

Grapewine News



COLORADO RIVER HISTORICAL
SOCIETY MUSEUM

Lives of Women Living on the Western Frontier

Many are the tales of men who traveled west and toiled from morning 'til night clearing the land, preparing the fields and raising crops to feed the family. Others chose to tame wild horses and work among the longhorn cattle to provide for their families.

Today let us take a brief look at the lifestyles of the wives and mothers of these hardy men. First, some background of the conditions in which these ladies raised their children and performed the daily chores.

Today it is described as the "Victorian Age", but it was a period during which it was considered scandalous for a woman to display so much as an ankle. Therefore, women wore floor-length dresses of heavy homespun material during the entire day - even while performing their chores, no matter how arduous the task.

Women were not allowed to vote or hold public office. In many states they were not even permitted to own property. For the most part they were treated as second-class citizens.

Their home was either a log cabin or one built of mud bricks, often with only a dirt floor. There was no indoor plumbing and water was carried into the house from a well or nearby spring. Any cooling was provided by a breeze from the windows or an open door, all without any screens or other barrier to prevent the entry of insects and/or rodents of various description. Mosquitos were especially troublesome



after heavy rains and flies were present at every meal. Mice were common and even an occasional skunk would wander in.

There was usually a fire in the fireplace as it was the only source for heating water and cooking. During the winter months the fireplace provided the only heat for the home. This required a constant supply of firewood and a regular routine of removing the ashes. The

open fire would sometimes fill the cabin with smoke and often cause a layer of soot on the cabin walls and ceiling.

Families were usually large, many times with ten or more children. These children were most often born at home as there were no hospitals available and who would care for the family if the mother was away in the hospital. It was also the norm for babies to be breast-fed by the mother for many months until the child could eat solid foods. Given the number of children she would give birth to, consider all the months during her young life that a wife was pregnant and still performed her many responsibilities.

So, if you will, imagine a small cabin with young children, perhaps one or two still in diapers, playing on the dirt floor with a family pet or two. The children are forced to share their limited, home-made toys, often causing squabbles and arguments. Now add some childhood sickness to the scene. Colds, fevers, measles, mumps, dysentery were not

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uncommon. People had no knowledge of germs or personal hygiene with most illness treated with home remedies such as herbs and teas.

This is the setting in which mothers must perform their daily chores. Rain or shine the cows had to be milked, the eggs gathered from the henhouse, and vegetables brought in from the garden; all necessary for the three meals each day. Again, the food was prepared without any electricity with the cooking done over the open fireplace. Each meal had to be prepared fresh as there was no form of refrigeration. After each meal it was necessary to clear the table and wash all the dishes to prepare them for the next meal.

The family laundry was an important chore, often required to be done several times each week. This involved using home-made laundry soap and a crude rubboard to wash the items and then hanging them on a line to dry in the sun.

Another important task assigned to the mother was making and mending all the clothing worn by members of the family. Few homes had sewing machines, requiring all sewing to be done by hand. Bed linens, quilts, window curtains, all the family clothing - anything made from fabric was sewn by hand.

The farms were so remote that it was impossible for the young children to attend any formal school and the task of teaching the children "reading, writing, and arithmetic" was another chore for their mother, sometime with the aid of any older children. One might suspect that many an education would only equal a third or fourth grade level.

Now, some thoughts to the mental stamina required of these women. They lived in virtual isolation with the husband being their sole contact with another adult. The nearest neighbors were often a mile away or more. There was no form of modern communication, not even a newspaper or mail service. One can imagine a woman longing for news from family and friends "back east" having to wait until a trip into a settlement that might have a post office for any mail from loved ones. If there were any books in the house, they were usually limited to the family bible and possibly a grade-school textbook or two for the younger children. Some were fortunate enough for an occasional Saturday shopping trip to the local market which provided a meeting with another adult, even if only the storekeeper.

The various seasons did not provide much respite. Warmer weather allowed the children to be outdoors where they seemed to be more prone to accidents and various injuries. Also, they needed to be careful of snakes and wild animals. Winter months often forced the children to remain indoors, sometimes for days at a time. This caused a whole different set of problems with boredom from the limited activities.

To add a bit of sadness to our story we must say that death was very common on the frontier. In addition to the usual run of childhood diseases and sicknesses there were epidemics of cholera, smallpox, diphtheria and typhoid

fever. Men were engaged in some very dangerous occupations and wives were never assured of their spouse returning at the end of the workday. Raging rivers, rattlesnakes, farming and mining equipment, steep slopes, and deep forests all provided ample opportunity for accidents that could maim or kill. Many other men died while fighting enemies or outlaws. A scarcity of capable doctors and the remoteness of the settlers contributed to the death of many who otherwise may have survived.

The death of these husbands left many widows to perform the work to maintain the farm along with their usual chores. Those who had an opportunity often remarried and, in some cases, became a widow for a second, and maybe, a third time.

There were wars during this time that required some men to leave their homes and families to fight for their beliefs and country. Indian wars, wars against the Spanish and Mexicans, and even the American Civil War, all involved many of those living in the Southwest. While the men were away it befell the wives and older children to care for the homestead with all the work required in running a farm or ranch.

