

P.W. Litchfield HERITAGE CENTER



History, Arts, and Culture of the Southwest Valley

SPRING 2024

P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center - Phase 1



P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center - Phase 1 Concept Drawing (not final)

By Judy Cook

The Board of Directors of the Litchfield Heritage Center recently faced an important decision with respect to our building project. Our capital campaign to refurbish and expand the home of Paul and Florence Litchfield on the historic Rancho La Loma property began in 2019. Since then, world events and the changing economic landscape have had an impact on those plans. Last fall, updated construction estimates presented to the Board showed a dramatic increase from \$3.5 million to \$6.2 million.

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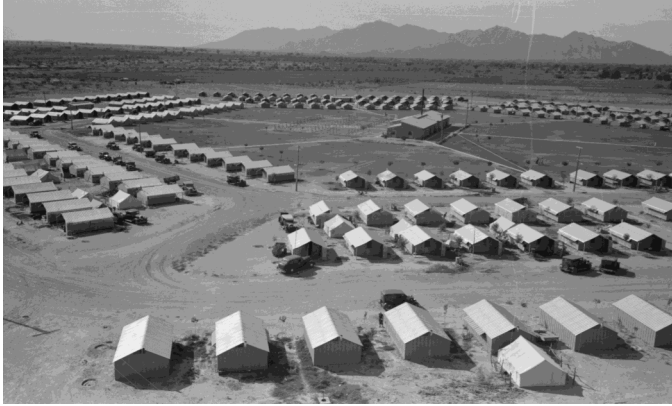
Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, "The man truly conversant with life knows ... that every wall is a gate." By all appearances, we certainly had a wall in front of us. Having sustained a four-year-long fundraising effort prolonged by the uncertainties of the COVID pandemic, it was time to find a way

forward with the project using the current funds raised. The Board of Directors along with the Capital Campaign and Building Committees met and decided on a plan to divide the building project into two phases.

Phase 1 will focus on the refurbishing of the top floor of the current Litchfield/Denny historic home. This floor will include seven galleries, one of which is the historic living room/library area with all of its books, paintings, furniture, lamps, rugs, and the historic mural. All seven galleries have been underwritten. The eighth gallery, which has not been underwritten, will be devoted to office and archival space. Completing this phase will give us four times the space we currently have – more exhibits to see, more artifacts to display, and more history to tell.

Currently our architect Orcutt|Winslow and Waltz Construction are redesigning the top floor. Much of the redesign relates to the exterior of the building because the entrance will be temporarily moved from the east side to the west. This will necessitate the widening of walkways, altering the grade of the land, and moving parking spaces – all to meet ADA requirements. We're enthusiastic about what's ahead. Focusing on what can be done with the resources we have has helped open a gate to our future.

Dust Bowl Refuge: The Agua Fria FSA Camp



Agua Fria FSA Camp with Estrella Mountains in background

By Lisa Hegarty

The Coldwater Plaza on the northeast corner of Dysart Road and Van Buren Street offers an abundance of goods for any need. You'd never guess that what is now dominated by a sprawling Sam's Club and various businesses was once where Depression era families in need went for help.

Constructed in 1940 by the Farm Security Administration (FSA), the **Agua Fria Migratory Labor Camp** provided shelter and services for migrant families during the Great Depression who came to Arizona looking for work. It was comprised of housing, a community building, laundry facilities, and meeting space.

What was the FSA?

This government organization's first iteration was the Resettlement Administration (RA), which focused on building relief camps for migratory workers in California arriving from the Dust Bowl stricken Great Plains.

The RA later became the FSA after the Farm Security Act was passed in 1937. The organization's goal was to help farm families become self-sufficient, provide educational support, and help modernize rural America.



