

TITLE: Grace Sparkes photograph collection

DATE RANGE: approximately 1930s-1950s

CALL NUMBER: PC 126

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION: .5 linear ft. (1 box)

PROVENANCE: Donated by the estate of Grace M. Sparkes.

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CREDIT LINE: Grace Sparkes photograph collection, PC 126, Arizona Historical Society-Tucson

PROCESSED BY: Processed by Dena McDuffie, May 2001

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE: Wallace Stegner wrote of the “boomers,” people “always on the lookout for the big chance, the ground floor, the inside track...” The Sparkes family--like many who came West in the early 1900s--were boomers who came to Arizona seeking their fortune. They were not well-educated, but were hard workers who believed firmly in the American Dream.

Grace Sparkes' mother, Mary Ann Martin, was born in 1858 in Houghton, Michigan. She first married Will Hitchings (or Hutchins) and had three children, Will, Bertha and Sadie. Sadie died while still young. When Hitchings died, Mary Ann moved to the Black Hills of South Dakota where her parents were living. There, she met Thomas Jefferson Sparkes. T.J. Sparkes was a native of Sioux City, Iowa. Before meeting Mary Ann, he had struck it rich in the Yukon Territory; owned and published the first newspaper in Dawson, Alaska; endowed the first hospital in Nome; and represented Yukon miners before the Canadian government concerning protection of miners' rights. T.J. and Mary Ann (who Grace referred to, in correspondence, as a “stem winder”) were married in Lead, South Dakota in 1884. They had four children: Thomas Jefferson Jr. was born in 1886; John George “Jack”); Charity Alexander in 1888; and Grace Marion in 1893. It is unclear what happened to Mary Ann's children from her first marriage.

In 1906, when Grace (or “Babe,” a childhood nickname that stuck throughout her life) was 13 years old, her family moved to the Arizona territory. Sparkes loved the West and became an avid fan of horseback riding, rodeos, and camping. She could also triple-tongue on the cornet.

In Arizona, T.J. Sparkes Sr. continued in mining. He bought several mines, among them the Sioux Silver and Lead Mine, eight miles south of Prescott in the Hassayampa Mining District and the State of Texas Mine in Cochise County. Grace eventually inherited the mines and the State of Texas figured prominently in her later years. In 1930, T.J. ran and was elected Arizona State Mining Inspector, calling himself “A practical mining man who also knows the humane side of life.”

Sparkes graduated from St. Joseph's Academy, a Catholic girls' school in Prescott, in 1910. She was a convert to Catholicism and remained active in the church throughout her life. After graduation, she studied business and clerical studies at Lamson Business College in Phoenix and by 1913, she had begun her career as secretary/manager of the Yavapai County Chamber of Commerce. In addition, she became Immigration Commissioner of Yavapai County, a position she held until 1945.

Mary Ann Sparkes died in 1917. Grace never married. In her later years, when asked why she'd never married, Grace replied, "Oh that would mean just another job." During her tenure with the Yavapai County Chamber of Commerce she is credited with, among other things, building the Prescott Frontier Days rodeo into one of the most outstanding in the West; being one of the founders of the Smoki Tribe of Prescott ceremonial dances organized to perpetuate the rites of Arizona's Indian tribes; working on highway development; bringing new industries into the district; helping establish a U.S. Veterans hospital at Fort Whipple; aiding the livestock and copper industries; and developing an adequate water supply and recreational facilities of the Prescott area. She also took on a number of independent ventures including the Sharlot Hall Museum, Hassayampa Hotel (1927), Smoki Museum (1935), Hassayampa Country Club, the state YMCA camp, Tuzigoot National Monument, and was an editor of Yavapai Magazine (considered by some to have been a forerunner to Arizona Highways magazine).

During the Depression, Sparkes was appointed to oversee the implementation of government relief programs in Yavapai County. In 1934, despite the Arizona legislature's decision to forgo funding an exhibit at the Chicago Century of Progress Exposition, Sparkes raised funds and built an exhibit. Sparkes went to Chicago as Arizona Governor Benjamin B. Mouef's representative at the Exposition. Arizona Congresswoman Isabella Greenway dedicated the exhibit and Sparkes was honored with a ride on a sled pulled by Alaskan huskies.

The year 1938, after 25 years with the Yavapai County Chamber of Commerce, Sparkes was involved in a dispute between the old and new guards at the Chamber. In anger and frustration, Sparkes quit her job and began working with Yavapai Associates, an organization financed through the Yavapai County Board of Supervisors. Sparkes considered throwing her hat in the political ring and running for Congress, but eventually decided to consider other options. In 1945, Yavapai Associates was disbanded and Sparkes found herself out of a job.

She decided to grab this chance to pursue an old passion: mining. Grace's sister Charity (nicknamed "Dolly" by friends and family) had married Perry L. Bones who became a friend of Grace's as well as her mining associate. They moved to Hereford, Arizona where Sparkes owned the State of Texas Mine in southern Arizona on the south side of the Huachuca Mountains, which had been bought by her father in 1926. The Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC) was a government agency established in 1932 by the Hoover administration. Its purpose was to facilitate economic activity by lending money during the Depression. At first it lent money only to financial, industrial, and agricultural institutions, but its scope was greatly widened by Franklin Delano Roosevelt as part of his New Deal administration. In the 1940s, Sparkes received a loan of \$14,000 for the mine.

For the next 20 years, Sparkes and Bones tried to make a go of the mine. Their efforts were enormous, but the payoff was small. During World War II, when the U.S. Government

sponsored mining of materials important to the war effort, mining was active at the State of Texas. After the war, when the mine ran dry, Sparkes felt the government had taken advantage of her and not paid her her due. She spent the next 20 years protesting this treatment and campaigning for bills to support small mine operators. Her correspondence indicates she was decidedly unhappy with Harry Truman after he vetoed bills designed to help the small mine operator.

In order to support their mining dreams, Sparkes tried to obtain work as an enumerator for the 1950 census, but her efforts proved unsuccessful. During this time, Sparkes worked hard to establish Coronado National Monument at the site where Coronado entered what is now the United States in 1540, searching for Cibola. Due in large part to her efforts, President Truman signed a proclamation declaring Coronado National Monument in November 1952. By 1960, she was working one day per week for the National Park Service as Park Historian, writing history of Coronado National Monument and providing information and interpretation to park visitors.

Sparkes' sister Charity died in 1954; her brother-in-law Perry L. Bones followed in 1963. That same year, Grace Sparkes, age 70, died following surgery. Sparkes was inducted as a member of the Arizona Women's Hall of Fame in 1985.

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: This is a small collection of photographs, taken and collected by Grace Sparkes. Photographs of many of Sparkes' correspondents (see MS 0752) are included in this collection. Some photographs of note include: rodeos, hunting, mining and coppersmiths, Native Americans, and Sharlot Hall. Also included are photos of actor Tom Mix and a signed photograph of actress Tallulah Bankhead. Many of the images included in this collection, especially those with images of outside Arizona, are postcards.

CONTAINER LIST:

Box	Folder	Description	Dates
1	1	Finding aid	undated
	2	Arizona	undated
	3	California	undated
	4	Colorado - scenery and cliff dwellings	undated
	5	People, identified	undated
	6	Mexico	undated
	7	Mining	undated
	8	Miscellaneous	undated
	9	New Mexico	undated
	10-11	Sparkes family photos	undated
	12	People, unidentified	undated