



## 2016 Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends:

In thinking over the past year, I was reminded of my two favorite quotes on the subject of history:

*There is an old saying about those who forget history. I don't remember it, but it's good*

—Stephen Colbert

and

*Those who understand history are condemned to watch other idiots repeat it*

—Peter Lamborn Wilson

At a time when domestic and international events seem without boundaries, when headlines from one week to the next exceed their ability to shock, the Arizona Historical Society was beset by its own seemingly endless series of trials: an early morning phone call describing a fire, with flames shooting above the Arizona Heritage Center in Tempe and, oh, by the way, embers have burned holes across the costly, newly replaced roof; or, arriving in my office to a staffer warning that, if the outside temperature rises one degree higher, the building's entire cooling system will shut down (I believe the actual words were "the chiller will explode"). Regardless, basic facilities maintenance goes on—painting, repairing, improving lighting, replacing exhibit labels, and grounds work—not to mention all the administrative and accounting tasks required of a public entity. Whatever the demands, we ought not to be overwhelmed by the challenge lest we forget just how powerful AHS's contribution is to promoting and preserving Arizona's story.

Audiences this past year have had a diverse menu of programs, exhibits, workshops, lectures, and special events from which to choose. *The Road to Yesterday* toured folks along Route 66 through northern Arizona, probably recalling their family vacations, while *Got Moonshine* gave them something else to think about. Museum visitors learned about Fred Harvey and the Harvey

Girls. In *Chasing Villa*, they followed Pancho Villa and the Punitive Expedition. Patrons became acquainted with 1890s Flagstaff's Hispanic families, met Rough Riders, experienced ghost towns, enjoyed nights at the museums, and discovered *Nuestro Tucson*, as well as *Secrets from America's Spy Planes*.

AHS fare offers something for young and old. Summer Day Camp, including pet guests, put kids nose-to-nose with tortoises and other desert creatures. Elbow deep in mud and water, they learned just what it takes to make adobe bricks. *Summer Sizzle* activities exposed children to Arizona history, art, storytelling, and pioneer life. As Arizona's proud sponsor for the National History Day Program, AHS encourages students, teachers, and parents at local and regional competitions, culminating at nationals in Washington D.C.

AHS has long been committed to collecting and preserving artifacts, archives, and photographs reflecting Arizona's treasures—past and in the making. The Robert Lynch architectural papers, seventy years of Yuma Hermosa Garden Club records describing the city's beautification projects, items from the January 8<sup>th</sup> Memorial Foundation, to cite a few examples, add to Arizona's historic record. Rare books are wrapped, microfilm materials (including 10,000 + images from the Lescher-Mahoney archive) are digitized, and photo collections representing historic Flagstaff are processed and conserved. All these efforts enhance and expand public accessibility.

Public access is at the core of AHS's mission. Past employees of American West Airlines who gather for a reunion at an AHS museum, families who celebrate Redondo Days, visitors entranced by sheep-shearing at Flagstaff's Wool Festival, listeners enjoying 19<sup>th</sup>-century military band music, volunteers participating in an oral history or conservation workshop—are all connected through AHS to Arizona's past.

Historian David McCullough says that for him, history is a source of pleasure. I agree. It isn't simply about taking a test and answering questions about dates, places, and events, and it's not even about our civic responsibility. McCullough describes it as an enlargement of the experience of being alive, just the way literature, art, or music is. History connects us. All those we have admired, whom we may have lost, who entranced us with their achievements or who may have angered and frustrated us with their misdeeds—all live among us in the house we call a history museum. Here, their stories are not forgotten. Here, the past is not a foreign country inhabited by folks who may have done things differently. Rather, it is a world lived in, to be discovered by people like us. The journey of discovery takes place daily in the Arizona Historical Society museums, programs, and collections.

With warm regards,

Anne I. Woosley, Ph.D.  
Executive Director