Saturday night dance at Agua Fria camp

The Photography of Russell Lee

The FSA employed photographers like Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, and Gordon Parks to take numerous photos of everyday life at these camps. Lange's iconic image of a careworn mother with her children is a defining image of the era. While Lange shot many photos in Arizona during that time, **Russell Lee** was the most active FSA photographer in Arizona, shooting numerous photos of the Agua Fria Camp. He also documented life at the camps at Eleven Mile Corner outside of Casa Grande and Yuma.



Giving cod liver oil to camp children

Hired by the FSA in 1936, Lee helped create what is considered by many to be the greatest collection of documentary photos. He also helped document the forced relocation of Japanese Americans in 1942 and continued to serve as a photographer in various government agencies. He eventually became the first photography instructor at the University of Texas in Austin.

Lee's images depict Agua Fria FSA Camp children attending school, women completing chores, residents receiving healthcare, Saturday night dances, and portraits of families and individuals. His photos taken from the top of a camp water tower also show the hexagonal footprint of the complex against the Estrella Mountains with dwellings arranged several rows deep. While migrant workers were generally allowed to stay in the camps for 364 days, some photos in the collection indicate housing was available for permanent agricultural laborers.

The Agua Fria FSA Camp later housed farm workers who were part of the **Bracero** program, which brought Mexican laborers into the United States to fill agricultural jobs from 1942 to 1964. The buildings stood for many years after fulfilling their original purpose.

Pan American Ostrich Company

By Lisa Hegarty

Did you know that ostrich ranches were once big business in Arizona and that the largest of these was in today's Avondale?

Ostrich farming in the United States got its start in 1882, with the first ostriches arriving in Arizona from California in 1888. The birds were raised for feathers to adorn women's fashions into the early part of the 20th century. California, Florida, and Arkansas also had ostrich farms, but by 1905, more than half of the ostriches in the U.S. were in Arizona.



Ostriches at the Pan American Ostrich Company

Climate was a major reason for this. Conditions in the Salt River Valley were ideal for the birds' health and allowed for the year-round production of alfalfa for feed. Arizona's largest ostrich farm was the **Pan American Ostrich Company**, which incorporated in 1906. It was once bounded by 107th Avenue, Buckeye Road, Avondale Boulevard, and McDowell Road.

According to the April 1, 1908 issue of the *Arizona Republican*, the Pan American Ostrich ranch offered "one of the most novel sights to be found in many a day's journey." The article described a landscape "green with alfalfa, dotted here and there with great droves of these strange looking foreign birds." Over 1,200 ostriches roamed the ranch. Feathers were gathered from each bird every eight months, generating over \$40,000 of annual income.

Helen Seargeant, author of the book *House by the Buckeye Road*, lived on a homestead about a mile east of the Pan American ranch and had many opportunities to visit and observe operations. From the balcony of the ranch house that stood on the property she "could overlook the work and watch the cowboys (ostrich boys) on ponies herding and moving ostriches from one field to another, and sorting and separating some for different fields."

When the company dissolved a few years later, Dr. A.J. Chandler, founder of Chandler, Arizona, purchased several of the birds and attempted to move them to his ranch with an ostrich drive. Helen Seargeant had a front row seat. She saw "about a hundred of the big birds - with cowboys to the right, cowboys to the left, and cowboys behind them" being moved down Buckeye Road.

She later learned the drive was disastrous. Fences along the road, which had kept the birds together, ended as they traveled further east, and the ostriches broke away. Having no herd instinct, they could not be rounded up, and most of the birds scattered into the desert and river bottoms like phantoms. According to Seargeant, local ostrich sightings occurred for some time, and several buggy accidents happened due to horses being spooked by the stray birds.



Plucking an ostrich

Agua Fria FSA Camp cont.

Just as John Steinbeck's novel, *The Grapes of Wrath* was key to illustrating the plight of those fleeing the Dust Bowl, the FSA photographers' images brought a human face to the issues confronting migrant families of the era. Of the photographs taken by the RA and FSA during that time, 164,000 are housed by the Library of Congress and are available online. Over 1,000 of them are Russell Lee's.



