

## 'OLD TOWN' Cottonwood, Arizona COTTONWOOD' S ONLY UPTOWN...

### YESTERYEAR:

**FOUNDED in 1879.** Hawkins, Strahans', Willards' & Bristow were large families that immigrated here. These settlers homesteaded & 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 an irrigation ditch system started in 1880. Game animals were abundant & wild mustard, grasses, fruit orchards & alfalfa were plentiful until the smelter smoke destroyed all of that. After the smelters closed for good, it eventually came back. The Verde River Greenway is now protected, as it one of the rarest riparian's of its kind. There are only 20 left like it in the world. Charles Willard was known as the father of Cottonwood.

**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 N. 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".

**April 5, 1917.** 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.

**April 14, 1917.** Lots in the Willard addition were selling for \$125 lot.

**April 27, 1917.** Unique Water System/ Artesian Well~ started by Charles Willard, later owned by the Garrison's. Now owned by the city.

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

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

**5/11/1917.** Busy times at Cottonwood. 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 called "the Biggest Little Town in the State of Arizona!"** With heavy bootlegging around, the **Main Street 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. Since Clarkdale and Clemenceau were "company towns" with certain restrictions, Cottonwood appealed to the more venturesome & those wanting their own homes & business. There was a certain reputation for lawlessness. Some who settled were often run out of the company towns, just because of their nationality. Cottonwood attracted citizens country wide for its best brew. For years, prohibition agents turned a blind eye to Cottonwood. 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 was always targeted. Slot machines & poker tables were in almost every store 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:

Cottonwood, a town once famous for bootlegging, feeding the miners and filming movies. Today, 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...



The only store on Main St. in 1917 until the boom  
(1908-1940's)

## Cottonwood, Arizona

This SELF-GUIDED WALKING TOUR, brochure design & historic compilation of info & photos is brought to you by Karen J. Leff, local historian, Cottonwood Hotel. 1st print 1998. Revised 2008.

Go to the webSite [www.cottonwoodhotel.com](http://www.cottonwoodhotel.com)

for more history & to print out additional brochures.

Many thanks and respect to our dear friends & their families of all mentioned here within who have shared their real life stories in the making of the history of Cottonwood.

SPECIAL COURTESY TO: Josephine Becchetti See, Helen Becchetti Dover, Jean Hall Redmond, Clemenceau Heritage Museum, Jerome Sun, Copper Verde News, Prescott News, Verde Independent.

**PLEASE make sure to stop by the locations as many businesses TODAY may be participating with more inside history & photos.**

Visit the city webSite to learn more about Cottonwood, Arizona

[www.ci.cottonwood.az.us](http://www.ci.cottonwood.az.us)

## Cottonwood, Arizona

### SELF-GUIDED HISTORIC WALKING TOUR

The BIGGEST Little TOWN  
in the STATE of ARIZONA



# Cottonwood, Arizona...Self-Guided Historic Walking Tour

**930 N. MAIN, corner of (Mason) now Pinal**, the **COTTONWOOD HOTEL** is the **OLDEST HOTEL in Cottonwood** and **Cottonwood's longest standing business with the same name & location since 1922**. It remained in the Giordano/Robinson family until the 1980's. It was rebuilt after being destroyed in the 1925 fire (*Cottonwood's biggest catastrophe*). The one fatality of the fire burned to death in the hotel. For nearly **40 years the hotel was home to Cottonwood's fire bell** until a fire department was erected. **Mae West stayed here** passing through in the Roaring Twenties & 1930's. **John Wayne & Gail Russell stayed & romanced here** on several occasions during their 1946 filming of *'Angel & the Badman'*. John Wayne & Elvis Presley bought western wear from Robinson's Clothier below the hotel. 'Pop' Clanton, surviving outlaw from Tombstone, AZ parked his covered wagon out front in the 40's-1950's, advertising for the hotel & the good town. Elvis Presley did a scene out front during the 1967 filming of *'Stay Away, Joe'*. Elvis also autographed for fans at this location.

**928 N. MAIN, (1922) LYSONS CONFECTIONARY & NEWSTAND**, with residence in back. Rebuilt after the 1925 fire. Contractors gave this building an eye appeal with its snappy parapet & swirly stucco. It was described 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 stalagmites. All remain as character defining elements of the building today. (*As listed in the historic register*). Robinson took it over in the 1960's, expanding the western wear storefront, below the hotel.

**924-926 N. MAIN. (1920-1923) RIALTO THEATER 1st location.** Became Thomas Moore Restaurant in 1923. On **April 20, 1925 the explosion of a whiskey still at this location burned most of the town**. Becchetti rebuilt commercial buildings & leased them out. A dress shop, dry goods, later cafe went in on one side. Barbershop for years on the other.

**EMPTY LOT** Since 1920's Requenda Saloon & Pool Hall. In 1965 became Tumbleweed Bar. Closed for good after it lost its roof in the 1967 snow storm.

**918 N. MAIN, (1923)McIntyre's VERDE FURNITURE & HARDWARE and NORRIS' DRUGSTORE.** Cast block bldg. survived both 1925 & 1998 fires.

