Founders Day
July 24th
This is a really fun time with herds of guests dropping by to enjoy outdoor music (thanks to Chris and Jimmy!) and trolley videos up on the outside wall (thank you, Victor!), a gift shop display, and our “resident” artist, Charlie! Y’all come!

We are open from 5-9 p.m. on First Friday, as part of the Grand Avenue Art Walk. This event happens on the FIRST FRIDAY of each month, from October thru May. Stay tuned! Come and enjoy the fun, and frolic with friends!

You may have noticed the big blank wall in front of the Trolley museum on Historic Grand Avenue. Well it won’t be blank for long. Coming this fall we will be launching a special Fundraising Campaign to create a mural for the community to enjoy as they pass by. We have engaged Lucretia Torva, who has her work all over the valley. You can see more of her fantastic talent at TorvaFineArt.com. Her current show is at the Walter Gallery.

So look forward to new things happening at the museum in the very near future.

Newspaper Clipping from 1918
just to satisfy your curiosity

The Commissioners appointed to select a capitol site have chosen the ten acres of land offered by Messrs. Sherman and Collins on the west end of Washington street.

Besides the ten acres, Messrs. Sherman and Collins have given a strip of land around the tract, one hundred feet in width, for a driveway, and also agree to extend the street railway to the track.

The capitol, when built, will be in the center of Washington street, so that it can easily be seen from the business portion of the city. The commissioners intend to plant trees on both sides of the street, around the track donated, and to improve the grounds generally so as to make a park where the good people of Phoenix can take pleasant evening strolls.

The site chosen is one which a majority of the members of the Fifteenth Legislative Assembly petitioned the commission to select; as in their judgment it would be the best for the purpose. Commissioners Hammond, Franklin and Johnstone have acted for the best interests of the tax payers of the Territory in this matter and the SENTINEL joins with the general endorsement of their action in the premises.
A lawyer, a builder and a millwright found that you still can take a streetcar. If you have the time, guts and the proper permits, you can take one just about anywhere you want it.

“It went really slick,” lawyer Larry Fleming said. “We lost a lot of nuts and bolts and dirt, and the resident owl flew away. And I hope some scorpions.”

Fleming and his associates in the Arizona Street Railway Museum moved a 1928 model Phoenix streetcar from the vicinity of Estrella Mountain Park to the area of Scottsdale Airport. The trip took only two hours and ten minutes. You can’t get there by bus in that time, especially on a Sunday morning.

Public transit used to work in Phoenix as far as it went, which was Glendale. Larry has written a book about it, “Ride a Mile and Smile the While,” published this year (1977) $18.95, Swaine Publications, Phoenix.

Fleming, 45, grew up in Phoenix in streetcar days. He lived on the west Washington-Capitol Line in a house his grandfather built, and later on the Kenilworth Line.

The name Fleming is prominent in Phoenix history. “We were the other Flemings,” the lawyer said. His family used to live at 505 West Linwood and Mayor R. Fleming lived at 302 West Linwood. “We used to get each other’s laundry,” the other Fleming said.

His father was a bricklayer who became custodian at the courthouse. “That’s when I decided I wanted to be a lawyer,” he said. “Dad would go down to the courthouse at night to surprise the janitors. When I was four or five years old I would climb up on Judge Phelps’ bench and play with the gavel.”

He became not only a lawyer but a history buff and a rail addict. Fleming belonged to the Orange Empire Railway Museum which has track and rolling stock at Perris, California.

Another member was retired millwright Dwight Vencill, who has lived in Arizona since childhood. Vencill wondered who in the Valley shared his interests, and came up with the names of Fleming and Carl Wickes. Wickes’ family has been in the construction business long enough to have built the first bridge over the Colorado River at Parker in the 1930s.

The trio formed the Arizona Street Railway Museum, a non-profit corporation, and began trying to track down old Phoenix streetcars. Some of them were moved out to ranches for use as line shacks, and to farms where they were quarters for migrant laborers. Some more modern ones were destroyed in a car barn fire in 1947 that canceled the first and last route in Phoenix, the Capitol line.

The six working cars out on the street at the time of the fire were stored behind Guys and Dolls, a club at 32nd and Washington streets. As near as Fleming can figure, two of those cars went to Mesa, and he’s trying to track them from there.