Laundry room at the Agua Fria camp

Love Times Two

By Judy Cook

In 1971, Air Force physician Lt. Col. Len Kirschner found himself in Spain after being transferred from war-torn Southeast Asia. Arriving at the base, he thought it would be really great to treat himself to a stylish two-seat Italian convertible—a fire-engine red Fiat 124 Spider to be exact!

Len found exactly what he had his heart set on in a showroom in nearby Madrid. He had found the car, and he had the money, but life, with its unpredictable nature, intervened. Doesn't it always?

On August 15, 1971, the day before Len was to pick up his car, President Nixon took the dollar off the gold standard in an attempt to improve U.S. competitiveness overseas. The dollar crashed and all purchases were frozen. No car!

Meanwhile, as Len was waiting for the dollar to settle down, a young Peggy Gilbert arrived at the air base to begin work as a guidance counselor at the base school. Peggy also had in mind the idea of buying a Fiat sports car.

On August 24th, after the dollar had steadied, Len found himself heading to the car agency in Madrid with one of the representatives to pick up his new car. Along with them, in the back seat, was Peggy who was looking for her new car. Len bought his red Fiat, and Peggy bought a yellow Fiat 850 Spider. Three days later Len and Peggy went out to dinner, and the rest is history. Len and Peggy married and eventually returned to the States, bringing the red Fiat dream car along with them.



Peggy and Len Kirschner in their Fiat 124 Spider



The Fiat Spider on a trailer after donating to the P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center.

The Kirschners later wound up in Litchfield Park. Col. Len Kirschner was the hospital commander at Luke Air Force Base for many years. Len and Peggy are a well-known and beloved couple in the area and long-time members of the Litchfield Heritage Center (formerly the Litchfield Park Historical Society).

Last year, after thirty-seven years of enjoying the red Fiat, the Kirschners decided to donate it to the **Heritage Center's CARS program**. Other than regular maintenance and one repaint, the car was in its original condition. The Fiat would go on the auction block with the proceeds being donated to the Heritage Center. We are grateful to the Kirschner's for their generosity and delighted that Peggy and Len are still together celebrating each year the day that they met.

Consider donating your unwanted vehicle to help support the P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center. We make it **fast and easy**, and you may qualify for a tax deduction.

P.W. Litchfield
HERITAGE CENTER

Help Keep the Wheels
Turning at our Museum

Donate Your Used Vehicle to
P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center

We are the #1 West Vally Vehicle Donation Organization



Help support the P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center
by donating your unwanted Car, Truck,
Trailer, Boat, RV, Motorcycle, Off-Road Vehicle,
or Heavy Equipment.

RUNNING OR NOT!

To learn more, call or visit us on-line:
844-569-4493 PWLHC.org

Vehicle Donation Program powered by CARS

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Dr. Gloria Cuádriz, ASU Associate
Professor, School of Humanities, Arts,
and Cultural Studies

Special Thanks

The City of Litchfield Park

MUSEUM HOURS

Wed., Thur., & Friday: 10 am - 4 pm
1st Saturday of each Month: 10 am - 1 pm
Summer Hours (beginning May 27th)
Wednesdays: 10 am - 4 pm
1st Saturday of each Month: 10 am - 1 pm

MUSEUM LOCATION

13912 W. Camelback Rd
Litchfield Park, AZ 85340
623-535-4414

5th Annual

LITCHFIELD PARK



The P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center is excited to offer beautiful luxury homes in the gated community of Litchfield Park. We offer an “elegant country lifestyle,” developers to provide a peaceful setting. The tour boasts excellent golf courses and a peaceful setting. The tour boasts excellent

Attendees can also look forward to fine art shows and demonstrations. For more information and tickets, visit [www.litchfieldpark.com](#)

5th Annual Litchfield Park Home Tour

Saturday, April 11, 2020

10 am - 12 pm

Tickets: \$35 for adults

Purchase online at [www.litchfieldpark.com](#)

