

Spring
2023

Litchfield Legends

A publication of the Litchfield Park Historical Society and Museum

Growing Into the Future

P.W. Litchfield HERITAGE CENTER



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The Litchfield Park Historical Society is rapidly moving into a new era. Established in 2001, the initial years of the organization were spent hosting several Founders' Day events, producing four DVDs, and erecting a permanent WWI Memorial. In addition, the Society established an archive of historic photos, documents, letters, and ledgers, as well as beginning a research library. In October of 2012, the organization opened a four-gallery museum in *Aunt Mary's House*, part of the historic *Rancho La Loma* property once owned by Paul Weeks Litchfield. Litchfield, designated as the *dean of the rubber industry* during the first half of the 20th century, was President and CEO of the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. from 1926 to 1940. Since the establishment of the museum, the organization has mounted over 25 exhibits, published one book (*Los Campos*) and two booklets, in addition to holding numerous public events, classes, and lectures.

Now the Society finds itself immersed in another change – one that is both exciting and energizing. Using a *dba (doing business as)*, the Society will now be operating under a new name – the **P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center** – a non-profit cultural facility with a **regional focus**. Along with the name change will be a **new logo**, one that highlights its

prominent agricultural history. Our organization will showcase the development of four major Arizona cities in the immediate Southwest Valley – Avondale, Goodyear, Litchfield Park, and Tolleson. The vision of the Heritage Center is *to be the historical and cultural heart of the Southwest Valley*. As such, our mission is *to connect generations by fostering an understanding and appreciation of the history, arts, and culture of the Southwest Valley*. How will the staff of the Heritage Center accomplish that?

As we move forward in an ever-changing world, *the power of place* has become a term that is used to describe how an individual relates to his or her community. That has become a challenge across our country, which has been peopled by a richly diverse and mobile society. How can a member of any community (especially a new member) experience a sense of belonging and become invested in their community? Our organization has been involved in promoting that process for over 20 years. By relating the history and cultural heritages of the area to members of the community, the Society has attempted to encourage a sense of *pride of place* to individuals who were born here as well as those new to the area. By learning the history of the

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A Letter from the President

"Spring is Nature's Way of Saying 'Let's Party.'" Robin Williams

Bring your friends and family and "party" with us! This month is our Fourth Annual Home Tour that will include six beautiful and architecturally unique homes in Litchfield Park. Our committee begins working on this special event almost a year in advance. We extend our appreciation to each of the six homeowners who open up their homes for an entire day. Without their generosity, this event would not be possible.



Our feature article on the rebranding of the Litchfield Park Historical Society into the P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center provides insight into the steps we are taking to move forward and embrace the incredible growth and success we are experiencing. From Wikipedia, "Heritage is the full range of our inherited traditions, monuments, objects, and culture. It is the range of contemporary activities, meanings, and behavior...". This is who we are and what we continue to bring to you, providing a fabulous museum with changing exhibits and an educational outreach program of speakers and small classes for special learning opportunities. Of course, none of this would be possible without the incredible, continuing support of YOU!

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Special Thanks

The City of Litchfield Park

There is so much more in this issue than I can cover in this message. Please take time to read each article. They are written by our volunteers and are meant to inform, inspire, and entice you to visit us and participate in our programs and events. *And*, if you are not already, consider becoming a member.

The incredible history of the Southwest Valley is all around you. Stay in touch with us through social media, sign up for our email blasts at office@lphsmuseum.org, and stop by the museum in Aunt Mary's House to learn more.

Have a wonderful spring and summer. I hope to see you soon!



Nancy Schafer
LPHS Board President

Is This Your Last Issue of Litchfield Legends?

