

Spring
2022

Litchfield Legends

A publication of the Litchfield Park Historical Society and Museum

A LOOK TO OUR FUTURE

P.W. LITCHFIELD HERITAGE CENTER PROJECT UPDATE

We have exciting news!

Our future home, **The P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center**, is now **71% funded!** Our current total is **\$2,497,500** of our **\$3.5-million-dollar** goal. Once we have reached that goal, construction will begin to repurpose and expand the historic Litchfield/Denny house into the Southwest Valley's regional cultural center. The Litchfield/Denny house is located on the 21-acre hilltop on the northwest corner of Litchfield and Camelback Roads.

This land was once a portion of the original **Rancho La Loma**, the winter home of Paul and Florence Litchfield. Notable figures such as Barry Goldwater, Cardinal Spellman, the former Shah

of Iran, and Lord Trenchard (the founder of England's Royal Air Force) once visited the Litchfields at their home on the hill. In the springtime, thousands attended the popular Desert Devotionals and Easter Sunrise Services. Built in 1935, it was expanded in the late 1970s by Edith and Wally Denny. Edith was the youngest daughter of Paul and Florence Litchfield. At that time, the property was lush with trees and gardens and populated with peacocks. The plans are to restore this historic property with our Heritage Center showcasing the history, arts, and culture of the Southwest Valley.



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www.LPHSMuseum.org



Kenneth McMicken

Historical Background

This historic location will become a destination for both area residents and tourists visiting the Valley of the Sun to learn more about the significant national and international achievements made by **Paul Litchfield** in the rubber industry and **Kenneth McMicken's** contributions to the agricultural industry. Paul Litchfield, once called *the dean of the rubber industry*, was the

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hi everyone,

One tour, two great events!

This year's **LPHS 3rd Annual Home Tour** offered a fabulous Friday night Cocktail Party followed by Saturday's tour of six unique homes. We thank all of our supporters of the event, with special appreciation going to the tour homeowners, who opened their homes to our attendees. Our Home Tour booklet highlighted supporting businesses and included a special message from Mayor Tom Schoaf. If you did not attend the event, stop by the museum for a copy of our booklet, there are still some available.



Our focus this month is the **P. W. Litchfield Heritage Center**, our new home. We begin our article with an overview of the area's history, and the impact Mr. Litchfield made on the Southwest Valley. This is followed by key LHC *Project Milestones* to date and then a *Look Ahead*. The Center is the future of the Southwest Valley. I encourage you to join us on this exciting adventure to bring the Heritage Center to life.

Don't miss the "Wingfoot Express and the Birth of Transcontinental Trucking", this issue's history spot. The article focuses on Paul Litchfield's endeavor to create a method of transporting consumer goods long distances and also ties in to our "Rolling on Rubber" exhibit. You will enjoy reading about the trials and tribulations of early tire technology expanding from automobiles to a fleet of vehicles transporting goods across the country.

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Special Thanks

The City of Litchfield Park

Our 2nd **Annual Ride & Seek** bike scavenger hunt is coming April 23rd. This is an event for the entire family. There will be new historical information to discover over three routes. So grab your bike, your family, and friends and join in the search for interesting and fun tidbits from our local history.

As we wrap up a busy season, I want to acknowledge the *unsung heroes* of our organization, our **volunteers**. They are your board, the docents that greet you at the museum, the volunteers working at our events, and those creating educational programs for all ages. Let us know if you would like to be part of the LPHS. We are offering a Volunteer Orientation twice a year.

On a special note, we are currently working with the **Three Rivers Historical Society** (3RHS) as they go through the process of dissolution of their organization. I would like to share with you a few words from 3RHS President JoAnn Gongaware: "*We appreciate all of the help and cooperation from the Litchfield Park Historical Society during this process.*" There will be more from JoAnn in our next issue. We thank JoAnn and look forward to her article in our fall issue.

Enjoy the wonderful Arizona spring weather. Those triple digits are just around the corner!

See you soon.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy".

Nancy Schafer,
LPHS Board President

Bicycle Scavenger Hunt Returns April 23rd



History is all around us!

That's the basis of the **Litchfield Park Ride & Seek** bicycle scavenger hunt, which returns this year. Grab your bike and bring along your friends and family for a ride through Litchfield Park to experience history outdoors.