Friends of the Museum

This special event is held each year on the evening of the 5th Annual Litchfield Park Home Tour. It is a gathering of the P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center's members in an outdoor setting at a Litchfield Park home. Tickets are \$25 and include admission to the next day's Home Tour. Join our Friends of the Museum at the Heritage Center. Tickets are available at [www.litchfieldpark.com](#)

Friday, April 10, 2020

6 pm - 8 pm

Tickets: \$25

Guest attendance is limited

Purchase online at [www.litchfieldpark.com](#)

Volunteer at the Sale

This event takes a village and that includes volunteers. We need you to direct them through the home, and answer questions. Shifts are 8 am – 1 pm or 1 pm- 4 pm. Each volunteer receives a complimentary ticket during the time opposite their shift. Individuals who are interested in volunteering should contact [Sherron Anastasoff](#) at sherron@litchfieldpark.com together. [Sign up at \[www.litchfieldpark.com\]\(#\)](#)



The Home Tour team thanks you for your support

Chairman: Meredith Stucky

Team: Angie Heppner, Bridget Schleifer, Diane P.

MJ Smyrl, Debra Stocks, Tanja Tanner, Diane P.

Sherron Anastasoff

PARK HOME TOUR

announce the 2024 Home Tour will include five homes in Litchfield Greens. Designed in the late 1980s to showcase its proximity to the Wigwam's premiere golf course, the homes feature exemplary custom homes and beautiful landscapes. Each home is showcased by local artists at each home. For more information, visit pwlhc.org/home-tour/

World Park Home Tour

April 6, 2024
10:00 am to 4 pm
For ages 12 and up
Last day of the event

Museum Cocktail Party

Coming before the Litchfield Park Home Tour. It's a special evening for supporters for hors d'oeuvres and drinks hosted in the museum. Guests to this event include gourmet food, music, and entertainment for a delightful evening in support of the Litchfield Park Home Tour at pwlhc.org/home-tour/

April 5, 2024
6:00 pm - 9pm
Cost: \$100
Space limited to 100
Visit our website

Saturday Home Tour

Volunteers in every home. Help greet ticket holders, answer questions. Volunteers may choose a three-hour shift of 10:00 am - 1:00 pm. Complimentary admission and may tour homes. If you are wishing to volunteer with a friend will be scheduled. Visit pwlhc.org/home-tour/

Support.

Deborah Smith,
Christine Parnitzke,



Scan this QR Code to connect to the Home Tour web page



P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center Upcoming Programs and Events

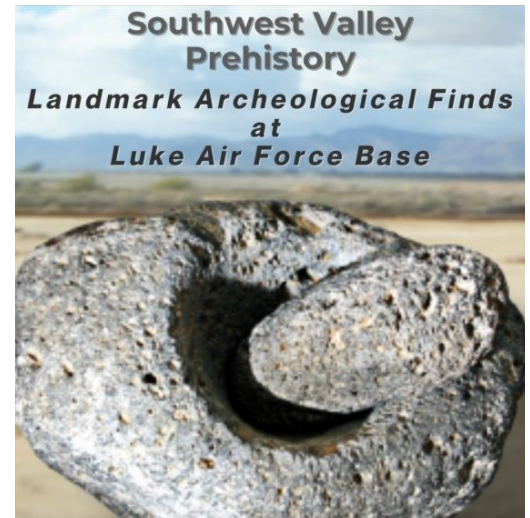
Landmark Archeological Finds at Luke Air Force Base

Thursday, March 21, 2024 10:00 AM

Goodyear City Council Chambers
1900 N Civic Square, Goodyear, Az 85395

Luke Air Force Base Solar-Power Array Archaeological Project: 5,000 Years of Aboriginal Land Use in the Western Phoenix Basin.