The Litchfield Park Historical Society will soon be transitioning to a more cost-effective delivery of the biannual newsletter. Interested persons who sign up to join our email list will receive an electronic version. **LPHS members will continue to receive a mailed hard copy version - in color!**

We are asking everyone to support our programming efforts by becoming a member today. The 2023 membership form is on the insert page in this edition. **Don't let it be your last hard copy of our newsletter!** Our newsletter keeps you informed of upcoming events such as *Las Posadas*, the spring Home Tour, our Speaker Series, new exhibits, and Hands-On History Events for the kids. **Please join today.**

For those of you who don't wish for membership benefits, you can sign up for email notices on our website at www.LPHSMuseum.org Scroll down to the bottom of the page to: **Sign Up To Get Email Updates.**

The Hidden Story of Guayule and the Link between Government-Funded Research, a Japanese Internment Camp, and Ralph Waldo Emerson

You may already know that the latex used in rubber products comes from rubber trees, but it's not the only plant that produces this substance. *Guayule* (pronounced Y-yoo-lee) is a woody plant or shrub native to Mexico which also thrives in the arid deserts of the southwestern United States. Many American rubber companies have studied it as an alternative to rubber trees, or *hevea brasiliensis*, located on plantations near the equator. Here in the Southwest Valley, Goodyear Farms experimented with guayule for several years, but it was WWII that would intensify interest in this plant.



Guayule Tire

In March of 1942, after the attack on Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, by the Empire of Japan, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066. This order resulted in the forced relocation of more than 120,000 Japanese Americans into ten different internment camps – most located in the southwestern United States.

Although these individuals came from a Japanese heritage, two thirds of these detainees were native-born American citizens. One of the camps was in California, situated between Sequoia National Park and Death Valley on an abandoned townsite. Unoccupied since 1929, *Manzanar*, which means *apple orchard* in Spanish, soon became home to an internee population that would peak at over 11,000 adults and children. About 90% came from the Los Angeles area. Housing consisted of hastily built, tarpaper-covered pine barracks that offered little protection from heat and cold. Meals were meager. The 540-acre detention camp was surrounded by a perimeter fence of barbed wire and eight guard towers equipped with machine guns.

In spite of being uprooted from their homes and communities to endure sub-standard living conditions, the spirit of these Japanese Americans rose above the situation. They cultivated individual gardens to help supplement the sparse food supply, and internees snuck

out of the camp to go fishing, bringing their catches back to the camp. They also developed a hog farm, a chicken ranch, and an orchard with all ages of detainees helping to maintain them. Soon a school was built, a newspaper established, a hospital erected, and other businesses formed. They even participated in games such as baseball to pass the time. Though it functioned as a small city which helped the detainees survive their circumstances, Manzanar's location and the world-wide disruption of the war ultimately led to a unique partnership.

The capture of rubber plantations in Asian colonies during WWII spurred the US government to search for ways to produce rubber from alternate sources. Much of the research was in California due to the high number of research labs located there. One such project, the Emergency Rubber Project (ERP) in Salinas, California, involved more than 1,000 scientists and technicians and the cultivation of 32,000 acres of guayule. But it was the work of a small team of scientists at Manzanar on only five acres of land which eventually proved to be the most successful.

CAL Tech professor and grandnephew of American poet and essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson, Dr. Robert Emerson, was sympathetic to the plight of the incarcerated Japanese Americans. Manzanar held high-level scientists, many of whom Dr. Emerson knew personally. He recruited from



Arthur Nonomura

the group of these detainees a nuclear physicist (Dr. M. Nishimura), a chemist (Dr. K. Nozaki), an organic chemist (Homer Kimura), a cytologist (Frank Hirasawa), and a mechanical engineer – men who were well-educated and intelligent scientists. These men, along with 35 others, worked to develop a high-quality rubber from

the *guayule* plant to support the United States' war effort. With a budget of only \$100, they produced a higher yield plant and a higher quality of rubber than the plantation tree rubber or the larger Emergency Rubber Project that was conducted in Salinas. The tensile strength of the rubber produced at Manzanar

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4TH AN LITCHFIELD HOME

This year 6 beautiful homes
are available for you to choose from.

