



GAHS: Providing Historical Signage



By Nelda Crowell

Glendale has 10 historic districts on the National Register of Historic Places. The first six had Historic District signs funded by the city, but there was no funding for the other four.

The Glendale Arizona Historical Society applied for and received a grant for Historic District signs from the Glendale Civic Pride Ambassadors for Thunderbird Estates/McDonald Addition, Sands Estates, Glendale Gardens and Sage Acres. The City of Glendale's sign shop installed all the signs.

The partnership of the Glendale Arizona Historical Society, the Civic Pride Ambassadors, and the City of Glendale has resulted in beautiful historic district street signs that allow residents and visitors to identify and enjoy Glendale's history at a glance.

Readers Speak: I Remember Glendale When....

Charles Lopresto recalls:

Carmen and Virginia Zanelli moved to Glendale to start a diner. "Carmen and Virginia were at a unique time in the history of Glendale when they made the choice, like so many other Eastern transplants, to come out West and open a business. The restaurant, under some other new owners, has continued through the years and it still retains its unique name. Virginia Zanelli was an attractive and petite Italian girl and went by a nickname, which became the restaurant's name—Bitzee Mama."

Randi Turk on a story from her father, Ed LeGendre: Years ago, Glendale's fire department was manned by volunteers. The siren would sound, and men throughout Glendale would stop what they were doing to get to the station as quickly as possible to head out to fight the fire. One Sunday at the Methodist Church downtown, the ushers were passing the collection plates when the siren sounded. The ushers were volunteer firemen. They dropped the plates into the hands of the nearest parishioner and ran out the

door. One more person followed them, the town mortician. He had the only ambulance in Glendale. The collection continued, the worship service concluded, and the fire was put out.

Please email your memories to: jodidecker@live.com, subject to editing for clarity and length.

Upcoming Events

Monday October 23, 7:00 p.m. at Manistee Ranch. "Bringing a Little Spice to Glendale" presented by Matt Borowski.

Monday November 27, 7:00 p.m. at Manistee Ranch. Vicki Hunt, of the Peoria Women's Club and former City of Peoria councilmember, discusses growing up in Glendale and her oral history project along with presenting her recent oral history video of GAHS's Martha Dennis.

Kittie Decker, Colorful Glendale Resident



Photo: William and Kittie Decker, wedding.

By Jodi Decker

Digging into family history, I found out some interesting stories about my husband's grandmother, former Glendale resident Kittie Claire (Anthony) Decker. I interviewed my 100-year old mother-in-law, Bertie Decker, about her former mother-in-law.

"Kittie," a nickname for Catherine, was one of six siblings born in Deanville, PA, on March 26 in 1881. That birthdate is significant to note, as family legend has it that she possibly doctored her birthdate or misled the family later on, as she was guarding the closely kept secret that she was 10 years older than her husband! Back in the day, you didn't discuss a lady's age.

Kittie married William Fredrick Decker, one of 11 siblings, who was born January 30, 1891, in Fairmount City, PA. Both of them grew up on farms. They moved to Arizona around 1952, following other family members out here. Their son, Warren "Bud" Decker, started Automatic Vendors in 1947, later named Decker Vendors, Inc.

William and Kittie lived right in the heart of Glendale on Ocotillo Road near 59th Avenue in Glendale, in a one-bedroom bungalow with a screened in back porch. By this time, they had 5 adult children, Bill, Al, Joe, Eva, and Bud, who all worked in various capacities for the vending company, which was run out of the back of their property. All 4 sons had proudly served in World War II.

William, nicknamed "Poppy," was known as a kind man. However, he did expect obedience. Kittie, or "Nana," who had grown up during the Depression era, was extremely thrifty. According to Bertie, Kittie saved the wrappers out of the cornflake box to reuse the wax paper.

She shopped at thrift stores and learned to improvise with what she had. She was a strong-willed woman, not openly demonstrative, but she did have a vice! Even though she thought it was a sin, and her children frowned upon it, Kittie would go to the horse-racing track, Turf Paradise, and bet on horses.

William and Kittie were the grandparents of 11, all of whom grew up in Glendale. Their twin grandsons, Curt and Carl Decker, eventually took over the vending company, maintaining the family tradition. Decker Vendors, Inc., served the Glendale community and wider Phoenix area for many years.

Do you have a family history story to tell about a long-time Glendale family resident, but need help writing it? Do you have letters, journals, diaries, or photos about their life in Glendale? Contact the GAHS office if you would like help writing your story or donating your family history artifacts.

Glendale Soil: Richer Than the Nile Delta



Glendale farm, 1918.

By Nelda Crowell

This is the first in a series of articles about Glendale's superior agriculture industry and the city's history as an agricultural community.

There is an almost phenomenal quality to the soil around Glendale. It's that soil that brought Glendale into prominence as the source of premier agricultural products: melons and lettuce of such high quality that- the crops could earn the growers extraordinarily high income per acre and quantities nearly unheard of. Strawberries, onions and vegetables of all kinds, fruits of every description reached a high degree of perfec-

tion, thanks to the Glendale soil.

Here for centuries nature has been putting on, year after year, layer on layer of soil which the United States Geological Survey calls "the Glendale Loess.," and says it is the richest and purest alluvial soil in the world. It extends for an area of 30,000 acres and lies to a depth of 20 to 60 feet.

Forty acres of Glendale Loess produced 205 tons of grain and alfalfa hay at one cutting; from 160 acres of barley, a crop averaging 26 sacks to the acre was harvested; a crop of 80 acres of Thompson seedless grapes on the vine was sold in 1910 for \$5,000 cash. Glendale agriculture was the talk of the country.



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

**Glendale Arizona Historical Society
is in need of dedicated volunteers for the
following:**

- * Experienced Grant Writers
- * Archive Library Assistant
- * Newsletter
- * Accounting
- * Tour Guide Trainee

If you would like to join the GAHS team, please email us at:
gahs73@gmail.com

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**Glendale Arizona Historical
Society is designated as a
Certified Historical Society**

GAHS
P.O. Box 5606
Glendale, AZ 85312

Address Service Requested

President's Message



Can you believe Thanksgiving is almost here? I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people who volunteer their time to keep GAHS running smoothly. However, we can always benefit from having more hands helping out from time to time. If you have a particular skill set or a passion that can benefit

GAHS, we would love to chat with you. As you may have noticed, we have changed up a few things. In an ever changing world, it is important that we keep up with the times in order to continue sharing our past. It is up to all of us to be great stewards of the history around us.

Hours & Tours

SAHUARO RANCH GUEST HOUSE
GAHS Office ~ 10 am to 1 pm Mon-Tue-Thur-Fri
Tours by appointment only
Wedding Dates are currently available!

MANISTEE RANCH
Tours resume October 2023 1st & 3rd Saturdays
of every month until April 2023

Adults \$5
Seniors 65+ and Military \$4
Children 6-10 \$1, under 6, free
GAHS members, free

For more information call 623-931-0072

Glendale Arizona Historical Society
GlendaleArizonaHistoricalSociety.org

P.O. Box 5606, Glendale, AZ 85312
gahs73@gmail.com Like us on Facebook