**914 N. MAIN, (1923) RIALTO THEATER 2nd location.** Over 100 "Rushes" (*area filmed movies*) were reviewed at this location bringing Hollywood stars, movie producers & directors to the streets of Cottonwood. **The last 'Rush' was 1964 'The ROUNDERS' starring John Ford & Henry Fonda.** In the late 60's it was renamed the OLD TOWN Theater. In the 1990's it was recognized as United States oldest operating single-screen theater until it was destroyed by fire in December of 1998.

**PARKING LOT Area: (1917-1923) The "BUNGALOW"**. Verde Valley Amusement Company, large 4500SF pavilion dance hall with porch, a venue for road shows, dances and other diversions.

**904 N. MAIN, SILER'S CUT-RATE GROCERY. (1927-'28)** Siler's built a little house where the parking lot now sits. Mrs. Siler took in laundry since **1917- Verde Valley Cleaning & Pressing**, earning enough to buy food by the case. When others asked her to sell some of it, that became the start of their store. Siler's ran it for years until it burnt down in the 1940's. They then built a big warehouse grocery & food lockers behind. It later became SELNA'S grocery. Farmers Market (late 1960's).

**826 N. MAIN**, Marianna Building, 1924 Rusticated Concrete/Cast Block. **1st tenant was CRUTCHFIELD BROTHERS BUICK.** During World War II & Post-War years it served as a mess hall for US Naval Defense School cadets.

**824 N. MAIN**, Marianna Building- Tillie & Louie's **ITALIAN RESTAURANT**

**816 (1954) Verde Valley Branch**, Bank of Arizona. C.P.D. (1970s-90's)

**804 N. MAIN**, opened in the spring of **1923, Jersey's Ice Cream Co.**

**724 BALBOA, EMIL AUTO PARTS, bldg. built after 720 Balboa bldg. was moved from airport to town.**

**720 BALBOA**, Quonset hut WWII & Post-War Years, US Naval Flight School classroom moved from airport to town, became EMIL KOVACOVICH BUICK.

**712 BALBOA**, Cold Storage Facility *built after 720 Balboa bldg. was moved*

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

**796 N. MAIN, (1928) Cottonwood FUEL & FEED**

**LYONS PARK (1930) MINI GOLF COARSE** was erected by Joe Becchetti.

**791 N. MAIN**, built in 1937,

**805 N. MAIN, 1939 CIVIC CLUB** was erected by WPA. Barracks for the Defense Dept. WWII flight school trained 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** (Now city maintenance yard) was **1<sup>st</sup> LIBRARY**

**817 N. MAIN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE (1956)** (now planning & zoning)

**827 N. MAIN (1961) POST OFFICE**, later became city hall.

**901 N. MAIN**, corner of Ellefson now Pima, **(1916-22), 2-story McGIMSEY HOTEL, MERCANTILE & ICE HOUSE. Burnt 1922**, Mercantile was rebuilt, burnt again (1933). Remained an empty lot until 1959. Building was erected & leased to Western Auto, later became Valley Clothing. In 1953 Jeremiah A. McGimsey, became collector of customs for Arizona by President Eisenhower. He was also the 1st president of the Progressive Association (1917).

**903 N. MAIN, (1929-1933) OASIS CAFE (burned)**

**905 N. MAIN. CHOKREE GOBINS** (burned 1933). Shoe store, misc. offices

**907 N. MAIN**, (1929-1933) BRALEY MALT SHOP. Burnt. New building 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) once stood Martilona's Rest Rite Hotel, housing Norton Ins. Destroyed by fire (6/26/1933). New building erected 1935 as Verde Valley Distributing, later became **SPROUSE REITZ** 5-10-15 Store.

**915 N. MAIN**, Jose Acuna's Pool Hall. Later was a recreation center.

**917 N. MAIN**(1923)EAT-MOR Sandwich Shop. Flames started from gasoline-powered coffee urn 6/26/1933, fire destroyed properties to 901 N. Main.

**921 N. MAIN, VERDE GROCERY**, later a furniture store, then Coomb's

**925-927 N. MAIN, RUSTY'S Saloon & Dance Hall**, used as movie set in 1946 DESERT FURY filming, starring Burt Lancaster, 'Lizabeth Scott, John Hodiak. The film crew renamed the saloon, the 'PURPLE SAGE'. Rusty kept the name. It was a disco dance hall in the 1970's.

**929 N. MAIN**, Zeb's Place & the Little Pig in the back, later the Buckeroo. 1987 movie set in "DUDES", starring Jon Cryer.

**E. PINAL (1956) Cottonwood's 1st funeral CHAPEL**, now the Mission.

**E. PINAL (1950's) across from Mission** was James Auto Court

**1001 N. MAIN**, 1933 fire wiped out 4 businesses & a residence in this area. Later rebuilt. Was the popular Cottonwood Café through the 60's.

**1003-1007 N. MAIN**(1933) Braley's Auto Court & Parts Store. Later the Alamo Motel & small grocery, then 1950s liquor store. Dr. Patterson, 28 N. Central, PHX set up eye exams office appointments every Sunday in 1950's. In 1967, a fan captured Elvis Presley here buying a coke & newspaper.