The event will start **Saturday, April 23 at 7:00 am**, at the gazebo on the southeast corner of **Wigwam Blvd and Old Litchfield Rd** and includes a choice of three routes ranging from two to five miles in length, which can be completed on foot or by other modes of transportation.

On-site registration and packet pickup is available from **7:00 am – 12:00 pm** at the gazebo. Early registration opens online beginning **April 1st** at **www.LPHSMuseum.org** Participants will have until Sunday, 5:00 pm to complete the routes at their own pace.

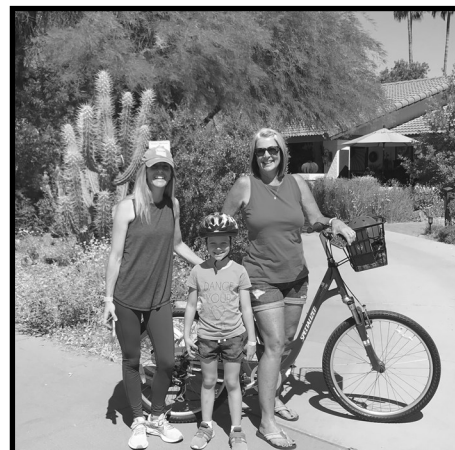
Last year's participants followed maps and clues to find QR codes revealing fascinating information about military heroes, local culture, and the unique architectural features of Litchfield Park, such as the original St. Thomas Aquinas mission church and the trio of streetlights found around the historic commercial area. Building on last year's success, this year's routes will highlight new landmarks and reveal more interesting bits of history.

Registration is **\$25 per family** or **\$15 per individual**. All scavenger hunt participants will be entered into a drawing for gift cards from local businesses.

Scavenger hunt riders are also strongly encouraged to bring a water bottle, wear helmets, and follow Arizona cycling laws. Bring a smart phone so you can access the clues using our QR codes. A signed release of liability form will be required for all riders on the day of the event. Minors will need a parent signature.

All proceeds go toward the funding of the Litchfield Park Historical Society Museum's exhibits and programs.

For more information, visit **www.LPHSMuseum.org**



What: Litchfield Park Ride & Seek Bike Scavenger Hunt

Where: Gazebo at southeast corner of Wigwam Blvd and Old Litchfield Rd

Event Check in and Registration: 7:00 am - 12:00 pm on Saturday, April 23.

(Participants can begin any time after 7:00 am and have until Sunday at 5:00 pm to finish.)

Registration: \$15 per individual or \$25 per family

Early registration online at www.LPHSMuseum.org

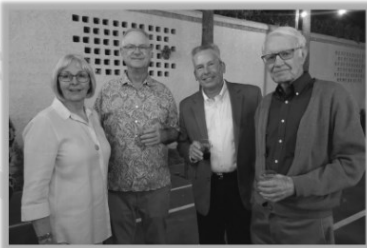
Las Posadas



Annual Meeting



Home Tour



Friends of the Museum
Cocktail Party

Musical
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Concert



Enrichment
Classes



Speakers
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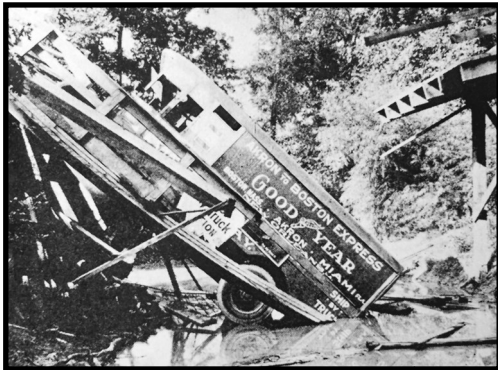


The Wingfoot Express and the Birth of Transcontinental Trucking

By Libby Hilton Rouse

One could argue that Litchfield Park owes its existence not only to World War I, but to advances in tire technology. With international trade disrupted by war, Paul Litchfield came to Arizona looking for a new way to access long-staple cotton, a key ingredient which would be particularly important in a product poised to change the trucking industry forever--Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company's cotton cord pneumatic truck tire.

While this tire technology was already in use on passenger cars, solid rubber tires were still considered the best option for heavy trucks. Goodyear's new pneumatic truck tire however, had more plies than a car tire, increasing strength while maintaining flexibility and resilience for a smooth ride. The auto industry remained doubtful; but Paul Litchfield was convinced that these tires would make trucks more efficient in hauling manufactured goods.



