



Those Who Came Before Prehistory at Saguaro National Park



The Hohokam

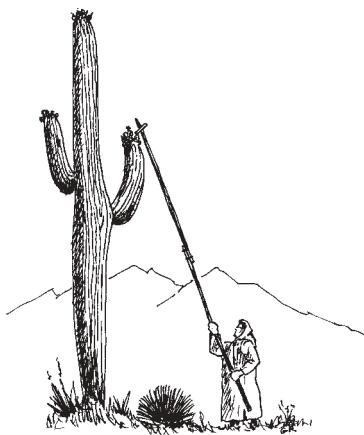
- ◆ Broken bits of pottery, decorated with swirling red lines litter the desert floor. Some of these broken jugs, pots, bowls and mugs portray animals: native quail or imported macaws.
- ◆ The image of a bighorn sheep, carefully pecked onto the face of a boulder, confronts you along the Signal Hill Trail. Nearby, a spiral image, mystic or real, faces the desert sun.
- ◆ In the bedrock by a dry stream, deep holes, called *morteros*, mark the place where mesquite beans were ground into a tasty and nutritious flour.
- ◆ Scraps of sharp-edged rhyolite rock beside the trail are leftovers from the manufacture of an arrowhead, spear point, knife or hide scraper.

These are remnants of a culture we now call “Hohokam”, a native word sometimes translated as “all used up”. From 200 to 1450 a.d. these farmers lived in villages near present day Saguaro National Park, venturing into both the Rincon and Tucson Mountains to hunt and gather native foods to supplement their dry-farming crops of corn, beans, and squash. Their ingenuity and will to survive the harsh desert amazes us, even as we puzzle over their “disappearance”.

The O’odham

The fate of the Hohokam is more controversial than mysterious. While archeologists search for evidence of direct links to the present indigenous peoples, today’s O’odham Nations carry on the Hohokam’s desert traditions.

What many have referred to as the “decline” of Hohokam culture was probably a natural change in lifestyle. Droughts and soil depletion, warfare and internal strife, disease and social disruption, have all been mentioned as factors in this change. Missing is a recognition of the richness of O’odham life, in the past and today.



Adopting a simpler lifestyle, more fitting to desert realities, the Sobaipuri people of the Tucson Basin and their Tohono O’odham neighbors to the west, wrested a living from the cactus forests of Saguaro National Park. Deer, rabbits squirrels and pack rats were hunted; cholla buds, prickly pears, and palo verde pods were a few of the plants harvested here. Medicinal herbs softened a hard life.

Of special importance was the annual saguaro fruit harvest, practiced to this very day from camps in the Tucson Mountain District of the park. In late June, at the height of summer’s heat, the sweet pulp is boiled down for jelly and syrup, then made into wine for the ceremony that ushers in the season of summer rains.

The Spaniards

Seeking to extend their conquest of Mexico, Spanish explorers came into Arizona in 1539-40. One expedition was led by a friar, the other by a soldier. The dual, sometimes dueling, forces of Church and State governed Spain’s newly-claimed lands and the peoples subjugated there.

Actual settlement of the area around Saguaro National Park began 150 years later when Father Kino and Captain Manje founded the first missions along the Santa

Cruz River. San Xavier was, and is, the major area mission; not far away was a military outpost, or Presidio, at the native village of Stjukson - modern Tucson.

Activities on the frontier of New Spain scarcely affected today’s park. Spaniard and native alike clustered in riverside communities, often besieged by raiders from the Apache nation. Even after Arizona became a U.S. territory, Apaches often returned home over, and around the park’s high Rincon Mountains.

Copper and Cattle History at Saguaro National Park

The Miners

1854: Southern Arizona is U.S. Territory

1862: Homestead Act opens public lands

1880: Railroad arrives in Tucson

1886: Geronimo gives up, Apache War ends

The lands that would become Saguaro National Park now faced development.

The Tucson Mountains - low, dry, lacking any streams or permanent springs - never appealed to settlers. But the geology was complex, intriguing and *mineralized*. The Nequilla Mine opened in 1865 and produced \$70,000 in silver ore.

Around 1900 a copper boom led to a wave of claims and speculation. The Gould Mine, its tailing piles still visible today, yielded only \$9,000 worth of low-grade chalcopryite. More infamous was the Mile Wide Mine; its 400 foot shaft led to only a small amount of ore, but one of its owners absconded with over \$100,000 of his investors' money.

A few prospect holes were sunk in the Rincon Mountains also - the Loma Verde Mine is still visible, and lime kilns are found there and in the Tucson Mountains. All in all, mining raised far more dollars in speculation than in mineral wealth.

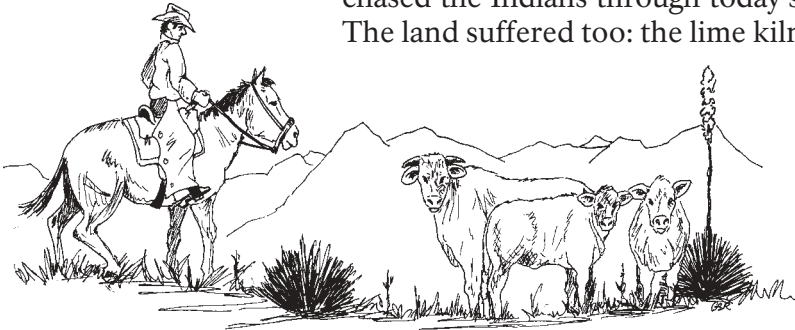
The Cowboys

In 1872 Manuel Martinez began his Cebadilla Ranch in the valley below Tanque Verde Ridge. He planted 400 fruit trees and brought in cattle. By 1880 other families - Campos, Van Alstine, Oury and Carrillo - settled here and ran over 1,200 head of cattle on public rangelands that would become Saguaro National Park.

There were troubles. When the land was declared part of Fort Lowell, squatters were subject to military review of grazing and wood-cutting. As late as 1886 the seven year old son of a cowboy was kidnapped by Apache raiders and a posse chased the Indians through today's park. The land suffered too: the lime kiln opera-

tion and unlimited grazing led to the destruction of several generations of saguaros. Only now is the recovery evident.

In the early 1900's ranches both north and south of the park were amalgamated into large holdings. Jim Converse opened the still operating Tanque Verde Guest Ranch in 1928. Gradually, homesteaders like Firmin Cruz turned to the drier giant cactus forest at the foot of the Rincons. You may visit the Freeman Homestead on a nature trail at Saguaro East. A more unusual "homestead" is the summer cabin of Levi Manning, wealthy Tucsonan, high on the shoulders of Mica Mountain.



The Park and the City

In 1933 University of Arizona president Homer Shantz convinced President Hoover to set aside Saguaro National Monument in the Rincon Mountains. Civilian Conservation Corps workers built recreation areas there and all around the growing city. When mining threatened the Tucson Mountains, citizens appealed to President Kennedy to add land to the monument. In 1991 and 1994 Congress enlarged both areas and created a National Park of 91,445 acres.

From a sleepy town, 15 miles away, Tucson now crowds the boundaries of the park. Developments are visible from many overlooks, air pollution mars the view, city

crime disturbs visitors. Our response to these changes will be the future history of Saguaro National Park.