**1019 N. MAIN. LINDER MOTORS** (Service, Sales & Parts).

**1021-1023 N. MAIN, (1929) ARNOLD'S Service Station & Auto Parts Store.** Beauty shop for years.

**1027 N. MAIN (1937)** Norton's law office, carriage house in rear.

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

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

**1045 N. MAIN**(1960s) 1st built for APS (AZ Public Services).

**North of 1045 was (1908) Alonzo Mason's General Store & Post.** In 1918, Stemmer took over the property & the post opening a confectionary store, soda fountain & ice cream shop. In 1923 Stemmer built new & moved across the street to **1034 N. MAIN.**

**1101 N. MAIN, Historic JAIL (1929)** was the county jail until the 60's. Into the 70's Cottonwood Police Dept. & jail. Joe Hall (AZ bootleg King) was the 1st jailed here (for 10 months). His whiskey still sat parked out front the whole time. Al Capone once bailed out a family friend, inscribing his name on the outside cell wall. Indian spirits haunt the jail, as many hung themselves here. This jail is in the 1967 Elvis Presley movie "Stay Away, Joe".

**LEFT of the old jail** once stood a small building. Served as **Cottonwood's POST OFFICE (1885-1899)**. "Mack" Willard was postmaster.

**1127 N. MAIN Willard House** (1890). Oldest house in Cottonwood

**1124 N. MAIN Cottonwood's OLDEST commercial building**, The 1-story 36'x60' concrete bldg. cost \$5,000 & opened 6/17/1917. One of Arizona's liveliest wires in the business, Kovacovich's Mercantile sold over 50 kinds of relishes & oils, fresh produce, fruits, vegetables & hardware.

**1060 N. MAIN** (1921) Snyders Bakery & apartment above. He moved to California during the depression, after discovering a culture for yeast, patented it & made a small fortune. The property then became a government assisted project. The Liberty Collision Works Building served as field office for work relief groups conducting bridge work between 1060 & 1124 (1934) & the Del Monte Wash Bridge S. of 791 N. Main (1935). Later housed Red Rock Cola Bottling, followed by doctors offices.

**1042 N. MAIN. (1916) NEFF'S Garage** (Cottonwood's 1st Garage). **1918 NEW Maxwell car cost \$665.** (1923-24) New bldg. housed Ersel Garrison LIBERTY FORD. Later became Garrison's Cottonwood Water Works.

**1034 N. MAIN (1923) Stemmer's STORE & POST.** It was saved in the 1925 fire. It housed the 1st APS office. Property was later sold to the Eden's (1933) **Eden Auto** Court completed. Dickinson Real Estate & Insurance kept office here. 1970's became the Sundial Motel.

**BEHIND EDEN COURT** (1917) **Rucker Bottling Works** was located on Cactus. A concrete slab remains.

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

**1024 N. MAIN** (NOW empty LOT) (1921-25) Pioneer Hotel was at this location. (*It burned in 1925*). It was later a part of Cottonwood Lumber Company. The building collapsed in the 1967 snowstorm.

**1020 N. MAIN. Cottonwood Lumber** later sold to Babbitt's, who later rebuilt on the by-pass, now Lumberman's.

**\*\*\*Properties below were rebuilt for a 3RD time. All locations were destroyed by the 12/3/1917 & the 4/20/1925 fires. Some businesses left the area, some stayed.**

**1018-1016 N. MAIN, (1917) Groves-Hansohn Bldg. Was HANSOHN GROCERY (1918-1945).** Later Hansohn Men's Clothing Store.

**1014 N. MAIN G. M. Willard Bldg., ASBY'S GROCERY burnt in 1925.**

**1010-12 N. MAIN, Willard's DURANT AUTO**, barbershop & doctor's offices burnt (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 1918 & 1925. RILEY'S VARIETY STORE.** Later the Pay & Take It Store & meat dept.

**1004 N. MAIN, (1917) Arizona's Bootleg King, Joe HALL'S ROOMING HOUSE & GRILLE.** Hall always fed the hungry & bunked one needing a place to stay. He transported his bootleg whiskey to California. Tunnels went underground from his building to his house & connected with several other buildings. His whiskey still exploded causing the 12/3/1917 fire. His stored whiskey between the walls & down in the cellar exploded again in 1925 once the fire hit those walls quickly catching the building next door on fire. He rebuilt again. After Hall was jailed in 1929, he later left town. The business became Snyder's Economic Mercantile (1930's-40s).

**1002 N. MAIN. (1919) GARRETT/NORRIS DRUGSTORE** burnt in the 1925 fire, but the back (1918) Eckert & Rounseville Bakery survived. Garrett rebuilt the drugstore made of cast concrete block, which became a major building material after the 1925 fire. Norris 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.

**Cactus/Pinal Corner (little white cottages)** were the whore houses. "Two bit Annie" would stand on Main Street. For \$2 a guy could have his way with her. She wore purple socks.