



2014 Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends:

Throughout the Arizona Historical Society's sesquicentennial year, I have been reminded how highly personal is history. History is biography and autobiography; history is our story as an individual or a group, as a community, a state, or a nation. As a species, we humans are compulsive about documenting our lives, as evidenced by archives of all kinds—the letters, diaries, and photographs we keep—and the objects we collect. In this technological age, it is no accident that smart phones include camera and video settings, which grow ever more sophisticated with each improved generation. No experience, whether celebratory or tragic, no backyard family gathering or vacation, no sports event or concert, or merely hiking with the family dog, seems to lack some sort of photo documentation. We are our planet's ultimate chroniclers. The means of delivery may have changed over the millennia, from unwritten narratives handed down by word of mouth, to epics sung by jongleurs, to the written word presented on clay tablets, papyrus, parchment, paper, and now electronically, in all its sometimes undisciplined formats, but at heart we remain storytellers. The story, whatever form it takes, is fundamental to how we view the world in which we live.

The Arizona Historical Society serves as the keeper of stories, both intimate and panoramic. Through its museum facilities, AHS provides the physical conduit by which anyone, regardless of background, can discover his or her own history alongside the histories of other individuals, familiar and unfamiliar. Its archival and artifact collections preserve the documents and objects

that illuminate the history of Arizona and the West. Its various public programs afford the opportunity to participate in a learning experience. If an on-site visit is difficult or impossible, the journey of discovery can begin on-line.

A perfect place to start is at the AHS Sanguinetti House Museum and Gardens, where visitors will observe how the personal story of a single individual unfolds into a broader understanding of the evolution of modern Yuma. Once the home of entrepreneur E. F. Sanguinetti (1867-1945), and donated by his descendants to the Arizona Historical Society, the museum introduces patrons to the Victorian-era home of a successful businessman and community leader. The so-called “territorial office” tweaks the imagination with images of local merchants making deals that shaped the community. We can imagine tea being served in the parlor. The sound of the railroad whistle in a changing gallery sharpens our senses to the hustle and bustle of Madison Avenue, Yuma’s main thoroughfare, and reminds us of the community’s vibrant heyday as a transportation crossroads. As we move into the Italian-inspired formal gardens, filled with exotic flowers that Sanguinetti imported and loved, we turn our backs on the surrounding desert and enter a lush environment that is as inviting today as it must have been during Sanguinetti’s lifetime. Refreshed from their on-site history tour, visitors can explore Yuma’s rich past in the archival and historic photograph collections available at the nearby Heritage Library. These collections are accessible to anyone, anywhere, through the AHS on-line catalog.

Similar experiences await audiences, from near and far, at Arizona Historical Society museums in Flagstaff, Tempe, and Tucson. Curious visitors and researchers need only scroll through the AHS website (ArizonaHistoricalSociety.org) to discover the broad content and exciting variety of programs, activities, special events, and services available through the Arizona Historical Society.

The Arizona Historical Society’s 150th birthday milestone deserves special recognition. A century and a half after its enactment by the Territorial Legislature in 1864, AHS is vital and thriving. After pondering how best to mark this special year, we decided to produce an anniversary edition of *The Journal of Arizona History*. Compiled and written by staff from across the Society’s divisions and departments, “AHS at 150” highlights emblematic objects in our collections—the dramatic and the mundane, the significant and the modest—all of which reflect the “real people, real stories” that are at the heart of AHS’s mission. Many of these artifacts are on special display at AHS museums around the state.

We thank you, the members and friends of the Arizona Historical Society, for traveling with us, marking our passage through every twist and turn of our state’s history, and joining us as we tackle the future.

With warm regards,

Anne I. Woosley, Ph.D.
Executive Director