Four cars became rental units in a trailer court near 35th Avenue and Lincoln Street. The streetcar buffs dickered for them but never could make a deal with the owners.

About three years ago they heard the court had been condemned and a wrecker was tearing out the cars. One car already had been destroyed, but they bought the three others from the scrap dealer.

The cars had been stripped, vented, shimmed, partitioned, painted and stuccoed. “The business of streetcar restoration is not very glamorous, at least in the early stages,” Fleming said. “It’s a matter of beating out walls, chasing rattlesnakes and rousting some really greasy bugs.”

The streetcars had been moved to a game refuge and hunting club near Estrella Mountain Park. Fleming is part owner of the club. They began restoring what was originally Car 116, renumbered 508 in 1941.

“At the duck club there is no electricity,” Fleming said. “Try to do woodworking when I decided I wanted to be a lawyer,” he said. “Dad would go down to the courthouse at night to surprise the janitors. When I was four or five years old I would climb up on Judge Phelps’ bench and play with the gavel.”

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without electricity. It’s a real pain.
We had to knock out windows, knock off the concrete and get down to bare streetcar. There were about ninety coats of paint we first had to take off. All the wood is mahogany, first-class stuff. We had to do the grinding wheel kind of thing to get down to real brass again.

“We took all the parts we had out to Carl Wickes’ home and shop (near Thunderbird Road and Scottsdale). We decided the obvious place to do the work was Carl’s shop.”

But they didn’t want to pay for a crane and lowboy trailer to move the streetcar. Vencill got a master welder, Robert E. White of Gilbert, to build new trucks with rubber tires.

“Fortunately, it worked,” Fleming said. “The trucks are the same general dimensions, but the wheelbase was wide for stability on the road. We can use the car as a mobile museum. We can take it to a shopping center, for instance, and fill it with displays and artifacts. “Our ultimate plan is to find real trucks & running gear and restore it to operating condition.”

Getting original equipment may be a problem, he said. “When they converted these cars to homes, seats had to be taken out and they went somewhere. The equipment went somewhere. Some of this is bound to be still around and we’d like to find it.

“We’re trying to smoke out any other streetcar bodies we don’t know about.”

To move the streetcar, they had to have permits. “You don’t want any kind of hassle,” Fleming said, “because the project itself is hassle enough. The State Highway Department application asked who manufactured it, the year, did we expect to rent it for hire without a driver. Wide load permit forms are not really geared for streetcars.

“Then they said you have to get a county permit. Dwight Vencill called the county and they said you can’t move it on Sunday.

Any day but Sunday. But we could apply and get an exception, so I called (Supervisor) Bob Corbin, whom I’ve known forever, and he got us a special permit.

“The city of Phoenix just wanted the number off our state permit. Glendale said no permit was needed because it wasn’t ten feet wide. Candidly, we didn’t give a darn about Paradise Valley.”

Early on a Sunday morning they hooked a Chevy Blazer onto Car 116 and moved out: Bullard Road, Broadway, Litchfield Road to Lower Buckeye, Lower Buckeye to 75th Avenue, up 75th to Thunderbird and across to Scottsdale.

“Only a couple of things that we got hung up on,” Fleming said. “My brother insisted on bringing his nineteen thirty four Ford pickup along for laughs. It boiled over.

“And we didn’t plan on the balloon races.” A hot air balloon race originated that day at the American Graduate School of International Management.

“We had carefully figured out the least busy route. But when we got in the general vicinity of - what do they call it now, used to be the Institute of Foreign Trade? - we got into a lot of traffic.

We cherish our tiny little museum now because we know it will grow and become one of the best around. Keep in touch, watch us grow Helps us Grow
Colonel William Christy was an original incorporator of the Arizona Improvement Company. Christy, born in 1841, had served in the Civil War, and settled in Arizona in 1882, purchasing 440 acres west of Phoenix for his farm. By 1884, he was Cashier for Sherman’s Valley Bank, and was fast becoming a driving force in the Arizona Republican party.

Christy’s neighbor Josiah Harbert, in the following year of 1888, would own the first two ostriches in Arizona; Harbert would go on to have “the distinction of having set out the first orange trees in the valley while serving as a director of the Arizona Improvement company.” Further, “At the time Grand Avenue was built, he platted and named the present town of Alhambra” which still exists as an urban village in the City of Phoenix. (Quotes from the Arizona Republican, 1909.) In 1893, Harbert would sell 1,100 of his acres on Grand Avenue, no doubt realizing a handsome profit. Back in 1887, the Arizona Mission of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Phoenix had, the previous November, begun work on founding its Arizona Wesleyan University. The University would be formally incorporated on 11 November 1889, with Christy and Harbert among its incorporators, and with M. H. Sherman on its board of directors; but already in 1887 planning was well underway.

