

## 'OLD TOWN' Cottonwood, Arizona

This self-guided historic walking tour is presented to you by local historian and storyteller Karen J. Leff. Please tour by street address. Some properties will have additional information displayed in their windows.

For guided or personal tours call Karen at the Cottonwood Hotel (928) 634-9455 office or (928) 202-2207 direct

- For more history and photos of Cottonwood, AZ go to: [www.cottonwoodhotel.com](http://www.cottonwoodhotel.com)
- To learn more about Cottonwood, Arizona visit the city website at [www.ci.cottonwood.az.gov](http://www.ci.cottonwood.az.gov)

Special Thanks to:

\* Josephine Becchetti See \* Helen Becchetti Dover \* Jean Hall Redman \* Georgia Hall Stadelman \* Glenda Farley \* Kathy Turano \* Copper Verde News \* Prescott Evening Courier \* Verde Independent \* The City of Cottonwood

1st print 1998. 4th revision 2010.

## Cottonwood, Arizona



## Cottonwood, Arizona

### Self-Guided Historic Walking Tour

### *The BIGGEST Little Town in the State of Arizona*



#### YESTERYEAR:

As several families found the valley to be rich in natural resources, they began to settle along the Verde River under the cottonwoods. Charles Willard (*known as the father of Cottonwood*) was among the first settlers that immigrated here, along with him his family. The homesteaders found a market for their crops, hay & grain in the mining towns of Camp Verde and Jerome. Farming, cattle running and plenty of water was supplied by the abandoned Indian Reservation irrigation ditch system (*behind the old jail*). Game animals were abundant. Wild mustard, grasses, fruit orchards & alfalfa were plentiful along the Verde River greenway, until it was destroyed by the smelter smoke. After the smelters closed for good, it eventually came back. Today this greenway area is protected. Historically, it is one of the rarest riparian's of its kind. There are only 20 like it left in the world today. This is one of five strands in Arizona.

**July 9, 1885, Cottonwood's, 1st Post Office** was established by G. M. "Mac" Willard.

**February 14, 1912.** Arizona was the 48th state in the USA. It had been part of Mexico before the Mexican War.

**1915-1917** Cottonwood started building their town between the two smelters. Campfires often burned at the old wagon grounds under the big **cottonwood trees** that stood in the wash that extended for several hundred yards to the Verde River from just north of where the old jail now stands. Cattlemen & ranchers from Oak Creek, Camp Verde & surrounding areas made their overnight stops here known as the "Cottonwoods", (*The Verde River Greenway Riparian*).

**4/5/1917 CVN** Many new residents had makeshift homes in the form of tents or tent houses. The location is 3 miles below Clarkdale, close to the Verde River and the cottonwood trees from which the place gets its name. It is a beautiful place for a town.

**4/14/1917 CVN** Willard Addition lots selling for \$125.

**5/7/1917 CVN** Visitors came by the hundreds from everywhere taking in the sights of the new city. Houses were selling & not many empty lots were left. Sunday was a great day for Cottonwood. Nice weather & perfect conditions for the young metropolis visitors motoring with their motor vehicles.

**5/8/1917 CVN** Auto Box Special for Cottonwood Run. Frank Dickinson puts on Jordan car to carry passengers to and from Jerome.

**5/11/1917 CVN** Busy times. People scrambled for real estate.

**BY 1925** there was not another town in the U.S. that could boast so many business houses for a population of 1000. Cottonwood was known as "*the Biggest Little Town in the State of Arizona!*" With heavy bootlegging around, Main Street's **big industry** was lined with pool halls & restaurants which were often fronts to the

backroom speakeasies dispensing the best brewed whiskey in the state of Arizona, attracting citizens country wide. Since Clarkdale and Clemenceau were "company towns" with certain restrictions, Cottonwood appealed to the more venturesome. There was a certain reputation for lawlessness. Some who settled here were often run out of the company towns because of their nationality. Cottonwood was the place to be for the entrepreneurial types, building a business and owning a home.

For years, prohibition agents turned a blind eye to Cottonwood's bootlegging. Things changed in 1928 when sheriff George Ruffner from Prescott was elected to come into Cottonwood to raid the businesses and close the underground tunnels. Joe Hall (*known as Arizona's bootlegger king*) was always targeted.

Slot machines & poker tables were in almost every storefront until the Legislature decided they were illegal.

**November 14, 1960.** Cottonwood was incorporated. John Garrett was the first mayor. No one else wanted the job. Incorporating the town was tried several times. When Clarkdale tried annexing the business district of Cottonwood, the people (1600 residents of Cottonwood) acted.

