



COLORADO RIVER HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM NEWSLETTER

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A HISTORY OF MOHAVE VALLEY BRIDGES



Before there were any bridges in Mohave Valley, one had to either wade, swim, ride a horse, or use a ferry, where available, if you wished to cross the Colorado River.

In the mid-1850s there was a ferry across the Colorado River just north of where Camp Mojave was created, where the Mojave Road joined the river.

In the mid-1860's there was a ferry where Silver Creek joined the river. This ferry and a companion dock (landing) were purchased by William Harrison Hardy where he founded Hardyville.

There was also a third ferry, probably near Sweeny's Landing at the southwesterly terminus of the Mohave and Milltown Railroad, not too far from the site of the present-day Needles Bridge, or possibly near Topock Gorge.

The first bridge was built by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad between April and August 1883. It was a wooden bridge, 1700 feet long, and, judging from its photograph and its length, it was located upstream of the Topock Gorge crossing,

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THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I am excited to see more and more people again visiting the museum and Lil Red Schoolhouse. I hope that we will be able to see more of you!

I would like to send my sincere condolences to Carla and Jim Lucas on the passing of their son.

Our volunteers are fantastic and have stepped in when needed. Hopefully more will return next season.

Our gift shop is looking beautiful and we have just received our new display cases, but it will be awhile before they are able to be installed in the museum.

Thanks again to all. Hope to see everyone soon.

Until next time...

Karole Finkelstein, President

what is now part of the Topock Marsh.

The second bridge, also built by the Railroad, was the steel Red Rock Cantilever Bridge, finished in 1890 just south of Topock Gorge. A pier was added at mid-span in 1911 and planks were added to allow automobile traffic in 1914.

The Old Trails Arch Bridge, made of steel, was completed in 1916 to carry automobiles. It was located 800 feet upstream from the Red Rocks Cantilever Bridge.

In 1926, Route 66 was created, mostly following the Old National Trails and/or railroad alignments.

In 1945 the Santa Fe Railroad built the bridge that is in use today.

In 1947, the Red Rocks Cantilever Bridge was modified to carry only automobiles and automobile traffic ceased over the Old Trails Arch Bridge (which was later saved and converted by P.G.&E. to carry gas pipelines.)

In 1966 the 1-40 bridge was built just south of the Santa Fe Bridge and the Red Rocks Cantilever Bridge was abandoned and then torn down in 1978.

In the meantime, the Bureau of Reclamation was starting construction on the Colorado River Front Work and Levee System. Davis Dam had been completed in 1951, providing an automobile crossing of the Colorado River at the north end of Mohave Valley.

The Mohave Valley Division of the system spanned from Davis Dam to Topock. The reach of the Colorado River from Needles to Topock was improved between 1949 and 1953 and the reach from Needles to Big Bend was improved between 1953 and 1959.

Prior to commencing this project, the Bureau constructed a one-way wooden bridge spanning the Colorado River located between what are now Jack Smith Park and Bureau Bay in Needles.

Intended for use during construction, this bridge (with many approach signs referring to it as "unsafe bridge ahead") was in use until the present Needles Bridge was constructed in 1978. That same year, this bridge was used in Sam Peckinpah's movie "CONVOY".

So now there were automobile crossings at both the north and south ends of Mohave Valley.

COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

Cheryl Mangin – Archivist-Curator
Richard Dotson – Asst. Archivist
Carla Lucas – Member
Jim Lucas – Member
Laurie Thompson – Member

DONATION GUIDELINES

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

Please keep in mind, these are the guidelines we use if you choose to donate an artifact in your possession:

- Is it of museum quality?
- Is it pertinent to our area of interest?
- Do we already have as good or a better prime example of the artifact?
- Does the provenance of the artifact or material increase its significance?
- Is the donor the legal owner of said materials?
- Do we have enough resources to maintain/store/display it.
- 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!

As the areas on both sides of the river developed, it became clear that the Davis Dam crossing was inadequate. For those from the Arizona side who wished to visit the Laughlin Casinos for work or pleasure, the ferries served fairly well unless the river was too shallow, or the weather wasn't cooperating. So, interest grew as to an additional bridge. Since Laughlin was expanding southerly, a bridge near Big Bend was considered.

In the mid-1980s, Don Laughlin funded the Laughlin Bridge at its present location. It has since been improved and expanded.

In the mid-1990s the Temple Bridge (renamed the Veteran's Memorial Bridge) was constructed to serve the Avi Casino on the Fort Mojave Indian Reservation.

But what remained was a need for another bridge to allow for those wishing to travel from the residential area of Laughlin to the major shopping areas in Bullhead City. In 1992, the City initiated first of many studies to determine the best location for this bridge. Riverview Drive, Rainbow Drive, Lakeside Drive, Hancock, Silver Creek, Pass Canyon, and Bullhead Parkway were all considered.

A study done in 2008 by Territorial Engineers Inc. made the recommendation that Riverview Drive be chosen for the new bridge site.

With the construction of the Mohave Crossroads Mall, and the Anderson Auto Group Fieldhouse, the Bullhead Parkway became the most viable choice for the bridge. Preparation construction has begun, but there is no definite date as when the bridge will be completed.

Excerpts taken from the Territorial Engineers, Inc. 2008 study by Damian W, Holther, SR., P.E., R.L.S.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Our hours of operation are Tuesday-Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. We are located at 1239 Highway 95 in Bullhead City, AZ.

We are closed on all major holidays. Due to staffing limitations during the pandemic it is a good idea to confirm by phone that we are open.

This summer we will be reducing our hours of operation to 3 days a week. A new schedule will be posted soon.

DONATIONS SOUGHT

NOTE: We are currently actively seeking Mohave Valley Daily News newspapers before 2010 in good condition. If you have editions you would like to donate to us, please drop them by the museum!

A LETTER FROM A VISITOR

April 20, 2021

Colorado River Museum
Staff Volunteers
1239 Highway 95
Bullhead City, Arizona 86429

Dear Volunteers,

On April 6th, we had the pleasure of visiting your very well maintained and informative Museum and Park Grounds. The volunteers were very knowledgeable and had great pride in their deserving projects.

This is a great asset to the Bullhead City, Laughlin, Colorado River areas.

Thanks again, to the donors and Volunteers!

Best Wishes,

Victor E. Kral

CHECK US OUT

E-mail: crhsmuseum@outlook.com

Facebook: [Colorado River Historical Society Inc](#)

Website: Still currently under construction, so please excuse the mess. We will be using our domain name of coloradoriverhistoricalsocietymuseum.org
Museum Phone Number: 928-754-3399
Address: 1239 Highway 95 BHC, AZ 86429