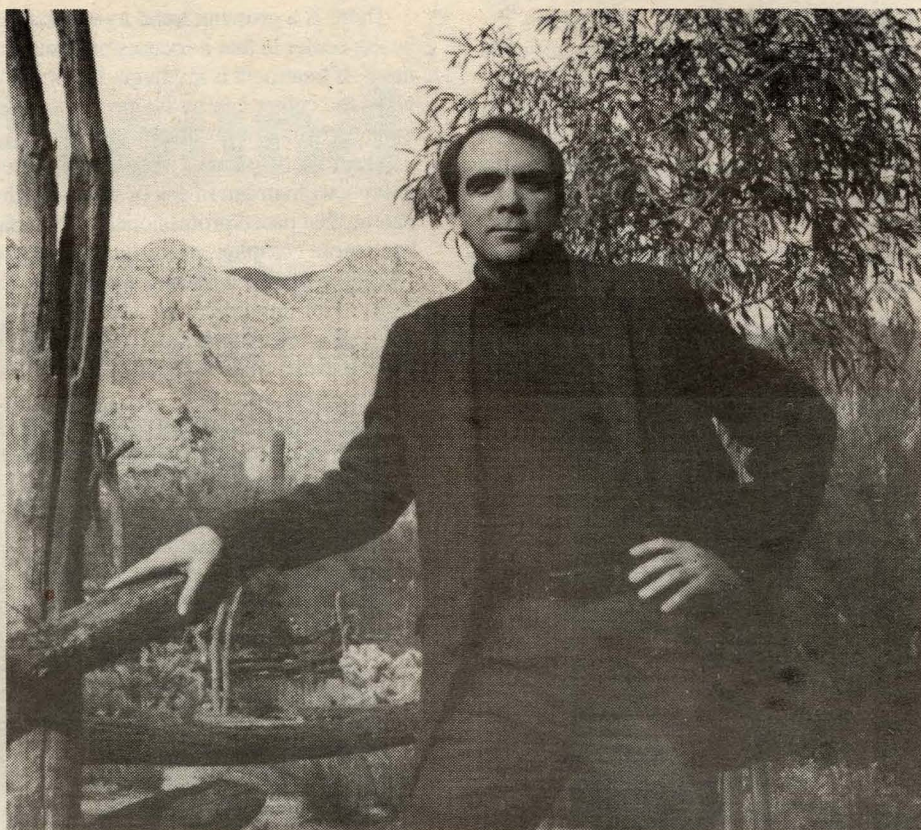
The Author of Historical Tucson

The best part about writing the articles on the history of Tucson that *The Saguaro* has been kind enough to publish during these past five months, has been the wonderful people I have met in the course of doing the research. Only having moved here from Ohio in 1973, I have to depend upon longtime city natives to provide or confirm information on the Old Pueblo's many lovely historic homes and neighborhoods. But they love Tucson so much that they are quite pleased to help—perhaps because they see that I share their enthusiasm.

But how could anyone not be enthusiastic when it is so much fun? I was drawn into my research after having held open some homes for sale in the Colonia Solana subdivision. There I saw many large graceful homes and began wondering who had built them fifty-some years ago. Each answer I found created new questions and necessitated finding people who could answer them.

On one occasion I called Mr. Jack B. Martin, Jr. whose parents had built a lovely two-story Spanish Colonial home on Avenida de Palmas. When I explained to Mr. Martin that I was seeking information on this house in the 1930s he said that my call, coincidentally, had come soon after he had happened across an old photo taken during his fifth birthday party, and he had wondered who the other little kids were in the picture with him. I surprised him by promptly furnishing their names from a newspaper clipping that I had found at the Arizona Historical Society library.

Another time I was looking for information on a house which had stood on Broadway near the El Con Water Tower from 1906 until the late 1960s. After eleven



phone calls to people who might have known about it, each one referring me to the next one, I finally found Mrs. Samuel Cox. She had been a life-long friend of the home's owner, Dorothy Heighton Monro, and provided interesting details about it. A year later, while researching the Charles Townsend House in the Sam Hughes Neighborhood, I happened across an obituary on Dr. Townsend which mentioned that his daughter was one Mrs. Samuel Cox of Tucson. Sure enough, it

was the same person and we spent another enjoyable afternoon discussing that house. The 1936 era photo of the Townsend House, which she removed from her family photo album, appeared in last month's *Saguaro* article. (Incidentally, if any readers would like a copy of any of the five articles published to date, please call me at 325-3448).

This research has produced so much material that I am now teaching a course on Tucson's residential history at the Hogan

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School of Real Estate. The response I have received from these courses convinces me that there are many people who enjoy learning about the earlier days in Tucson. The positive response I have heard to our company's newspaper pictorial campaign, "No One Knows Tucson Like Tucson Realty," is another indication that the city's history is popular.

The fact that people enjoy Tucson's history is a matter of broader importance, too. As a Realtor I believe that the city's heritage is an important part of the overall reason why many people decide to live here and appreciate the southwest charm of the Old Pueblo. But it is essential that efforts to preserve this heritage are continued so that future generations of residents can appreciate such now-endangered local landmarks as the Broadway Village Shopping Center.

To help in this preservation effort, I have secured an appointment to the Tucson Pima County Historical Commission and am actively searching for buildings and neighborhoods that should be formally designated as contributing to our local history. (I welcome calls on this subject, too.)

But landmark designation alone will not insure the survival of our heritage. Neighborhoods are not history museums, but places where families live. By helping people who appreciate lovely older homes find one that they can love and invest money in preserving I feel that I am making the most effective use of my time on behalf of historic preservation. Finding "just the right house" for my clients is always a very gratifying experience for me, and if a charming historic home is selected then I am doubly satisfied.