



### **2013 Letter from the Executive Director**

Dear Friends:

On February 24, 150 years ago, President Lincoln signed legislation that created Arizona Territory, one month after the Emancipation Proclamation took effect. It was a tumultuous year, marked by some of the bloodiest struggles of the American Civil War—the battles of Chancellorsville, Fredericksburg and Gettysburg, the sieges of Chattanooga and Vicksburg, and raids by Forrest and Quantrill.

Looking back to 1863 from our vantage in 2013, history clearly shows the inexorable erosion of Confederate strength in favor of the Union. The Arizona Historical Society was formed in the context of these panoramic events. One of the initial actions taken by the First Territorial Legislature in the following year was the establishment of a historical society to collect and preserve all “objects relating to the history of the Territory” (but more on that subject when the Arizona Historical Society celebrates its own sesquicentennial in 2014).

If we have learned anything about history, it is that it is a play of many acts performed on a vast stage. For example, at about that time and closer to home, miners sought gold near Prescott, which led to the founding of that community and its designation as Arizona’s first capital city. The skirmish at Picacho Peak (“the westernmost battle of the Civil War”), in 1863, reminded Arizonans of their connection to events in the east and ensured the continuation of mining exploration and settlement in southern Arizona that had been interrupted by the Civil War.

Frederick Brunckow’s discovery of gold and silver ore in present-day Cochise County in the late 1850s had ignited the spark that flamed brightest in Ed Schieffelin’s famous strike and the founding of Tombstone nearly two decades later. Eighteen sixty-three can also be remembered for groundbreaking on the western segment of the First Transcontinental Railroad near Sacramento, California, as well as the incorporation of the National Academy of Sciences. Popular songs of the day included “Oh, My Darling Clementine,” “When Johnny Comes Marching Home,” and “All Quiet Along the Potomac Tonight.”

In France, the Paris Observatory began publishing weather maps, which, 150 years later, have become a staple of nightly news reports, while in London, William Banting published his *Letter on Corpulence*, purportedly the first popular low-carbohydrate diet. And, of all the important documents signed or penned by President Lincoln that year—remember the Gettysburg Address—he officially designated the last Thursday in November as Thanksgiving Day. Certainly, history is nothing if not varied.

AHS gives voice to the variety and richness of Arizona history—the stories of its people and groups whose roots link us to different lands and traditions—in exhibitions, through programs in multiple formats, and in museum, library, and archive collections. Audiences can meet a 19th-century street vendor, sheriff, photographer, entrepreneur, or judge, alongside 20th- and 21st-century politicians, ranchers, social workers, Tohono O’odham farmers, entertainers, civil servants, and business leaders, to name but a few among the many who make up the past and present Arizona community.

Our “Mapping the Territory” exhibition connects visitors to history through museum and archival collections. They can follow shifting boundaries displayed on rare historic maps, meet men and women of the day, and view rare objects and personal belongings.

Taking a patently different course, and recognizing that history also encompasses the baffling, AHS staff exhibited the Silverbell Artifacts. It may be characteristic of human nature to create historic puzzles—Scotland’s “Nessie” is a well-known example—but Arizona has its own mystery in the form of relics purportedly of “Roman” origin. Whoever produced them, the Silverbell Artifacts are a popular draw whenever they are displayed; it seems everyone likes a good story.

Less controversial, but equally appealing, are traveling displays of Arizona’s geologic past, mining history, and significant mineral collections, as well as components of the centennial “100 Years ~ 100 Quilts” exhibit, both of which have reached communities in all corners of the state. For the serious researcher, library and archival collections are being processed and made accessible at an accelerated rate. The index to *The Journal of Arizona History* is now available on-line through the AHS website, and the entire back run of articles is accessible through JSTOR. Increased public access to AHS resources, using a variety of formats, is one of our core values and a commitment to our constituents.

We invite you to discover history at the Arizona Historical Society. We wish you an enjoyable journey.

With warm regards,

Anne I. Woosley, Ph.D.  
Executive Director