**TODAY:** A town once famous for bootlegging, feeding the miners and filming movies, is yet a best kept secret. Still away from the hustle bustle of the big city atmosphere, the small town is quiet and friendly. A year 'round place to be, in any season, whether for sightseeing or exploring, you'll find Historic Old Town Cottonwood to have its own inspiring beauty all her own...

You'll find lodging, wine tasting rooms, bakery, olive oil trading co., dining in some of the best restaurants in the Verde Valley, eclectic mix of shopping, antiques, art galleries, hiking trails, seasonal farmer's market, events and the 2nd Saturday of the month Old Town Stroll with a GUIDED TOUR through the neighborhood. Come & mingle with the Old Town locals.



## Tour by Street Address

**930 N. Main** the **Cottonwood Hotel**, Cottonwood's oldest hotel & longest standing business with the same name & location since **1917**. Proprietor Samuel Steinberg sold the hotel to Antonio Giordano in 1922, which remained in the Giordano/Robinson family until the 1980's. The hotel wood structure was destroyed by the 1925 town fire, having the only fatality, renown spiritualist/lecturer Rev. George Brooks. The hotel was soon rebuilt of cast concrete block, a major building material after the fire.



**1925-1960's** Cottonwood's fire bell location until a fire department was erected.

**Roaring 20's & 1930's** Mae West stayed here.

**1946 John Wayne & Gail Russell** romanced here on several occasions during their filming of '**Angel & the Badman**'.



**John Wayne & Elvis Presley** bought western wear from Robinson's Clothier below the hotel.

**1940-50's**. 'Pop' Clanton, surviving outlaw from Tombstone, AZ parked his covered wagon out front, advertising for the hotel, while his dog smoked a pipe... "Pull In and Spend the Night. This is a Good Town!" Rooms sold for \$1.50 a night!

**1967**, **Movie scene location for Stay Away, Joe**, starring Elvis Presley. Elvis autographed for fans here.



**1992**: 'Dudes' movie scene location starring Jon Cryer.

**928 N. Main** (1922) Cash Store, Lyson's Confectionary & News Stand and residence was also rebuilt after the 1925 fire. Contractors gave this building an eye appeal with its snappy parapet & swirly stucco, describing it as a "curious building with individuality, a Jazz Palace" The storefront simulating "Toltec Indian architecture

with an interior like a copy of the inside of the Carlsbad cavern & ceiling like frosting of a cake with snow white miniature stalactites. All remain as character defining elements of the building today. (As listed in the historic register). In 1965 this location became an addition to Robinson's Clothier under the Cottonwood Hotel.

**924-926 N. Main** (1920-1923) **Rialto Theater** (1st location). Then became Thomas Moore Restaurant. On **April 19, 1925** a whiskey a still exploded in the rear burning down most of the town. With pressures from insurance companies & the law clamping down on bootlegging, the towns people rumored that the fire was started by a cigar that fell under the wooden boardwalk, hoping to hide their enterprising.



**Empty Lot** Requenda Saloon/Pool Hall, later became the Tumbleweed Bar. It closed for good after it lost its roof to the freak 2 ft. snow storm in Dec. of 1967.

**918 N. Main** (1923) McIntyre's **Verde Furniture & Hardware**. (1925) **Norris' Drugstore** moved in. \*\*\*This cast block building survived the 4/19/1925 town fire & the 12/8/1998 Old Town Theater fire with just smoke and water damage.

**914 N. Main** (1917-1923) This location once sat the "**Bungalow**" Verde Valley Amusement Co, a 4500SF pavilion dance hall with porch. It was a venue for road shows, dances & other diversions. Built by Joseph Becchetti, the building was dismantled for the relocation of his new **Rialto Theater** in 1923. Over 100 Rushes (area filmed movies) were reviewed here, bringing Hollywood stars, movie producers & directors to the streets of Cottonwood. The last 'Rush' (1964) was '**The ROUNDERS**' starring John Ford & Henry Fonda. The theater was sold & renamed the Old Town Palace. In 1990's it was recognized as the United States oldest operating single-screen theater, until it was destroyed by the 12/08/1998 fire.

**904 N. Main** (1927) **Siler's Cut-Rate Grocery** & food lockers. It later became Selna's grocery.

**826 N. Main** (1924) rusticated concrete/cast block Marianna Building. **1st tenant** was **Crutchfield Brothers Buick**. During World War II & Post-War years it served as a mess hall for the US Naval Defense School cadets.