The story begins on 24 May 1887, with the incorporation of the Arizona Improvement Company which was to build the original Phoenix Street Railway. The Company’s depository was the Valley Bank, whose president Moses H. Sherman, would be a key player in the Street Railway. 

By William Lindley

On 28 May 1887, four days after the founding of the Arizona Improvement Company, one plan for both the Grand Avenue and the University Additions to the city of Phoenix was officially recorded. Primarily composed of land divided by Christy and Harbert from their properties to the northwest of the Phoenix townsite, these additions were each broken into a large variety of home sites. A single large ten-acre rectangular plot, on the north side of Van Buren Street, between 10th and 12th Avenues, was designated for use by the “M. E.” (Methodist Episcopal) University -- thus the name, University Addition.

Prominent in the overall design of the diagonal Grand Avenue, which was and would remain a unique feature within the Valley. Construction proceeded apace with the grading of the streets. By March of 1888, real estate developer “W. J. Murphy of the Grand Avenue Company, at Phoenix, has contracted for 1,000 two-year-old ash trees, which are to be set out along the Grand Avenue.” (Arizona Weekly Journal-Miner)

By March of 1890, the street railway would be open along the original mile-and-a-half of Grand Avenue, from Five Points (at Van Buren and 7th Avenues) to Six Points (at McDowell Road and 19th Avenue). Much of what we today consider key features of this area were not yet in place: The route of the Santa Fe Railway line, along Grand Avenue west of 19th Avenue, would not be chosen until October 1891; the State Fair would not move to its present location at Six Points until 1905. This was still a featureless ranch land on little-traveled side of Phoenix.

In November 1890, the Phoenix Herald reported:


The general policy of the university is to be outlined by the Arizona mission or conference. Otherwise the board has control of the management. They appoint the faculty of professors, who fix the course of study and that it is properly followed. Indebtedness limited to $25,000. Annual meeting of directors 4th Tuesday in every
The offer came to the council from Rev. George H. Adams, acting for the trustees, through Mayor Christy. In accepting the tender of the property with the agreement at once to proceed with the work of making it a playground of which the children may well feel proud, the council also extended a sincere vote of thanks to the trustees who have with one move solved the problem which has faced the city of Phoenix for many years.

While the future of the playground is just now somewhat dim, it is understood that it will not be long before there will be many features installed which will appeal to the children. It was announced yesterday that the children will be the sole ‘owners’ of the property and that they will be permitted to do pretty much as they like. There will be no restrictions as to noise except on Sundays. Ball games, football, pushmobile contests, marbles, building of sandhouses and the hundred and one other things in which the young folks delight will be permitted.

One of these days it is likely that swings will be installed, together with out-of-door gymnasium features, all of which will cost but little, and which will probably be augmented with donations from public spirited citizens. It is also likely that with the placing of this tract at the command of the youngsters, that other playgrounds may be established in other parts of the city.

The University’s incorporation was extended in 1914 for an additional twenty-five years (through 1939) although with the same of all or most of the remaining portions of the original ten acres and some adjoining parcels (per a legal notice printed in the Arizona Republican, 23 March 1919) the University seems to have vanished as a functioning entity.

In October 1925, continuing the purpose of education, the City of Phoenix leased the southeastern portion of University Park to the nascent Phoenix History Museum. Today, University Park still comprises the original ten acres, and continues its recreational and educational purposes as originally intended.

And although the University itself was never built, the names University Addition and University Park continue a legacy of advancement for the City in which the Street Railway’s M. H. Sherman had a hand in creating.

The proposal of the Arizona Wesleyan University Tract Is Tendered [to the] City and Solves Problem Which Has Been Under Consideration For Years

Phoenix is to have a children’s public playground. In special session late yesterday the common council accepted the offer of the Arizona Wesleyan University trustees to permit the use of its ten acres tract in University addition for such purposes, providing the city agrees to clean up, grade and keep clean the property during the time it is used for recreation purposes. It is an indefinite tender, in that the property reverts to the trustees at such time as the playground is abandoned or it is desired by the trustees to make other use or disposition of the ground.