Archaeologist Robert Wegener will discuss the impressive findings uncovered in an archaeological dig conducted on Luke Air Force Base from 2009 – 2015. The 44-acre excavation project is one of the largest in the Phoenix Basin over the last 50 years. Excavation of 3,006 buried features resulted in the documentation of a remarkable record of indigenous land-use practices starting at least as early as 7,000 B.C and lasting until ca. A.D. 1200. **This is a free event.**



Crate Label Art with Royal John Medley

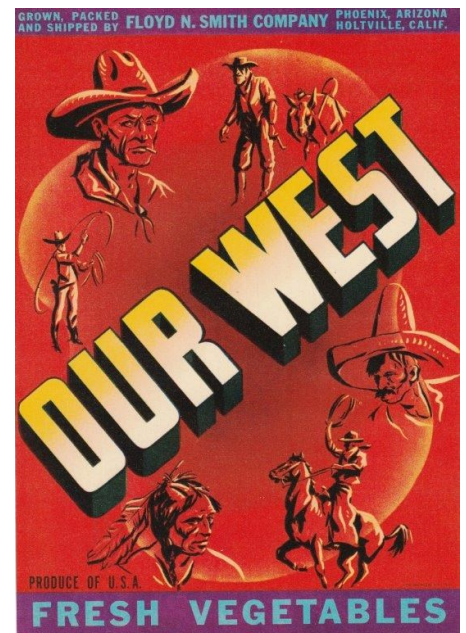


Thursday, May 16, 2024 10:00 AM

Goodyear City Council Chambers
1900 N Civic Square, Goodyear, Az 85395

Citrus and Saguars -
Lettuce and Landscapes -
An Illustrated History of Citrus and Commercial
Row Crops in Arizona

Fruit and vegetable farming has a long history in Arizona, and the colorful crate labels used by the industry to grab the attention of eastern wholesale produce buyers are some of the best examples of 20th century commercial art. **Regional historian Royal John Medley** of Oracle, whose extensive collection of vintage paper ephemera centers on the produce industry of the American Southwest with emphasis on Arizona, will present the history of the artwork once essential to Arizona citrus and vegetables marketing. **This is a free event.**



Friday Fireside History

Several Fridays a month we hold an informal event at the Wigwam Resort. Grab a drink at the bar and unwind in the historic Fireplace Room to explore the past with knowledgeable Litchfield Heritage Center docents while enjoying good company and vibes. Check our website for the next Friday date. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram or sign up for email notifications for all of our events.

This is a free event.

Thank you to our Sponsors!

Tier 1 - \$1000



LA LOMA VILLAGE

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



www.veincareofaz.com
13629 W. Camino Del Sol #180
Sun City West, AZ 85375
623.584.7874

Tier 2 - \$750



www.Oceano-Rentals.com
PO Box 2357, Litchfield Park, AZ 85340
602-884-8102



www.teematitle.com
108 N Old Litchfield Rd, Litchfield Park, AZ 85340
623-289-7378

Tier 3 - \$500



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



www.WigwamResort.com
300 E Wigwam Blvd., Litchfield Park, AZ 85340

Tier 4 - \$250

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dba FAITH LAW

Erica Zuniga
REALTOR
HomeSmart Elite Group

Tier 5 - \$100

Peter Mahoney
Park Café, Old Pueblo Café, Papa Paul's

Housing Styles in Litchfield Park: Mid-Century to Present



By Mary Dickson

Litchfield Park is unique in that it contains decades of architectural styles all within its small city limits. One leisurely car, golf cart, or energetic bike tour offers a glimpse into Litchfield Park's diverse housing styles.

Let's take a tour!

Along the south side of Wigwam Boulevard and the north side of Palm Street, just east of the original St. Thomas Aquinas Mission Church, sits a long block of quaint efficient homes built in the **mid-1950s** to house Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. supervisors. Originally the houses were constructed of block and red brick with two or three bedrooms and one bath. Fortunately, most of these homes have retained their original historic style.