**824 N. Main** Marianna Building-- **Tillie & Louie's Italian Restaurant**

**816 N. Main** (1954) **Verde Valley Branch**, Bank of Arizona. 1970-s-'90's was the Cottonwood Police Department.

**804 N. Main** (1923) **Jersey's Ice Cream Co.**

**724 Balboa Emil Kovacovich Auto Parts** This building was built after the 720 Balboa building was moved from the airport to town.

**720 Balboa**, Quonset hut WWII & Post-War US Naval Flight School classroom was moved from airport to town, became Emil's Buick Auto Sales & Service.

**712 Balboa**, Cold Storage Facility *built after moving 720 Balboa bldg*

**704 N. Balboa**, the old ICE HOUSE

**796 N. Main**, (1928) **Cottonwood Fuel & Feed (Barker family until 1990's)**

**794 N. Main**, (1952) **Black Bert's Service Station**

**Lyons Park** Joe Becchetti erected a Mini Golf Course here in 1930.

**791 N. Main** (1937) Church, for years, then city recreation center until 2010.

**805 N. Main** (1939) **Civic Club** erected by WPA. It became the barracks for the Defense Dept. WWII flight school Naval cadets. In 1955 the Civic Club held wrestling sponsored by the VFW. Girl's matches were as popular as the guy's. Hillbilly Kate vs. Pearl Nelson & Violet Ray vs. Kathy Go-Girl were only a few to name. Admission was \$1, Ringside \$1.25, kids \$.50.

**Behind Civic Center** **1st Library**, later city maintenance yard

**817 N. Main** (1956) **Chamber of Commerce**

**827 N. Main** (1961) **Post Office**, later became city hall.

**901 N. Main** (1916-22) **2-story Mc Gimsey Hotel, Mercantile & Ice House**, destroyed by fire. Mercantile was rebuilt, burned again (1933). Remained an empty lot until 1959 when a new building was erected & leased to Western Auto, later became Valley Clothing.

**907 N. Main** (1929-1933) **Braley Malt Shop** (Burned) Building rebuilt 1940.

**909 N. Main** (1939) **Carlson's 5 & 10 Dept. Store**.

**911 N. Main** (50s-1960's) **Lillian's Sweet Shop & Bus Stop**

**913 N. Main** (1930-33) Martilona's Rest Rite Hotel, destroyed by fire. New building erected in 1935 as Verde Valley Distributing, later became **Sprouse Reitz** 5-10-15.

**915 N. Main** once stood Jose Acuna's Pool Hall who was busted for bootlegging.

**917 N. Main** (1923) Eat-Mor Sandwich Shop. Flames started from gasoline-powered coffee urn 6/26/1933, destroying properties to Eleifson now Pima.

**921 N. Main Verde Grocery**, later a furniture store, then Coomb's.

**925-927 N. Main Rusty's Saloon & Dance Hall**, used in 1946 movie set for Desert Fury, starring Burt Lancaster, 'Elizabeth Scott, John Hodiak. The film crew renamed the saloon, the 'Purple Sage'. Rusty kept the name. In the 1970's it was a disco dance hall.

**929 N. Main** 1940's Zeb's Place & the Little Pig, later became the Buckeroo.

**1001 N. Main** 1930's fire wiped out 4 businesses & a residence on this corner. Rebuilt & became the Cottonwood Café through the 1960's.

**1003-1007 N. Main** (1933) Braley's Auto Court & Parts Store. Later the Alamo Motel & small grocery, then Shep's 1950s liquor store. In 1967, a fan captured Elvis Presley here buying a coke & newspaper.

**1019 N. Main Linder Motors** Sales, Service & Parts.

**1021-1023 N. Main** (1929) **Arnold's Service Station** & Auto Parts Store. Ka-china Beauty shop for years.

**1027 N. Main** (1937) Norton's law office & carriage house

**1035 N. Main** (1928) Hudson-Essex Car Shop. Later Gas Company.

**1037 N. Main** Ray Manley Service Station, then Price Auto Parts.

**1045 N. Main** (1960s) 1st built for APS (AZ Public Services). North of this bldg. In 1908 was **Alonzo Mason's General Store & Post**. In 1918, Charlie Stemmer bought the property, taking over the post, along with a confectionary store, soda fountain & ice cream shop. In 1923 Stemmer built new moving across the street

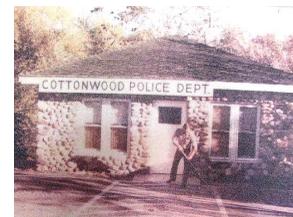
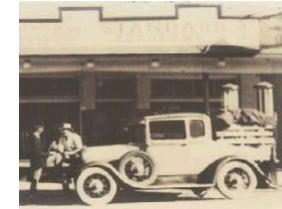
**1101 N. Main**, (1929) County jail until 1961. Cottonwood P.D. & jail thru 1970's. Joe Hall (AZ *bootleg King*) was the 1st jailed here for 10 months after his business & home were raided and shut down by the law. Al Capone inscribed his name on the outside jail cell wall. Indian spirits haunt the jail, as many hung themselves here. This jail is in the 1946 movie "Desert Fury" and the 1967 Elvis Presley movie "Stay Away, Joe".