Maricopa-Phoenix Railroad arrives in Phoenix

In the late 1800s, the townspeople of Phoenix were seeking a connection with the rest of the world through the Southern Pacific’s Sunset Route, which passed about 25 miles south of them at a settlement-siding called Phoenix Junction (now the town of Maricopa). Authorization was needed from Congress to build a rail line through the Gila River Indian Reservation. Having been approved the Maricopa and Phoenix Railroad began construction 1886, and was completed in 1887, the same year that the Moses Sherman Phoenix Trolley system was built. These two rail connections contributed greatly to the growth of Phoenix in its early years.

This railroad was most likely abandoned in the early to mid 1940s. At the time it was abandoned, it was owned by Arizona Eastern Railroad (a subsidiary of the Southern Pacific), and was known as the Maricopa Branch.

The routing of the M&P is not known, but it is speculated that most it lies along the Maricopa Road (Route 347). The northern terminus in early 1887 was at Tempe, but by July of that year a Phoenix Depot was operating at lower Apache Street (now 7th Street) south of Washington Street. Over the years along this southern alignment (basically along Harrison Street) several other rail depots were built including the Atchison Topeka and Santa Fe, and the Arizona Eastern. The Santa Fe arrived from northern Arizona in 1895 and the Southern Pacific arrived in 1926 at Union Station.
This is a glad time of the year when complaint begins to be made against the practice of youth of going in swimming in the canals at road crossings where the water is always deeper than anywhere else. The boys while so engaged do not wear enough cloths to flag approaching passersby along the road to warn them to turn back if they wish to avoid embarrassment. Other kind hearted complaint’s fear that the boys will catch cold and they have suggested to the authorities ruling to compel the youth to wear bathing suits. Most of these complaints come from the Osborn district whose inhabitants are particular about scenery generally.

Article in the Arizona Republican - 1911

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1853 • June 24th - US President Franklin Pierce signs the Gadsden Purchase, buying 29,670 square-miles from Mexico for $10 million—now southern Arizona and New Mexico.

1856 • June 13th - Treaty of Bosque Redondo is signed allowing the Navajos to return to their lands in Arizona and New Mexico.

1856 • June 17th - On the Sonoita River in southern Arizona, the US Army establishes Fort Buchanan in order to defend land acquired in the Gadsden Purchase.

1871 • September 5th - First public School opens in Phoenix.

1879 • - Salt River Herald, the valley’s first newspaper, begins publication.

1888 • July 4th - First organized rodeo competition held, Prescott, Arizona.

1912 • July 19th - A meteorite of estimated at 419lb mass explodes above Holbrook in Navajo County, causes approximately 16,000 pieces of debris to rain down on the town.

1917 • July 12th - The “Bisbee Deportation” occurs as vigilantes kidnap and deport nearly 1,300 striking miners and others from Bisbee.

1919 • July 7th - The highest temperature at 22°F is reached in Phoenix Arizona.

1925 • August 29th - Moses Hazeltine Sherman sells the electric streetcar system to the City of Phoenix for $20,000.

1931 • The Wrigley Mansion is built as the winter cottage for chewing-gum magnate William Wrigley Jr.

1935 • September 30th - The Hoover Dam, on the border between the U.S. states of Arizona and Nevada, is dedicated by FDR.

1953 • July 26th - Arizona Governor Howard Pyle orders the Short Creek Raid to crackdown on polygamist residents.

1970 • September 19th - 11.5 inches rainfall at Workman Creek, Arizona (state record).

1990 • July 7th - Jineane Ford of Arizona replaces Shawn Weatherly (Miss Universe) as the 29th Miss USA.

2013 • July 30th - 19 fire fighters are killed controlling a wildfire in Yarnell south of Prescott.

2014 • July 27th - The NHL Coyotes franchise changes geographic name from “Phoenix” to “Arizona” after change of ownership.
Can you give us a hand to put the Phoenix Trolley back on its tracks?

After more than 40 years on the north side of Hance Park, we have moved due to the park’s redevelopment. This means building an entirely new museum with new experiences and stories to tell – in our new location on Historic Grand Avenue.

We ask for your support to preserve an important part of Phoenix’s heritage.

More Details at phxtrolley.org

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