Saturday, May 13, 2023

10 am - 2 pm

Tickets: \$100.00

On-line, at the museum website

Friends of the Museum

Held Friday night

Gourmet food, West

and a home tour

Friday, May 12, 2023

6 pm - 8 pm

Tickets: \$100.00

On-line, at the museum website

More information and tickets

www.lphs.org



The Home Tour is
for your support of the Museum.
All proceeds go to the Museum.

Co-Chairmen

Judy Fulton

Meredeth Stucky

ANNUAL ELD PARK TOUR

Beautiful homes
to tour at your leisure.

March 25, 2023

10 am to 4 pm

Ticket: \$35.00

10 am, day of the event



Museum Cocktail Party

Event before the Tour.

Valley Youth Orchestra,

ticket for Saturday.

March 24, 2023

6 pm – 9 pm

Cost: \$10, limited to 100.

at the museum.



Additional tickets are available at

museum.org

*The team thanks you
for this Home Tour.
for the museum's operating budget.*

Home Tour Team

Anne Clair

Angie Heppner

Tray Olds

Bridget Schleifer

Diane Smith

MJ Smyrl

Debra Swanso

Janna Willingham



In Our Gift Shop ...

**Ernest Hemingway once said,
“There is no friend as loyal as a book.”**

Our gift shop provides both the casual and avid reader with an interesting and unique collection of books. We encourage you to stop by and find a *friend*, or a gift for a friend. On our shelves, we have a collection of Arcadia’s *Images of America* series that focuses on Arizona. Four of the books showcase each one of the cities of the Southwest Valley, taking you on an historical and visual journey through Goodyear, Tolleson, Avondale, and Litchfield Park. If you enjoy the unusual, we have “*Arizona’s Haunted Route 66*” book compiled by Debe Branning from the *Haunted America* series. Another offering is a beautiful *coffee table* book entitled “*Goodyear – The First*



100 Years” with a forward written by famous race car driver, A.J. Foyt. For the children in your life, we have a delightful book entitled “*Chloe and the Desert Heroes – A Tale of Adventure in the Sonoran Desert.*” This story relates the adventures of a 12-year-old girl who is lost in the desert and must find her way home. For fun, at the end of the book, there is an *Activities* section filled with word searches, scrambles, and other games that will delight any child. Our best seller, “*Los Campos,*” is in its second printing. Published by the LPHS, this book is filled with over 300 photos and personally written accounts of the lives of the families who lived in the camps of Litchfield Park from 1929 through 1986 when The Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. sold their land.

Beyond books!

In addition to our great collection of books, we have a new selection of Kachinas. Each one is individually carved, painted, and signed by a Pueblo Native American who created it. These miniature sculptures are adorned with

ceremonial feathers representing a spirit that reflects the beliefs of their native culture.

Our Oaxacan carvings are made by the families that live in the small communities in the Oaxacan Valley in Mexico. They are carved from the wood of the Copal Tree. The figures are often whimsical, bringing to life animals, birds, and reptiles of all sizes. Each one hand is painted, unique, and signed by the individual who made it.



The continuing popularity of our *HP Silver* bracelets and earrings has been amazing! We first discovered this great Arizona based company at a Phoenix Gift Show where we purchased a few bracelets for resale. As they say – “the rest is history.” The *HP Silver* company began in 2006 in Bisbee, Arizona, using local copper and artisan designs based on those created by craftsmen from Taxco, Mexico. The original bracelets, which are still the best sellers in their line, are made of copper, white copper, and leather. Most exciting is their newest addition made with natural cork. The beautiful sage colored leather is from the prickly pear cactus. Of course, we also have lovely earrings and copper bracelets made from both regular copper and silver copper for both men and women.



These are just a few of the items in our unique collection of Southwest themed products available for purchase. And, as a 501(c)(3) organization, profits from your purchases in our gift shop help our museum continue to tell the stories of the history, arts, and culture of the Southwest Valley region.