**1127 N. Main** (1890) **Willard House**, oldest house in town... To the left of the

Willard House once stood a small building, served as **the Post Office (1885-1899)**. "Mack" Willard as 1st postmaster.

**1124 N. Main Oldest commercial building**, The 1-story 36'x60' concrete bldg. cost \$5,000 & opened 6/17/1917. Kovacovich's Mercantile sold over 50 kinds of relishes & oils, fresh produce, fruits, vegetables & hardware.

**1060 N. Main** (1921) Snyder's Bakery & living quarters. Snyder moved to California after discovering a culture for yeast, patenting it & making a small fortune. The bldg. then became the Liberty Collision Works. It served as field offices for a government assisted program. Work relief groups conducted bridge work between 1060 & 1124 N. Main in 1934 & the Del Monte Wash Bridge S. of 791 N. Main in 1935. Property later housed Red Rock Cola Bottling CO., followed by doctors offices.



**1042 N. Main** (1916) **Neff's Garage**, Cottonwood's 1st Auto Garage. A new 1918 Maxwell car sold for \$665. A new building was built in 1923, housing Ersel Garrison Liberty Ford, later became Cottonwood Water Works.

**1034 N. Main** (1923) **Stemmer's Store & Post plus APS 1st office in rear**. Saved during the 1925 fire, later sold to the Eden's. In 1933 **Eden Auto Garage** was completed. In 1970's it became the Sundial Motel

**1028 N. Main** (1906-1917) **Dickenson Cash Store, Home & Post**, burned in the 1917 fire. Present building was built in 1950.

**1024 N. Main** (vacant lot) 1918-25 was the Pioneer Hotel. It burned in the 1925 fire. Location later became a part of Pugh/Cottonwood Lumber. Bldg. collapsed in the 1967 snowstorm.

**1020 N. Main Cottonwood Lumber** later sold to Babbitt's.

\*\*\***Main St. buildings below were rebuilt for a 3RD time. All locations were destroyed by the 12/3/1917 & the 4/20/1925 fires.**

**1018-1016 N. Main** (1917) **Groves-Hansohn Grocery** (1918-1945). Later Hansohn Men's Clothing Store.

**1014 N. Main G. M. Willard Bldg.**, Asby's Grocery burned in 1925.

**1010-12 N. Main Willard's Durant Auto**, barbershop & doctor's offices burned (1925) Charles Willard rebuilt commercial bldg. adding 2nd floor (Willard Hall) in 1926. Its spacious hardwood dance floor served as Cottonwood's assembly hall, replacing the Bungalow, until the civic club was built. Boxing matches were held here. It was a skating rink when the upper floor collapsed in the 1967 heavy snowstorm. 1st floor was Jones Furniture.

**1006-1008 N. Main** (1917) Mack Willard Bldg. rebuilt in 1918 & 1925, leasing to Riley's Variety Store; later the Pay & Take It Store & meat dept.

**1004 N. Main** (1917) **Joe Hall** (Arizona's *Bootleg King*). **Rooming House & Grille & Pool Hall**. He transported his bootleg whiskey to California. Underground tunnels went from his building to his house behind on Cactus. His whiskey still exploded causing the 12/3/1917 fire. His stored whiskey between the walls & in the cellar exploded again in 1925 once the fire hit, quickly catching the building next door on fire. (1930-40's) Snyder's Economic Mercantile.

**1002 N. Main** The back section built in 1918 (**Eckert & Rounseville Bakery**) survived the 1925 fire. **Garrett/Norris Drugstore** in the front was destroyed. Garrett rebuilt the drugstore. Norris's partnership split and he moved to 918 N. Main.

**1001 Cactus Joe Hall's family house** was the only home on the block saved in the 1925 fire (*corner of Pinal & Cactus*). Built 1924.

**1015 Cactus** 1925 Eden Home, Colonial Spanish Revival on Nat'l Historic Register. Today's gallery in the rear was the old Eden Court laundry.

**Cactus/Pinal Corner** (little white cottages) housed the ladies of the night. 'Two bit Annie' would stand on Main Street. For \$2 a guy could have his way with her during Cottonwood's heyday! She wore purple socks!

**910 Cactus**: 1908 Billiard Pool Hall