P R E S I D E N T S C O R N E R

Hi all. Happy Hot August!

Hope everyone is staying cool and hydrated. Not too much happening this month, but September is coming and hopefully more visitors will be coming.

Also, more news next month in our building addition.

Take care be well.

Respectfully
Karole Finkelstein
President

WORD PUZZLE

E R S R F W Y F S D J S Z N S
 D N X R O A U R O T W P H D E
 U N P M E D M F D V A C G C R
 R E E E N H B I F N L M A W O
 C N X I V P T P L M U L I H H
 N P T Z E K B O G I P A E N C
 R E I T N O R F M E E N L Y A
 H O M E S P U N R M H S T C B
 S R E P A I D I E O M I T H O
 R B E L I E F S U X C H X I R
 I D Q W M M A S R R N E U L E
 V Q F B A L E G A B H R L D D
 O J G A C Z U C R H E W D R O
 D Y M G M Q S O G D F K I E M
 S E L B A T E G E V P A Q N A

BELIEFS	BOREDOM	CHILDREN
CHORES	CRUDE	DIAPERS
FAMILIES	FIREPLACE	FRONTIER
HENHOUSE	HOMESPUN	LAUNDRY
MOTHERS	PET	SCARCITY
STAMINA	VEGETABLES	WOMEN

July 2023 puzzle answers: Padre Francisco Garces

K W U I M U O W T D G P Z C H
 C J M W F I E L J R A U X U G
 L H T X J E S M O H R S B L H
 T S E I R P V S G D C H I T R
 T Q P D B I Q A I S E P Y U I
 A F A W H V G E J O S U P R S
 S P Q C M E H A X O N N H E T
 K T L I S U V K J P M A P Z I
 I Q I A O H R N I Y L E R S A
 J O M U G E X O G V A O P Y N
 G U N E S M S I Y C A A R F I
 Y N C X Y E Y S E G I L A E T
 A F Y Q R H J S O N Q M C S Y
 V W H Z G C S I C N A R F S M
 S Y K A S S I M I L A T E D I

EVENTS CALENDAR

All events are at the museum unless otherwise stated

2nd Annual Pumpkin Patch:

Come join us for fall festivities in the Educational Gardens at the museum.

October 7th 2023 - Saturday 9:00am - 1:00pm

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Have you been by to see our Educational Gardens yet? Our volunteers have done a phenomenal job creating a beautiful space highlighting local floral and fauna, a Cactus Hill, a Prehistoric display, mining displays, a wonderful mural wall and much more! Your donations made this space available! If you haven't become a member of the Colorado River Historical Society yet, now is the time.

If you have questions about membership, or you're interested in becoming a member, please reach out to Ellen Brown at 928-542-1160 or see one of the docents when you visit the museum.

Membership Chair - Ellen Brown

CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

The Colorado River Historical Society Museum is seeking volunteers. If you enjoy history and want to learn more about the area, the society needs you. This is a chance to meet area visitors from all over the world and form friendships with a wonderful group of volunteers. Many of our volunteers are part-time residents and retirees. Hours are flexible and duties are as easy or challenging as you would like.

Examples of the types of volunteer we need:

Docent	Handyman
Gardener	Data Entry
Teachers	Marketing
Fundraising & Event Coordinators	



**COLORADO RIVER
HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MUSEUM**

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Hours of Operations:
Tuesday—Saturday 10:00am - 2:00pm
(last admittance 1:00pm)

Grapevine News Editor - Laurie Thompson

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

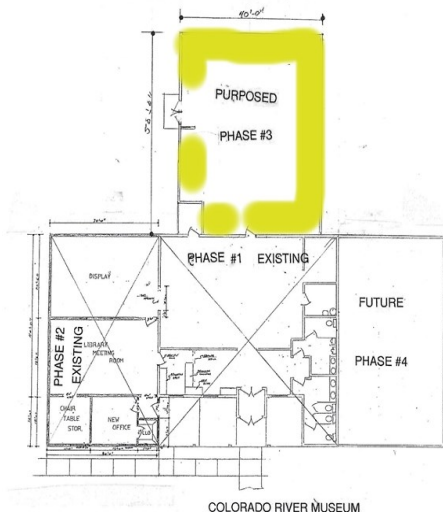
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Mission Statement

The mission of The Colorado River Historical Society shall be to operate a museum to promote interest and knowledge concerning the history of the Lower Colorado River area, most specifically the Tri-state area.

Museum Phase 3 Update

We are pleased to announce the funds have been raised to start our next phase of the museum building. This addition will store our archives and collections not presently displayed in the museum. Also, with this addition we will also have an area to do maintenance and repair on our artifacts as needed.



Seeking Donations for Our Collection

We are looking for any artifact that is pertinent to our Tri-state area. This includes, but is not limited to, photographs, family histories, mining equipment, Davis Dam, Native Americans, steamboats, ranching, fossils, explorers, highways, historical maps, churches, service clubs and businesses.

- ◆ We cannot accept an artifact with stipulations on it such as it must be displayed in a particular way or time period.
- ◆ We do not accept loans.

Give us a call at the museum if you have an artifact or historical item you would like us to consider. We are actively seeking local historic photographs and Mohave Valley Daily Newspapers prior to 2010.