North of these houses, the first development in Litchfield Park was begun by a small group of independent builders. The initial homes that were constructed in this area line the golf course along Fairway Drive east of Neolin Avenue. These were larger than the Wigwam Boulevard homes and better reflected the style of the times – long lines and low-pitched roofs that are typical of **early ranch-style housing**. Along this street were the homes of Paul Litchfield (no longer there) and his cousin Kenneth McMicken.



Asymmetrical design

Snuggled between these two groups of housing is **Palo Verde Estates**. These homes were built in the early **1960s** and some of the first **mid-century modern** houses in the area are located there. The mid-century modern style has low roof slopes, open block designs, expansive glass, and includes some asymmetrical design components. Most of the houses reflect the then popular ranch style and have expansive front yards. The builders incorporated colorful burnt clay brick from Mexico, flat stonework, and open decorative block patterns into many of their designs.

Continued on Page 11

Housing Styles in Litchfield Park cont.



Mexican burnt clay brick

In the **1970s**, Litchfield Park experienced rapid growth. With the population nearing 1,200, more housing was needed. Several developments started south of Wigwam Boulevard and on both sides of Florence Avenue. These homes were the first ones constructed by an individual builder – **Suggs Homes** – who used the very popular slump block in their houses. Keeping with Litchfield Park’s unique housing styles, **slump block** was used in very creative ways – full slump face, wainscoting, and in conjunction with stucco. This resulted in attractive neighborhoods without the feel of tract housing!



Slump block

With the area to the south nearly built out, construction started up north of The Wigwam’s golf courses. These homes were on larger lots and were mainly **custom designs**. While the same styles and building materials

were used there, every architectural style can be found in this area from simple ranch to modern contemporary along with a few Spanish styles.

The **1980s** and **90s** brought about the development of **Litchfield Greens**. Houses in this era became grander with large, towering entryways to tall ceilings and rooflines. For a close-up look at these beautiful homes, plan on attending the **Litchfield Heritage Center’s Annual Home Tour on Saturday, April 6th**. In this gated community, they are among the finest examples of housing built at the end of the last century!



Deco block

The first decade of this century brought even larger homes with grander entries, high ceilings, and a touch of Tuscany mixed with Spanish. There are even hints of bungalow styling. These styles can be found throughout the area of Litchfield Park known as The Village. You can also see the transition from mostly masonry construction found in the older areas to wood-frame with stucco.

The **2010s** brought the latest development in Litchfield Park—**Sunset Terrace** behind the Fry’s shopping center at Camelback and Litchfield Roads. It was named after the *Sunset Terrace* that Paul Litchfield built on the hill directly to the west of this development. The builders were challenged by the City Planners and Design Review Board to create diverse exteriors which reflected the history of Litchfield Park. Here you can find modern versions of ranch, Spanish, and even mid-century modern styles.

We hope you enjoyed this quick architectural history tour. In future newsletters, we will take a closer look at some of the most unique housing in Litchfield Park and the stories behind them.



PO Box 1936
Litchfield Park, AZ 85340

Location Address: 13912 W. Camelback Rd.
Email: office@PWLHC.org
www.PWLHC.org
623-535-4414



JOIN US! Become a Member Today!

P.W. LITCHFIELD HERITAGE CENTER 2024 Membership/Special Donation Form

January 1 – December 31, 2024 membership year

Name _____ Spouse's Name _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Annual Membership Dues Single Adult \$25 Family \$35 Business/Professional \$60
 Contributor \$125 Benefactor \$300

I would like to make an additional Special Donation of: \$25 \$50 \$100 Other _____

Please make your check payable to:

P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center
PO Box 1936
Litchfield Park, AZ 85340

Would you be interested in volunteering for our organization? Yes

May we add you to our email list? Yes

We only send emails related PWLHC events and activities. You may opt out at any time.

The P.W. Litchfield Heritage Center is an official IRS 501 (c)(3) non-profit corporation, and membership dues and other donations are tax deductible for persons who itemize.