Southwest Valley, one begins to understand *how to fit into the community, how to contribute to the community, and how to become a part of the community's history as it unfolds.*

After years of research, the staff of the Heritage Center is of the opinion that **the history of the near Southwest Valley is the most extraordinary story in Maricopa County and one of the most significant narratives in the state of Arizona.** People from all walks of life and backgrounds – from its earliest inhabitants through to today's residents – have struggled to make a home in the desert. Their determination and hard work created **a rich agricultural legacy and an aerospace industry** which have impacted state, national, and international events. A knowledge of this history and the cultures that contributed to this history promotes *pride of place.* One cannot know this history without wanting to become a part of it. Today's actions and events become tomorrow's history.

Therefore, our organization has made plans to move to a much larger space – one that will help us grow and promote our vision and mission. Our new building will be housed in the historic Litchfield/Denny home on the hilltop north of our current building. It will contain a **nine-gallery museum** showcasing the history of the area including the four cities and their people, with one gallery turned over to changing exhibits. This will afford us space for school and tourist bus tours – something we are unable to do now. An **Assembly Room** will be available for intergenerational learning. The room will seat over 100 people and be used for lectures, classes, children's programming, dinners, and other community events – all encouraging a sense of shared interests and belonging. The lower floor of the facility will include an **archive** that will preserve artifacts and archival items in perpetuity and a **research library** that will specialize in the area's history. Currently we have four storage areas filled with artifacts, archival items, and books with unavailable access. We can't open our archive and library to scholars and the public without more space along with proper storage and security. The ultimate goal is for each visitor to come away from the Heritage Center with an appreciation and understanding of the rich and diverse history of the area from the people who first inhabited it to the establishment of the four cities that can be seen from the hilltop and are laid out between the Heritage Center and the Estrella Mountains.

Our **Capital Campaign** for the Heritage Center is **now 78% complete.** Become a Founding Donor today! Join with us to make the Heritage Center happen. Share your stories. Give us your photos and artifacts. Become a part of something good, something worthy. Help us build something worth creating – a space where we can all share in and experience *pride of place.*

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
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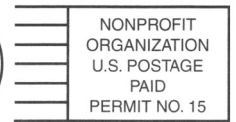
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and Papa Paul's



PO Box 1936
Litchfield Park, Arizona 85340

Location Address: 13912 W Camelback Rd.

Email: office@LPHSMuseum.org
www.LPHSMuseum.org
623.535.4414



Thanks to the generosity of donors like you, kids and families are connecting with exciting untold history in our communities.

Story of Guayule: Continued from Page 3

was 5,150 pounds per square inch (PSI) compared to 3,700 PSI from Salinas and 4,400 PSI from tree rubber. Tensile strength pertains to tension, i.e., the ability of the rubber to be stretched or extended. Guayule rubber accounted for 10% of the US supply during WWII.

Arthur Nonomura, PhD, a scientist and Litchfield Park resident, was visiting a colleague at the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. On his friend's desk was a small rubber tire with a relief imprint stamped on it saying *Manzanar*. Recognizing the name and its historical significance, he asked his friend if he might have it. Arthur loaned this tire to the LPHS to be put on exhibit and you can see this tire at the museum today. It may be the only rubber evidence left from the experiment in Manzanar. After WWII, President Harry Truman ordered that all seeds and crops from both projects were to be

plowed under and all records were classified. However, since the Manzanar group was headed by scientists with doctoral degrees, they published articles in various professional journals after the war. **Manzanar** was the sixth camp to be closed after WWII and is **now a National Historic Site**.

Today tire companies are again looking for a domestic source for rubber. Bridgestone is working with the University of Arizona and farmers in Pinal County to develop the cultivation of guayule. It uses 30% to 40% less water than alfalfa and if studies prove successful, has the potential to surpass cotton as the main crop in Pinal County. The plant has many benefits as it yields multiple harvests, creates habitat for desert wildlife, needs little maintenance, and can be used in making adhesives, natural pesticides, and biomass fuel.