



2012 Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends:

Arizona is 100! During the past several months, numerous conversations with friends and colleagues have begun with: “What else happened in 1912, the year Arizona became a state?” It was quite a year. On a high note, the U.S. Public Health Service was founded. A 190 kg meteorite wondrously exploded over Holbrook, AZ. The Titanic tragically sank. And, for those who applaud innovation, the first zippers were purportedly sewn into clothing.

Nineteen twelve was also the year that distinguished educator, and lifelong public servant, John. W. Gardner was born. Always at the ready with a good quote, he once observed that “history never looks like history when we are passing through it.” I have often thought about this quotation in light of the almost 400 separate centennial events and projects initiated by communities large and small, in every county, to commemorate Arizona’s admission as the 48th State: projects recognizing influential individuals; campaigns to preserve historic buildings and archives; tributes to veterans; programs that entertained with film, music, and song, and others that educated, whether online or with exhibitions, publications, and public lectures. Many observances focused on the contributions of industries, universities, and service organizations to the growth of Arizona and the welfare of its citizens. Who can forget the amazing (as in “Amazing Arizona!”) signature events, especially the Best Fests that attracted 75,000 attendees in Prescott and drew more than 150,000 celebrants in Phoenix; the beautiful centennial evening *Fandango! Arizona* gala in Phoenix; the splendid State Capitol fireworks display; and the 4,000-member motorcycle cavalcade, whose first wave of riders reached the capitol just as the last riders were leaving Mesa.

Throughout our centennial year, we Arizonans knew that we were a part of history. Those thousands of us who toured the Best Fest pavilions suddenly discovered ourselves looking into the future, even as we were re-experiencing Arizona’s rich and diverse past. At this moment in time, we were well aware that we were making history, and not merely passing through. In 2012, we joined together to celebrate our state’s history with an enthusiasm that gives optimism for Arizona’s future.

Michael Wade, in his president’s letter within our 2012 Annual Report, eloquently details AHS’s many contributions in this centennial year. As executive director, I share the board and staff’s pride of accomplishment as we reflect on a remarkable 100 years of statehood and look forward to our second century.

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Executive Director