To prove the new tire's ability to withstand the rigors of long-haul transport, a demonstration was planned. Drivers would deliver and pick up company products from Akron, Ohio to Boston, Massachusetts then proceed to Goodyear's fabric mill in Killingly, Connecticut before returning to Akron.

On April 9, 1917, a five-ton Packard truck with a ten-foot-high custom body built by Goodyear set out from Akron. With an enclosed sleeping compartment behind the driver's seat, a two-man crew could alternate driving and resting. Thus was born the first sleeper cab in the trucking industry. Outfitted with the newly developed heavy duty pneumatic tires, the truck carried a dozen spares, a compressor to inflate them, 500 feet of sturdy rope, shovels, and a heavy block and tackle. Two support autos with a tire engineer, a movie man, and a publicist, completed the caravan.

On the first day it took 16 hours to travel a three-mile stretch of unpaved muddy road just outside of Akron. So began an agonizing odyssey of muddy ditches, broken bridges, blown-out tires, and engine failures. Bridges adequate for farm wagons and lightweight buggies

collapsed under the Packard truck. With the addition of more rope and a winch, the crew rapidly mastered the task of hauling themselves out of the mud. The fleet arrived in Killingly greeted by a brass band and hundreds of Goodyear fabric mill girls, though it was 21 days overdue. Benefiting from experience, the caravan returned to Akron in five days.

Soon this Akron-Boston shuttle fleet grew to four trucks, regularly delivering company products such as tires, shoe soles, and tire fabric. Dubbed the *Wingfoot Express*, it now averaged a round-trip of five days—a schedule the railroads could not match.

The Transcontinental Motor Express

The next phase of the Wingfoot Express mission began on September 1, 1918, when the fleet transported supplies from Boston to San Francisco in 21 days. Roads and bridges, not the trucks or the tires, were the biggest obstacles on their journey. More than 70% of the trip was on dirt roads and across trackless desert. Most bridges were not built to withstand heavy loads. In Wyoming the trucks broke through 52 crude bridges that had to be reinforced before continuing. Eventually, Express trucks established a new world transcontinental record travelling coast to coast in 14 days.



After further study, Goodyear developed a new design for a six-wheeled vehicle. It allowed for increased payload, greater speed, and less wear on the tires than four-wheeled trucks. By the early 1920s, the practicality of long-distance hauling on pneumatic-tired trucks was proven. Goodyear retired the Wingfoot Express but would continue to innovate and expand.

This story is one of many exploring the history of rubber and its global impact in our current exhibit, *Rolling on Rubber: How Need Inspires Innovation*.



GOODYEAR
AKRON

President and CEO of Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. from 1926 to 1940 and Chairman of the Board from 1940 to 1958. Kenneth McMicken, an expert in cotton and feeder cattle, oversaw the work done at **Goodyear Farms** (earlier called the **Southwest Cotton Co**). This Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. subsidiary was an experimental farm whose work drew national and international visitors interested in learning the latest agricultural methods at their annual Farm Forums beginning in 1943. Two additional Goodyear subsidiaries, **Goodyear Aircraft** and later **Goodyear Aerospace**, were also of national and international importance. Goodyear Aircraft aided the nation's WWII efforts and assisted the US and its allies in winning the war. Goodyear Aerospace was one of the leaders in the aerospace industry, especially with the development of its **SARS** radar equipment.

In addition to the 70-year-long history of the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. in the Southwest Valley, exhibits in the Heritage Center will display the histories of Avondale, Goodyear, Litchfield Park, and Tolleson. Included in this extraordinary narrative will be the rich Mexican American legacy that left an indelible imprint on each of these communities. Another exhibit – **Agriculture in the Southwest Valley** – will also include an array of significant Arizona farmers and ranchers. Some of the notable agricultural families already selected are the Rayners, the Boswells, the Lakins, the Gladdens, the Jarnagins, the Duncans, the Espils, the Rosztozcys, and the Roveys.

Project Milestones

In 2018, a one-million-dollar challenge grant was gifted to the LPHS from **John and Pamela Denny Blackford** (granddaughter of Paul Litchfield) that was to be used to repurpose the historic house. The City of Litchfield Park gave approval to the

LPHS to proceed with the development of a design and plans for the new facility.



Paul W. Litchfield

In early 2019, a contract was extended to the award-winning **Orcutt|Winslow Architectural Firm** to redesign the interior of the house into a public facility that would include a **museum, an archive, a gift shop, a research library, and an assembly room** for public programming. The new design includes a large

south-facing **exterior terrace**. The terrace and assembly room will be available as rental space. The building will be expanded from two to **three levels** and encompass over **11,000 square feet**.

As the design phase progressed, the LPHS awarded **Waltz Construction Company** the position of general contractor and project manager of the future Heritage Center.

In 2020/2021 - Plans for the Heritage Center were approved by the **City of Litchfield Park's Design Review Board and City Council**.

Looking Ahead

The **Heritage Center** will be a significant contribution to the preservation of the history and culture of the Southwest Valley. The plans include a substantial archive where we will be able to preserve historically valuable photos, films, oral histories, logs, journals, letters, documents, and artifacts for future generations. A research library will be available for scholars.

In addition, extensive opportunities will be available for members of the various Southwest Valley communities to participate in cultural activities and informal learning experiences. If you have ever toured one of our exhibits, attended one of our **"Speakers Series"** presentations, enjoyed one of our community

events such as *Las Posadas* and our **Ride & Seek family bike event**, or participated in one of **our small classes** to learn about cactus gardening or the story of wool, you know how informative and pleasurable they can be. **These happenings are only the beginning!** When we move up to the hill, we will be offering an even greater array of cultural experiences you will not find elsewhere.

We have a little over one million dollars left to raise, and you can become a part of this unique project. We need everyone's help. Come to our current museum and see the plans. Tell everyone you know about the Heritage Center and what it will mean for our Southwest Valley communities. Become one of our **Founding Donors** and have your name listed on our **Founders' Wall**. We still have some **Naming Opportunities** available where you can have your company's name, your family's name, or that of a loved one commemorated for an area of our new facility. All donations, monetary or *in-kind*, are greatly appreciated. For further information please contact our office at **623-535-4414** or email us at **office@LPHSMuseum.org**.

“Come up to the Hill” and be a part of the vision for the future!

Did you know...

The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company was named in honor of Charles Goodyear, an American self-taught chemist who developed vulcanized rubber?

Early 20th century tire technology relied on cotton? Tires were built up around a carcass composed of successive plies of rubberized cotton fabric which gave body and strength to the tire.



We are always looking to fill the gaps in our collection. Our Archivist, Judy Cook would like to add a **Blackberry** device. It does not need to be functional. Please think of us when sorting through old photos and items relating to our area's history. Thank you.

Sponsors

Tier 1—\$1000 Level



LA LOMA VILLAGE

www.SunHealthCommunities.org
14154 Denny Blvd, Litchfield Park, AZ 85340
623.537.7450

Tier 3 - \$500 Level



www.Océano-Rentals.com
PO Box 2357, Litchfield Park, AZ 85340



OriginsBedandBreakfast.com
5180 E Comanche Dr, Cottonwood, AZ 86326



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www.wigwamresort.com
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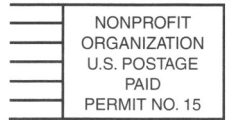
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Peter Mahoney, Park Café, Old Pueblo Café,
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PO Box 1936
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Location Address: 13912 W Camelback Rd.

Email: office@LPHSMuseum.org
www.LPHSMuseum.org





Help keep the wheels turning at our Museum!



To learn more call
844-569-4483

Or visit our website at
www.LPHSMuseum.org

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JOIN US! Become a Member Today!
LPHS 2022 Membership/Special Donation Form
 January 1 – December 31, 2022 membership year

Name _____ Spouse's Name _____
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Annual Membership Dues Single Adult \$25 Family \$35
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I would like to make an additional Special Donation of:
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Please make your check payable to the LPHS and send it to:
Litchfield Park Historical Society
PO Box 1936
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Would you be interested in volunteering for our organization? Yes
 The Litchfield Park Historical Society is an official IRS 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation, and membership dues and other donations are tax deductible for persons who itemize.

Support Opportunities Include.....

Amazon Smile Program:

Sign onto <https://smile.amazon.com> and select the Litchfield Park Historical Society as the non-profit you wish to support.

LPHS will receive a percentage of certain purchases – just like the cash-back rebates on credit cards.– every time you shop at smile.amazon.com

Scan this QR code to connect to our Support Page. It is through your dues and fundraising support that we are able to continue our efforts.

